

## BUDDHIST ECONOMICS FOR SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN THAI SOCIETY

**Phra Theppavaramethi<sup>[1]</sup>**

**Lampong Klomkul<sup>[2]\*</sup>**

Faculty of Buddhism, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand<sup>[1]</sup>

Faculty of Education, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand<sup>[2]</sup>

\*Corresponding E-mail: research.mcu@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this article was to study the concept of Buddhist economics for sustainability development. Documentary study was used for the study and was presented in descriptive writing. Results indicated that economic development was the concept of original economic which showed the development under the demand more than supply. Therefore, the new concept of balanced economy for sufficiency called "Buddhist Economics" was presented by applying the middle way from Buddhist principle and the philosophy of sufficiency economy that was given by King Rama IX. These concepts have been encouraging and applying in practical way and to promote to be best practice. Sufficiency economy has been applied for sustainable development under the transformation of capital in macroeconomic that was appeared in Thai society of many previous years.*

### Keywords

Buddhist Economics, Sustainability Development, Thai Society

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of "sufficiency economy" initiated by King Bhumibol is being known as a model of economic society in Thailand for balanced adjustment of lifestyle. Considering in the wide view of Buddhist scholars, they have tried applying Buddhist principles to be "Buddhist Economics". Buddhist economics is the concept of applying Buddhist principles into economy in order to study about human behavior conducting economic activities in middle way following the natural law for human development. There are many scholars who have tried to propose the concept "Buddhist Economics" and linked into practices systematically such as E. F. Schumacher from Germany who presented it in a book called "Small Is Beautiful : A study of Economics as if people mattered" (E. F. Schumacher, 1911-1977). The first content is said "Buddhist Economics" which brought from the Buddha teaching to put into the introduction part of the book. In 1981, Somboon Supasin wrote a book called "Small and Significant: Buddhist Economics", and is being translated by Kasin Cheppensuk in 2006 to be called "Charming Small Economic Education for Human Centered". Many books and articles are published lead to high interesting in Buddhist economics including the crisis situation occurred that only the main economics cannot solve the problem. The new concept of sustainable development concerning on environment and nature to contribute the most important value for human development.

The concept of Buddhist economic organization that try to propose the alternative way of framework is "balance, sufficient and happy", it might be called only the concept such as the theory of "Middle way economy" by P.A. Payutto, the concept of "Sufficiency economy" by King Bhumibol, the concept of "Dhammika - Socialism" by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, and the concept of "Buddhist Economics" by Phramaha

Vuthichai Vachiramethi and Apichai Puntasen. These concepts reflected the truth of sufficiency, balance and middle way as the alternative way for consumption towards balanced sufficiency. Balanced sufficiency is to live together without encroachment following Buddhist principles including the encouragement of living together with peace under the balanced life. Moreover, Phramaha Vuthichai Vachiramethi has also proposed the concept of Buddhist economics and established "Buddhist Economics College" for the community in order to guide the approach for people in the society. The concept has been changed into practice and related to people lives in the community such as encourage them for self-reliance, use organic agricultural methods and to apply agriculture for life balanced life and correlates to the nature without conflict with the nature. Stability of life and living with happiness integrating with religious concept will lead the clearly way of practice. This article is to study an overall concept of Buddhist Economics for the development of Thai society in the current context.

### BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES TO ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

There are many cases of concepts and Buddhist principles that related to economics such as balanced consumption (middle path) means good behavior of trading without taking advantage of nature and human. The nature of consumption with 4 basic needs will show compassion that Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) proposed the word called "Buddhist Economics" or "Middle Path Economics". According to his teaching, he has given another meaning is "do not have self-encroachment, do not encroach to others" that are not only human, but also include all living things in the environment. There are three compositions that normally being with each other which are human, nature and society or

it is being called “ecosystem”. In term of economy of human following middle way economics, it should not be self-encroachment. On the other hand, it should be the way of life development for the quality of life in the society.

In the main-stream economy that is developed from western civilization and the needs of human is unlimited related to Buddhist proverb called “Natti Tunha Sama Nati” that means there is no any river in the same level of passion which divided into 2 aspects in term of the main-stream economy in Buddhist economics.

1. The main-stream economy is unlimited demand that never change for all people, and it seems to be forever. On the other hand, Buddhist economics scope that the need of people may cause suffering. Therefore, the best way to decrease it is trying to find the direction to reduce passion until decreasingly relating to the Buddhist belief that human can develop themselves from living in passion into life with wisdom. The main-stream economy also focuses on the power of authority while

Buddhist economics has divided need into two aspects which are passion (Thanha) and aspiration (Chanda) and focus on the way of solving problem by reducing passion and enhancing aspiration. Therefore, Buddhist economics focuses on balanced living with sufficiency life for appropriate movement under the usefulness of life and consume with fairness.

2. The Alternative Economy is the concept of profit and loss. However, the current concept of economics that does not focus on profit and loss occurs in the society such as sharing profit to the society or social responsibility. This concept will link to the social movement for Sustainability Development.

Buddhist Concept for supporting mechanism of alternative economy is as follows:

1. The concept of 4 basic needs in Buddhism is the consumption through 4 basic needs to reflect only the important and needs for life under the conditions of human to be survived with balanced living consisted of air, water, food and shelter. In Buddhist pray has shown the intention of consumption, target and method of consumption. Therefore, people eat for health more than eat for eating which shows in the pray script called “Aphinha”. This is the reflection of idea of consumption following Buddhist principles based on 4 basic needs that is the consumption for balanced and sufficiency life.

2. The concept of self-reliance appears in Buddhist principles in many dimensions which showed from many Buddhist scholars who applied this concept into practice in the community. There are some academic article showed the result of practicing that belongs to Photirak called “Self-Sufficient in form of Buddhist Agriculture in Salee-Asoke Community, Paisalee, Nakornsawan” (Hathairat Chanvikarn, 2015), the self-reliant encouragement is also being used at Wat Suan Kaew which belongs to Phra Payom Kalayano called “The Role of Suan Kaew Monk as the Social Entrepreneur: Case Study of Suan Kaew Temple, Changwat Nonthaburi” (Wannaporn Nokyai, 2012). Moreover, the community enterprise encouragement that belongs to Phra Subin Panito from Wat Phailom, Trat Provinve has appeared in the article called “An Analytical Study of Phra Subin Paneeto’s Role in SACCA SASOMSAP Group, TRAT Province” (Pramote Yotkaew, 2013), and the article of

Ajanh Manat from Wat Phothong, Chantaburi Province called “The Role of Leader for Promotion of Community Welfare in Wat Kamong Sajchasasomsup Group, Kamong Subdistrict, Tha Mai District, Chunthaburi Province” (Phra Banpot Vanalainivej, 2010)

The main idea of these books and articles tried to persuade Buddhist people to have self-reliance based on the way of living that correlates to balance and do not encroach. Self-reliance is being used for encouragement people to have the quality of life by using the process of resource management including make moral profit to support each other within group or community with the concept of “At-ta-Nata” before request for help or rely on others.

3. The concept of middle way in Buddhist teaching means balance, moderate, sufficiency in consumption as being balanced consumption or the concept of balanced giving. This kind of consumption called an intellectual thinking of consumption and do not come from greedy consumption which will effect an over eating that different from ordinary human. The reflection into practical way from many thinkers from Thai society are presented the concept of balancing in living that appeared from the book of Chai-Anan Samudavanija, (1995) called “Middle Way Theory” (Fuzzy Logic), to propose thing are not different or stay in the opposite, but always stay in the middle focusing on sufficiency and balance. This theory is appropriate for multicultural society and religions because under the condition of various aspects can stay together with the middle way including the political aspect as well. Considering in ancient time of the Buddha period, Prince Sithata had shown a balanced in education. He had never strict himself at studying, and did not relax until lack of studying. Therefore, the Buddhist concept of Middle way is the economic significant that do not relate to over consumption or over the basic needs of human living.

4. The concept of Dhammika - Socialism or Socialism rooted in Dhamma reflected the truth in both principles and guideline for life living. This concept was proposed by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu during the crisis situation on 14 October 1973. He has given the meaning of Dhammika – Socialism that Socialism based on Dhamma or Buddhist principles. The intention of socialism in Buddhism is Dhammika – Socialism that related to the natural truth as follows:

1. Being a Sangha socialism structure
2. Refuse things more than 4 basic needs.
3. The idea of refuse thing is the root of socialism.
4. Human lives and helps each other in the society.
5. There is a kind relationship between people in the community.

Dhammika – Socialism may integrate between political concept and others, but only the consumption in Buddhist context that shows sharing and charity for creating balanced in the community under Sangha concept. This will lead to holistic consumption and initiate life movement, and the main social profit with Buddhist integration is very important.

5. The concept of Sharing (Satharanapoki) in Buddhism is divided into giving, sharing and sacrifice. People all societies must live together with peace under the possible concept, or the possibility of living together in the society. In Buddhist principles, it has shown giving or charity with the meaning of

high moral and sacrifice. From the conclusion in Buddhist context relating to consumption reflects that all concepts in Buddhism focuses on learning, self-development, social development, and the way of living together with balanced and sharing.

### INTEGRATION OF BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES INTO ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

Buddhist Economics means the application of Buddhist thought about human nature to explain principles and concepts of economics. A new approach to understanding economics has been discussed by P.A. Payutto (2001) that economic of Buddhism must be consistent with the process of factors to be fully integrated and having good relationship with all elements in the human existence system. All three elements (Human, Nature, and Society) in existence in human beings must be well-coordinated and the meaning of these elements is harmonized with each other. In existence together, they have been written together in the book called "Buddhist Economics" (2001) by P.A. Payutto. It is the activity that dominates most of human life, and most of the time in human life normally uses in economic activities. In order to give economics with a real value in solving human problems, all economic activities must be provided for eating and distribution. It is an activity to create a quality of life and to develop a good life. We can make every activity in the economy to improve the quality of life at any time, and this is one way to make economics a real value. Buddhadasa (1906-1993) who proposed the concept of economics called "Dhammika-Socialism" that (1) must be for the benefit of the society, (2) not violate the overall benefits of society to "eat with sufficiency, but not eat well with well-being", (3) must respect nature, life and kindness. E.F. Schumacher (1911-1977) presented at the Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered (1973), also known as the Buddhist Economic idea of the Middle Way. In the middle way, we know economics as well as "morality" to contribute to living as a human. Apichai Puntasen (2004) who has given a view that economics is a way of life. He mentioned that "mainstream economics provides insufficient understanding of human affairs. It is a matter of bringing some of the truths of humanity into focus or beyond reality. It leads to the wrong conclusion. He proposed economics as self-reliant and did not take advantage of Buddhism "

Therefore, the concept of Buddhist economics based on Buddhism focuses on human economic behavior and must be in the way that do not overpower and do not spoil the quality of life. However, it is to be in the way to improve the quality of life. If people do not care and do not persecute others, it does not impair the quality of ecosystems or the natural environment. The view in Buddhism shows the economy is focused not only on the object of production, but behind the scenes of production is often overlooked. In fact, the key factor of the economy is human resources and the highest value of human is ethical and moral. This is very important to the economy consisted of moral, moral values and mental values. If economic behavior focuses on production, ethics need to be used for the control and supervision. If not, then it will affect the economy very much. It is the heart of Buddhist economics that emphasizes the balance or the center as well.

### THE CONCEPT OF BUDDHIST ECONOMICS INTEGRATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN THAI SOCIETY

The application of Buddhist economics concept in Thailand is being applied by many Thai scholars such as Aphichai Puntasen who wrote the book called "Buddhist Economics: Buddhist Economics : Evolution, Theories and Its Application to Various Economics Subjects" (2004). Buddhist principles were used for extending the idea of economics as well as other Buddhist scholars who are Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto), Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Payom Kalayano. In addition, it is also shown best practice of the community in a case study of Santi Asoke Community, and the self-reliant communities of Luangpor Nan and Luangpor Kamkhian. These communities are applied Buddhist principles for self-reliant in order to make the strength community which happens in the Savings cooperative group that normally encourage self-reliance for making balance within the community.

In the case of Suwann Panyodhin of Wat Pai Lom, Trat, and the monk, Manus Kiatiyathammo of Wat Pho Thong, Chanthaburi, presented the concept of management through the concept of truth and self-reliance for living together in Buddhist context. In addition, the King has adopted a concept based on Buddhism. In mediocrity, the balance is enough to serve as a framework for Thai society. Many research contexts reflected on economics into practice. According to the research called "The Sufficiency Economy of the King and the Analysis of the Meaning of Economists" (2003) or "The Application of Sufficiency Economy to Small and Medium Enterprises" (2003), "Application of Sufficiency Economy to Small and Medium Enterprises" (2003), and The development of the budgeting system focused on the work of higher education institutions (2003), the synthesis of knowledge about sufficiency economy, etc. These images are one of the successes in the management of community established with the development of another. One is to promote Thai society in holistic way focusing on self-reliance, and to create yourself under the proper coexistence, balanced and co-ordinated in the management.

In Thailand, people may hear the concept of sufficiency economy that his Majesty the King introduced as a "model of economic society" for the solution to the balance of life. If looking at the big picture, there are Buddhist scholars proposed the concept of Buddhism and applied to the studying of human behavior in economic activities by stretching the middle way and following the natural law. In order to develop human life, there are many scholars who try to present the concept. "Buddhist economics" is leading to systematic practice. The idea of the Bureau of Buddhist thought economics which seeks to offer alternatives by framing similar ideas is "balanced" and living a happy life. The presentation of the concept of these scholars may be just such a concept as appeared in the work of Brahma Khunaporn in the Middle Economy. Phramaha Vuttichai Vachiramethi tried to find the idea of "Buddhist Economics and settle" Buddhist Economics College in order to propose the solution to society by applying the concept. This is a good example of how people can become self-reliant including the use of biological farming. Using of subsistence agriculture is to live

a balanced life in harmony with nature. It does not conflict with nature until it becomes a stable of life and a happier life. In addition, the mixing between religious concepts and practices is a clear integration of Buddhist economics that enhance the quality of life for all people who accepted and practice in their daily lives.

The key is to carry out a balanced economic policy without compromising. It is an alternative to consumption and as for the non-persecution based on the Buddhist concept and is consumed according to Buddhist principles. In general, Thai society has an alternative to using self-reliant economics. Economics of balance in Buddhism is not consumed in a competitive way as it appears in the present system of economics. It is believed that the choice and survival of the Thai society in the long run as King Rama IX was made and has been solved for the economy suffers which made the survival of the Thai society in times of crisis as well.

### CONCLUSION

The concept of Buddhist economics is the concept for supporting people to be self-reliant based on Buddhist way by makes balance between production and consumption. This concept is being campaigned to initiate balance under the satisfaction and the sufficiency of lifestyle including the mechanism of management movement in the society in order to support how to live together. In addition, it leads to the management of economy that focuses on the production and link to productive factors supporting to economy, society, culture, and religions integrating with both concept and practice for encouraging people in society. The social members live together based on applying Buddhist principles into practices in order to create a balanced life. Therefore, Buddhist Economics is used for social development is the sufficiency economy to build the framework of life and make a mechanism economic development. Buddhist economics is the mixed concept between economy and Buddhist context focusing on the value system in parallel with value added such as not encroach each other in both direct and indirect ways. Then, the ideal society will be created for the current and future happiness.

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