

THE ROLE OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING
IN ESTABLISHING SOCIAL HARMONY

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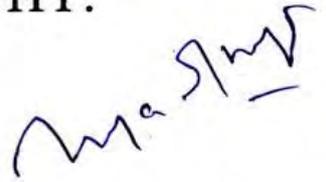
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THE ROLE OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN ESTABLISHING SOCIAL HARMONY

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an attempt to answer the question: Why Cross-cultural understanding is important not only to establish peace and harmony in society but to assimilate new perspectives and ideas for the all-round development of a given society?¹The research finding isto show that one of the basic factors to establish peace and harmony is to acknowledge the fact of multiculturalism and the need for cross-cultural understanding by putting forward arguments based on theoretical as well as historical grounds.²The research method which will be used, are the descriptive and evaluative methods.³The research principle is the principle of unity in diversity.⁴This dissertation will try to clarify and identify through cross-cultural understanding perspectives and ideas that will help the ongoing modernization, development and reconciliation process in Myanmar.⁵

Key words: culture, diversity, unity, harmony, multiculturalism, cultural pluralism,cross-cultural understanding

¹. Research Problem
². Research Finding
³. Research Methods
⁴. Research Principle
⁵. Contribution

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a human beings' second environment which was built up by human beings themselves. People cannot be separated from their culture, for it surrounds them. Not only is culture everywhere but it also makes a difference to how people live their lives. Their culture influences what they eat, how they speak, what they believe, how they behave, and what they value. An understanding of a culture is necessary for interactions with others. Every society has some form of culture which is an expression and production of man. Man is the agent of culture and benefits from it in diverse ways.

Lisa J. McIntyre quoted two eminent anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn in her book *The Practical Skeptic Core Concepts in Sociology* as follows:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas [beliefs] and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements of further action. (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, 181)¹

This means that culture consists not only of objects but also includes human behaviour and how they view the world and how they look upon other beings. It also conveys the message that although culture is a human creation, once it comes into existence, it in turn determines human beings and how they live. This moreover is an ongoing process.

The most fundamental elements of all societies are characterized under culture and social structure. Human beings live with their fellow humans because of their desire for security. It is said that the earliest human beings organized some form of society, established some values and rules for living together. These became tribal laws or rules of the social group or community that were found to preserve the group for their welfare.

Their aim was for the preservation of the life of the social group.

One of the facts that cannot be disputed is that human beings are social animals and due to this social nature most human beings live in organized groups known as society. But society like culture is not an idea that can be clearly defined. According to sociologists, a society is a group of people who are relatively self-sufficient and who share a common territory and culture.² On the other hand, when a group of people live in a particular area and have values in common, it can be said that it is a society.

F.S.C Northrop referred Francisco Romero in his book *Studies in the Philosophy and Science of the World's Culture* as follows:

Man is inconceivable without culture; the correlation between the two terms has become increasingly clear, although it may not yet have been stated in a sufficiently distinct and definite form. Culture is not only an expression and production of man and – in the form of objective culture – the medium or environment he creates around himself and inside which alone he can lead a human life; it is also the condition sine qua non of things human, the external and, as it were, objectified aspect of man's being and, for that reason, an essential part of man.³

So, according to the above, a person is the agent that creates his or her own culture together with other persons in his or her society. Depending on geographical, climatic and other material conditions he or she tries to improve the material conditions of life for long-term survival as for instance when he or she begins to grow crops and breed livestock for food. This improves the material life of society but as life improved human beings also try to improve the finer and more spiritual life of human society. Hence, the general assumption of some sociologists and anthropologists is that religious and ethical values form the foundations of culture. But, later intellectual and aesthetic values also emerged to combine with religion and ethical values to form its foundation. Thus cultural foundations consist of improved material conditions such as agriculture, farming, better housing, material artifacts as well as poetry, drama, painting, and other artistic activities.

But no two groups are alike. Therefore, human societies are characterized by diversity. Each society is characterized by many different racial, ethnic, and religious factors, and each has its own distinctive set of values. The physical and material environment shapes the life and culture of a people but other factors that distinguish one society or culture from the others include their different ways of viewing the world; the way they think about life and their moral and spiritual values. When the way they think about life, morals and spiritual values are different, their language customs and traditions will also differ.

Culture therefore is instrumental for the development of society and cross-cultural understanding is of great importance in establishing peace and harmony in today's globalized world society which consists of culturally diverse nations and people. In today's multicultural but interconnected globalized world, understanding of the culture of others is of importance. Only with understanding can there be tolerance which is necessary to avoid conflict.

As stated earlier cultural differences arise from variations in the way of life, beliefs, traditions and laws among different countries, religions, societies and people. All human societies are characterized by diversity for there are racial, ethnic, and religious differences and each has its own distinctive set of values. Geographical conditions may also be considered as a partial cause of the differences in world-outlook which therefore results in cultural diversity. But that the more important factors that distinguish cultures are the different ways of viewing the world; the way people think about life, about other living beings as well as their moral and spiritual values. The differences in the way they think about life, their morals and spiritual values also partly determine their manners and behaviour. All this contributes to diversity in cultures. As explained earlier one of the meanings of culture is that it is the second environment created by human beings to make

life better, but though there may be similarities there are also many differences which are more significant and need to be understood. Another factor that results in cultural diversity is that differences among cultures are enforced by internal rules. Culture is thus the total way of life that characterizes a group of people.

There are thousands of cultures in the world today and each culture contributes to some diverse elements depending on geographical factors, world outlook, their history, and their moral and spiritual values. This accounts for the many ways in which people can be culturally different.

A human being is a social being and humans live with their fellow humans because of their desire for security. They try to preserve their own life by protecting the social group and they try to look out for the group's welfare for the protection individual welfare too. Therefore they try to improve the material conditions of life for long-term survival and in the process learn to make artifacts. So culture is said to be of two kinds; material culture and non-material culture. Material cultures consist of material objects and tools made by people to use and better their conditions of life. It can be said that material culture is made up of artifacts. Artifacts are made by human beings and as such are also known as tangible culture. On the other hand non-material culture is made up of objects that are intangible such as language, ideas, belief, morality and philosophy.

It is important that human beings as social beings understand each other when they communicate. Thus while some societies use English as the language of communication others speak Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, or any of the thousands of languages spoken today. Then there are hundreds of ways that different groups worship or practice different religions and they are also partly characterized by that trait. Likewise, there is a world of cultural differences with respect to economic and agricultural activities, modes of architecture and transportation. Moreover, cultural communities may differ in the way

they dress, in music, cuisine, dance, sport, etiquette, and others. But some cultures also have certain similarities and affinities. It is often assumed on this basis to classify cultures with similarities under one group and others whose cultures have certain other similarities in another group. Today people often talk of cultures of the East and West-that Eastern cultures tend to be more spiritualistic and those of the West as more materialistic. The reason often given is that because the West is more materialistic and that it is fertile ground for the growth of science and technology. The East is said to be more spiritualistic because the four great religions of the world namely Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism all had Eastern roots.

These are speculations and assumptions with some probability but no absolute certainty. However, it cannot be denied that cultures often have certain characters in common, hence the assertion that unity can be achieved in diversity.

However cultural diversity and multiculturalism is a fact. So the critical question is “Should cultural differences be used as an excuse for discrimination between humans?” and “Should not people try to understand these differences to bring about peace and good will on Earth?” So if people concern themselves about differences in culture it should be to create harmony and avoid conflict. There are many good reasons why people should concern themselves about the differences in culture. It is not to eliminate or discard these differences but to bring about understanding and empathy when meeting people from other cultures; it is to give insight into their customs and avoid unnecessary conflict and misunderstanding.

Cultures are not to be denigrated just because they are different. It can be said that differences are inherent in the very nature of each society and culture. Cultural differences and similarities exist and they are important to identity and to provide people with a sense of belonging. A person's culture is important and will have usually been a part of life since

birth. It is by understanding the differences in culture that misunderstanding and conflict can be avoided. An understanding of the differences in culture is thus necessary for establishing peace and harmony in society.

The aim of this dissertation is to support the view that the conflicts occurring across the world today are due largely to social, political and religious extremism and are thus rooted in cultural conflict and is motivated by fear of the unknown. People often fear and have misconceptions about things that they do not know or understand. Thus when they come across a culture that is different, this breeds fear. Thus when people do not understand this fear it leads to hatred and extremist views.

This dissertation thus undertakes to study the role of cross-cultural understanding to dispel such fears and establish social harmony. It is an attempt to answer the question: Why cross-cultural understanding is important not only to establish peace and harmony in society but to assimilate new perspectives and ideas for the all-round development of a given society. Cross-cultural understanding is important because it is one of the basic factors to establish peace and harmony in a society. As cultures are different among different communities or societies of human beings, cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect are thus necessary. Through cross-cultural understanding, misunderstanding and conflicts can be avoided. Through mutual respect cultures can exist side by side without hatred or fear, and that cultural pluralism and diversity should not breed antagonism and conflict.

The structure of this dissertation is composed of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the meaning of culture. It deals with the general definition of culture and with the meaning of culture from the anthropological point of view and philosophical anthropology. Culture may be classified as tangible and intangible culture. Tangible cultures are physical objects or artifacts which are created and used by human beings, to

make life better materially as well as psychologically. And intangible cultures are made up of non-material things that are generally understood as having no material existence. Some categories of intangible cultures are symbols, language, norms, values and belief. Symbols are the things that represents something to more than one person or one thing and it stands for many things. Language is an important element of culture because it is through language that the other components of beliefs, values, and norms are communicated. Language can develop communication skill. Norms include social norms, economic norms, administrative (or) political norms and morals and manners. In the first chapter the concept of culture and civilization will also be discussed.

The second chapter is a discussion of cultural diversity and unity. There are differences in culture depending on geographical and historical factors, customs, worship and world outlook. Though there are differences in culture there are also common shared characteristics. The second chapter discusses the differences of culture in the cultures of the East and West. The condition of peace and harmony depend on cross-cultural understanding of such differences and to achieve such understanding there must be interaction, mutual understanding and contact together with a sense of tolerance.

In order to establish the fact that national identity does not mean cultural identity a comparative study is made of Chin and Bama cultures in the third chapter. The ethnic races who live in Myanmar have different customs and traditions. There are differences concerning their social life, economic life, religious life, their language and in their moral views and moral values. But there are shared common aspects in Chin and Bama culture in spite of the differences between them. In other words this chapter explains that multiculturalism is a fact that must be acknowledged. National identity does not necessarily mean cultural identity.

The last chapter deals with the nature and the issues that cause cultural conflict.

There are many causes which bring about cultural conflict. They are inequality concerning distribution of natural resources, unequal opportunities, legal inequality, economic inequality, social inequality and political inequality. When there is no equality among individual, conflicts arise. But the principal cause is lack of understanding and the misconception that one's culture is superior to others. This kind of chauvinism is the fuse that leads to explosive cultural conflict.

Aim and Objective

The aim and objective of this dissertation is to clarify and identify the role of cross-cultural understanding in establishing social harmony and how it can support the ongoing modernization and development process.

Research Problem

This dissertation therefore attempts to solve the problem why cross-cultural understanding is important not only to establish peace and harmony in society but to assimilate new perspectives and ideas for the all-round development of a given society.

Research Methods

In this dissertation, the descriptive method and evaluative method will be used to resolve the main problem. The descriptive method will be used to make a literary survey for establishing the premises for the argument based on theoretical as well as historical grounds. Then the evaluative method will be used to try to give reasons as to why cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect are important not only to establish peace and harmony in society but to assimilate new perspectives and ideas for the all-round development of a given society.

The Research Principle

The research principle is the principle of unity in diversity.

Research Findings

The research finding is that understanding cultural diversity and multiculturalism can eliminate human fear and suspicion and thus open the way to cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect that is necessary for peaceful co-existence.

Contribution

At present Myanmar, which is a multiethnic and therefore a multi-cultural society, is in the midst of building a modernized and developed nation and only the right perspectives and ideas will help advance the modernization and development process. Understanding the differences and similarities in culture can support and strengthen social harmony and build unity to establish a national identity that tolerates and respects cultural diversity and cultural pluralism. Such understanding can then be extended to the world as a whole to show that human beings of different race and creed can live together in cooperation and peace.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS CULTURE

1.1. General Definition

The term culture has many different meanings. It is related to all the ways and conditions of livings in human societies. People often use the term to refer to great literature, classical music, or gourmet foods. For sociologists, culture refers to the total life-style of a people, including all of the ideas, knowledge, behaviour, and material objects that they share.¹This means that all peoples have culture, which they themselves have created and accumulated through time and passed on from generation to generation. Each generation has also modified or added to the culture they inherited. Culture is the full range of learned human behaviour patterns. So culture is not something static but a living dynamic institution and it is constantly changing. It is the second environment that human beings have created to make life better, and it is thus a continuous process. Once a culture dies it can no longer renew itself, and a culture that fails to renew itself withers and dies.

Culture provides people with guidelines on how to lead their lives. People learn what is good or bad, what is right or wrong; what is beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant; what they should or should not do and even what they desire and what they dislike are determined by their culture. Culture is a powerful tool for human beings for their survival. The terms culture and society are often used interchangeably. But society refers to a group of people who have agreed to live together in a chosen territory for their survival and well-being whereas culture refers to their way of life. Culture is the general way of life of a society. A society is a group of individuals living together for peace and happiness and for their security, and culture is the means they create and use to achieve these ends. Therefore, culture reveals a general pattern of life of a society that is embedded

their customs, beliefs, languages, and ways of thinking, feeling and acting for the good of society.

According to Marvin Harris, a culture is the socially learned ways of living found in human societies and it embraces all aspects of social life, including both thought and behaviour. The majority of cultural characteristics are overwhelmingly shaped by socially mediated learning. A majority of contemporary anthropologists accept that culture includes shared and socially transmitted ideational or mental elements that are values, ideas and beliefs.² Thus culture consists of values, motives, and moral rules and meanings that are a part of a social system that embraces the whole set of institutions that human beings live by and it consists of ways of thinking and behaving. Thus, culture also consists of thoughts or ideas, or activities.

Individual behaviour may be different in many ways. Even in one family each person born into the same culture and in the same country behaves differently. But as an element of a social system, they share ways and patterns of thinking, feeling and doing determined by their culture and society as a whole, which is transmitted from generation to generation through traditions and customs. Therefore, culture implies all that a person has acquired as a member of society.³ Defining culture Dev Raj Bali quoted Prof. E.B. Tylor's view in his book *Introduction to Philosophy* as follows:

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.⁴

The word capabilities mean language, methods for making and using various tools and the capacity to think and learn. Everything man inherits in the form of ideas, habits, and values, constitutes his culture. Therefore, it can be said that culture is said to be the second environment which humankind has created from the earliest period. Human beings have always analyzed facts in terms of meaning and values. They developed concepts,

ideas, habits, values and technical processes for the enrichment of life. Every group of society wants to preserve its culture because culture forms the essential basis of its life. The very essence of culture was developed by awareness of existence. Awareness of existence must have been the basis of all the creative activities with which cultural life began.⁵ Again Bali quoted Bronislaw Malinowski's view of culture in his book *Introduction to Philosophy* as follows;

It is essentially an instrumental reality which has come into existence to satisfy the needs of man in a manner far surpassing any direct adaptations to the environment; man has his wants as an implement-making and implement-using creature, as a communicating and discoursing member of a group, as the guardian of a traditional continuity, as a family unit within a cooperative body of men. For the development of a fuller life in all its aspects of religion, morality and aesthetics, culture has evolved in human society through the expanding ideas of mankind. The ultimate aim of culture is to give satisfaction to man and cater to various social needs; without such satisfaction social life cannot develop in its richness.⁶

So, according to the above, it can be said that culture is an essential tool for the better living of human beings. The aim of culture is to fulfill the physical, social and psychological needs of human beings. A human being as a cultural being is a communicating member of a group and the protector of a traditional continuity.

Culture is a way of life, not just the sum of several activities. A person of culture focuses on learning, good manners and cultivation of arts in his behaviour. Personal culture depends upon the culture of a group and the culture of a group depends upon the culture of each person in the group. Therefore, both the individual and the group influence each other. Culture gets transmitted through many ways. This can be seen in the family life style. Children are born in the same family, culture, and country, but their actions are not the same. Individual action is called his nature. When it comes to a group, the group's mode of behaviour is its culture. Therefore, when family life fails to play its part in the transmission of values, the culture as a whole begins to degenerate. Culture is a cooperative affair where each person, each family and each community contributes its

share knowingly or unknowingly.

It is also said that it is culture that distinguishes human beings from animals. As far as basic needs are concerned there is no difference between men and animals. But a human being always desires and makes efforts to keep himself or herself at a higher level; therefore little by little he or she transcends the limitations of his or her biological needs. The human being is blessed with the capacity of thinking. If a person uses this ability rightly, it will be a blessing. If not it can become a curse. This capacity for thought is also the origin of culture. Development of human being's culture starts when they begin to understand the meaning and value of life. Human being is a rational animal and this rationality was a great help in his gaining of superiority over the animals. Human beings learned to protect themselves against external enemies and danger – physical, animal or human.

Some anthropologists maintain that philosophy is a universal category of culture.⁷ It means that in any society, there is a philosophy which is transmitted from generation to generation. Types of family, cooperative patterns and technical abilities are parts of the culture of any society. Since each culture is formed from its own value conceptions, its special achievements will be found where the culture places the strongest evaluation. Education and religion should be the real basis of cultural growth in a man. This is because from the very beginning when human beings began to grow crops for food, it was from what they had learned from natural events. It was based on learning. But they also developed a sense of surprise and awe at their achievement. Then when crops failed they did not realize that it was due to weather such as lack of rain, but began to look upon natural events as the work of some supernatural power. Thus began a primitive worship of nature and natural events.

Primitive people observe the changes in nature, the winds and the storms, the

mountains and the seas, the trees and the rivers and experiences with awe and wonder, hopes and desires, fear and joy. This is also part of the cultural process. This was done so that man could survive and flourish. With this, agriculture became a way of life for man. Development of human beings' knowledge for survival against the forces of nature began with the introduction of agriculture. And another level in human beings' development is livestock breeding in which they tamed and bred animals. They changed from seeking shelters in caves to building their own houses with some raw materials taken from the nature. And their development came with the discovery in the use of fire. They also learnt to make and sharpen tools.

The above account consists of assumptions but assumptions that are most probable. To understand this better would require a brief study of cultural anthropology and philosophical anthropology to clarify and understand the various aspects of culture.

1.2. Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humans, past and present. It deals with human beings' culture especially with respect to social structure, language, law, politics, religion, magic, art, and technology. It can be said that it is the scientific study of human beings as social beings interacting with each other in their environment, and cultural aspects of life. To understand the complexity of cultures across all of human history, anthropology draws and builds upon knowledge from the social and biological sciences as well as the humanities and physical sciences. A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems.

Anthropologists have had an ongoing debate concerning the view that culture is "human nature"; that all human beings tend to classify their experiences and represent such classifications with symbols, that is in the form of language which is then conveyed

to others. Human beings, it is said, learn about culture and become cultured through interaction with others belonging to a certain group. This means that cultures will differ due to place and circumstances. But people also adapt differently to different environments according to some anthropologists and thus it is said accounts for the differences in cultures. Such anthropological theories have arisen due to the fact that anthropologists are aware of the fact that though particular cultures have their own distinctive features, there are also certain universal characteristics shared by all human beings and there are interconnections.⁸

Cultural anthropology is a branch of anthropology that focuses on the study of cultural variation among humans. Cultural anthropology is a major division of anthropology that deals with the study of culture in all of its aspects and uses the methods, concepts, and data of archaeology, ethnography and ethnology, folklore, and linguistics in its descriptions and analyses of the diverse peoples of the world and their cultures. It brings out differences and their shared common characteristics.

Etymologically, anthropology is the science of humans. In fact, however, it is only one of the sciences that studies human beings, bringing together those disciplines that commonly aim to describe human beings and explain them on the basis of the biological and cultural characteristics of the populations among which they are distributed, and to emphasize, through time, the differences and variations of these populations. Anthropology deals with human culture especially with respect to social structure, language, law, politics, religion, magic, art, and technology. So, the branch of anthropology that deals with the origins, history, and development of human culture, including in its scope the fields of archaeology, ethnology, and ethnography, is cultural anthropology.

Concerning cultural anthropology, Felix M. Keesing, states as follows;

Cultural anthropology is the facet of anthropology (“man study”) which describes and seeks general understandings about human “customs” or “cultural behavior”.⁹

The above statement means that cultural anthropology is related to the social sciences and humanities. The cultural anthropologist examines the many different systems of custom throughout the world; seeks to explain their origin and development; weigh their likenesses and contrasts. They probe the values, premises, and goals which make a given “culture” a rounded way of life, and also the relation between the culture of the group and the personality of the individual. They analyze the processes by which customs persist or change.

1.3. Philosophical Anthropology

Philosophical anthropology is a discipline dealing with questions of metaphysics and phenomenology of the human person, and interpersonal relationships. It is a critical reflection upon the impact of anthropological approaches and their findings on philosophical conceptions of human affairs.

Philosophical anthropology is the philosophical discipline that inquire into the essence of human nature and the human condition. In making this inquiry it seeks to unify or analyze philosophically the diverse scientific methods and humanistic approaches to answering the question of human nature. Although the majority of thinkers throughout the history of philosophy have had a distinctive anthropology (or understanding of human nature), “philosophical anthropology” as a specific discipline emerged rather recently within the context of the late modern period.

Philosophical anthropology also focuses on interpersonal relationships, in an attempt to unify different ways of understanding the behaviour of humans as both products of their social environments and producers of their own values. It analyses the ontology in

human relationships – that is how individuals interact and relate to one another. This interrelationship or intersubjectivity is the study of how two individuals or subjects, whose experiences and interpretations of the world are radically different understand and relate to each other. Philosophical anthropology is a discipline that seeks to unify the several empirical investigations of human nature in an effort to understand individuals as both creatures of their environment and creators of their own values.

In culture, a distinction is also made between tangible culture and intangible culture. Thus it is necessary to try to understand culture from these two different aspects.

1.4. Tangible Culture and Intangible Culture

Culture can be classified into two kinds: tangible culture and intangible culture. They are closely interrelated. The ploughs and shares used in agriculture are material and tangible. Temples, churches and other monuments are part of tangible culture, but represent the values and beliefs of humans which are intangible. Many primitive people left behind no written records, but from artifacts such as cave paintings, pottery, arrowheads, and burial mounds, investigators have been able to piece together some conception of the intangible cultures of many of those societies.¹⁰ Sullivan explains tangible culture and intangible culture in this way;

Material culture consists of *all the physical objects, or "artifacts", made or used by people, such as canoes, stone clubs, jet airplanes, and skyscrapers.* **Nonmaterial culture** consists of *those things that have no physical existence such as language, ideas, knowledge, and behaviors.*¹¹

Tangible cultures consist of implements made and used by people. Computers, houses, forks, bulldozers, jewellery and so forth are part of tangible culture. It includes some very sophisticated and complex objects. It can be said that tangible culture is largely made up of artifacts and are by-products of human behaviour or human endeavour.

It can be said that intangible culture is made up of nonmaterial things. Ideas about

truth and beauty, about happiness and boredom, about what is funny and what is not, about right and wrong and so forth are part of intangible culture. Intangible culture is a sign or an expression of ideas, knowledge, and behaviour. Symbols, language, norms, values and beliefs are categories of intangible culture. But it should also be noted that tangible culture can convey the intangible cultural heritage e.g. religious monuments, books etc. Thus from a study of tangible material objects one may infer the customs, traditions, beliefs of a culture which are considered intangible.

1.4.1. Symbols and Language

A symbol is anything that represents something or the other to more than one person so it can stand for many things and not just one thing. A symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else. It can be said that without symbols, culture cannot exist because there would be no shared meanings among people and no means of communicating and having meaningful relations. Symbols can help human beings in communicating ideas about love and hate. For example, love or patriotism can be shared because they express abstract concepts with visible objects. They can stand for love, peace, or hate, just as languages can be used to convey these meanings. Symbols may be specific to a given culture and have special meaning to individuals who share that culture but not necessarily to other people.

Symbols are social things and if an object has meaning only for one individual, it is not a symbol. Therefore, a symbol is anything that at least two people agree on as representing something other than itself. Symbols are powerful things, because people react to them as if they are the real thing. They are powerful enough to invoke man's emotions, and hence the reason why it is said that symbols contains interpretations. Cultural values are expressed in all kinds of symbols. Concerning this view Ernst Cassirer states as follows;

Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining an as an *animalrationale*, we should define him as 'an *animalsymbolicum*. By so doing we can designate his specific differences we can understand the new way open to man—the way to civilization.¹²

Concerning symbols in culture, J.A Banks and C.A McGee, stated as follows;

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways.¹³

A sign, on the other hand, is something that stands for just one thing like a traffic sign. But symbols have various meanings because they include human interpretations. Therefore a symbol is said to be a cultural category for symbols can arouse human emotion. People's behaviour and the way of their living is acquired and transmitted through symbols. Language is also a very important element of culture. Concerning language in culture, Diana Kendall, stated as follows;

Language is a set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another.¹⁴

The above statement explains that language is a set of written or verbal symbols that people use to communicate with one another. Language is not solely a human characteristic. Other animals use sounds, gestures, touch, and smell to communicate with one another, but they use signals with fixed meanings that are limited to the immediate situation and cannot encompass past or future situations. Therefore, nonhuman animals cannot transmit the more complex aspects of culture to their offspring. Human beings have a unique ability to manipulate symbols to express abstract concepts and rules and thus to create and transmit culture from one generation to the next. Language played a crucial role

in developing human intellect and reasoning and also his feelings and emotions. Without symbols there would be no art and without language, no literary art – no way to express emotions.

Concerning symbol and language, Susanne K. Langer, states as follows;

The development of language is the history of the gradual accumulation and elaboration of verbal symbols. By means of this phenomenon, man's whole behavior-pattern has undergone an immense change from the simple biological scheme, and his mentality has expanded to such a degree that it is no longer comparable to the minds of animals.¹⁵

The above statement states that by means of language the behaviour patterns of human beings can be known. By means of language, the vast differences between the intelligence of human beings and those of other animals can be seen. Again, Langer, states

Language is, without doubt, the most momentous and at the same time the most mysterious product of the human mind.... In language we have the free, accomplished use of symbolism, the record of articulate conceptual thinking; without language there seems to be nothing like explicit thought whatever.¹⁶

From the above statement, it can be said that human beings created language, and language in turn developed the conceptual thinking of human beings. It is true that symbol and language play an important role in political, economic, laws, rules, music, ethics, and military organization etc., And again, language play an important role in the means with which different cultures interact with each other. Without language and symbol, human beings would not have been able to establish mutual understanding and tolerance of one another in society. As mentioned earlier, language is a set of sounds, combination of sounds and symbols that are used for communication. So, it can be said that language has an essential part in the development and existence of a culture.

Language is a part of culture and a part of human behaviour. It is a particularly important component of culture because it is through language that the other components- beliefs, values, and norms- are stored, communicated, and memorized. It can be said that

without language there can be no culture at all and without it, it would be difficult to maintain intangible culture. At the same time, language is considered as one of the categories of culture because language both spoken and written develops communication skills and enhances knowledge. Any activity that requires cooperation between individuals is promoted by language. Therefore, human life as it is today would be practically impossible without language and symbols. Language is essential to human life and culture.¹⁷ An elaborate system of language first in spoken form is the creation that distinguishes sharply the difference between humans from beasts, and once language in written form emerged human intellect developed by leaps and bounds. Thomas J. Sullivan quoted White's view in his book *Sociology* as follows:

wewould have no political, economic, ecclesiastic, or military organization; no codes of etiquette or ethics; no laws; no science, theology, or literature; no games or music....Rituals and ceremonial paraphernalia would be meaningless without articulate speech. Indeed, without articulate speech we would be all but toolless: we would have only the occasional and insignificant use of the tool such as we find today among the higher apes.... In short, without symbolic communication in some form, we would have no culture. (White, 1949:33-34)¹⁸

1.4.2. Norms

Norms are also part of intangible culture. Cultural norms are behaviour criteria that are typical of specific groups. Such criteria are learned from parents, teachers, peers, and many others whose values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour take place in the context of their own organizational culture. Norms are standards of conduct that guide people's behaviour. A person's culture is an ingrained part of their lives. The way to judge the importance of a norm is to observe how people respond to behaviour. They are the expectations that people in society share about how they ought to behave. Unlike values, norms are basic guidelines for behaviour and are an integral part of day-to-day lives. They provide people with a set of rules for their own behaviour and to foretell how others will react and thus provide the order and stability necessary for a society to exist and function.

A society teaches its member the types of behaviour that are expected through sanctions, which are rewards or punishments for conforming to or violating norms. Cultural norms exist even in small groups or cultures, not just in large societies.

Norms are cultural products (including values, customs, and traditions) which represent the individuals' basic knowledge of what others do and what others think that they should do. Sociologists describe norms as informal understandings that govern individual behaviour in society. In other words, norms are collective representations of acceptable group conduct as well as individual perceptions of particular group conduct.

Cultural norms are behaviour patterns that are typical of specific groups. They often are so strongly ingrained in an individual's daily life that the individual may be unaware of them until such behaviour is seen in the context of a different culture with different values and beliefs. This means that only when a person comes in contact with people from another culture with different norms does he or she become aware of the norms of his or her own culture and that there are differences.

Cultural norms can also be found in folklore. Folklore represents casual norms which differ from moral rules and principles and violations are not taken seriously. Norms that are customary, popular, widely performed are called folkways. Folkways are informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture. For example, how to dress for a funeral, how to behave while eating or other common social behaviours. There is some social pressure to conform to folkways, but violating them usually results in weak, informal, negative punishment. However, such violations occur frequently and they are normally not taken very seriously, although a person who repeatedly ignores folkways may be viewed as strange or eccentric.

Mores are anything but casual. Mores refers to morality and morality distinguishes

the difference between right and wrong. It is the determination of what should be done and what should not be done. The laws of society are based on mores. Mores reflect important rules, such as the norms against unjustified assaults on other persons. Mores are norms that are associated with strong feelings of right and wrong, the violation of which usually results in sanctions.¹⁹ They are the rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable in a group or society. They are the laws of society that deal with murder, incest theft, and they are taken very seriously and are considered, crimes. The laws of society are based on mores. People who violate folkways are usually tolerated, but people who violate mores are usually punished. For example, most of the religions have prohibitions on cohabitating with a romantic partner before marriage.

People who do not follow these norms may be shunned or suffer some kind of consequence. Violations of norms are considered crimes from the legal aspect and are punishable by law. So a person who violates such norms may be banished and put in prison, or put to death. These strong reactions are one reason people adhere to mores. People are taught to adhere to their cultural mores from the time they are born. As a result, people incorporate the mores into their own personal codes of conduct. They try to control themselves.

Taboos are norms that are so deeply held that even the thought of violating them upsets people.²⁰ Sometimes the violator of the taboo is considered unfit to live in that society. A taboo is a very strong negative norm; it is a strict prohibition of behaviour that society holds so strongly that violating it results in extreme disgust or expulsion from the group or society. Violations of taboos are considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable. For example it was taboo for a White woman to be seen with a Black man of African descent in the United States of American. The Black man would have been lynched and hanged from the nearest tree.

(a). Social Norms

Norms which include values, customs, and traditions are cultural products. They represent views on how people behave and how they should behave. Norms are part of the social order and are more or less guidelines to maintain the social order. In different societies, there are different norms for different kinds of behaviour. Norms can change from time to time, and it can be said that social norms are not static. Social norms which have been agreed upon have the power to motivate behaviour and are learned through social interaction.

Social norms are rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable in a group or society. But social norms can change according to changes in the environment or in situation and may be modified over time. Social norms differ from country to country and from social group to social group. It can be said that without social norms societies could not exist peacefully. Societies can exist only if it has social norms because social norms direct, regulate and control the behaviour of human beings. Social norms are prescribed in order to organize a community or society. When people begin to establish relations among themselves it is called socialization. But this socialization takes place in accordance with the social norms that have been agreed upon and accepted by the group, for example, family relationships or relation between friends. This socialization helps to satisfy human social needs. They also help in establishing social order by lessening tensions and conflicts in society. Norms are used to evaluate human behaviour in all fields of human endeavour – social, political or economic. They act as ideals and objectives in certain situations and they help in predicting human behaviour.

(b). Economic Norms

Human beings are not only social animals, but they are also economic beings.

Since human beings have to work for a living one way or the other trade and commerce is an important livelihood in society. They are incessantly engaged in what are known as economic pursuits or activities. In order to survive, human beings must ensure that food, clothing, shelter, and other materials are produced and distributed to members of society who need them. Thus economics is a discipline concerned with how people make a living. It consists of rules and social practices that govern production and distribution of goods that led to the establishment economic institutions of a society. Economic institutions can take many different forms. In some societies, every member has a right to a share of societies' resources, including food, shelter, clothing, and so on. Production is the process of combining various material inputs and immaterial inputs in order to make something for consumption. Goods or services are created to fulfill the needs of members of a society. Thus arose economic norms as well as other rules and regulations to guide economic relations.

From the above it can be seen that human beings in a society establish many kinds of relations which are specific to the kind of activity concerned. When the interaction is for social purposes there are social norms for guidance. Similarly economic activities also have specific norms for control and guidance. In a culture thus there can be found economic norms and these norms may differ. For example the norms of a socialist economy differ greatly from an open-market economy. So it can be said that just as each culture or nation has its own culture each culture has norms that control and guide the many kinds of activities that take place.

Another of the more important activities of human beings in every culture concerns administration and governance. In this area too can be found what may be termed administrative or political norms.

(c) Administrative (or) Political Norms

Political norms are part of intangible culture. Today, political norms are embedded in political theories in written form. They then constitute the norms that are to be followed by who accept political theory. It is a political agenda followed by individuals or groups (or parties) that advocate or accept a particular theory. Political culture first of all consist of the attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process. It also includes the basic assumptions and rules of a political system. It covers both the political ideals and the operating norms of a politics. Political culture is the concrete form of the ways of political thinking and the views on the role and rights of people in a political group or state. A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experiences. All human beings have a number of roles associated with it. Concerning political systems, C.N. Rao Shankar referred to Robert A Dahl's view in his book *Sociology* as follows:

Whether he likes it or not, virtually no one is completely beyond the reach of some kind of political system. A citizen encounters politics in the Government of a country, town school, Church, business firm, trade union, club, political party, civic associations—*Politics is one of the unavoidable facts of human existence. Everyone is involved in some fashion at some time in some kind of political system.*²¹

The above statement shows that administrative or political norms play a crucial role for all human beings. No one living in society can avoid politics whether he or she likes it or not and it is indispensable for the existence of human beings. All human beings are involved in a political system of one kind or another even those living in the most primitive of societies.

Political culture is a recent term which aims to give a clearer and more systematic understanding of concepts such as political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national

political psychology, and the fundamental values of people. Political culture, brings out the political orientations of both leaders and citizens and how they approach and react to issues in politics.

(d) Morals and Manners

Having briefly explained the nature of social, economic and political norms, it is necessary to touch upon the role of morals and manners in culture, for they also play a role in determining the differences in culture. This is not to say that there are no shared common features. However people tend to notice the significant differences in morals and manner when they first come up against culture different from theirs.

Morality is the distinction between right and wrong. It is the determination of what should be done and what should not be done. Morals deal with behaviour as well as motives. Morals differ among cultures depending upon situations and context. For example, bowing may be morally accepted in one culture and kissing the cheek in another culture. And there are morals which seem to be universally accepted. For example, it is morally wrong to murder and to torture babies for personal pleasure. It must also be stated that people tend to identify themselves with the morals and manners for both are concerned with acceptable kinds of behaviour.

Every society throughout the world has standards for what is acceptable behaviour. Having good manners helps an individual build confidence and improve communication skills. Manners are more concerned with overt every day modes of behaviour. Manners are the mode of action, ways of living, ways of speaking, ways of treating others and habits of a people. Manners are the rules worked over time for people to interrelate in a friendly manner and show mutual good will and respect. It is the way that helps people in their daily contacts with other – it leads to smooth relations and prevent conflict. Manner is the

way in which something is done or takes place; a method of action, or mode of procedure. It is external behaviour in social intercourse, estimated as good or bad according to its degree of politeness or of conformity to the accepted standard of propriety.

Morality on the other hand goes deeper. Morality is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are good or right and those that are bad or wrong. Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture, or it may be derived from a standard that is believed to be universal. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with “goodness” or “rightness”. It is closely related to values and beliefs.

1.4.3. Values and Beliefs

The values professed by a society are expressed in its norms. Norms and values are interconnected. If a society's norms, can be identified one can also come to understand its values. Values are abstract ideas about what is good and desirable, as opposed to what is bad and undesirable, in a society. But because values are abstract they are apt to create conflict. Values differ from society to society. For example, one society may emphasize the value of individual social liberty as in the West, whereas another society may put more value on authority and discipline. In the East family bonds are given priority whereas in the West family relationships are not so important; it is the individual that counts. But there are certain moral and religious values that are inviolate as for example premeditated murder or the brutal treatment of an innocent child. In these days when human rights have come to the fore, cultures and societies across the world are now attempting to universalize certain moral values as for example not to treat any human being as a means but as an end. Such values are now being revived.

Belief refers to people's ideas about what is real and what is not real. Beliefs have

to do with what people accept as factual though they may not be facts as such. Beliefs and values are sometimes commonly related. Beliefs are also referred to as values, and the behaviour that support these values are referred to as norms. Most people who live in a certain country think and behave in a similar ways, but some people from another country or culture are different. These differences may have to do with cultural norms. As stated above the term culture also refers to attitudes and patterns of behaviour in a given group.

Norm refers to standard or criteria for cultivating good attitude or behaviour, and all societies have their own cultural norms. However even though norms influence every outlook of people's lives, including what they value, their attitudes, and how they behave, human beings are often unaware that they are influenced by the culture into which they were born. In general they unquestioningly accept it as natural and normal especially people who are unreflective. They do not stop to question beliefs and ways of thinking that have been ingrained in them since birth.

The most basic components of culture are beliefs which are the conceptions people have about what is true in the world.²² They include ideas about what things exist in the world, how they work, and how they are related to one another. Some beliefs can be verified by observation but some others are not. Cultural beliefs help people to understand the world and their place in it. People tend to confuse their beliefs with moral significance. When this happens, beliefs become values which are people's ideas about what is good or bad, right or wrong. Then, people use these values as guidelines for judging behaviour. However, values tend to be general and abstract and the cultural values of a society serve as guidelines for judging behaviour. This is the case in most people, but as stated earlier cultures are by no means static and as they grow and expand on a grandeur scale, civilizations emerge. However, the term civilization has yet to be defined concisely or unanimously and this point is noteworthy. Sometimes the terms culture and civilization are

used interchangeably. But for the purpose of this dissertation the following relationship will be assumed as a premise that will support the need for cross-cultural understanding.

1.5. Culture and Civilization

It can be said that human history is the history of civilization. No one can think of the development of humanity without the term, civilization. Throughout history, civilizations have provided the broadest identifications for people. As a result, the causes, rise, interaction, decline, and fall of civilizations have been studied at length by distinguished historians, sociologists, and anthropologists. Many theories have been put forward yet no unanimous definition of civilization has been possible.

But, without the concept of civilization, the discussion of culture cannot be complete because culture and civilization are related terms. Bali referred to Prof. Pitrim Sorokin in his book *Introduction to Philosophy* as follows;

"civilisation refers to all man-made devices."²³

It is often said that civilization is the process of the social environment to make man's life more safe and convenient. Therefore, man creates artificial things to improve life in a society.

Bali quoted Prof. N.K. Devaraja's view in his book *Introduction to Philosophy* as follows;

Both civilization and culture are products of the creative activity of human mind. When such activity is directed towards utilitarian ends, it produces civilisation, when it operates for awakening consciousness of values it produces culture. The two aspects of creativity work together in scientific and socio-political thinking. The scientist, so far as an inventor pursues truth engages in the cultural activity, when in his capacity as inventor he seeks to harness nature to human use, he is behaving as a builder of civilization.²⁴

The term culture refers to the consciousness of values but the term civilization is defined as the utilitarian aspect of living. Such a view seems to indicate that culture is the

intangible aspect whereas civilization is tangible and concrete. This however is just one view out of many.

Again Bali quoted John Cowper Powys' view in his book *Introduction to Philosophy* as follows;

A civilisation is culture that has risen to a level where it incorporates considerable variety, a high degree of control over the material world.²⁵

Civilization is related with the scientific and technological effort of man and it refers to human effort for change, development and comfortable living conditions.

Civilization and culture are closely connected. Concerning culture and civilization, Samuel P. Huntington referred to Bozeman's view in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* as follows:

Civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the "values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance."²⁶

The above statement, considers both culture and civilization as a universal way of life of human beings. Many scholars have made in-depth studies of culture and civilizations and have come up with a variety of views concerning their respective characteristics. However for the purpose of this dissertation it would suffice to simply acknowledge that civilization is a later product and that it emerges as culture expands inscope and becomes more complex; in short, in both culture and civilization there are values, norms and institutions which are to be followed by society as well as modes of thinking, that are all of fundamental importance for society. Culture and civilization are interlinked and cannot thus be separated.

All animals, including human beings have basic needs; the most basic needs being food and shelter. But human beings have additional needs such as clothing, adequate

housing as well as other needs for their mental welfare. So, all living beings have to struggle for the fulfillment of their basic needs for survival. But for humans the fulfillment of physical needs is not enough, for they have spiritual and emotional needs as well. So, in a way, it can be said that human beings have unlimited needs, and they have to struggle to fulfill those needs. It is often said that human beings are different because they are rational beings. At the same time human beings with their strong urges and desires are also emotional beings. Consequently human beings create artifacts. They invent technical tools to satisfy their urges and desires and from this emerged civilization which has made life more convenient and brought people closer to each other. But, there are also negative aspects to these developments. Due to a host of different factors, geographical, psychological, social and economic, civilizations differ. Moreover civilization like culture is dynamic and changes over time. As human beings develop new tools and techniques with greater knowledge their way of living also changes dramatically that leads to drastic upheavals in culture and civilization.

The advancement of civilization from earliest times to the present age may be considered to depend upon two important stages. The first stage is from hunting to agriculture as the means of human existence. The second stage is from agriculture to industry.²⁷ Depending on geographical, climatic and other material conditions primitive people struggle for survival so that they begin to grow crops and breed livestock for food. This improves the material life of his society. From the earliest time till today agriculture plays a role in improving social customs. It can be said that farming, planting and food production have driven man to civilization. The symbols of improvement in civilization can be seen in architecture, weaving, painting, sculpture, and pottery, political and economic ideology. Therefore, it can be said that culture and civilization arose because human beings, who are more intelligent than other creatures, wished to live a better life.²⁸

With regard to civilization, Huntington states as follows;

Throughout history, civilizations have provided the broadest identifications for people. As a result, the causes, emergence, rise, interactions, achievements, decline, and fall of civilizations have been explored at length by distinguished historians, sociologists, and anthropologists.²⁹

The term culture refers to the consciousness of values but the term civilization is defined as the utilitarian aspect of living. Again Bali in referring to John Cowper Powys' view of civilization in his work *Introduction to Philosophy*³⁰

Civilization is related with the scientific and technological effort of man and it refers to human effort for change, development and comfortable living conditions. With regard to civilization, Rao has a slightly different view. He says:

The term '*Civilisation*' is derived from the Latin word '*Civitas*' which means a city. Hence the term refers to all the attainments characteristic of human life in an organized city. Since cities appeared relatively at a later stage in human history, '*Civilisation*' indicates a particular stage in the evolution of man. In contrast with this, culture represents the group life of man at all the stages of his social development. The term civilisation is also used to cover all the social organizations and other attainments of man which mark him off from other animals.³¹

Civilization is what distinguishes human beings from other creatures. They are both rational and emotional in nature which gives rise to different needs. Therefore they struggle and aim to fulfill those needs. Thus arose first cultures and then civilizations. As stated above culture and civilization are inseparable but according to some, civilization is concerned with the means of production and the products of civilization are necessary for the satisfaction of wants.

It is also said that civilization can be viewed as the outward appearance and culture as the inward character of a society because as already mentioned previously, culture refers not only to the material patterns of people's way of living, but also to their belief, values, ideas, and so on. On the other hand, civilization can be seen in tool making, agriculture, technology and in the rise of cities. So many have come to identify culture

with the social standards, norms of behaviour, the traditions, values, religious beliefs and practices that are held in common by members of the society. Culture is manifest through the arts as well as in the social structures and institutions of the society.

Culture is a manifestation of the way of life for a society and consists of both tangible and intangible elements. Thus there are common elements in culture and civilization, such as codes of manners, dress, languages, religion, rituals and norms of behaviour such as law and morality, and systems of belief. Members of the social group adopt the elements of culture and then transmit them to others. In this way, culture is both defined by the social activities of the group and also defines the behaviour of the members of the society.

Culture can be said to be the creation of the whole society but civilization also advances only as society as a whole advances in knowledge. But civilizations may also fall with the decline of knowledge and wisdom. Culture in this respect is more resistant even though it may be primitive or elementary. Culture is the living process of the functioning of values in the context of the existence of the individual and society. It can be said that civilization is a bigger unit than culture because it is a complex aggregate of society. Civilization cannot exist by itself without culture. Therefore, the meaning of civilization will be less if it does not have its culture. It means that culture can grow and exist without residing in a formal civilization. Culture as already mentioned is something that is material as well as non-material. But a civilization is something that can be seen in material culture although its basic components may also be immaterial.

When people study a particular human society it can be said that they study the culture of those people. Culture is one of the most important concepts in society. Therefore, it can be said that culture and society are inseparable. Only man is born and grows up in a cultural environment. Human beings are social beings but they can also be

defined as cultural beings. Culture is the unique quality of a human being which separates them from the animals.

Culture and 'civilization' represent the activity and experience of human beings. The products of civilization can be measured quantitatively on grounds of efficiency but cultural products such as values, opinions, ideas, ideologies, morals, customs, beliefs, etc., cannot be measured.

Moreover, the products of civilization are more easily communicated than the products of culture. Knowledge concerning civilization can be passed on very easily and without much effort. On the other hand, products of culture can be communicated only between the like-minded.³²

In other words the diversity of civilization is not as great as that of culture. The products of civilization can be borrowed easily without loss or change but culture cannot be borrowed as the products of civilization. Ideas and concepts can be communicated and accepted or rejected. Technical devices and plants can easily be borrowed or transferred. It may be easy for the East to borrow the technology invented by the West but that is not the case with the moral, cognitive and religious beliefs of cultures. A human being cannot readily change his outlook on the world or life as easily.³³

The distinction between culture and civilization is only relative and not absolute. They are not only interdependent but also interactive. It can be said that both culture and civilization are man-made. In a way it can be claimed that civilization is for material welfare while culture fulfills both social and spiritual needs. Both are important equally and influence each other. Culture is influenced by the articles of civilization. When some material objects of civilization become old, they come to be valued as antiques of culture. The tools and implements of the primitive communities are also regarded as the symbols

of culture. It can be seen in various articles such as pots, vessels, ornaments, coins, weapons, and tools, etc., found in excavations that reveal the culture of the ancient people. Culture and civilization are the two facets of human efforts to make life better.³⁴

Civilization can be generally defined as a stage of advanced human social development and organization. It is an ensemble of geographic, political, economic, religious and social structures; it is a ceremonial center for social and cultural activities. Civilization thus is a specific type of human community, made up of large, complex societies based on domestication of animals, plants, people, knowledge, beliefs and practices. So civilizations differ from cultures but are related.

CHAPTER II

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND UNITY

2.1. Differences in Cultures

It is true that different groups of people who possess different cultures think, feel, and act differently. In this world there is no single best standard for considering one culture as being intrinsically superior or inferior to another. But it can be seen that most people think that their own cultures and ways of life are the best and others' are not as good. This is the most basic cause of cultural antagonism and conflict. Studying the differences in cultures presupposes a position of cultural relativism. It is true that there is cultural diversity; on the other hand it is possible that there may as well be cultural similarities also. All human beings have some shared basic characteristics which are psychological and behavioural. All human beings are the same in their basic needs which are the needs for shelter, food and clothing, and they all can feel happy, sad, tired, and hungry and joyful. Thus all human beings are similar in their humanity. But the way such needs are fulfilled may be different or similar in some respects.

For instance food, clothing and shelter may be different or similar due to geographical conditions. In the same way most human beings mourn the loss of a loved one but the way they culturally express this sadness may differ. Yet there are similarities too. The Myanmar people mourn the loss of a relative for a week and on the last day make donations of food and other necessities to monks to share merit with the one who passed away. They then hold an open house for friends and relatives to partake of food in memory of the deceased. Likewise, in Ireland a wake is held for seven days with food and drink to honour the dead relative. So although the two cultures are different some similarity can be found in some aspects for they share the same humanity.

However no two human beings are alike – they differ in physical appearance, in the way they see the world and other human beings. Their perceptions and attitudes are different, their desires are different and their likes and dislikes are different. Even identical twins are not truly identical. Thus everyone would agree that individual human beings are different. Genetic science has confirmed this fact. No two human beings have the same DNA.

Similarly people who inhabit this world are racially different. They differ in physical appearance from other racial groups – their skin colors, their bone structure, height and weight etc. are different. Different races also live in different geographical locations and so they have different histories, different languages and different ways of life, and more importantly the way they see the world differ, and the way they work, the way they worship, the way they eat are different. In short, different races across the world or within the region have produced different cultures. So, apart from racial differences, there are also cultural differences. This cannot be denied.

Diversity and differences are inherent in the very nature of every society and culture. There cannot be a society where all people are absolutely identical in all respects. Diversity is the essence of human beings and human society. It can be said that every culture and society rests on the principle of diversity. It is also the factor that drives growth and progress. Thus no two cultures are the same although there may be areas where cultures may overlap.

It is true that there cannot be one world culture that is, uniformity does not characterize this world. Uniformity is not the norm although there may be affinity in some areas. There are various cultures in this world and in those cultures, there are many different traditions and sub-cultures and they are always changing.

All human beings cannot be the same in their way of living, and their way of thinking. They have different views of the world and of life and different values. A person can change his way of dressing, eating and living but the values of a person are hard to change because they are deeply rooted within their hearts, mind, body and soul which they have received and assimilated from their culture. Therefore, it can be said that culture is relative; all evidence point in that direction. A variety of factors determine the nature and characteristics of a culture which in turn influences the physical and psychological features of the people.

2.1.1. Geographical Factors

People who live in the world are characterized by the differences in culture and this may partially be due to geographical conditions as already mentioned. When looking back in history, geographical condition is one of the contributory factors that has affected the development and degradation of nations and regions. Geographic factors can hinder or promote cultural diffusion. For example, Greece is a peninsula which is surrounded by mountains and these mountains have had a great impact on the development of Greece. The mountains divide the land and it led to the creation of city-states. Take for example the two city-states of Athens and Sparta in ancient Greece. They were city-states ruled differently with different values. Athens was a city-state which emphasized education. Sparta was ruled by an oligarchy, of a military based society. These two major city-states developed their own types of government and societies. But there may have been similarities with regard to language, mythology, drama and interaction in athletics such as the Olympic Games. The mountains of the Greek peninsula created not only small city-states but differences in world outlook and philosophy. Athenian culture was more idealistic and the Spartans were more practical and warrior-like. These mountains greatly promoted cultural diffusion. The mountainous terrain made agricultural production

limited. Therefore they depended on trade. By trading with other countries, different ideas and cultures entered which affected the people who adopted foreign ideas and cultures and assimilated them. Again through trading Greek culture spread throughout Europe.¹

Therefore it can be said that geographical factors have much impact on culture. As stated above the many different cultures of the world have been classified in many ways one of which is between Eastern and Western cultures. Such classifications take into account shared similarities such as climatic conditions, religious views and world outlook, cuisine and so forth. The countries of the East and West are separated by the highest of the world's mountain ranges, by vast expanses of land and water, and by great differences of climate. The differences in geographical conditions lead to differences in world outlook which therefore generates cultural diversity. One cannot discount geographical conditions as a determining factor in world outlook customs and worship.

2.1.2. Differences in Customs, Traditions and World Outlook

Customs are different according to the culture people create and assimilate. The ways people interrelate, the practices they follow in earning a livelihood, the manner of eating, playing, etc., are generally called customs. When customs are followed generation after generation they become traditions. These are specific practices that are unique to those cultures only and are performed in rites of passage such as baptism, marriage ceremonies and funeral rites. They also include rituals of worship. So customs are social practices that are common and are followed by most people in a society. There are customs that are individual and family based. Once a practice is followed by the father it is practiced by his son, and soon qualifies as a custom. Once customs become part of the daily life of a people in one region over a period of time they qualify as traditions.

Culture on the other hand include all customs and traditions and connotes the entire

way of life of a group of people, tribe or nation. In its broadest sense culture could also be determined region-wise based on certain common denominators such as cultures of the East and West.

There are a very great many different countries in the world, and almost every country is inhabited by a people differing in manners and habits, language, religion and dress. Thus differences in custom and traditions make up their culture.

All cultures and societies of the world have their unique customs and traditions that have evolved over a long period of time. Every society devises ways to maintain peace and order among its people and also to serve as a guide for interaction between the members of the society. Practices that are followed by many people in a society or culture are termed as customs. Marriage is a social institution that is common all over the world but, in different societies and cultures, there are specific practices that are unique to those cultures only and are performed during marriage ceremonies.

Every society and every country has their own unique values. These different values are due to differences in outlook. But values are important because they are the basic elements of cross-cultural communication. Therefore the differences in culture among countries partly depend on different values. Values have great influence on every society for they determine how they relate to the world around them and to others. For example, if they have been taught from young that money and possessions have greater value than learning then that will be the general outlook or attitude of their community. They will learn how to buy and sell to become traders or shop keepers or businessmen or entrepreneurs. They will not become scholars or academics. Differences in value lead to differences in outlook. The essence of these differences reflects the cultural differences. The objects, laws and rules differ from one culture to another, depending on their values and world outlook. Differences in world outlook refer to the manner in which a culture

sees and expresses its relation to the world around it. Things are different according to the viewer's means of perceiving and most people in the world makes evaluations according to their own culture. When people in one culture differ from those in another their beliefs also are not the same, not because they have different physical and mental processes, but because they are exposed to different aspects of the world. By understanding of some of the causes and conditions of cultures we can possibly come to see that all cultures –similar or dissimilar, primitive or advanced are all human creations.

A study of the differences in the cultures of the East and West would be necessary at this point to prove that ultimately culture is a human creation – created for human survival and welfare. But people have lost sight of this because of the emphasis and focus on the differences. There are differences, but these differences should not be obstacles to harmonious relations among people of different cultures. So there is a need to study the differences to promote understanding and appreciation of each other's culture. To understand and appreciate the culture of another does not necessarily mean giving up one's own culture.

2.2. Differences in the Cultures of East and West

As already mentioned previously, there are differences in culture partly because of differences in geographical conditions and world outlook. So, naturally there are differences between the cultures of the East and West. With regard to the differences in the cultures of the East and West, Olivia Wilde, states as follow;

The east and the west show a great number of differences in their culture, dress, religion, philosophy, sports, arts and languages.... The west is young whereas the east is old. The east is contemplative whereas the west is emotive as far as their religions and cultures are concerned.... There are differences in their religious thinking as well. The West is active in the sense that all its activity is turned externally. The religious activity of the East on the contrary is turned towards the spirit. It is more spiritual than the West.²

This is true in general. It can be said that there are vast differences between the cultures of the East and the West concerning their way of living, their philosophy, beliefs, attitudes, languages, customs and traditions. And it can be said that the East is more spiritual than the West concerning religious life and culture. In fact the major religions of the world (including those of the West) originated in the East. But the attitudes towards religion and way of worship are different. It can also be said that the West is more materialistic than the East. The Western objective is based on individual comfort and satisfaction while the Eastern objective is based on attaining human orientation and truths about life. Another difference of the East and the West is that the orientation of the East is towards the many and the orientation of the West is towards the self. Eastern orientation is towards group harmony, whereas the Western emphasis is on the individual. In the West there is greater opportunity for individual contributions to be implemented at the group level and with the objective of advancement.

Eastern cultures, therefore, view the West as too individualistic with less emphasis in the areas of morality and ethics. Westerners tend to be more analytic and Easterners tend to be more holistic. Western philosophy focuses on the differences, while Eastern philosophy focuses on the similarities. The independence of the individual is more important in the West, whereas the East is much more focused on relationships, interconnectedness, harmony, the holistic, collectivism, and interdependence.

It is also said that the Westerners base their decisions and actions rationally rather than emotionally and rely largely on analytic methods. Easterners however make room for emotions in addition to reason and their outlook is the result of synthesis rather than analysis. The attitude of the West may be thought of as analytical and detailed but the attitude of the Easterners can be known as holistic. The idea of individual independence and human rights are emphasized by the West while in the East family bonds are more

important. This has led to the view that East is East and West is West and that the twain shall never meet. This is too narrow a view. In today's age of globalization where there is instant communications it can be said that the world's cultures have intermingled in some respects.

Cultures are borrowed and assimilated by each other. With regard to this, Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, referred Bertrand Russell's view in their book *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* as follows;

Greece learnt from Egypt, Rome from Greece, the Arabs from the Roman Empire, medieval Europe from the Arabs, and Renaissance Europe from the Byzantines.³

People may speak different languages, dress differently and eat different kinds of food. But human beings have the same aspirations to survive and flourish and therefore are open to new experiences and learning. This can lead to exchange of knowledge and learning.

This statement implies that one culture can infect or assimilate another culture. When culture infects another culture there is a need of mutual understanding. Culture can be assimilated through trading, commerce, transportation, economic cooperation and political and interrelationship among countries. Cultures have also spread in today's world from country to country through migrant workers. When they migrate to another country, people bring their customs and traditions with them. They are also influenced by the customs and traditions of the host country. When the migrants and the host live together there may be misunderstanding and conflict sometimes, but there can be cultural exchange and understanding. Cultural traditions and beliefs have the ability to seep into and become part of another culture. This has also become a cause of conflict between traditionalists who wish to keep their cultures pure and in their view uncontaminated especially with regard to race and religion.

In spite of such dissemination, cultural differences between the East and the West show that concrete differences also exist in how the West and the East people recognize people and the world around them. Easterners really do look at the world differently from Westerners. The East and the West are not the same in many ways.

With regard to the differences of the East and West, Richard E. Nisbett, states as follows;

The Chinese believe in constant change, but with things always moving back to some prior state. They pay attention to a wide range of events; they search for relationships between things; and they think that you can't understand the part without understanding the whole. Westerners live in a simpler, more deterministic world; Westerners focus on salient objects or people instead of the larger picture; and they think that they can control events because they know the rules that govern the behavior of objects.⁴

The above statement means that the East and West are different in viewing the events of the things. It may be because of their different philosophies and valuation systems. The East believes that one should understand the whole in order to understand the relationships between things. It cannot be denied that the different values, outlook and beliefs are grounded in man because culture is a human creation. But the East and West need each other. If there is understanding regarding the differences in culture and are open to the idea of peaceful co-existence there is the likelihood that they could establish peace and harmony in society. The Occidental and Oriental need to support and sustain each other's culture rather than combat and destroy one another.

2.3. Unity in Diversity

Understanding cultural diversity and unity is one of the more important factors for resolving the conflicts now raging across the world, between the Palestinians and the Israelis, between Muslims of various sects and Muslims with people of a different faith and even among different sects between one religion. The ongoing ethnic conflicts in Myanmar for example are attributed to different causes, political, economic, and social,

but though all the parties to the conflict are Myanmar citizens, the difference in ethnicity and culture are also contributing factors. This paper's argument is that cross-cultural understanding can resolve in great part this long ongoing ethnic conflict. To do this the common shared cultural attributes should be highlighted to demonstrate that unity can be achieved in spite of the diversity, but it has to be understood that cultural pluralism must be acknowledge and accepted.

As stated earlier all human beings try to improve the material conditions of life. People living apart from one another develop unique cultures, but elements of different cultures can easily spread from one group of people to another and it can cause a potentially rapid form of adaptation to changes in physical conditions. This is occurring in today's world that cannot be disputed. There has been an exchange of knowledge and a gradual convergence in certain ways of life. Outstanding examples can be shown in the social sector such as health care and medical treatment and in education. The East is in need of Western science and technology and the West in need of the moral values of the East in their search of peace and security.

The differences among Eastern cultures and Western cultures do not mean that there can never be agreement or meeting between the two. A detailed study will show that they share many central values; that they share common interests and that they can build understanding between them and still retain their identity. In all societies there is cultural differentiation. Individuals and societies are different wherever they may be, but this should not lead to antagonism and conflict if there is respect for each other.

Differentiation is one of the patterns inherent in the very nature of human society. It can be said that differentiation is the law of nature and human society is composed of variety and differentiation. Therefore, people should try to understand the differences in

culture. Understanding differences in culture can help people to understand how others interpret their environment and their outlook. It is inevitable that culture shapes how people see their world and how they function within that world. Understanding differences of culture promotes a focus on the positive characteristics of a particular group, and reflects an appreciation of cultural differences. Insofar as culture grows and changes naturally within human society, it requires propagation. Groups of immigrants, exiles, or minorities often form cultural associations or clubs to preserve their own cultural roots in the face of a surrounding culture. Therefore, people need to understand the heart of differences in culture.

While each culture does stress different factors it is plausible that within one culture different values are stressed as well which can also cause a difference in the thought of a set of people who are all from the East or all from the West. Greater awareness of how these differences arise can only help improve communication between East and West. When conflicts, ill feelings or stressful situations arise due to the sub-cultures involved, it is due to misunderstanding "differences." Understanding of cultural diversity means not just tolerating differences among individuals or groups, but supporting and nurturing them. Careful attention must be given to mutual understanding and appreciation of culture differences.

People around the world may come from different backgrounds and cultures but they can share common interests if they have understanding of the differences in cultures. Though cultures may be different according to the differences of geographical factors and world outlook, if people have understanding they can share the common interests and they can establish harmony and peace in their society. Understanding differences in culture is necessary in establishing peace and harmony for today's globalized world society. If there

is lack of understanding and respect cultural differences taken to extremes will destroy human society and the world.

Culture is an important part in people's lives because culture tells how people live and how they think and worship. Cultures are rich and diverse and determine the relationships between individuals and society, community and organizations. Even in one family the lifestyle of each family member is not exactly alike even though they are born from one family. In this world, it is true that there is diversity in cultures, as well as in moral codes and institutional structures of different societies. It cannot be said that one culture is better than others or that some cultures are inferior. However cultures are different and may be said to be relative and that there may be contradictions in the social, economic, religious and moral spheres. There is no one world view of culture. So cross-cultural understanding is of great importance in establishing a peaceful society and community. If such cross-cultural understanding is absent there can be no friendship and cooperation. It is especially the case today that cross-cultural understanding is of prime importance. This is evident in the ongoing conflicts of the world. Therefore no one culture has the right to impose its values and traditions on another, but find common ground for peaceful co-existence.

2.4. Common Shared Characteristics

Human beings are unique and distinct from the other animals. They are said to be rational, social, political, ethical, aesthetic, economic and symbolizing animals.

Human beings living together in society develop their own distinctive culture. Therefore the members of one society behave and live differently in some respects from the members of other societies. But human beings are similar in their physical and bodily structure; they have head, hands, legs, stomach, and so on. And psychologically also they

have similar feeling and emotions in that they can feel love, joy and hate and similar desires. But they all are the same in their humanity for they all have the same basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing and they all have the same emotions and feelings. Human beings naturally want to thrive and live a peaceful life. Likewise, various states and nations are concerned with preserving peace and stability. Yet the history of the world has been more or less a history of war and conflict due not only to diverse political, and economic views, but also to situations that arise from social and cultural interactions. There is ignorance of each other's way of life, beliefs and socio-cultural identity. There is a need to understand that in spite of the many cultural differences there can be unity if there is tolerance, respect, understanding and above all compassion.

There are also shared common features in human beings because of their humanity. Every human being feels hope, love, fears; they have emotions, they need security, they need to eat, they can feel other urges, they need shelter and they need to work for their survival. So there can also be unity in the diversity of cultures. Concerning this view, SaralJhingran, states as follows;

It is not to say that these developed cultures do not have distinctive patterns of their own according to which their various dimensions and stages are more or less organized. It is also not to say that the conceptual schemes and systems of values, or value preferences are not distinctive in each culture. It is only to say that while the patterns of organization or value preferences may be different in different cultures, the raw material, i.e. the feelings, interests, percepts, concepts etc., are more or less common in all human beings.⁵

The above statement supports the view that human beings may be different in their body structures, their skin colors, their way of dressing, their way of living, their way of cooking, their way of thinking and so on but their feelings, interest, percepts and concepts coincide in many respects because they are all human beings. Their feelings about security, their feelings about happiness, and their emotions about love are all the same in all human beings even though their concepts concerning values may be different.

Unity among humanity is important for the survival of human beings. It is not unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and or psychological differences but a more complex unity based on an understanding that differences enrich human interactions.

Awareness of different cultural norms, sensitivity to the needs and concerns of people is important. It is important for the people to develop and retain the ability to communicate with one another. Integrating different cultures is needed for establishing peace and harmony in a society. When there is no unity among human beings, society may face the agony of dissolution and conflicts.⁶ Hans K ochler, founder and President of the International Press Organization stated that:

The gap between the idea of peace and the reality of tension and conflict, however, has proven to be a major challenge to the world organization ever since its foundation after World War II—and that challenge was not only due to conflicting political and economic interests. Situations of conflict often arise in a complex setting of historical, social, cultural and political interaction between communities; accordingly, they must be dealt with in a multifaceted and integrative manner. In order to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”, as the peoples of the United Nations proclaim in the Preamble to the Charter, we first have to understand each other, or appreciate each other’s way of life and socio-cultural identity. This is only possible if we are knowledgeable about our distinct cultures, traditions and value systems.⁷

However it is necessary to understand that there is another aspect to human beings in culture. Every human being is a participant in a number of different cultures. In this sense they are all multicultural creatures, because cultures are evolving and influencing each other. So each person must first understand his or her own culture and come to a firm understanding of the regional culture as well. And to understand the regional culture, one must work in its context, and change it from within.

Unity in diversity means a convergence of the many differences. Unity in diversity focuses on the existence of unity in spite of the differences of caste, life style, cultural,

social, physical, linguistic, and so forth. The greater the number of diversities the more complex is the unity. But the shared features of humanity could help to maintain unity. If one understands this unity in diversity it could boost the morale of the people at workplaces, in organizations, and in the community. It helps in enhancing relationships between one country and another; it makes communication effective and helps to manage conflicts easily. It improves the right relationship among human beings and protects equal human rights for all. It gives rise to the habit of national integration among people of the country even though they are different in various ways. It gives value to the rich heritage of a country strengthens and enriches the cultural heritage of the people.

A human being is a social being and they have lived with their fellow human beings in groups small or large for a long time and they are said to be gregarious by nature. The reason for living in groups may have been the inherent desire for safety and security. Since all living beings including human being live together in groups, this may bring about conflict or misunderstanding among their members. Therefore, groups or communities or societies established some rules and norms to be followed by members of their society, and these become rules and regulations of the social group. These rules and regulations firmly held the group together. On the other hand, these rules can also create misunderstanding among people, because some may feel it restricts their freedom.

When people of the group have understanding there is peace and harmony but, when there is lack of understanding it leads to conflict even among members of the same group; moreover they may not have the same likes and dislikes. These differences are wider among different groups with different ways of life; different customs and traditions. So, if understanding is required even for individuals of the same group for peace and stability, it is even more necessary for different groups with different cultures. In other words there is a need for cross-cultural understanding.

Culture is the underlying foundation of beliefs, values, customs, traditions, religious, patterns of people's life and the way they look at the world and their attitudes. And it is the underlying foundation of traditions and beliefs that help human beings to relate each other and the world around them. On the other hand, the diversity of beliefs, values, customs, traditions, religions, patterns can create conflict among them. Mutual understanding of culture cannot solve every conflicts but it can be minimized through cross-cultural understanding to develop tolerance towards the customs and traditions of other cultural groups. To clarify how cross-cultural understanding can be achieved it would be necessary to first understand what cultural identity means.

2.5. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group which profess similar beliefs, attitudes, living style and ways of thinking. Cultural identity is how human beings identify with their culture and how that establishes relations of friendship and fraternity. All human beings identify themselves with some aspects of culture. Concerning cultural identity, MohaEnnaji, states as follows;

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity.⁸

The above statement means that cultural identity is identity with the group's patterns of beliefs, attitudes, ways of thinking and belonging to distinct culture. It can be said that it is the characteristics of individuals sharing similar characteristics in a society such as race, religion or language and other customs and traditions. And cultural identity is a sense of companionship that involves the same beliefs, interests and basic principles of living and it is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It can be said that a person's

cultural identity is the foundation of every aspect of life. It can be concluded that it is the foundation of what makes them who they are.

Cultural identity is important for people's sense of self and how they relate to others. Identifying with a particular culture helps people to feel that they belong to a group and gives them a sense of security. Cultural identity is as important for a person's wellbeing as his national or racial or religious identity. Sometimes they are considered to be the same. It provides access to social networks, which provide support and shared values and aspirations. Cultural identity can help to break down barriers and build a sense of trust between people when establishing peace and harmony in a society. But cultural identity has a negative aspect; it can also contribute to barriers between people and groups. Cultural identity is important in the life of an individual but this when taken to extremes creates conflict. It is also the case that sometimes cultural identity is identified with national identity. Cultural identity is connected to national identity but the two are not identical. National identity is a political concept, one that become important with the rise of nation states. However, nations may consist of many racial groups with different cultures. So if there is an over emphasis on nationality it would create antagonism. And members of smaller cultural groups can feel excluded from society when the majority of the group prohibit and cannot accept their cultural practices. This happens when the people of different cultures are obliged to live together. For example, a foreigner on a job assignment in another country. Craig Storti, states as follows;

To succeed in an overseas assignment, expats have to interact effectively with the local people.⁹

The above statement means that when people are living in the same society with different cultures, they need to respect each other's culture to have effective interaction between the host and the expatriates. It is true that cultural conflicts are not easy to resolve

because every individual has his or her own beliefs, customs and traditions. Such cultural discrimination leads sometimes to infringements of a person's human and social rights. When cultural conflict intensifies, such discriminations can lead to war and genocide. Having different cultures, human beings need to respect each other's cultural diversity and they need to accept that they all are the same in being humans who need security, shelter, food and have similar feelings of love, happiness, joy and sorrow.

In the next chapter a comparative study will be made of Bama and Chin culture to illustrate the fact of multiculturalism within a nation, and that cultural identity need not be the same as national identity. This needs to be understood for establishing peace and stability in a multiethnic society.

CHAPTER III

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHIN AND BAMA CULTURE

Myanmar is made up of seven states and seven divisions where eight principal ethnic races reside. They are Kachin, Kaya, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan and Bama. The term 'Myanmar' refers to all these eight ethnic races. The ethnic races who live in Myanmar have different traditions and customs, languages as well as way of life depending on their geographical and climatic conditions but they have lived on the same land since recorded historical times with the Bama language as the common language of communication. These ethnic races reside in the plains and valleys as well as on the mountain ranges. As said in the introduction, geographical factors such as terrain and climatic play an important role in shaping a culture. This chapter makes a comparative study of the Chin peoples who mostly live in the mountainous areas and the Bama who largely live in the plains.

What this dissertation wishes to affirm is that although culture is a complex and broad concept that is difficult to define comprehensively, it is the outcome and effect of human endeavour, and as such it would be one sided to say that culture is purely relative with no similarities or shared common features. In fact culture is a synthesis of the relative and universal. The aim of this paper is to prove that culture is both relative and universal and that cultural pluralism is a reality. In other words, it aims to show that smaller groups within a larger society can maintain their unique cultural identities.

3.1. Some Important Aspects of Chin Culture

The Chin state is located within Myanmar and has a shared border with Rakhine state in the south, Bangladesh and India in the west and north, and Sagaing and Magway Divisions in the east. The Chin state is a very remote, independent, and isolated part of

western Myanmar. The populations of the Chin Hills consist of many clans and communities. A study of the life of people in the Chin Hills will show what is unique to their culture and what is similar in some respects to Bama culture.

3.1.1. Social Life

Among the seven states in Myanmar, the Chin state is one of the seven ethnic states. In the Chin States there are nine townships. The social, economic and religious life and the morality and moral values of the Chin people will demonstrate the fact that cultures may be different but also interrelated.

The Chin ethnic races are great hunters and one can see their hunting trophies in their houses up to now. The Chin people in the olden times carried their weapons or guns whenever they left the village to work in the fields, visit neighbors, or to trade goods. This was because the Chins were also hunters as well as cultivators. Another reason is the sparse population, so travelers carried weapons for personal safety.

The Chin people liked good hunting and enjoyed holding feasts as the highest mark of honour for successful hunters. Hunters were greatly respected and honored and in Chin culture a man had to be skilled in hunting to be considered a gentleman. Hunting was done in groups and they assisted each other to scare an animal out of its hiding place for the main hunter. This is an ancient custom that displays a spirit of cooperation. In primitive times all human beings were hunters of animals or gatherers of fruits and vegetables. This is true not only of the Chin races but of every race and culture. Human beings at one time had to gather and hunt for food till they developed skills for cultivation. Human beings of modern times hunt as a sport or to supplement their food. The modern Chin folk who are educated and work and live in towns no longer hunt for food but they have not lost their skill or interest in hunting. They can still use cross-bows as well as locally made guns.

However people living in small isolated villages in the Chin Hills still hunt for food. Hunting is thus both a sport and a source of income. A hunter who brings in big game is very much admired and feasts are held to honour him. When a hunter is successful a gun is fired to let his village know and all in the village go to the village entrance to greet the victorious hunters with green tea and palm sugar. This is a custom still alive in the Chin State. To be a successful hunter thus requires bravery, skill and cooperation of friends. Concerning hunting, Thang Tin Sum states as follows;

They help each other, especially those who were weak and helpless, by building their houses and cultivating their fields, voluntarily. When they harvested new crops like millet, rice and corn, they shared them with their neighbours. When they hunted and got some animals, they shared them with members of the community. Especially the elderly were given priority.¹

The spirit of cooperation is still very evident in the rural areas of Chin State. The terrain of Chin state is rough and mountainous and cultivating the land is arduous work but the people are simple, honest and hard-working. Both men and women have to work hard; even water has to be fetched from faraway mountain streams. The ethnic Chin races prefer to work in teams. They help each other to build their tents and houses. When they grow crops people gather to work on each other's farms, doing it in turns. Till today this team work is customary. This is the spirit of cooperation which is considered a virtue in Chin morality. There is no theorizing about it for the Chin people for they learn from young that cooperation is the key to survival. They are brave, friendly and easy to content in what they have.

The Chin ethnic races like other ethnic races also have many cottage industries, such as bamboo work and weaving cloth with special Chin ethnic patterns or designs. They also have their own traditional music both classical and modern.

The Chin ethnic groups consider marriage as holy but in olden days there were no

restriction on the number of wives a man could marry. A wedding feast is held which has to be paid for by the bridegroom and his family. In the Chin ethnic group the parents of the young men arrange marriages, and look around for a good match for their sons. Most of them believe that the criteria for a good match are not in face and form, nor in a dowry. In the olden days, the Chin ethnic group judged a potential bride by the character of her work in the fields and house. If she is a good tiller of the soil she is considered as a good match, whatever her looks and antecedents may be. However, the bridegroom has to give a dowry for his bride in the form of mithuns. The mithun is a domestic animal reared for meat and prestige. The number of mithuns given shows the status of the woman given in marriage.² However, this is not considered a payment or buying of a wife. Wedding ceremony is held at groom house. After marriage the wife has to live with the husband's family. When the girl lives with her husband she brings no dowry but her clothes and the beads that she wears. It is the custom for the new husband and wife to live with the parents of the husband for it is their duty to care for them. When the husband wants to divorce his wife it is required that he must leave all the wedding fees. When the wife wants to divorce the man needs to return all wedding fees. Moreover, regarding children they prefer the first-born child to be a male to carry on the ancestry of the family. Males are raised to be strong and tough but females are raised to be nurturing and to obey their husbands. In short males are considered superior to females. This is a view common to most races of the East.

Concerning family relationship, the father is the most authoritative person, the decision maker, and breadwinner in the family. It can be said that the social system of the Chin is patriarchal and not a matriarchal system. Most the Chin women rule the rest of the household. Women are expected to do all the household chores including cooking for the family, take care of their aged parents and tending to the children in addition to working in

the fields rather than men. Concerning inheritance among the Chin ethnic group, only the eldest son inherits the house and fields because they believe that only a male can carry on the ancestry of the family. The cattle are divided amongst all the sons, the eldest taking the major portion as he is responsible for the maintenance of the womenfolk of the family. When their parents die a few necklaces are divided amongst the younger brothers and sisters. As the heir-looms go to the eldest brother the house and the lands are received by the eldest son. The daughters just receive necklaces of the mother. Women in the family are not allowed to receive house and land from their parents. Concerning inheritance, Vumson, states as follows;

From clan to clan the custom differed as to whether the youngest or eldest son inherited the office of the father. In most cases however, the youngest son inherited the chieftainship. It was next to impossible for a daughter to inherit the office of the father.³

Concerning death, there are some similarities as well as differences in the way the last rites are carried out among the Chin ethnic groups. But generally, they all believe that though the body is dead it must be given an honorable farewell for a fair start in the next existence. For this reason the body is buried a short distance from his village, as it is considered that a spirit cannot be at rest whilst his body lies in a foreign grave or amongst alien tribesmen, and the funeral rites are conducted with great pomp.⁴ When a man dies, they send a messenger to the neighbouring villages –with the news, fire a gun salute and bathe the dead body, which they dress in new clothes. They then bury the dead persons together with his possessions with ceremony. In olden times when a Chin died the body was cremated but with the coming of Christianity this custom was replaced by burial because according to the Christian Bible the dead must be resurrected before God on Judgment Day and the body therefore must be preserved. In the old days when someone died mithun or cows were killed to feed those who attend the funeral. Usually a memorial of stone or wood was put up. All the villages have cemeteries to put up such memorials to

this day. Concerning this view, Vumson, states as follows;

One of the characteristics of a Zovillage is a *khan* or *lungdawn*, a memorial stone in memory of a powerful man. Usually situated on higher ground than the village houses, an evergreen Bayan tree is planted to give shade to the place. Memorial slabs are decorated with drawings of animals that the man killed in his time, and wooden carvings of men and women are erected there as well. These places serve as a meeting ground, or as a dancing arena during ceremonies, and as a place of offerings to the spirits. The skulls of animals killed during feasts for the dead are hung at the *khan*, in belief that these animals will accompany the dead to his new world. Any man can erect such a monument for himself or for any important relative, and a village can have several *khan*.⁵

The daily diets of the Chin races consist of boiled rice and vegetables with no oil. Their staple foods are maize, millet, *aunglauk* (sulphur bean), beans, peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, melons and other crops that grow in colder regions. The Chin people drink country beer and fermented liquor made from millet, rice, and corn. They think that drinking country beer is very nutritious. This custom is in practice today especially in rural areas.

3.1.2. Economic Life

The economy of the Chin State is agriculture. It can be said that they rely on agriculture for sustenance. Most Chin people are farmers and peasants. They use the slash and burn method of cultivation moving from place to place. Most of them do not use cattle in preparing the soil or in bringing the crop to the village. Some have their own land for farming. The fields are not worked in common; each man has his own fields and each cultivates his own patch and the fields are not fenced and no one hesitates to shoot strange cattle which stray into their fields. Agriculture is the main source of their income. Most of their cultivation is done on the hillside. They enrich their land by burning the weeds and stalks of gathered crops on old ground, and by burning the fallen timber on new ground which has been cleared for the first time. Another means of livelihood especially in the old days is hunting, fishing, trapping animals and birds, and so on.

The handicrafts in the Chin Hills produce cane mats, bamboo mats and baskets. These are sold to other regions. In olden times the main imports are salt and iron. Spears, axe-heads, hoes and knives are also manufactured for local use. Cane mats, the horn of buffalo, deer, and other animals are exported. In olden days they used to live by hunting and fishing. There is also livestock breeding of mithun, pigs, cattle, goats, dogs, cats, and fowls. Nowadays many Chin youths are educated and have left their home state to join professions in medicine and teaching and some have become traders. Many have also left Myanmar to work abroad and there is brain drain.

3.1.3. Religious Life

In Chin State there are various kinds of religious worship. The majority are Christians. Before Christian missionaries came to the Chin State many were spirit worshippers. There was fear of spirits or devils who are under the rule of the king of spirits. They believed that the spirits live on earth, in the sky, in springs, trees, caves, mountains, streams, houses, and even in the human body. The spirits were thought to have immense strength and power, with the ability to transform themselves into anything, but most commonly take the form of snakes. They believed in life after death, although it is said that a person can be reborn only if death is violent and instantaneous. The dead live forever as ghosts and retain the social status they enjoyed as human beings. They also believe that a person can be born again as another human being.⁶

So in days past, the Chin peoples feared the spirits and devils who were ruled by the king of spirits. There are some places which are agreed upon as strongholds of the spirits. Each village has a certain location where people believe spirits reside. They believed that the spirits have immense power to bring about sickness and misery unless treated with due respect. In primitive times, the Chin people believed that there is the life after death and this concept is still believed by the Chin people today. During those days

diviners played a very important role in Chin society. Thus ancient Chin customs and traditions were based on animism and spirit worship. Today most Chin people are Christians belonging to different denominations. Even in a village there are more than three or four denominations but their basic doctrine is love, so they can live together in harmony. The Christian missionaries came from abroad but today it can be found that most evangelists, pastors, preachers, priests and missionaries are native. Most Chins today profess the Baptist faith.

3.1.4. Cultural and Moral Life

In the olden days, education was not given priority. They did not believe that education could provide a good life. They were also ignorant of the modern idea of material wealth and prosperity. Their idea of happiness was to go hunting and enjoy big feasts. So they spent all their wealth and possessions not on children's education but for celebrating feasts. For the ancient Chins development meant being a good hunter, holding big feasts, owning a big house, possessing firearms, plenty of grain and lastly they placed great value on bravery and strength. Up to now a Chin's home is full of hunting trophies.

With regard to social relationships, they are taught to help each other especially widows and the weak and helpless, by helping to build their houses and cultivate their fields. Harvested new crops like millet, rice and corn, must also be shared with neighbours. When they hunted game, they shared the meat among members of the community and the elderly were given priority.

The Chin peoples mostly lived a simple, rural life and in olden times, it can be said that there were almost no cases of theft and nobody would take another's possession without permission. Concerning this view, Sum notes as follows;

During the summer everybody was afraid of fire. So, most of their valuables, including their money boxes, were kept outside in the open

compound, without any watchers. But it was amazing that nobody ever stole it. It was completely safe and secure.⁷

From the above statement, it can be assumed that the Chin ethnic peoples were very honest. They were not avaricious and were content with what they had. In those days, no family had any kind of keys; they just locked their doors with wooden hasps to keep out dogs that would steal their meat and food. This is still the case in some rural areas of the Chin Hills today, but in the towns morality has deteriorated.

Most of the Chin peoples are polite, honest and open-minded. Concerning the lifestyle of the Chin tribes, Sum states as follows;

The traditional Chin tribe lifestyle was a simple one. They were community minded and were very friendly. For the Chin people, friendship was more important than financial wealth. Moreover, generosity was more important than getting rich, daily joy instead of worrying about the future and contentment rather than high competition.⁸

Concerning the above statement, it is true that the lifestyle of the Chin ethnic races was once a simple one and they were community minded and very friendly. But times have changed and the young people no longer wish to live in rural regions which are not easily accessible. Sum, in his book *A Wounded World*, asserted that friendship was more important than financial wealth and although this statement may be true to some extent, it is not absolutely so, for the Chin people today. In modern times not only the Chin people but everyone wishes to improve the quality of life with better education and other social amenities, like health care and better housing and transportation. This means earning more money and this has become a priority. Friendship however is still important as well as moral values like helping others, being humble and establishing peace and happiness in society.

The Chin ethnic race also have distinct art and aesthetic traditions of their own and their spirit of cooperation can be seen in their communal dances such as the bamboo dance

which requires synchronized movements and rhythm: There are also many Chin folktales which instill in the Chin peoples the moral and cultural values handed down from generation to generation. The unity of the Chin ethnic races is also symbolized in the national emblem of the Hornbill bird and the national flower, the Rhododendron. This flower brings out the beauty of the Chin State. This is a brief survey of the basic cultural elements of the Chin people who remain a distinct cultural group though it is part of the larger Myanmar society.

3.2. Some Important Aspects of Bama Culture

In Myanmar, the majority ethnic group is Bama and most of them largely live in the plains. Most are Buddhists but there are some who are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, animists and so on. The social, economic, religious life and the morality and moral values of the Bama will be discussed in the following.

3.2.1. Social Life

Births, engagements, and marriages are considered to be auspicious occasions in Bama custom and traditions. Marriage is considered once in a life time occasion, Bama women regard the wedding ceremony very seriously. In Bama Buddhist custom, marriage is a social institution rather than religious. The marriage ceremony is not performed by Buddhist monks but by a respected elderly couple in a civic ceremony. Nowadays couples agree to wed in the presence of a law officer or judge and it is officially registered. In the olden days no ceremony was required and a couple could simply make an announcement in the neighbourhood that they had decided to live as husband and wife. If they are of age they did not need the consent of parents. However most marriages take place with the consent of parents even nowadays.

So today, some couples formalize the union by signing a marriage agreement

officially before witnesses or attorneys or in front of a judge. Usually a reception is held in the presence of parents and elders, relatives and friends. A couple is also considered married if they have lived together for some times and are recognized as a couple by their parents and neighbours and pay obeisance to their parents with no other ceremony at all. Marriages have traditionally been monogamous in the Bama traditions, although a few wealthy males may have a lesser wife or mistress in another establishment. Weddings are traditionally avoided during the Buddhist lent, which lasts three months from July to October.

Most Bama couples consult an astrologer in choosing the most auspicious time and setting for the event. The newly married couples also offer food and alms to the Sangha as their first meritorious deed and to pray for a happy and auspicious life together.

So, theoretically, the Bama traditional marriage is an entirely civic ceremony with little or no restrictions. There is no official dowry system but it is usual for parents of both sides to help the young couple set up a new household. There are however individual cases especially among the wealthy where money is involved and the bride's wealthy parents pay the groom if he has the potential to become a high-ranking official or one who earns a high-income.

The relationship between parents and children is also very important. The Bama people accept that the father of a family is the Lord of the forefront of the house. Most Bama women rule the rest of the household. Women are expected to do the household chores and take care of their aged parents rather than men. Generally, parents, grandparents and children live together in the same house, and adult children do not leave the family until they get married and the last married person usually lives with the parents. When both parents die, the children share the inheritance equally. The Bama parents and children have strong ties as well as duties and obligations to each other. Parents have the

duty to take care of their children, see they get an education and ensure they get married when of age. The children in turn have the duty to care for aged parents.

Most Bama children know that parents are included in the Five Boundless Beneficences. Therefore if they blaspheme their parents it is the same as if they blaspheme the Buddha.⁹ Therefore, most children are taught from young to respect parents and elders. Both parents and children have mutual duties and responsibilities and these responsibilities and duties are taken seriously and adhered to closely. Most parents favour their sons over their daughters but they do not treat them partially but love and treasure equally whether they are male or female. Sons are favoured only because parents can hold a novitiation ceremony, entering monkhood as novices temporarily and this bring merit to parents. These customs and traditions are still adhered to especially by rural folks. In large cities the marriage and Shin Pyu (novitiation) ceremonies are held with much pomp and splendour especially among the wealthy.

In the Bama tradition, parents and teachers are specially revered and are paid obeisance at special times of the year such as Thadingyut (End of Lent Festival) and usually before one leaves on a journey; some children are taught to pay obeisance to parents and grandparents before they go to bed. At mealtimes elders are served first as a token of respect before serving the food to others. Young people avoid sitting on a higher level than the elders or passing in front of them unless unavoidable, and then only treading softly with a slight bow. Therefore, it can be said that the Bama people respect not only parents and teachers but also elders in family and in society. Children are taught from young to venerate elders, respect peers, and be kind to the young and weak. Parents are solely responsible for their children's behaviour. Bama children are first taught morals and manners within the family.

The Bama people eat rice as their staple food. Most of their curries are mainly

cooked with oil and spices. Their cuisine has been influenced by Western, Indian, and Chinese cuisine as well as domestic ethnic food. A typical Bama meal consists of a meat curry, soup, steamed rice and fish sauce along with vegetables for dipping. Condiments like pickles and pickled vegetables are commonly served alongside the dishes of boiled stews of chick peas or lentils. They use fish sauce, shrimp paste, for flavour and tamarind is used to add a sour taste. Mohinga made up of rice noodles in a rich fish soup is a favourite breakfast dish. The most traditional national snack is pickled tea leaves eaten with fried peanut, sesame, garlic and dried shrimp.

Concerning death, the Bama people like all human beings mourn when someone close to them dies. When a person dies, the body is bathed and dressed in the person's best clothes. A coin is placed in the mouth of the deceased person, to pay a "ferry toll" for crossing the river to death. The mourning period usually lasts for five or six days or a week after the day of death. Traditionally the body is buried or cremated on the third day. Burial is common in rural areas, but cremation is more common in the cities. During the actual funeral, gifts in the form of paper fans containing the deceased person's name, as well as Buddhist scriptures relating to the impermanence of life and *samsara* are distributed to all present at the funeral. During the wake, relatives of the deceased and close friends keep vigil during the nights. Monks are invited to the home for offering alms food as well as other suitable items to ensure that the dead person will be reborn in a good world. Friends and relatives are invited to participate in the ceremony.

The Western custom of laying flower wreaths or bouquets have been adopted in large cities but a donation of money, for less well-to-do families is a Bama custom. However, in villages, more practical gifts such as food items are given to the grieving family. In rural areas all the villagers help each other when someone dies.¹⁰ This shows the

Bama social custom of cooperation.

3.2.2. Economic Life

The basic economy of the Bama is agriculture. Rural people are mostly farmers. They earn their livelihood by farming. The average population is involved in rice production. Their main source of income is cultivating rice in rural areas and in the coastal areas fishing is a considerable industry. But the urban people are merchants, company employees, government employees, teachers, doctors and factory workers. Agriculture has been the main economy since primitive days. The majority of people living in towns and cities however are not farmers or peasants but office and factory workers, teachers, nurses and doctors etc.

3.2.3. Religious Life

In Myanmar, the religious faith of the majority Bama ethnic group is Buddhism and it can be said that Myanmar is a Theravada Buddhist country. It is the most religious Buddhist country in terms of the proportion of monks in the population and proportion of income spent on religion. The country has been called the "Land of Pagodas" as the landscape is dominated by Buddhist pagodas. Monks are venerated members of Bama society. Some Bamas also worship "nat" or spirits together with Buddhism. The Bama Buddhists believe in earning merit (*kusala*) in this life. To earn merit involves observing the Five Precepts and accumulation of good merit through charity and good deeds in order to obtain a favorable rebirth.

The main goal of Buddhism is to achieve '*nibbāna*' that is to attain liberation from suffering in the cycle of birth and rebirth. Bama Buddhists are taught that killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking intoxicants are bad deeds. They all have images of the Buddha in their house. All Bama Buddhists pay obeisance to the Buddha images

and revere all *zedis* and symbols of the Buddha. At the same time Bama people believe in astrology or fortune-telling and when they want to start a new job or they want to get married, they go and consult astrologers and spirit mediums.

3.2.4. Cultural and Moral Life

Most Bama people are Buddhist of the Theravada School. Their central belief is in Law of *Kammawhich* holds that all actions have consequences and that good begets good and evil begets evil. Another belief is that all living things go through the cycle of birth and rebirth (*samasra*). If a person has committed evil he or she will be reborn into a lower level such as an animal or suffer in Hell. On the other hand, if one has done good deeds, he or she will be reborn as a human being or elevated to a higher level of existence to the world of devas or celestial beings. The ultimate aim in life is to escape the cycle of rebirth and reach *nibbāna* or liberation. They practice meritorious deeds that will help a person to achieve a good life. They exhort not to kill, steal, lie, drink alcohol, and commit adultery and are urged to practice meditation, to control greed, anger and delusion.

Most Bama are hardworking and loyal. The Bama people respect people who are older than them. The ethnic Bama respect the elders in the family and society as stated earlier. When the younger walk and pass the elder people they bow from the waist in order to show their respect. It is considered rude to touch a person's head, because it is the "highest" point of the body. Shoes are always taken off upon entering homes, monasteries and pagoda compounds.

The Bama also have rich art and aesthetic traditions which are brought to life in their paintings, sculpture, literature and performing arts. Their performing arts especially reflect the cheerful personality of the Bama people who are happy-go-lucky and resilient. They also have great national pride which is reflected in the national emblem of the

Peacock. The national flower Padauk represents the romantic side of the Bama personality and the U ShweYoe and Daw Moe dance, their love of fun and laughter.

The above is a brief outline of Myanmar culture and tradition. It will be seen that there are similarities and differences between Chin and Bama culture. See appendix from the comparative study of Chin and Bama culture.

3.3. A Comparative Study of Chin and Bama Culture

A society or a country is made up of a diverse range of people with different interests and passions. There are diversity and similarities between the Chin and the Bama ethnic races concerning their social, religious, economic life and their cultural and moral life. Concerning social events such as weddings, family relationship and funeral rites there are similarities as well as differences. All the ethnic groups in Myanmar are varied in language and culture.

As already mentioned in the previous pages, the Chin and the Bama people consider marriage to be an auspicious occasion. As marrying is once in a life time occasion, women regard the wedding ceremony very seriously. Today both ethnic races generally approve of and practice monogamy. Both races respect womanhood today and women are almost treated as equal to men, although there is still gender discrimination in many aspects of life.

Concerning the relationship in the family, both the Bama and Chin consider the father as the most authoritative. The system they use in their family is patriarchal and not a matriarchal system. The parents love their children equally. But both ethnic races favour the son over daughter but do not regard the female as outcast or inferior.

There are differences and similarities between the Chin and the Bama food and ways of cooking. The daily diet of the Chin races consists of boiled rice and vegetables

with no oil. But most Bama curries are mainly cooked with oil and spices. But the staple food is rice for both ethnic races.

They also differ in their funeral rites. The average Chin people accept death as resting in Jesus because they are Christians and one day Jesus will come and call them to Heaven. The Bama people consider death as an inauspicious occasion. Both races help each other during the wake and there is cooperation. So holding a wake for the dead is common in both cultures.

The economic life of the Chin and the Bama people are partly the same. Their economy is agriculture. In rural areas most people are farmers and earn their livelihood by farming. In the Chin State there is no big industrial zone, or big trading companies. Therefore most of them earn their livelihood by trade and agriculture but Bama people in cities and towns work in companies, industrial zones and in trade. Rice is the main product for both ethnic races.

Myanmar is a multi-religious country. There is no official state of religion. Therefore many different religions can be practiced in Myanmar. It will be seen that there are differences between Chin and Bama religions. The religious life of the Chin people and the Bama people are vastly different for most of the Chin people are Christians and the majority of the Bama are Theravāda Buddhists. The main goal of Buddhism is to achieve '*nibbāna*' by doing good deeds. But the main goal of the Chin Christian is to get to heaven. The most obvious difference is that the Chins as Christians believe in a soul or permanent self-whereas for Theravada Buddhists there is no permanent self or soul.

Theravāda Buddhism teaches that there is only non-self or *anatta*. However it should be noted that this difference is not a cultural difference between Chin and Bama but

between Christian and Buddhist. This difference is mentioned only because the Christian religion and culture have had some influence on Chin ethnic culture. For instance, the Chins are no longer animists and have given up animal sacrifice.

The Chin people have mostly lived in remote mountainous regions and although many are now educated and modernized, people in the rural areas lead a hard life. The Bama rural folk also lead a hard life. The fact however is that because there are greater numbers of Bama it seems as if more Bamas are educated and better off. This gap has led to political and social discontent among the educated Chin which led to the rise of the armed Chin insurgency. It seems to them that there is an unequal distribution of wealth and resources. Such conflict can be resolved if only the Chin and the Bama try to understand each other culturally. If there is cross-cultural understanding it can help to alleviate if not totally resolve political and economic issues of resource distribution and power sharing.

It should also be noted that even though much has been said about cultural identity and unity there is domestic multiculturalism. It must be acknowledged that there are multi-cultural societies in almost all nations in the world including Myanmar which has eight major ethnic groups. So there is the need for intercultural understanding even within a nation. Thus when cultural unity is mentioned it must be understood that it does not necessarily mean national identity in the political sense. Moreover even within one culture such as for instance the “Bama” culture there are cultural differences between those from Upper Myanmar and Lower Myanmar although the similarities outnumber the differences. The same may be said about Chin culture which was compared to Bama culture in the previous pages. In this sense therefore cultural unity is rather more conceptual and cultural diversity is more realistic and this should be noted in any attempt to resolve cultural discrimination and conflict. No two cultures can be identical so the question is why should

there be hate and contempt because of the differences, for the case is that even within one culture there are so – called differences. What is important therefore is understanding, tolerance and acceptance of these differences. In other words it must be acknowledged that cultural pluralism is the rule rather than the exception.

Moreover as stated above no two cultures are alike between diverse ethnic groups. To prove this point this dissertation has undertaken a comparative study of Chin and Bama cultures. The Chin and the Bama belong to the larger Myanmar national ethnic race. They were born of the same soil and have lived together in weal and woe since the beginning of Myanmar history, yet they belong to two but different ethnic groups of Myanmar, the Chin and the Bama. Though both are Myanmar their ethnicity is different in some respects. This brief study intends therefore to show the unity in their diversity, that is, their common shared features and their differences. Each must therefore try to understand these differences and build harmony and peace on what is common to both. Peace and harmony can be achieved only if there is acknowledgement and acceptance of cultural pluralism.

There is also the need to understand the fine distinction between multiculturalism and cultural pluralism if unity is to be achieved in diversity. This will later be elaborated in the conclusion of this dissertation. In this chapter the intention is to bring out the similarities and differences between the Chin and Bama ethnic races which have the same nationality and to highlight the need for cross-cultural understanding.

Indeed it is a recognizable and notable saying for all human beings that their cultures are different but they all are one in mankind living on the same planet. It does not matter how various cultures are different from each other, all human beings are the same. Both ‘Chin and ‘Bama’ people are the same members of the group, namely, ‘mankind’ that is unique and only one among other groups of living beings on the earth. Since they are ‘human beings’ they both actually live a unique humanistic life style. They have

established a secondary environment that is known as cultural surroundings. So there are many resembling features between two different cultural races. The similarities of the value systems of two cultures are seen in chapter three of this dissertation. These resemblances of the value systems between two different cultures, Chin culture and Bama culture, enhance the philosophical attitude to the acceptance of an optimistic cultural policy and to practice cross-cultural understanding between two societies. The notion of 'cross-cultural understanding' may be regarded as an optimistic cultural policy that should be maintained by all global cultural societies today.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL CONFLICT AND CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

4.1. The Nature and Causes of Cultural Conflict

The world today is full of conflict due to many causes-political, ideological, religious and social. The title of my main dissertation is The Role of Cross-cultural Understanding in Establishing Social Harmony and is thus mainly concerned with cultural conflict and how such conflicts can be resolved. The focus is thus on cultural conflicts. But economic, social and political conflict in relating to cultural conflicts will also be considered. With this in view,chaptertwo dealt mainly with the significance of cultural diversity. As a follow-up chapter four will discuss how unity can be found in cultures that are different and diverse, for it is the contention of this paper that there are some fundamentally shared characteristics and similarities in all cultures. This is because culture is a human product and achievement which arose through human intervention of Nature's processes to fulfill human needs.

However, more attention has been given to the differences than to the similarities. This must be taken into account. Furthermore it must be understood that culture is dynamic and that it is constantly changing. So not only are cultures different in different parts of the world but that each culture itself evolves and changes as time passes. Thus the spatio-temporal impact on cultures must also be taken into consideration.

So culture is constantly changing due to its own inner dynamics, as well as due to the passage of time and the distance of space. It also changes due to the impact of other cultures and ways of life. Human beingslive in different parts of the world and therefore it is not possible to establish one homogenous community or a homogenous world society. There cannot be a common language, common culture, common meanings and common

shared sensibilities. Concerning this view, Jhingran, states as follows;

I have contended that a homogeneous closed culture or way of life is a myth, and every culture is multi-faceted, and consists of diverse traditions and sub-cultures which are not separate but constantly overlap. Moreover, a culture or society is constantly changing due to various internal and external factors. As a result, it becomes impossible to identify one world-view or way of life which can represent the whole of that culture in all its dimensions and historical stages.¹

The above view explains the complexity of culture and also explains why within each culture there are sub-cultures. Many cultures have different traditions and sub-cultures and they are always changing. It is also a fact that it is impossible for each culture to have one view of culture or one kind of lifestyle which can represent the whole culture because not only cultures but all things in the world are constantly changing. Naturally the world outlook of human beings, their social relations and their manners and morals diverge and change over times. As a consequence culture which is the main source of beliefs, norms and values cannot be identical. Culture is thus never static, due to the many factors and conditions stated above.

In days past, however cultures changed and developed due more to the inner dynamics of its people than to external factors. Travel and communications had not been easy and interactions between nations were few and far between. So, there was very little external influence as interrelations and interactions were few and far between. Such contacts were confined to neighboring countries and countries within the region. There was trade and commerce across continents but roads were poor, travel by sea was dangerous and travel to far regions took time and endurance. Transportation was slow, so it took months and years to travel to faraway countries. So although cultures did change, the change was not rapid but incremental. The situation today is vastly different.

Concerning this view, Andrew Whittaker, states as follows;

The world is shrinking-made smaller by commerce, tourism and migration-

and yet the importance of national culture, of national identity, seems to grow.²

The above statement means that cultural changes have accelerated due to the advances made in science and technology which led to better transportation and communication facilities. Interrelationships among countries have expanded. The invention of steamships, motor vehicles and lastly airplanes, facilitated travel and trade and commerce become global. The economy today is a world economy. Commerce expanded but the trade in goods and commodities was followed by people travel to look for better employment or to see the world and how others lived. Today there are many tourists who travel to countries across the world who learn something about cultures foreign to their own. Then there are migrant workers who work in other countries and who need to adopt in some way to the living conditions of the host country.

The growing world economy has led to investments in foreign countries which means that many people travel and live in countries other than their own. There is an influx of foreigners in many countries across the world. The important point here is that when people travel to foreign countries, they bring in their cultural and social traditions with them and they are also confronted with cultural and social traditions of the host country which are different from their own. At the beginning the changes may not be obvious but as time passes cultural changes occur. Visitors to another country may come to adapt themselves to certain social customs and manners of their host country and the people in the host country will also adopt some of the ways brought in by the visitors – for example, music, food as well as exchange of knowledge. Then, the great impact made by the new communications technology also needs to be considered. Computer technology in the way of the world - wide - web and satellite communications, television communications, and internet communications have had the greatest impact on cultural changes and exchanges. But some people resist the changes and conflicts begin, when

resistance intensifies or become widespread.

When human beings live together in a society with different cultures, it can be said that there must be conflict and misunderstanding in some respect because people accept that their own culture is the best way. Cultural conflict can be seen when people's expectations of a certain behaviour coming from their cultural backgrounds are not met, as others have different cultural backgrounds and different expectations. Concerning cultural conflicts, Huntington, states as follows;

People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level, civilization. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity.... In this new world local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations. In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations.³

Cultural conflicts arise because of the differences in values and norms of behaviour of people from different cultures. Undoubtedly, there are differences in their ways of living, beliefs, behaviour, values, norms, customs, traditions and world outlook. Cultural conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when different cultural values and beliefs clash and they clash when people believe their way of life is better than others and must be therefore protected. Different social groups have different cultural beliefs and ideas which may certainly conflict, and this conflict leads to differences in opinion, arguments may arise which later results in violence and crime. Cultures are embedded in every conflict because conflicts arise in human relationships. For example people from different cultures may live side by side as neighbours interacting socially at the outset with no cause for conflict. But one can imagine what can happen when grown children from different cultures with different faiths should fall in love and wish to inter-marry. Antagonism

arises and there is serious conflict or clash.

People have their biases and prejudices about different races and ethnic groups, so a culturally diverse workplace also sometimes brings in conflict. When human beings act according to the values and norms of their cultures and when another group of people holding a different worldview behave differently, it can create misunderstanding and conflict. It is true that people often perceive their behaviour and beliefs as an ultimate norm and they are often unable to perceive their own cultural distinctiveness and often believe that their culture is the best, so others must also adhere to their values and norms. In other words they fail to make allowances for other cultures with their own different norms or values. This is especially true of cultures with different religious faiths. Such religious fundamentalism prevails to this day and is the cause of violent conflicts across the world.

What this dissertation wishes to affirm is that although culture is a complex and broad concept that is difficult to define comprehensively, but it is the outcome and effect of human endeavour, and as such it could be considered universal. Culture is thus a human construct. Humans create cultures to improve life. Throughout history they have made efforts to improve their material well-being to fulfill their physical needs such as food, clothing and shelter. As their knowledge grew other advances were made that enhanced the material welfare of society in areas such as transportation and communications; they built roads and bridges and learned how to utilize natural resources for human well-being.

Then as stated earlier as human intelligence and intellect developed further they came to see the need for education, for harmony in society and for morality, ethics and religion. Thus there arose the need for spiritual and moral well-being or to put it another way to enhance the spiritual well-being in human life and society. All cultures proceed and develop with such goals and in this can be found common shared characteristics. Thus in

this respect there is universality. But the ways and means each culture uses to fulfill these needs are different depending on geographical, climatic and other environmental factors. In this sense culture is relative and diverse.

What needs to be acknowledged is that no two human beings are identical. Human beings are not alike in their nature, physical make-up, attitudes, ideal, interest and aspirations. But there are an important and shared similarity which has led to people grouping themselves according to race, ethnicity and nationality. They identify themselves as members of a particular racial or national group who therefore have created and brought forth their own way of life or culture. So culture is the way of life of a group. It differs from society to society. It has generally been assumed that each ethnic group or national group is defined and determined by its own unique culture. These cultural differences among various groups, sometimes cause tension and lead to conflict. Therefore, it can be said that cultural differences can result in cultural conflicts. But conflicts are also due to other causes. The clash of interests of different people makes conflicts inevitable. The interests of the workers clash with those of employers that lead to conflict. Conflict also arises due to the social changes. The change in moral norms of a society and man's hopes, aspirations and demands lead to conflict. For example the conflict between old and new generations. Conflict is thus an expression of social disequilibrium and there are various types of conflicts.

When any two people (or groups) coexist, conflict is bound to occur just because people are different, think differently, and have needs and wants that sometimes do not match. Culture is an essential part of such conflict but it can also help conflict resolution because culture shapes the perceptions, attributions, judgments and ideas of human beings. Though cultures are powerful, they are often part of the subconscious and can cause as well as resolve conflict in imperceptible ways. Cultures are more than language, dress, and

food customs. Cultural groups may share race, ethnicity, or nationality, but they also arise from gaps in generation, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, ability and disability, political and religious affiliation, language, and gender.

Two things are essential to remember about cultures: they are always changing, and they relate to the symbolic dimension of life. The symbolic dimension is the place where meanings are given and identities are determined. Everyone consciously or subconsciously knows these meanings which give them a sense of identity and such cultural messages are conveyed through institutions such as the family or the school and everyone in a group knows what outsiders do not know. They are like the water fish swim in, unaware of its effect on their vision. They are somewhat like rose tinted glasses when everything seen is coloured pink. They determine what can be seen or not seen. Similarly cultures are the starting points or currencies that shape a person's values. Starting points are those places it is natural to begin, whether with individual or group concerns, with the big picture or particularities. Currencies are those things human being care about that influence and shape our interactions with others.⁴

It is often said that conflicts among human beings is natural and that there has been conflict between living beings including humans since primitive times. Primitive people fought one another with arrows and locally made gun for protecting their land and territory. Conflicts between two or more individuals and two or more organizations, community or social groups is said to be caused by different factors such as differences in personality, values, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, customs and traditions but basically it is a clash of self-interest and survival. Conflict is motivated by competition, rivalry, and self-interest. Therefore, it can be said that conflict is a feature of all human societies, and potentially an aspect of all social relationships. However human beings must understand that conflict that is unchecked leads to violence, crime and finally genocide. Conflict

resolution is a long-term process, and is often overtaken by the immediate requirements of conflict management, which may in the short term impede the resolution of conflicts. The major blocks to conflict resolution are human rights abuses and suppression of ethnic minorities.

Yet since primitive time's conflict between human beings has not been not new. Concerning this view, George F. Mclean referred Craig Storti's view as follows;

The two interesting problems which are as old as philosophy itself are the problems of one and the many and of the same and different.⁵

What this means is that due to the nature of society where a number of human beings live there are bound to be problems that arise between the one and the many and between those cultures that are different. These differences and similarities of a human society may be viewed in several ways; they are political, social, economic and cultural.

So, cultural misunderstandings and conflicts may arise whenever there are cultural differences. Misunderstandings or conflicts between different nationalities, religious or ethnic groups and cultural ignorance and insensitivity are due to lack of awareness and understanding of different societal lifestyle and practices of other cultural groups.

Cultures are therefore embedded in every conflict and it is always an important factor in conflict, whether it plays a central role or influences it subtly and gently. The cultural component is present in any human conflict. Culture is inextricable from conflict, though it may not be its direct cause in some cases. When differences surface in families, organizations, or communities, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes. A further analysis of conflicts between cultures shows there are several dominant issues.

4.2. The Issues of Equality

All people differ in their body structure, physical appearance, their way of living, and how they see the world and the way they look upon other human beings. But there is no difference in their humanity for they can feel love, feel the need for security of life and they all need shelter to live. Therefore it can be said that the ideal would be for all human beings to be given equal economic, education, health, political and social opportunities.

Generally the word equality means that those who possess the same qualities in some respect need to be treated equally. That is for individuals to be treated equally there must be some correspondence among them. Therefore, in the sense of equality there is no superior or inferior. There should be equality for all human beings because all human beings are the same in their qualities of humanity. In equality, all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status. All human beings should be treated as equals and they should have the same political, economic, social and civil rights. In this sense all human beings are entitled to the same rights and respect.

Human beings are not only equal in the condition of possessing the same rights, privileges, and freedom but they also have the same responsibility to carry out their duties as citizens and to obey the laws of the country. Everyone has the right to a nationality and in most democracies they have the right to elect an assembly of citizens to enact laws, a government to administer the country and a judiciary to administer the country's laws. This is the general picture of a democracy which is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Therefore, equality is the condition of being equal, especially of having the same political, social, and economic rights. There are various causes which create conflicts between cultures. They are economic equality, social equality, political equality and equal opportunities.

4.2.1. Economic Equality

Before discussing economic equality it would be necessary to first explain what equality means.

Equality is the condition where individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally in the fulfillment of their needs or in opportunities open to them irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. There should be no discrimination of any sort in any area of human endeavour whether it is economic, social or political. This is of utmost importance in building unity in a society where there is ethnic and cultural diversity.

It would also be necessary at this point to reaffirm what is meant by diversity. To put it briefly for the purpose of this dissertation diversity refers to the differences that exist between the peoples of the world mainly with regard to race and culture. But diversity also implies that one should give recognition to these differences and that there should be due respect and mutual understanding. From this it follows that if cultures are to avoid antagonism and conflict economic equality, political equality, social equality and equality of opportunity play an important role. This is especially true in a nation state where there is a diversity of cultures.

Economic equality defined in the simplest form means that everyone has the same access to the same wealth. In this day and age this definition is simple enough to understand in theory but unrealistic in practical terms. To get at the essence of what equality means it would be easier to first consider what its opposite, inequality means economically.

Economic inequality may be defined as differences that can be most obviously seen in people's different positions within the economic sphere - income, pay, wealth and

possessions. However, there are other factors that have to be considered such as the differences due to physical disability, lack of skills and education, ethnic background, or gender. But what is evident is that economic inequality means that there is a gap – a gap between what is called the haves and have-nots, between the well-off and the less well-off in the overall economic distribution.

Economic inequality is thus due to many factors but that which is caused by ethnicity is most often aggravated due to a sense of unfair distribution of resources, natural and social as well as in power-sharing. This happens in multicultural states. Economic equality is thus crucial for unity in a nation with diverse cultures but it is also intertwined with social and political equality and most fundamental of all, equal opportunity. The ethnic races of a nation state are entitled to an equal share in the distribution of income from natural resources and the regions in which they reside must be equally developed; they are entitled to good infrastructure; they must have good roads and transportation to access other parts of the country and hence to the world; good health care and education must be made available for them. So, economic equality will bring about better relations and good will and will help promote social equality as well. It would surely help to promote the standard of living and capacities of the ethnic races concerned which would surely benefit not only those directly concerned but the whole nation as well. Most important of all it would dispel the idea that the major ethnic race is oppressing the minor and would strengthen the sense of belonging and identity. If however, there is no economic equality this will bring about social and political discontent. This will hinder long term growth and sustainable development for the ethnic regions and the ethnic races concerned and for a nation as a whole. In some cases such inequalities have led to the fragmentation of nations that were once united.

If there is economic equality between Chin and Bama, economic issues in

association with cultural conflict, due to the lack of such equality, can be reduced.

4.2.2. Social Equality

There is said to be social equality when all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects. They also have many rights including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights, and are also entitled to social goods and services such as equal health care, education and other social services. Social equality is closely related to economic equality, equal opportunities and obligations, and so involves the whole of society. Social equality means that there must be no distinction of class or caste or any form of discrimination that is legally enforced. For example, sex, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, origin, caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health or disability must not result in unequal treatment under the law and should not reduce opportunities unjustifiably. Social equality is based on the view everyone is created equal at birth. It is sometimes known as ontological equality. The statement reflects the philosophy of John Locke and his idea that we are all equal in certain natural rights. It stems from his famous '*tabula rasa*', that holds that the mind at birth is just a blank slate.

Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly on socially defined lines of class, caste or gender. Economic inequality, mentioned earlier is also studied as a type of social inequality. This is because social and natural resources other than purely economic resources are also unevenly distributed in most societies which leads to differences in social status. The norms used in allocation can also affect the distribution of rights and privileges, social power, access to education or protection under law, adequate housing and transportation etc.

Social inequality is often linked to racial inequality, gender inequality, and ethnic

inequality as well as other status characteristics and these forms can be related to corruption. Such social inequality is found in almost every society and is shaped by a range of factors, such as geographical location or citizenship status, and by cultural outlook and identities. Some anthropologists however say that cultures which are "kinship-oriented," appear to value social harmony more than wealth or status. These cultures are contrasted with materially oriented cultures in which status and wealth are prized and competition and conflict are common. Similarly, if there is social equality between the two ethnic groups, Chin and Bama, social issues in association with cultural conflicts are more likely to disappear.

4.2.3. Political Equality

Politicaequality means that everyone has equal rights in the political sphere regardless of wealth, education or means of livelihood. This means among other things, that no one is above the law and that anyone charged with breaking some law is entitled to legal representation and that everyone gets equal treatment under the law. Moreover each citizen is entitled to one vote to decide who is to govern the country or what system of government it should be. All citizens have an equal voice over governmental decisions. This is especially the case in a system of democracy. Equal considerations must be given to the preferences and interests of all citizens. This is expressed in democratic principles such as the entitlement of one-person/one-vote, and equality before the law. To achieve political equality it is necessary for all citizens to participate in political activity for this is the way of informing governments of their needs and preferences. Only then can governments can respond to their wishes.

Thus there is political equality when members of a society have equal standing in terms of political power or influence. It is the founding principle of various forms of democracy. Citizen participation is, thus, at the heart of political equality. Through their

activity citizens in a democracy can choose who will hold public office and also influence governmental activities. Political equality is a valued good in itself. It is the ability to express one's political views giving one a sense of selfhood, of agency, of belonging. Political equality builds community for societies are bound together by cooperative activity toward shared goals. It implies the engagement of equals. Moreover political participation is educative because it helps people learn about politics and about democracy and about their own needs and preferences through participation for all. Equality in political activity is valuable just as equality in education is. Political equality also provides equal protection of interests. Those who express political voice - by voting or by speaking up or in other ways are able to influence government policies and compel governments to pay attention to their needs and preferences. In this sense, political voice represents a general capacity to achieve many goals.

All this shows that political equality in many aspects can help to establish unity among citizens of a nation composed of different ethnicity and culture. If therefore there is political equality, unity can be found in diversity from the cultural aspect. And if there is political equality between the two ethnic groups, Chin and Bama, political un-stability can be reduced.

4.2.4. Equal Opportunities

Economic equality, social equality and political equality as discussed above play an important role in establishing peace and stability and avoiding instability and conflict in human society especially when a society or nation is composed of citizens of different cultures. But equality whether economic, social or political rests ultimately on whether or not there is equal opportunity for an individual or group of individuals to develop and flourish.

Equality centres on the fact that in whatever venture people undertake the rules for achieving it must apply equally to all. No one has a head start and everyone begins at the same time and has to follow the same rules. It is easy to understand if one thinks of appearing for an examination with the same goal of attaining say a diploma. It is required that everyone appearing for the examination must have studied the same course and are required to answer the same questions without some enjoying benefit over the others and the same rules are to be followed. For example there must be no copying or cheating. Moreover the examiners also must be of good character and show no favouritism. All conditions for the examinees must be equal. It is also the same when competing in a game such as tennis or any other sport. Each player must abide by the rules set and there are umpires or referees to see that everything is above board and equal. There must be a level playing field. This in the simplest terms gives some idea of what equal opportunity means. But the game or situation becomes more complex when it comes to the economic, political or social spheres. Many factors such as the number of people, their psychological make-up and culture and traditions must be taken account of. So there is no method that is fool-proof for measuring equal opportunity.

What is most important to realize however is that though every effort is made to provide equal opportunity the outcome may not be the same for everyone, for humans as stated earlier are different – different in physical appearance, intelligence, psychological make-up and their upbringing to mention just a few and most crucial of all as far as this paper is concerned their cultural differences. This does not mean that there must be uniformity in culture, but that cultural differences must also be considered in providing equal opportunity. Thus if a culturally diverse society wishes to provide equality economically, socially and politically there must be equal opportunity, the kind of equal opportunity that gives serious consideration to cultural differences.

The point therefore is that to achieve harmony and peace out of the many cultural differences there is a need to provide equality in economic, social and political life but to do so depends on equality of opportunity and to achieve this it is necessary to understand and make every allowance for cultural diversity.

This would require a brief examination of two concepts Multiculturalism and Cultural Pluralism that are being studied in relation to diversity and the need for cross-cultural understanding.

In short, it is necessary to provide equal opportunities of economics, social affairs and politics between the two ethnic groups of Chin and Bama so as to live peaceful co-existence. In order to provide so, cross-cultural understanding, mutual understanding and mutual respect need to be taken place.

By virtue of cross-cultural understanding including multiculturalism and cultural pluralism, there can be equal rights and equal responsibility in both races and there will be social harmony and social prosperity.

4.3. Multiculturalism versus Cultural Pluralism

Multiculturalism is similar in meaning to cultural diversity in that it means there are many cultures that exist side by side. But multiculturalism goes much further to add that it is necessary for different cultures existing in a single society to acknowledge and tolerate one another. So, a multicultural society is not only a composition of diverse cultural groups but a society in which there is recognition and toleration among them. It is said that Singapore is one such society. Multiculturalism thus refers to a diversity of ethnicities within a country or community. Various ethnic groups live together in spite of their cultural difference and in most cases are acknowledged as citizens of a nation. The people also, though they may be culturally different in many ways such as religious faith

and language, they accept each other as belonging to the same country or group. However there are some who hold that multiculturalism maintains that the values of the minority cultural group must have equal status to that of the majority. This sometimes leads to the majority group imposing its values on the minority or else the minority group after many years assimilates the values of the larger group. For example the United States of America where most African Americans have adopted the culture of the White majority.

Cultural Pluralism subscribes to the view that there must be understanding, appreciation and celebration of the (diversity of) different cultures existing in a single society. Any attempt to consider the values of the majority group to be superior to that of the minority group is prejudicial. Pluralism allows for many different groupings but, unlike multiculturalism, does not try to impose one uniform status on all of them. Minorities have their own communities of faith, ethnicity or culture within a society but share the same national identity.

Cultural pluralism is an understanding and appreciation of the cultural differences that people have. Its focus is on society as a whole, and yet it accepts and appreciates that each culture that makes up the society or nation as a whole is unique. Cultural pluralism disregards assimilation; the majority cultural group does not aspire to assimilate the culture of the minority. It gives priority to each and every group maintaining their own diverse and equal identity.

In this respect the Union of Myanmar is a culturally pluralistic society where each ethnic group is respected for its culture and traditions. But culture is an all-embracing term and there are many aspects as shown above that are crucial for maintaining unity in all its diversity. These are the many aspects that need to be understood to strengthen the spirit of unity or in Myanmar's case to strengthen the Union Spirit and maintain peace and harmony for the development of country as well as for the people.

The term multiculturalism generally refers to a de facto state of both cultural and ethnic diversity within a state or nation. The aim of multiculturalism is to preserve the cultures or cultural identities – usually those of immigrant groups within a unified society. This has been the cause of debate and violent conflict in extreme cases.

There is no one way approach to conflict resolution, since culture is always changing. Cultural knowledge and understanding is therefore necessary for those who wish to mediate in cultural conflicts or simply want to function more effectively in their own lives and situations. Cultural understanding is based mainly on recognition and respect of other cultures. Multiculturalism cannot be denied, it must be accepted.

Every society has its own distinct but equally sound patterns of perception, thought, and choice. Therefore, there must be mutual respect and mutual understanding among human beings. Human beings need to know that despite the profound differences among individuals, there are some fundamental general norms which are standards of rational discourse and norms that extend freedom and the protection of justice to all persons in virtue of their common humanity. Only through such general norms can there be some principle guide for rejecting the suppression of the opinion, religion, customs, traditions and way of life of other cultures.

But on the other hand it can be said that multiculturalism is fundamentally anti-individualistic because it expects each individual to conform in his or her perceptions, thoughts, and assessments to those pronounced to be the authentic perceptions, thoughts, and assessments of that individual's group. All women may share their concept in the female perspective. Likewise, the thoughts of men may have their own perspective. Therefore the members of a society may share attitudes or views in different ways from members of other societies or groups.

CONCLUSION

A society of multicultural groups without cross-cultural understanding cannot survive and achieve stability. When human beings have cross-cultural understanding they can establish peace and harmony for the present and the next generation. The minority races should not think that they are discriminated against by the majority and the majority should also not think that they are superior to the minority.

Human beings can share their interests when they understand each other culturally. They can build unity in diversity. All the eight ethnic races of Myanmar can establish unity in diversity. When peoples in Myanmar can understand the diversity of culture of these eight ethnic races' they will be able to achieve national reconciliation, unification, harmonization and establish national unity for cultures tend to overlap, meaning that there is common ground which can provide a base for unity.

If human beings can see the strength and value of the other cultures it may help their society to be stable. When human beings accept that unity is power; they may establish a better world outlook and a better moral life. The diversity that exists in each ethnic race in their customs, traditions and way of life should not create conflict between them; they can have unity in diversity.

As the world gets smaller and shrinks to the level of a village, conflicts have spread among people from different cultural backgrounds. The problems and issues have spread and become more complex because of this insistence on identity, – political, racial and cultural. People of different cultures, values, lifestyle, world outlooks and attitudes forget they are all human beings living on the same planet. Where people of different cultures live together, the key to establish harmony and peace for individuals or among groups is to relate in a positive manner to those who are different and to understand each

other's culture.

Some cultures may be considered strange by others who are of another culture and some cultures may be difficult to accept by others. For example, there are differences between the cultures of the East and West. It may be difficult for the West to accept the East's culture and also the East to accept the West's culture. This is true especially with regard to religious beliefs and rites. For instance the War of the Crusades where the Christians considered those of the Islamic faith as non-believers and the Muslims considered the Christians as infidels. They considered each other as evil. But the people who belong to either Eastern or Western cultures can share certain interests because they are human beings with the same hopes and fears. Moreover they can share their interest and establish unity and peace only when there is cross-cultural understanding. In the constitution of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) it is said, "ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind"¹ of suspicion and mistrust. Human beings are not exactly alike and there may be differences among them but these differences do not make them inhuman.

One solution to resolving cultural conflict is to promote cross-cultural and intercultural understanding. Köchler quoted the words of the UN secretary Kurt Waldheim in the **UN Chronicle: The Magazines of the United Nations**. "Unity in Diversity: The Integrative Approach to Intercultural Relations" as follows;

There is "no future for mankind unless tolerance and understanding between cultures and nations become the rule rather than the exception".²

A society is that group of people who live in the same country and share the same common values and customs in general. Each society has its own values system in common, but there is also diversity. When there is no understanding of the diversity of

culture, there can be no unity and when there is no unity among the groups, it is impossible to have social harmony. Therefore, it is indispensable that there must be understanding among human beings. It is important that people should care for their society and the groups to which they belong, but there must also be understanding of other groups that do not belong.

Everyone who lives and works together must be able to get along with each other. Human beings cannot succeed in establishing peace and harmony when they cannot interact effectively with each other. Interaction with others is important for only when there can be understanding. To have effective interaction with people from other cultures there must also be tolerance. Interaction must therefore begin with intercultural dialogue. Such intercultural dialogue will bring about understanding that a culture can realize itself and reach a state of maturity only if it is able to relate to other cultures. Again concerning interaction with other cultures, Köchler states as follows;

The strength of a people or nation indeed depends on the ability to interact with other communities in a complex, multidimensional manner, something that also includes the capacity to see oneself through the eyes of the other. Without such interaction, a community will lack the skills it needs to compete and be successful in today's fast-changing global environment.³

In other words, differences must be accepted realistically and in dealing with them they must not be rejected or denied. The preservation of peace and stability between the states has been a predominant concern for every society. Situations of conflict often arise in a complex setting of historical, social, cultural and political interaction between communities and they must be dealt with in an integrative manner. In order to practice and live together in peace with one another and as a good neighbour they have to understand each other and appreciate each other's way of life and their culture. This is possible only if there is knowledge about the distinct and varying cultures, customs, traditions and value systems.⁴

This paper maintains that the integrative approach proposed by Köchler is one of the better ways to achieve cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and that the following maxims clearly clarify the steps that should be taken:

1. To hold a dialogue that addresses issues of social justice.
2. To hold a dialogue with a firm commitment to peace.
3. Not to preach cultural dialogue internationally and reject the notion of domestic multiculturalism.

This is because it would be meaningless and artificial if social justice issues are not addressed. Secondly dialogue without commitment to peace is a contradiction in itself and finally to reject multiculturalism while preaching cultural dialogue internationally would be just a hoax.⁵

Cross-cultural understanding is the important factor in establishing social harmony. To have cross-cultural understanding, it is important to have mutual understanding and tolerance about each other's cultural differences.

To have cross-cultural understanding does not mean looking for the differences and weak points for the sake of taking advantage but looking for the similarities and strong points where two cultures can meet and cooperate. This is the most effective way of avoiding cultural conflict.

Culture is essential for human beings for their survival and their communication with other people. People learn about other cultures through interaction, observation, and imitation in order to participate as members of the group. Sharing a common culture with others simplifies day-to-day interactions. However, human beings should understand other cultures and the worldviews therein.

Just as culture is essential for individuals, it is also fundamental for the survival of

societies. In order to survive, societies need rules about civility and tolerance. What human beings do as human beings is determined by nature (their biological and genetic makeup) rather than nurture (their social environment). In other words, their behavior is instinctive. An instinct is an unlearned, biologically determined behaviour pattern common to all members of a species that predictably occurs whenever certain environmental conditions exist. Culture helps human beings to deal with daily life. Human beings cannot rely on instincts alone in order to survive, but also needs culture to flourish.

There are values and norms in the culture in which a human being is born and grows up as a social being. It is not enough to understand what culture is only in theory. It must be understood how it influences real life and practical activities. The abstractness of values sometimes creates problems of conflict. The values themselves might not necessarily conflict, but the real world implications might. What it means is that a group of people might accept the same values in principle but find that they cannot agree on how to put these values into practice. From this arise conflicts. Without culture, man cannot live as a rational and social animal.

It is true that culture guides people to live an organized life. On the other hand, cultures imply that they should view the whole human race as one because ultimately all are human beings. The word culture overrides all artificial barriers between people and there should be no discrimination. In this sense, there are various stages of culture; while a group of people has its distinct way of life, customs, beliefs and language it is still a part of the whole human race where there are no distinctions due to the common human ideals of love, peace, unity, compassion, kindness and universal brotherhood. Therefore, a culture needs to develop at different levels, in a family in a community or in a country. A man of culture naturally is aware of his place in relation to his own family and community.

Culture aims to bring about a free spirit; it must be free from the fanaticisms of

religion, of science and of social beliefs. Culture brings forth values which provide for the enrichment of human life. The enriched life is identified by the enlargement of the awareness and consciousness of culture. A man of culture does not live just as an individual but is involved in the creative life of the community. A man is cultured when he conducts himself consciously, creatively and impersonally. Yet it is culture or the components of culture that can turn a so-called "cultured" person into a wild creature that is cruel and savage. For example religious or racist radicals.

However, the problem is everyone thinks that their way of life is the "right" way. Each person believes that his or her own people's customs and traditions are best. When a man encounters people whose way of life is different, the tendency is to make a value judgment. When people do not see differences as merely differences, but as an indication of inferiority it can lead to conflict between one culture and another culture. This can be used to justify unfair, hostile, and even genocidal attacks on other groups.

When establishing peace and harmony in a society, human beings need to have mutual understanding, mutual respect of each other's culture. Furthermore tolerance among human beings is also important in establishing a stable society. Mutual understanding, mutual respect and tolerance can form the bedrock on which human beings build their relationship. Through these concepts of mutual understanding and mutual respect, people can avoid extremism and an entrenched fear of other people's way of life or culture.

Consciousness of culture makes social consciousness. A man of culture respects norms and values. He must base his values on the happiness of all and not on personal gain but on human interests. There are many examples of people who work for the good or happiness of all. They all work to create the situation in which all people could live in the greatest freedom. Artist, philosophers and scientists have done wonders for the enrichment

of culture.

But today people are drifting from cultured living to material, commercial and mechanical life. Cultural diversity has become the source of problems between human beings. Cultural differences have always provoked fear or anger but if people would only stop to reflect they will see the same humanity in everyone. So cross-cultural understanding is necessary. Cross-cultural understanding means to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences. Without cross-cultural understanding, the future of mankind is unpredictable. Today the world is a world of multiculturalism and so cross-cultural understanding is important in business, in the workplace and in a country. It is easy to speak about cross-cultural understanding but it is difficult to practice it in real everyday life.

Then there is the obsession with national and ethnic identity. It is usually taken for granted that a nation is identified by one culture, that national identity means cultural identity. That is not the case. This dissertation has made this point in the chapter that compares Bama and Chin culture.

The Bama and Chin share the same nationality which is Myanmar, but ethnically there are differences which means that though the culture of the Bama and Chin share common cultural likenesses such as eating the same staple food rice or showing deep respect for parents, grand-parents and elders, they also have cultural differences. It is thus the same with the British consisting of other ethnic races such as the Welsh, Irish and Scots. But living on the same islands they also have common cultural characteristics. This is true of many nations large and small. The majority should not despise the minority and the minority should not think that they are isolated from the majority. They need to share interests which are common to both.

Thus multiculturalism is an indisputable fact. It describes the existence and acceptance or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single country and is generally associated with ethnicity. So even within one nation there is bound to be cultural diversity. Multiculturalism therefore maintains and even promotes the distinctiveness of a multicultural society.

Acknowledging multiculturalism is not enough. One needs to go beyond and acknowledge the need for cultural pluralism if cultural conflict is to be avoided. The world today is riddled with conflict and violence because people refuse to accept cultural pluralism – that is the need to acknowledge and respect cultural differences. This means that there can be no cross-cultural understanding, if people do not even acknowledge the right to live their way of life to those whose cultures are different.

Then there are those who advocate social integration, cultural assimilation or even racial segregation. This is the case where a major culture tends to impose its values on a minor culture which therefore leads to resistance. But some cultures are weak and are swallowed by a major culture. Whatever the case may be cultural conflict has been around since ancient times and cannot be eliminated. So the next best thing is mutual understanding and respect that will enable peace and harmony in a community as nation.

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မြန်မာဘာသာကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း

- ၁။ သန်းဖေမြင့်၊ ဦး။ (၁၉၆၇)။ ဗမာ၏ ဗမာ။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။ ဂန္ဓာဝင်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
- ၂။ မြန်မာ့ဆိုရှယ်လစ်လမ်းစဉ်ပါတီ။ (၁၉၆၈)။ တိုင်းရင်းသားယဉ်ကျေးမှုရိုးရာဓလေ့များ(ချင်း)။ (ပထမပုံနှိပ်ခြင်း) စာပေဗိမာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။

GLOSSARY

1. *Anatta* (pali) No permanent self or soul
2. *Zedi*(pali) A pagoda
3. *Dharmas* (pali) Teachings of the Buddha
4. *Kamma*(pali) Action; deed
5. *Khan* or *lungdawn*(chin) A memorial stone in memory of a powerful man
6. *kusala* (pali) Morally wholesome
7. *Mithun*(chin) A domestic animal reared for meat and prestige
8. *Mohinga* (myan) Myanmar traditional food
9. *Nat*(pali) Spirit worship
10. *Nibbāna*(pali) Extinction of craving
11. *Samsara* (pali) Round of rebirths
12. *Sangha*(pali) Monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns
13. *Thingyan*(myan) The Myanmar New Year water festival
14. *Zo* (chin) The Chin ethnic group

Appendix

A Comparative Study of Chin and Bama Culture

The Value System	Chin Culture	Bama Culture
Art, Aesthetic Value	Traditional dance, artistic craft ‘Bamboo dance’ as traditional dance	Traditional dance, paintings, craft ‘U ShweYoe and Daw Moe dance’ as traditional dance
Beliefs	Traditional ‘nat’ worship (Animism and spirit worship)	Traditional ‘nat’ worship (Animism and spirit worship)
Customs	Marriage as an auspicious occasion Practicing Monogamy	Marriage as an auspicious occasion Practicing Monogamy
Folklore	Fond of Folktales	Fond of Folktales
Language	Hakha Chin or Lai Language	Bama Language
Moral Value	Respectfulness to parents and elders	Respectfulness to parents and elders
Religion	Christianity	Theravada Buddhism
Social Values	Spirit of Cooperation Patriarchal system Women are treated as equal to man	Spirit of Cooperation Patriarchal system Women are treated as equal to man
Symbolism	‘Hornbill’ bird as national emblem ‘Rhododendron’ as national flower	‘Peacock’ as national emblem ‘Padauk’ as national flower

Illustrations

1. Figure I: 'Hornbill' as national emblem of Chin
2. Figure II: 'Peacock' as national emblem of Bama
3. Figure III: 'Rhododendron' as national flower of Chin
4. Figure IV: 'Padauk' as national flower of Bama
5. Figure V: 'Bamboo dance' as national dance of Chin
6. Figure VI: 'U ShweYoe and Daw Moe dance' as national dance of Bama



Figure I
'Hornbill' as national emblem of Chin



Figure II
'Peacock' as national emblem of Bama



Figure III
'Rhododendron' as national flower of Chin



Figure IV
'Padauk' as national flower of Bama



Figure V
'Bamboo Dance' as national dance of Chin



Figure VI
'U ShweYoe and Daw Moe Dance' as national dance of Bama