Women Issue in Pam Bog Village

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Five days being in Pam Bog village. We felt as if we were back in to the past 50 years. The old Thai saying-man is the elephant's front leg, women is only the back ones- is still believed among women in this village. It means that man is leader, woman is only follower. Why do they feel that much inferior? We are going to see.

After few hours talking, sharing ideas with them, we got a lot of accurate informations. Generally, children is Pam Bog village attend school at age of 5 or 6 and leave school quite early at age of 12. Why we said *"quite early"?* According to the government policy, the compulsory education was recently extended from 6 to 9 years. It means, in theory, Thai children must continue their studies till Junior High school but in practice they don't. Main preblem is the lack of teachers and schools in many remote areas. Fortunately, in some villages along the frontier, the border soldiers are teachers at the same time. After leaving school, some boys get a chance going downtown or to big cities to further their studies or be labourer there while girls have no choice due to old social values thai girls need not to have high education. They have to help their family working in the field. Parents rarely let their children out of their sight, particularly daughters. We hardly find the girls from this village working downtown but there are still some.

As we knew, people in this village live on agriculture. They spend most of thier time in the field, girls are no exception. There, despite of hard working, the young can enjoy themselves so much. Especially during harvest season, people always get together and help one another in the field, the girls will look for their ideal hero and get marries. Also during festive season or on special occasion such as marriage. Buddhist Holy days or funeral, the young have chance to meet and learn about each other then fall in love and marriage comes. Normally, the girls in Pam Bog village get married with a man about the same age, 17-20 years old. Compared with girls in big cities, village girls care less about their spouse:'s background, status and education. For them only love is enough.

According to Thai custom, before getting married, the young couple have to ask permission from the girl's parents. At that time the boy will be ask for ***"Sin-Sod"*** - the money or valuable things given to the bride's parents by the groom's parents at the engagement or marriage caremony. It means, for parents, to make sure that their daughter can live happily with her spouse. Normally, the groom will be ask for some money, a couple of cow or water buffalo, a part of land or even a house that later parents will give these things back to the just-married for settlement.

After married, women's duty seems to

be heavier. Not only they have to help their husband work in the field but they also run a house, take care of children if any and cook for family. Nevertheless they, fearing of being abandoned, depend so much on their husband. They always ask for their husband's opinion before doing anything they put importance on. Some women, though they have their own family, still live with their parents. It is kind of grateful way to nurse their parents who are getting older and older. At present, due to the government successful campaign of family planning, each family wish to have only 2 children. They said they did not need so much man power in farming like in the past, but animal ones.

We can notice many differences from informations above in way of leading our life, spending time. We can say that women in this village devote their time, their life to their family. They always back up their husband, their children in the time of weakness and difficulties. Thank to these women who took part in these activities, our country can gradually develop.