

## **The Role of Buddhism in Rural Development of Thailand : Some Performances and Outcomes<sup>1</sup>**

**Direk Rerkrai<sup>2</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

The performances of the selected famous abbots ( 46 monks in Northeastern and Northern provinces ) mostly concerned on : ( 1 ) Spiritual development for diligence, cooperation, saving, and preventing from alcohol and gambling, ( 2 ) Buddhist Sunday School for youth and others, ( 3 ) Occupational development such as a stimulator for agricultural demonstration, and other occupational training programmes, ( 4 ) Social services and welfare projects, ( 5 ) Stimulator for creating community fund, etc. The outcomes of their performances showed some significant changes in quality of life and some trends for increasing the income of the target persons. It was found that ( 1 ) There were not significant different among the opinion of the 3 sample groups in understanding of Buddhism philosophy, ( 2 ) There was significant difference between the opinion scores on the actual role of " the Sangha " of the abbots ( N = 46 ) and the government official; head of the provincial levels in Community Development Dept. and Ag. Extension Dept. ( N = 88 ), ( 3 ) There was not significant differences between the opinion scores for the expected role of these two sample groups.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Thailand is a less developed country which is transferring to be a newly agro - industrialized country. About 60 per cent of population are farmers and contributed for only 21 per cent of gross national incomes, and had about 30 per cent in sharing of export valumn in 1987. Therefore, most of them in the rural poverty areas need any help that can support them to have self - reliance development and seek for the higher income and better quality of life.

The abbot of " Wat " ( temple ) in north -

eastern and northern provinces do a lot of thing to those poor people not only in religious or spiritual, but the material or secular in improving their daily lives. Thus it was interesting to study the abbots' activities concerned the secular programme in rural development. Study of Bhuddhism role for rural development, actual roles and expected roles of the abbot or the core monks in rural areas, then it was necessary to do for predicting the possible role of Buddhism in rural development. However, study of the opinion of those who were concerned in rural development schemes should be given the attention for explaining of those roles performed by the monks.

<sup>1</sup> Supported by NIWANO Peace Foundation, JAPAN

<sup>2</sup> Office of Extension and Training, Kasetsart University, Bangkok 10900, Thailand.

### Purpose of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the role of Buddhism monk in relation to rural development of Thailand at the present time especially in the north - eastern and northern provinces.

Therefore the major objectives of this study were as followed :

1. To find out some performances of the abbots and outcomes in socio - economic development in rural areas.
2. To find out some basic roles of Buddhism in the past for rural development and its trends.
3. Applying the specific philosophy of Buddhism for rural strategies in the development schemes.

### Religion in Thailand

Buddhism is the state religion of Thailand. In 1981, 95% of Thai people are Buddhist, 4.05% Islam, 0.6% Christian and 0.35% adhere to other faiths. Both in constitutional and in practice there is complete freedom of worship and religions toleration in Thailand. His Magist the King is the patronage of all religions. ( National Identity Board, 1982, p. 29 )

### Some prominent characteristics of Buddhism in Thailand

Generally Buddhism in Thailand may be called Buddhism and have some prominent characteristics such as : ( Punyanubhab, 1980, Payutto, 1985, pp. 186 - 7, 282 - 3 )

1. It is cause and effect. The effect is not to depend upon some mysterious power, or not by chance.

2. Three characteristics of existence to be born in Buddhist mind are impermanence, instability, conflict, and soulessness.

3. Three successive steps of practice in Buddhism are : morality, concentration, and wisdom.

4. The model of good man in society is composed of : ( 1 ) knowing the cause, ( 2 ) knowing the consequence, ( 3 ) knowing oneself, ( 4 ) knowing how to be temperate, ( 5 ) knowing the proper time, ( 6 ) knowing the society, ( 7 ) knowing the different individuals.

5. The Four bases of success are : ( 1 ) aspiration, ( 2 ) effort, ( 3 ) thoughtfulness, ( 4 ) exercise the power of thought.

6. A progress involves continuing efforts in acquiring for knowledge, experiences and skill in work, and getting support from others. Obstacles and conflicts are the means by which spiritual growth can be attained.

7. The self - help behavior of Buddhist life concerns on : ( 1 ) keep moral habits, ( 2 ) associate with good people, ( 3 ) to be great learning and understanding, ( 4 ) able to deal with correction, ( 5 ) diligence and willingness to give help to others, ( 6 ) love of truth, ( 7 ) willing to give constant affort to win success, ( 8 ) satisfy with what one has, ( 9 ) give thought and attention to what has been done and spoken, ( 10 ) have wisdom and understanding reality.

8. Some significant behaviors of Buddhist life concerning on : ( 1 ) loving sympathy, ( 2 ) gratitude, ( 3 ) diligence, ( 4 ) freedom, ( 5 ) broad - mindedness, ( 6 ) having the art of prevention, ( 7 ) having the art of avoidance, ( 8 ) no self - cartred desires, ( 9 ) compassion on all beings, and ( 10 ) self - correction

9. " The Middle Way " is a way of life.

10. Those who do good are to receive good, while those who do evil are similarly to receive evil.

11. Fighting evil with good, counteracting hatred with love and neutralizing anger with forgiveness.

### **The relationship between religions and society**

The role of religious to the society may be classified as : ( 1 ) The explanation of truth such as human life, faith, human suffering, everyday living, and mental training etc.; ( 2 ) Establishment the philosophy to support the basic organizations in creating social values, belief in order to make the government the way to lead a nation to prosperity; ( 3 ) Creating the mental accomplishment for individuals in acting wisely, ( 4 ) Unity the sub social systems such as cultural system, belief, social values, integrated together and bring it to the national development. ( Suksamran, 1986, pp. 19 - 20 )

Generally the monks depend wholly on the material support given by the people; the people rely on the monks' spiritual guidance; and from the religious role and status the monk gain their prestige and respect. ( Suksamran, 1977, p. 11 )

### **Buddhist monk's secular role in Thailand**

The secular role of the Sangha may be classified as follows : ( Suksamran, 1977, pp. 11 - 17, 63 )

**1. Educational role.** In the former days, when the school system in the modern sense had not been set up, the monks were regarded as the most important teachers, and the temple was the major educational institution where both religions and secular subjects were taught. This role gradually declined when the state educational system was introduced in the 1870's and 1880's. Since 1932, the state educational system has rapidly expanded, and the monks have lost their vital secular function as teachers of the young, and also lost some of their contact with young members of the rural society.

**2. Communication role.** The monks had performed this role in the past well according to the transitional society of rural Thai. Before

1950's. Thai Villages in different parts tend to have less communication with each other than they have even with urban centres. In such communities the monks prove to be an informative and communicative element according to their often visit to urban areas whenever they can, and monks were also expected to transmit the government's information to the villagers at the same time. However, at the present time, the temple or school in the community still perform this role as centre for communication on line that manage the daily specific information programme of the community to the villagers in proper time.

**3. Counselling role.** The abbot or respected monk in the temple of the village in the North and Northeast is always ask for advice whether it be personal and family problems or communal problems. Some time fortune - telling is a form of counselling even though this is not recognized as a proper practice for a monk but they performed this activity in making anyone who came for counsel feel comfortable and results in a good deed. For making modernization, the monks are closely involved in helping villagers to adapt to the new demands of the modern society. In communal activities, it has been observed that monks give advice, co - operate, and participate in these affairs. The monks could be seen helping the villagers in the construction of a village well, the building of a bridge or a small dam, repairing a public meeting hall or a school, the laying of a new road or the maintenance of existing ones. In such activities, whether it was villagers' own needs or government's direction, the monks would have been consulted before work commences. Apart from giving advice, co - operation and participation in communal activities, the monks themselves often initiate a new community development and under take the role of organizers such as the idea of and organized the villagers in building a village road or idea for extra fund raising in addition to the

government subsidy to expand the old school, etc. The monks are sometimes consulted on political issues particularly at such times as elections, though they are not supposed to take part or take sides in the politics.

**4. Role as arbitrator.** An abbot or a respected monk sometimes serves the community as an arbitrator when minor disputes, which are open to compromise and do not seriously violate the laws, occur among villagers.

To keep on the secular role for the community, Mahachulalongkorn and Mahamakut Buddhist universities have initiated training programmes, called "The Project for the Participation of Monk - Graduates in Up - Country Buddhist Activities", and "the Project for Encouraging the Participation of Monks in Community Development". These programmes wanted to maintain and promote the monks's status as refuge of the people by providing them with religious education and general knowledge concerning community development, and also to promote unity among Thai people, at the same time to encourage monks to participate in community development and thus help existing community development programmes to achieve their aims.

## METHODOLOGY

### Population and sampling method

To study the role of Buddhism especially the famous abbot in rural development, the population of this study concerned the related groups as followed :

1. The famous abbots in north - eastern ( 5 provinces, 8 monks ) and northern provinces ( 16 provinces, 125 monks ). Used one criterion to select only monks who conducted the secular programme before 1987. Therefore the selected abbots were 85 monks ( 77 abbots in 16 north - eastern provinces and 8 abbots in 5 northern provinces ).

2. The community development provincial heads together with agricultural extension provincial heads ( 16 persons each in 16 north - eastern provinces, and 17 persons each in 17 northern provinces ) and also their deputy were the population of this study. Therefore, the subjects of this study were 132 governmental officials in 33 provinces.

3. In this study it was needed to compare the opinion among the monks, the government officials and the local people. Therefore, another group of population of this study were those in poverty areas of 2 villages in north - eastern provinces and one village in northern province. ( about 30 - 50 persons from each village which selected only ones who were the target group of the abbot for secular programmes ). This subjects were evaluated on the outcomes of the programme.

Another group of population belonged to the local people in 3 provinces ( 2 provinces in north - eastern and one province in the middle part of the country, simple random sampling for 2 villages in the non - poverty areas and systematic random sampling 20 persons from each of 6 villages of 3 provinces ). Therefore the subjects of this study those belonged to this group were 120 local people. This group will be the respondents of this study to explain the influence of the abbot for the adoption of innovations in comparing with the poverty area people.

### Method of collecting the data

Interviewing schedules were used for the subjects those were local people in 6 provinces ( 3 provinces in non - poverty and the rest in poverty areas ) in October 1987 to April 1988.

Mailed questionnaires were sent to the 85 selected abbots on January 1988 and got feedback only 46 monks ( 54.12% ).

Mailed questionnaire also sent on January 1988 to the provincial heads and their deputies

in community development ( 33 provinces ) and agricultural extension organizations ( 33 provinces ). This study got the respondent on 88 government official ( 66.67% ).

Finally, an assessment of Buddhist monks in this study were made in order to reach some conclusion whether the monks would be one of core persons for organizing whether on the government's policy of rural development, national integration, and social welfare.

### **Analysis of data**

The statistical analysis for this study were : correlation coefficient, analysis of variance, T - test.

### **Hypothesis**

1. There is a significant difference among the opinion score to the understanding on some basic Buddhism knowledge that concerned with the development :

1.1 of the local, people, the abbots, and the government officials;

1.2 of the local people and the government officials;

1.3 of the abbots and the government officials.

2. There is a significant different among the opinion scores of the abbot and government official on the actual and expected role of Samgha ( abbot and " Wat " ) in rural development.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Analysis for general situation concerned Buddhism and rural development**

Before 1960, most of Thai rural areas ( more than 80% out of about 55,000 villages ) were poverty areas which characterized by low production, low incomes and poor welfare facilities.

The local people have little knowledge of modern technology and methods of production. Poor health and of ignorance were other problems of rural society. The success of community development programmes thus relies heavily on village leadership. The abbot of the village temple, therefore, was considered to be one of an informal leader to stimulate and organize local people to cooperate the government programmes or initiated for the community self - help programmes.

Government subdistrict officials who were responsible for rural development programmes then made contacting the abbot to explain the process and the activities of the programmes, to seek advice, at the same time to gather information about the community critical problems and real needs, and more significantly to win the goodwill of the abbot. If the abbot supports the programme, usually he imposes his acceptance to local leaders and other people those come for general consol.

Many reasons that the secular role performed by the monks may be maintained according to :

1. The lack of knowledge and skills in certain fields necessary to the wellbeing of villagers.

2. The minimal extent of government services such as social welfare services and developmental programmes.

### **Some basic background and activities of the abbot in rural development programmes**

The subjects of this study were 42 abbots in north - eastern provinces ( 14 provinces ) and 4 abbots from northern provinces ( 4 provinces ) of Thailand.

The mean age of this group was 51.1, while the eldest one was 76 and the youngest one was 37 years old. The mode of age belonged to two groups together 46 - 50 and 61 - 65 years. However, the average year of being monkhood was 29.01 years.

The average programme per one abbot for rural development was 3.47 programmes. Each programme had the average cost of approximately 16,132 Baht. Therefore each abbot may contribute to the local fund and government budget toward the programme of approximately 55,978 Baht in rural development programme in 1988.

Table 1 showed that the major activities of the abbot was in the spiritual development and secular programmes.

For spiritual development the target groups belong to youth group and the interested persons.

However, one programme as " Moral Land and Golden Land ", the abbots worked as core person to coordinate the government programme to be trained at their " Wat " and the abbot was lecturer of this programme.

In occupational training programme, it was two kinds of programme : agricultural and non - agricultural training programme. Most of the programme, the budget came from the government subsidy and the abbots worked as stimulators, organizers and coordinators to manage the programme centred at " Wat ". For non - agricultural programmes, there were

**Table 1 Rural development activities and programme of the abbots in north - eastern and northern provinces of Thailand in 1988.**

Activities	Begining year	No. of Project	Cost per project ( baht )	Target group per project
<b>Spiritual development</b>				
(1) Buddhist Sunday School for Youth and Others	1975	6	7,400	270
(2) Youth for spiritual development ( diligence, avoid alcohol and gambling )	1987	3	3,000	200
(3) " Moral Land and Golden Land " ( Spiritual development for diligence, cooperation, saving, and preventing from alcohol and gambling )	1982	11	25,666	2,028
(4) Radio - broadcasting programme	1975, 1978	3	—	10,000 persons
<b>Occupational Development</b>				
<b>A. Agricultural demonstration &amp; training.</b>				
(1) Farmers group of Buddhist	1987	1	25,000	2,600 persons
(2) Fish raising	1985	3	16,166	38 farmers
(3) School fish pond	1985	2	30,000	50 students
(4) School poultry raising	1983	4	19,000	29 students
(5) Vegetable, fruit - tree, and bamboo planting	1975	6	2,750 - 80,000	28 farmers
(6) Mushroom culture training	1987	3	17,750	27 farmers
(7) Forest conservation project	1982	4	2,180	all of villagers
(8) Wild animal breeder method	1987	1	5,000	15 students

Activities	Begining year	No. of Project	Cost per project ( baht )	Target group per project
<b>B. Non - agricultural occupation</b>				
(1) Sawing training	1986	2	50,000	50 persons
(2) Flower by handmaking training	1986	2	3,500	38 housewives
(3) Local weaving training	1982	4	6,500	37 housewives
(4) Wickerwork training	1987	1	3,000	29 youths
(5) Lacquer ware training	1987	1	5,500	18 youths
(6) Colour painting technique training	1987	1	3,000	20 persons
(7) Precious stone cutting school	1985	1	200,000	126 families
(8) Electronic school	1987	3	10,000	20 persons
(9) Cement brick making	1986	1	5,000	50 persons
(10) Community Rice Mill	1987	1	100,000	45
<b>Social services project</b>				
(1) Amplifier on line of the village information centre	1981	2	10,000	170 families
(2) Village library at " Wat "	1982	4	35,500	1,396 persons
(3) Home - Wat - School integration project for occupational & spiritual development	1987	2	50,000	130 families
(4) Primary health care project ( water container, latrine, and mul - nutrition prevention )	1982	5	5,000	74 families
(5) Herbal medicines curing and herval planting	1984	3	2,500	100 persons
(6) Long term credit for occupation ( tricycle workers )	1987	1	30,000	2 - 6 workers
<b>Organizers for community fund</b>				
(1) Cow - Buffalo for the poor	1982	2	200,000 ( govt. )	250 families
		2	14,000 ( Wat )	2 families
(2) Paddy Bank for the poor	1982	6	5,000	30 - 35 families
(3) Community fund for poor student's lunch	1982	1	50,000	350 students
(4) Credit Union for the community retail store	1982	3	50,000	120 families
(5) Community development fund ( i, e. medicine fund )	1987	2	20,000	150 families
(6) School cooperative	1982	1	10,000	250 students
<b>Cultural programme</b>				
(1) Store house for Pali text on palm - leaves	1987	1	5,000	—
<b>Social welfare programmes</b>				
(1) Pre - school nursery	1974	7	17,166	79 children
(2) Basic needs for the old citizen	1987	1	5,000	150 persons

many kinds of training, which depended upon the existing resources and demand of the market, such as precious stone cutting, electronic techniques, flower handmaking, sawing, etc. And sometime "Wat" stimulated the farmers to be business men by setting community rice mill at "Wat" too.

For social service project, "Wat" worked as an information centre, primary health care centre as many programmes concerned as listed in Table 1.

Abbots also worked as community fund raisers. There were many governmental programmes that used "Wat" as the centre of community fund, or either the abbots were the ones who initiated to organize such community fund such as : Cow - buffalo for the poor, paddy bank for the poor, community fund for poor student's lunch, credit unit for community retailstore, community development fund and school cooperative, etc.

The abbots also performed the cultural programme and social welfare as listed in Table 1.

Major three sources of budget of rural development programme managed by the abbots came from: (a) special government budget or subsidy from the government, (b) the rich and other people donated to "Wat", and (c) NGOs such as Asia Foundation.

The roles of Buddhist monks however may be depended on the situation in the local community regardless of the poverty or non-poverty areas. In the non-poverty area, the people expected that the abbot would be centred for ceremonial activities and transfer the reality of Buddha teaching to them. However, in the poverty areas various help from the monk to have additional roles in community development was needed. Anyway, it depended on the ability of those active monks themselves in making voluntary participation for the local people in performing the social development roles of the community.

### **The reasons of performing secular programme of the abbots**

Many reasons of the abbots expressed in concerning with the performing of secular programme in Thai rural development were :

The people were poor, they needed help not only for the spiritual development but the material development for their higher incomes and improving quality of life.

Many abbot were community - mind centre and the government official needed help for core persons who can stimulate, persuade, and organize people to accept the innovations. At the sametime the "Wat" were centred of community affairs which had many areas of land that can arrange any communal activities. Then many abbots were willing to help the government agencies to perform those duties as the village core persons.

"Wat" in the poverty areas may be an appropriate centre for continuing education. Either the agricultural or non-agricultural curriculum which needed in the community way and arranged by stimulating the organization of the capability abbot. The abbot worked as the manager that need not to have a deep knowledge for that curriculum, but can help for the additional curriculum as spiritual development.

"Wat" as the centre of secular training and services may help the local ones to develop their self-reliance in the right way of being the balance between the material and spiritual development.

Many programmes aimed at the local youth for the future change of Thai society in becoming the newly agro-industrial country. The non-agricultural programmes help the youth to prepare themselves for sideline occupation besides agricultural occupation. Therefore, the semi-skilled labor in non-agricultural sectors were increased automatically especially the independent entrepreneurship.

### The outcomes of abbot performance

The analysis of this part concerned the data in Table 1 and the supported data that collected from 6 villages of poverty and non - poverty areas in 3 provinces (  $N = 120$  ). The additional data came from 3 villages of the other 3 provinces (  $N = 183$  ).

The results may be summarized as follows :

1. Generally the abbot's performance had the influence only in spiritual development. The data in 6 villages (  $N = 120$  ) show that the abbot worked as the influencial person only in spiritual development ( rank no. 1 ), and some in the performance of organizer for community participation ( rank no. 6 )( more detail in Table 2 ). Therefore, very few villages that the capable abbot performed the significant change as indicated in Table 2, and we could not directly weight how many per cent came from the abbot's performance.

2. For those areas that had the famous abbot who devoted themselves for the rural development, it showed the outcome of the performance to those target groups. However, those secular

programmes of the abbot were subsidy from the government budget, and the abbots worked as a consultant to stimulate and persuade the local people to participate and used the " Wat " as a centre for continuing education and other activities. Anyway, the outcomes of abbots performance mainly aimed either spiritual development or anti - poverty programmes. So their income and quality of life would be improved.

3. In the areas that the abbots had influenced ( as seen in Table 1 ), the answer concerning of the direct outcomes of the abbot's role was significantly changed in the opinion scores before having the programmes and the present understanding of some knowledge in Buddhism. ( as seen in Table 3 )(  $F = 5.83$ , d.f. 1, 24, sig. at  $p = 0.05$  ). However, in evaluating outcomes of the secular programme of the monks, the local people could not answer clearly according to the short duration in applying to their occupation, and could not exactly pointed how much of its sharing in the benefit of doing those things. However, they thought that it had the impact in total human development.

**Table 2 The influence sources for adoption of innovations in Thai rural areas in 1988.**

Influence Sources	Agricultural innovations		Spiritual development ( $N = 120$ )		Organizer for comm. participation	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
(1) Extension workers	72.5	1	—	—	46.7	4
(2) Community Devt. Workers	35.0	4	—	—	96.7	1
(3) Local teachers	14.2	9	49.2	2	19.2	7
(4) Sub - district committee	15.0	8	—	—	51.7	3
(5) Village committee	26.7	5	12.5	4	80.0	2
(6) Farmer's organization	26.7	5	—	—	30.0	5
(7) Local store ( i.e. fertilizer store )	55.83	2	—	—	—	—
(8) Neighbor	37.5	3	6.7	5	19.2	7
(9) The abbot	5.8	10	93.3	1	29.2	6
(10) Mass media	19.1	7	15.0	3	—	—

### **Comparison of the opinions of three sample groups on the understanding of Buddhism**

There are some misunderstanding on the concepts of Buddhism thus become the barrier in development. Therefore, it was necessary to find out some opinions among 3 sample groups : the local people (  $N = 183$  ), the abbots (  $N = 46$  ), and the government officials (  $N = 88$  ) ( C.D. provincial officers, agricultural extension provincial officers and their deputy in 36 provinces )

The result showed in Table 3 as follows :

1. There were not significant different among the opinion of the 3 sample groups in understanding of some Buddhism knowledge. (  $F = 1.6755$ , d.f. = 2, 36, N.S. at  $p = 0.05$  )

2. There was not significant difference between the opinion of 2 - sample groups ( government officials and local people ) (  $F = 1.6704$ , d.f. = 1, 24, N.S. at  $p = 0.05$  ). Also there was not significant difference between the opinion of 2 sample groups ( government officials and the abbots ) (  $F = 0.9421$ , d.f. = 1, 24, N.S. at  $p = 0.05$  )

Therefore, it was rejected the hypothesis I.

However, it was noted that in some items such as 1, 2, 3, 6 the opinion scores of the local people were quite different from the government official. It was noticed that all of these items might be the barrier in rural development according to the belief of the local people. ( more detail in Table 3 ).

Then it is a role of the abbot to make the people understood in the following thinking :

1. Human is born for doing good volition instead of born for compensation of good and bad volition in last life.

2. Ones who are poor not because of their insufficient in making merit of last life but mostly depend upon the lack of continuing effort to do the good thing at this life.

3. We are rich and wealthy not depend upon the mysterious power or by chance, but by ourselves in doing things and get support from the others.

4. Hanging a small Buddha image probably not to protect us from danger, but hanging for the purpose of a means for mind - centre.

### **Comparison the samples' opinions for actual and expected role of Buddhism in Thai rural development**

The results showed in table 4 may be summarized as :

1. There was significant difference between the opinion scores on the actual role of " the Sangha " of the abbots (  $N = 46$  ) and the government officials. (  $N = 88$  ) ( those are provincial community development workers and provincial agricultural extension workers ) (  $F = 6.8119$ , d.f. = 1, 20, Sig. at  $p = 0.05$  ) Therefore, hypotheses no. 2.1 was accepted.

2. There was not significant difference between the opinion score for the expected role of " the Sangha " between the abbots and the government officials. (  $F = 3.3603$ , d.f. = 1, 20, N.S. ) Therefore, hypotheses no. 2.1 was rejected.

This results may be explained as follows :

1. Both groups thought that the expected role of " Wat " ( temple ) were from higher scores to the lower ones : ( 1 ) is centre for moral teaching; ( 2 ) is an important place for guidance on the way of life to meet progress and happiness; ( 3 ) is Buddhist Sunday school for the young; ( 4 ) is a store house for keeping communal equipments for ceremony; ( 5 ) is centre for village library; ( 6 ) is the community recreation areas, forest and environment conservation; ( 7 ) is a sociocultural centre; ( 8 ) is a centre for public relations though amplifier on line; ( 9 ) is a centre for local performance in using hall as meeting place; ( 10 ) is a place

**Table 3 Comparison of the opinion of the local people, the abbots and the government officials on the understand of Buddhism.**

Items	Opinion		
	Local people ( N = 183 )	Abbot ( N = 46 )	Government officials ( N = 88 )
(1)* Human being is born compensation of good and bad volition in last life more than for doing good volition.	4.10	2.71	2.25
(2)* Ones who are not rich because of insufficient in making merit of last life. Therefore, we should make more merit action to receive better life.	4.58	3.77	2.59
(3) It depends upon of the mysterious power or by chance that we are rich and wealthy.	3.89	1.92	1.99
(4)* Animal raising for the purpose of selling, and we know those will be killed by someones for human food, it is sin in this case.	2.77	3.32	2.48
(5) Those who do good are to receive good, while those who do evil are similarly to receive unhappiness in the present life, not waiting for next life.	4.78	4.75	4.71
(6)* Hanging a small Buddha image can protect us from danger.	4.25	2.15	2.14
(7)* Having conflict, after put some effort and could not win it, we should let it be according to compensate the bad actions done in last life.	2.84	3.83	2.46
(8) Either rich or poor, everyone is equal of human being.	3.75	4.60	4.71
(9) Having merit activities at the temple, it is not only for the senior ones but also the younger ones too.	1.28	1.31	1.42
(10)* Meditation practice is an absolute solution for failure in occupational management or other conflict, there is no need to consider cause and effect and then get proper solution.	2.74	3.35	2.10
(11) Merit actions make the same consequence whether we conduct to the monks or to the poor that needed critical help.	4.23	4.31	4.78
(12) At the present time, most of the abbots and monks devoted their life for people and are mind - centre of rural people.	4.60	4.18	3.19
(13) Impermanence is reality, the conflict will come continuously even we have proper solution to each one, the difficulty and complexity will come more and more.	4.37	4.35	3.38

Using analysis of variance :

 $F_1$  ( Among 3 groups ) = 1.6755, d.f. = 2, 36, N.S. $F_2$  ( Between govt. officials and local people ) = 1.6704, d.f. = 1, 24, N.S. $F_3$  ( Between govt. officials and abbot ) = 0.9421, d.f. = 1, 24, N.S.**Note:** Opinion score has 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, which means strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, strongly disagree.

for social welfare which depends upon existing resources.

However, the government official did not prefer that " Wat " should perform the primary health care, while the abbot still thought that " Wat " may perform this role too. ( the opinion score = 4.6 out of 6.0 )

2. For the actual role of " Wat ", 2 sample groups were quite different in their opinions. The government official thought that the role of " Wat " that the abbot actually did it well were : ( from the higher score to the lower ones ) ( 1 ) Wat as a store house for communal equipment; ( 2 ) as a centre for spiritual development; ( 3 ) as a guidance place for the way of life to meet progress and happiness; ( 4 ) as a recreation areas; ( 5 ) centre for public relations. Anyway, they thought that the actual performance of " Wat " at present could not do the following role as well as expected: ( 1 ) " Wat " as Buddhist Sunday School for the youth; ( 2 ) as a centre for village library; ( 3 ) as a place for social welfare; as a socio - cultural centre; as centre for using " Wat " as a meeting place.

The additional find out of related the " Wat " role in rural development may be showed as following :

1. The temple or " Wat " is the next most important institution in Thai rural life. " Wat " as a symbol of the commitment of the people to Buddhism and as the core of village unity. The social life of the village involves around the " Wat ". The " Wat " perform other functions for its people, reinforces or creates bonds between individuals.

2. The abbots in poverty areas should perform their roles centre on spiritual development. For the secular role the monk may perform as the stimulator, organizer for the community participation in the government programmes.

The abbot may create their necessary secular programme without getting the subsidy from the government. For social welfare programmes, it depends upon the existing condition of the community in needed for that help.

3. Only the capability and famous abbots may well perform secular role, not all of them in every villages can do. It is the responsibility of the government agency to take care in selecting only the readiness ones to perform their duties as core persons in the village.

4. It is a role of " Wat " to help the local people, not only the local people to give their money to " Wat " for ceremony. Therefore, " Wat " should manage the budget in making the benefit to the local ones in secular programmes too.

### **Applying some concepts of Buddhism for social development schemes**

Buddha teaching is accepted as scientific concept. Therefore, in rural development schemes in Thailand there are many strategies applied from Buddhism for human development schemes.<sup>1</sup>

However, in this study it was aimed to analyse and applied the concepts concerned only the role of the abbot in supporting the rural development programmes.

Some basic related concepted may be classified and applied to be used in social development programmes as follows :

1. The concept of self - help. The application of this concept from Buddha teaching when integrated to the rural development process may be as a model below :

2. Some Buddha teaching and concepts should be clarified and make understood either or be the barried in development. Those concepts such as :

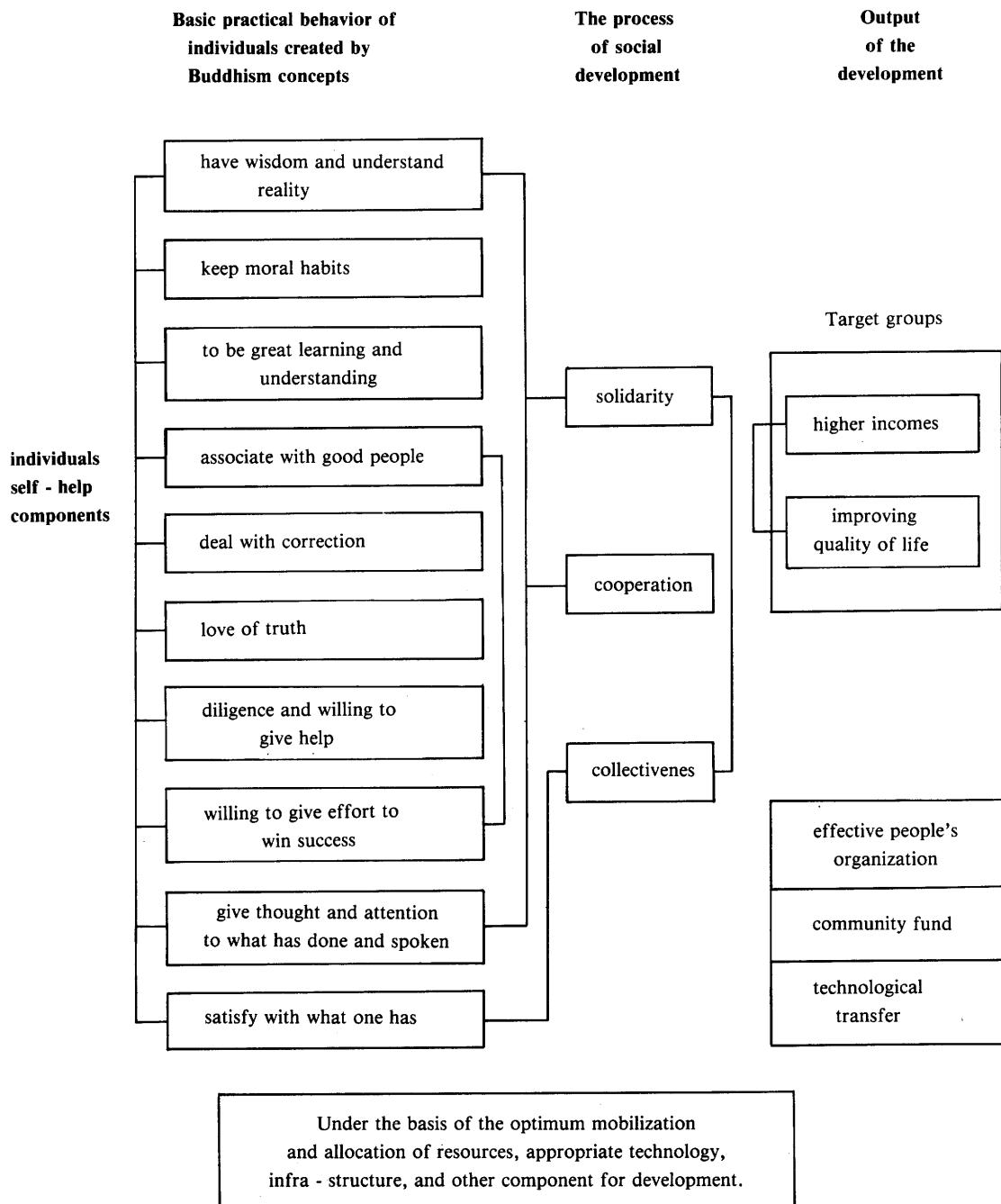
<sup>1</sup> More detail in Rerkrai, Direk ( 1987 ), *Applying Buddhism Concepts in Improving Quality of Life Schemes in Thailand*. Kasetsart J. ( Social Sci. ) 8 (2) : 143 - 154.

**Table 4 Comparison the opinions between the abbots and the government officials for the actual and expected of Buddhism in development.**

Items	Opinion Scores	
	Abbot ( N = 46 )	Government officials ( N = 88 )
(1) " Wat " is a centre for moral teaching for people to do good things and prevent from those evil.	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.58 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.75	4.19 5.69
(2) " Wat " is a Buddhist Sunday School to uplift the young generation's morality by training and instructing them to understand and direct their lives in accordance with Dhamma.	<u>Actual Role</u> 4.13 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.47	2.83 5.14
(3) " Wat " should have an activity as a communal library and have various kinds of back in secular too.	<u>Actual Role</u> 4.94 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.74	2.53 4.95
(4) " Wat " may be used for primary health care centre, or curing drug addiction, or producing herbal medicines, etc.	<u>Actual Role</u> 3.63 <u>Exp. Role</u> 4.60	2.35 2.75
(5) " Wat " has a role as a store house for keeping community valuable properties and also communal equipments for ceremony.	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.47 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.44	4.77 5.00
(6) " Wat " should perform the social welfare roles which depends upon the existing resources and capability of monks concerned. Those activities such as temporally dormitory for the traveller, nursery centre for 3 - 5 years children, etc.	<u>Actual Role</u> 4.43 <u>Exp. Role</u> 4.87	2.30 3.74
(7) " Wat " is community recreation areas, forest and environmental conservation for the village.	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.09 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.37	3.54 5.06
(8) " Wat " is a socio - cultural centre and keeping antiques, and having fair for villagers express their common social and cultural membership.	<u>Actual Role</u> 4.52 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.29	3.00 4.95
(9) " Wat " is a centre for public relations, and communication by amplifier on line channel.	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.14 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.47	3.46 4.84
(10) " Wat " is centre for local administrative performance where the government officials and village committee and local leaders use as a meeting hall and for various purpose.	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.53 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.65	3.11 4.22
(11) " Wat " is an important place for guidance on the way of life to meet progress and happiness	<u>Actual Role</u> 5.78 <u>Exp. Role</u> 5.75	4.14 5.52

Opinion to actual role,  $F = 6.8119$ , d.f. 1, 20, Sig. at  $p = 0.05$ Opinion to expected role,  $F = 3.3603$ , d.f. 1, 20, N.S.

Noted : Opinion score ranges from 6 - 1 which means strongly agree to strongly disagree.

**Noted**

**Solidarity** means unity resulting from common problems, needs and interests of the people.

**Cooperation** means a group working together for a common purpose and manage by their specialization and responsibility to the group.

**Collectiveness** means a group that work together and sharing the benefit according to the capability and devotion to the group.

2.1 "Satisfy with what one has" should be explained that it is not to eliminate the human aspiration but make him to aware about the present and put continuous effort to win the success little by little.

2.2 Those who are poor not because of their results in last life, we can be wealthy and happiness if we do good and prevent evil. The monk should teach the local people that our progress and success not depend upon on the mysterious power or chance, but ours. That we have to put more effort and direct way to win.

2.3 The society has a continuous change, it is impermanency. Therefore, human being should adjust himself to the changing condition. All compound things, e.g. life, position, wealth, health, etc. are subject to change, decay and disintegration, that there is suffering in assuming that these things belong to or are parts of the self. Actuality there is no self or soul. By this teaching, ones should set our target of life by looking present as the basis for change. The impact of adapting ours to have the equilibrium to the society should be the benefit to other people who needed help.

2.4 The understanding of animal raising occupation is right livelihood; is not a sin if we do not kill the animal, makes misunderstood to the Buddhist that they would be sin if the animal raising for consumption purposes, therefore, it is a barrier in development process, then the monks have to make understood.

### **Implication of the study**

This implication is based on the assumption that the leaders of Thailand have various reasons used Buddhism and the monks especially in rural poverty areas as a means for modernizing the country; such as the formulation the policy of national integration based on Buddhism values. Buddhism also have the potential to spiritual development.

The results of this study, may have some important suggestions as follows :

1. Rural development is the balance between material and human development. Government organizations, that is responsible for rural development schemes, together with the Sangha step by step, research and development for the applying Buddhism concept to integrate the human development strategies for socio - economic development programmes in rural poverty areas.

2. "Wat" may perform the secular role as village continuing education centre and the abbot works as the consultant of government training programme. By this role, the abbot may work as core person to stimulate, persuade, and organize interest people especially the out - of - school youth to learn by doing programme.

3. The monks should concentrate their primary role in teaching people to do good and prevent from evil. The secular role may be conducted in the basis of stimulating, and organizing the rural poor to help themselves mobilizing and utilizing local resources. However, the social welfare role still needed for any age - group, especially for the poorer ones by persuading the rich to give more helping hand.

4. Fund raising from "Wat" should be managed by the abbot in order to make the solidarity and cooperation among the rural poor, and also make their output for income improvement and higher quality of life, instead of spending a lot of money for building the high cost of beautiful church. Quality of life that the abbot may use the "Wat" fund to manage such as : food, housing and environment, social services, community participation for development, and spiritual development.

5. The beneficiary of the development by the abbot in the community should be collective concept not only benefit to all local people, but gear firstly to the poorest who could not help themselves. Therefore, any secular activities of the "Wat" ( temple ) should provide the

poor ones, the opportunity to mobilize and utilize the communal existing resources. It should be aware that, the programmes will not be arranged in accordance with the extent of abbot empire.

6. The pattern of doing secular role should centre on the activities such as : ( 1 ) The abbot is one of the stimulators and organizers in arranging socio - economic pressure group, which depends upon their needs and problems. ( 2 ) The " Wat " is probably a centre for information transfer, especially community amplifier on line which equipment providing by " Wat " but manage by Village Committee. " Wat " also may be a cultural centre, temporary dormitory service for the traveller, and using " Wat " hall as a communal hall for doing any village activities.

#### LITERATURE CITED

Bhavilai, Ravi. 1967. *Buddhism in Thailand*. Bangkok : SEATO.

Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai. 1981. *The Teaching of Buddha*. Tokyo : Kasaido Printing Co., Ltd.

National Identity Board. Thailand. 1982. *Thailand 1982 : Plan. Problems and Prospects*. Bangkok : Graphic Art Pub.

Payutto, Prayut. 1970. *The Role of the Monk in Thai Society in Buddhism and Thai Society* ( in Thai ). Bangkok : Sivaporn Press, cited from Suksamran, Somboon. 1977. *Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia*. New York : St. Martin's Press, pp. 19 - 20.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *Dictionary of Buddhism*. Bangkok : Mahajulalongkorn.

Punyanubhab, Sujib. 1980. *Some Prominent Characteristics of Buddhism*, cited from Punyasingh, Temsiri ed. 1981. *Buddhism in Thai Life*, second edition Bangkok : Amarin Press.

Suksamran, Somboon. 1977. *Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia : The Role of the Sangha in the Modernization of Thailand*. New York : St. Martin's Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1986. *The Development by Buddhism Approach Case Study of the Social Development Monk*. Thailand : Pimsuay Pub.