

Sufficiency Economy as the Model of Thailand's Community Development

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Abstract

Thailand's community development policy has generally focused on accelerating economic growth. Implementation has emphasized top down populist policy initiatives, which often have uneven distributional impacts, resulting in social-economic inequality between rural communities and urban cities. This is one of the root causes of today's political crisis. Members of rural communities have a growing sense of losing control over their lives in the globalization era. Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej proposed that the Sufficiency Economy could be applied as a model of development to empower communities and reduce inequality. This paper describes the King's Sufficiency Economy model, its principles, potential and application were originally developed for rural communities, and its emphasis on sustainable development fits in with the way of life, culture and traditions of rural community. The experience of three communities is reviewed to demonstrate various ways they apply the principles of Sufficiency Economy, with a focus on the network of Asoke communities. The government can turn this political crisis into an opportunity to implement initiatives that support people to become self-reliant, resilient, and persevering and to build self-immunity through reason, moderation and integrity, which are the guiding principles of Sufficiency Economy.

Key words: Sufficiency economy, community development, Asoke community.

Introduction

Thailand's social inequality is the root cause that keeps national and political development from being sustainable. Social inequality can be defined as a disparity in income, education, welfare and social status between rural and urban people. The government attempted to close the disparity gap by pursuing national development plans to eradicate poverty, raise the level of education and establish the welfare system. The First to Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961-98) aimed to raise the income of poor farmers who are the majority of Thailand's population. The first step was to stimulate economic growth through the export of agriculture products, following by expansion of the manufacturing and service sectors. Economic growth did occur from the First to the Seventh Plan, but its distribution was uneven. The urban areas were prosperous, while the rural communities remained under developed, resulting in widening of the income gap between the rich and the poor, the urban cities and the rural communities. "The top fifth of the population enjoys 55% of the total income, while the bottom fifth has just 4" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2007, p. 9), which has deepened class divisions and brought unwelcome changes to rural communities in the following areas.

1. The rural community way of life. Economic growth focused on export of agriculture products altered the local tradition of exchange and sharing of labor into employment and trade, changing the traditional structure of interdependence in local communities.

2. Alienation. In order to increase production, small farmers were encouraged to invest in cash crops using techniques and technology imported from outside, instead of relying on local resources. Small farmers were not familiar with these foreign techniques and had no control over the market price. They felt alienated and had a growing sense of losing control over their lives in the process of struggling with the unforeseen force of a global market that was foreign to them.

3. Dependency. The previous National Economic and Social Development Plans were not designed to include rural people as active participants, but as the recipients of benefits. Successive Thai Governments implemented programs such as village revolving development funds (the million baht per village fund), rural debt relief, universal health care, an income guarantee for farmers, 15 years free education for the young, and provision of subsistence support for the elderly. These schemes, which were intended to eliminate economic and social disparities, created dependency on the central government for peoples' livelihood. Additionally, they reflected a tradition of populist top-down policy initiatives, often with uneven distribution impacts, that focused more on political popularity rather than on sustainability. Sustainable development has to empower people to be self-reliant. By the Eight Plan (1997-2001), the government had become aware of these social problems and changed the focus to "People Center Development" for a better quality of life.

But the 1997 economic crisis forced the government to shift its priority to restoring economic stability (UNDP, 2007, p. 63). Prior to the 1997 economic crisis, Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej had proposed that the Sufficiency Economy could be applied as a model of development to achieve community empowerment and reduce social inequality. The government therefore based the Ninth (2002-06) and Tenth (2007-11) Plans on the King's Sufficiency Economy principles in order to integrate the people, society, economy and environment into a holistic and sustainable development (NESDB, 2008). To be sustainable, any development has to fit in with people's culture, tradition, life style and their belief systems. The King's Sufficiency Economy model has been developed over thirty years of visiting and working with the grass roots people -- observing, listening and talking to them. The agrarian community is the birth place of his Sufficiency Economy model. Its principles, potential and application were originally developed for rural communities.

A sustainable community development model should provide opportunities for people to improve themselves, earn a living and contribute to their community. The author argues that this is a better way to eliminate social disparities than a populist policy of handouts. The purpose of this paper is to present the King's model of sustainable development, which fits the way of life, culture and traditions of rural communities. After the 1997 economic crisis, several rural communities in Thailand, longing for a life that was less stressful, abandoned the economic growth model to follow the King's Sufficiency Economy philosophy of self-reliance, moderation, knowledge and self-immunity as general principles of living. Among these, twenty-four Asoke communities have applied the King's Sufficiency Economy philosophy with Buddhist principles for their way of life. Their way of life, faith and governance will be presented as an example of Sufficiency Economy in action. Additionally, the Mai Rieng community and Inpaeng Network Group will be briefly described to demonstrate that the Sufficiency Economy model can be applied in differing settings, with various problems and community needs.

The King's Concept of Sufficiency Economy

The King had gradually developed conceptual framework and philosophy of Sufficiency Economy in stages from 1974 to 1999, but it was not until after the economic crisis in 1997, which began in Thailand, that Sufficiency Economy became a household name. Nevertheless, most people still do not have a clear understanding of the principles of Sufficiency Economy. Therefore, in 1999 the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) set up a working group of experts from various fields to collect and study the King's statements from all occasions and develop the following concise description approved by the King (UNDP, 2007, p. 29):

The Sufficiency Economy is an approach to life and conduct which is applicable at every level from the individual through the family and the community to the management and development of the nation.

It promotes a middle path, especially in developing the economy to keep up with the world in the era of globalization.

Sufficiency has three components: moderation; wisdom or insight; and the need for built-in resilience against the risks which arise from internal or external change. In addition, the application of theories in planning and implementation requires great care and good judgment at every stage.

At the same time, all members of the nation - especially officials, intellectuals, and business people – need to develop their commitment to the importance of knowledge, integrity, and honesty, and to conduct their lives with perseverance, toleration, wisdom, and insight, so that the country has the strength and balance to respond to the rapid and wide spread changes in economy, society, environment, and culture in the outside world.

A subsequent working group summarized the description in three areas as: 1) moderation; 2) reasonableness; and 3) self-immunity.

Moderation or [pho praman] is closely linked to the idea of sufficiency. In Thai as in English, the word of sufficiency (pho phiang) has two meanings: enough in the sense of not too little, and enough in the sense of not too much. It conveys the idea of the middle way between want and extravagance, between backwardness and impossible dreams. It implies both self-reliance and frugality.

Reasonableness or [mi het phon] means both evaluating the reasons for any action, and understanding its full consequences – not only on oneself, but on others, the society, and the environment; and not only in the short term, but the long also. This idea of reasonableness thus includes accumulated knowledge and experience along with the analytic capability, self-awareness, foresight, compassion and empathy.

Self-immunity or [phumkhum kan nai tua] means having build-in resilience, and the ability to withstand shocks, to adjust to external change, and to cope with events that are unpredictable or uncontrollable.

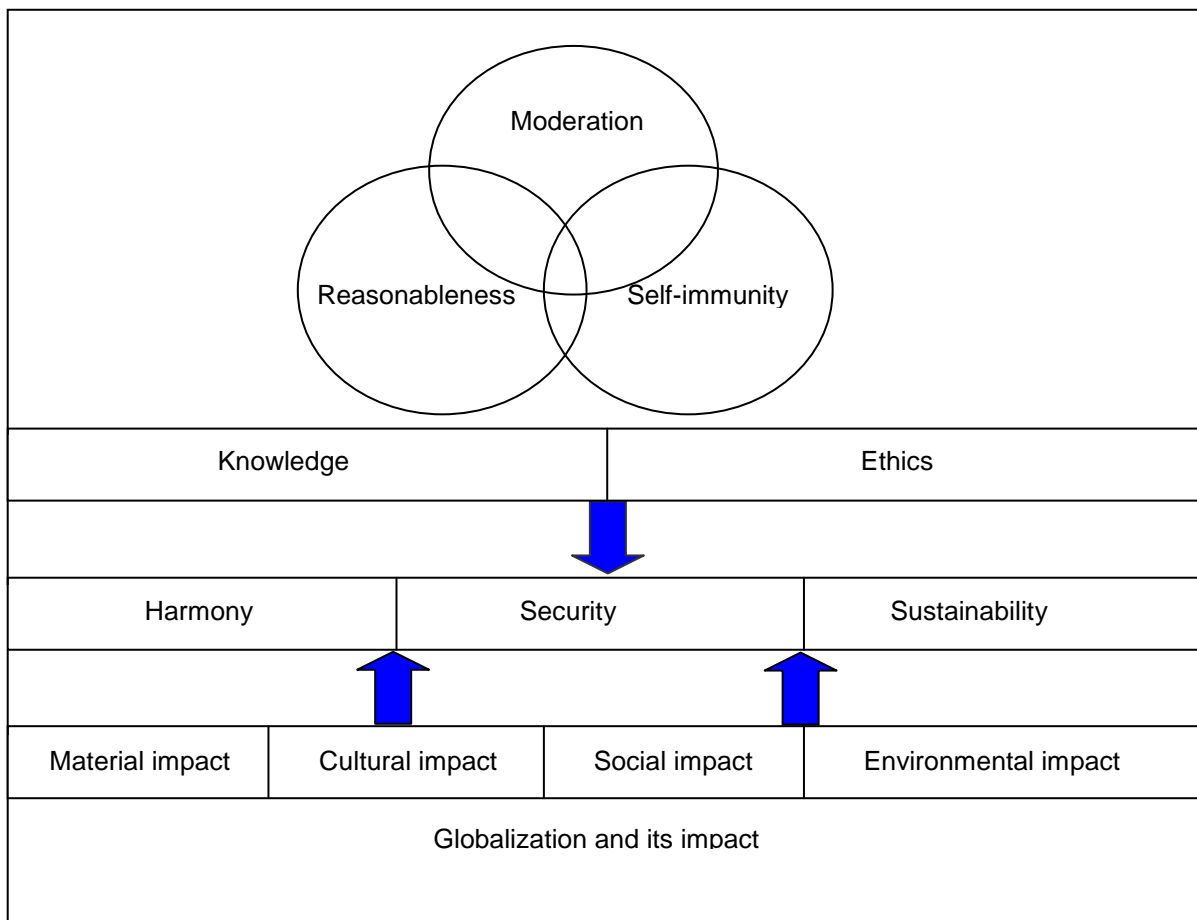
It implies a foundation of self-reliance, as well as self-discipline. Besides these three components, two other conditions are needed to make the principle of Sufficiency Economy work: knowledge and integrity.

Knowledge or [khvam ru] means something close to wisdom in English as it encompasses accumulating information with the insight to understand its meaning and the care or prudence needed to put it to use.

Integrity or [khunatham] means virtue, ethical behavior, honesty and straight-forwardness, but also tolerance, perseverance, a readiness to work hard and a refusal to exploit others.

These elements clearly overlap and interlock. Reasonableness indicates moderation. Moderation builds self-immunity. Self-immunity is a request for reasonableness. They are not separate items but a trio. Graphically they can be shown as overlapping spheres (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Sufficiency Economy and globalization



Source: UNDP Thailand Human Development Report 2007. p.30

The King realized that the term “sufficiency” could create a misunderstanding as being self-sufficient or a total self-reliance and a rejection of globalization. In his 1997 birthday speech, he clarified:

As we are in the globalization era, we also have to conform to the world.

(Dusit Palace, December 4, 1997)

Two years later, in his 1999 birthday speech, he added:

....self-sufficiency is not a Sufficiency Economy, but a Stone Age Economy. There must be some gradual development, some exchange and cooperation between districts, provinces, and countries, something beyond sufficiency.

(Dusit Palace, December 4, 1999)

UNDP (2007, p. 31) simplified the King’s ideas to five basic maxims:

- Know what you’re doing
- Be honest and persevere

- *Take a middle path, avoiding extremes*
- *Be sensible and insightful in taking decisions*
- *Build protection against shocks*

In conclusion, after 30 years, Sufficiency Economy has expanded into 3 levels: individual/family, community and national levels. But the community level is where it's most advanced.

Application of Sufficiency Economy to Community Development

Sufficiency Economy provides guiding principles as indicated above to design socio-economic development policy to empower and strengthen communities by providing opportunities for people to become self-reliant and able to develop themselves. Thailand's Ninth (2002-06) and Tenth (2007-11) Plans shifted the focus from economic growth to social development in order to integrate the people, society, economy and environment in a holistic and sustainable approach to development (NESDB, 2008). A time of crisis is also a time of opportunity, as implied by the saying, "*This is the time to try men's souls.*" The philosophy of Sufficiency Economy indicates the same message that strength is born from within people's heart and soul. The government can take the opportunity to implement initiatives that support people to become self-reliant, resilient, persevering, and to build self-immunity through wisdom, reason, moderation and integrity, which are the guiding principles of Sufficiency Economy as well.

Several rural communities that faced hardship from global economic crisis realized that they could not wait for the government to rescue them. They got together and applied the principles of the King's Sufficiency Economy to rebuild their communities, beginning with self-reliance and moderation in order to built self-immunity.

Three communities are selected to demonstrate various ways they applied the principles of Sufficiency Economy based on their cultures, situations and needs.

Mai Rieng Community

Mai Rieng is located in Nakhon Srithammarat province in southern Thailand. Mai Rieng community members took the first step by adopting the principle of self-reliance. They held meetings to discuss their situation and selected major problems to work with. They decided that it was important to bring back their traditional way of living and community relationships, followed by knowledge management in order to gain insight into the make-up of their community and their own needs, learn to live in moderation, and build self-immunity to adjust to external change. The community's activities include developing a community self-management system, community enterprises, education, agriculture, and environmental conservation to revive the land and natural resources (Chinavinijkul, 2006).

Inpaeng Network Group

In 1987 a cluster of communities in Sakon Nakhon province in northeastern Thailand turned their crisis into opportunity. Following the government economic growth policy of exporting cash-cropping, they had become deeply in debt. The local leaders took a momentous decision to stop growing cassava and instead to "*Grow what they eat and eat what they grow.*" They had adopted the King's idea of Sufficiency Economy by doing mixed farms. They divided the land into sections for rice, fruit trees mixed with organic vegetable and herbs underneath the trees, and fish ponds. In a couple years, they had enough food for their own consumption, exchange among themselves, and sale to neighboring communities at below market prices. Soon the neighboring communities formed a network serving as markets and outlets for surplus community produce. The economic crisis of 1997 hardly affected the Inpaeng communities because they were immune through self-reliance and living in moderation. By the end of 2005, almost every community in the network had established saving groups, credit union groups, rice banks and life insurance. Some Inpaeng farms have become demonstration plots for the King's model (Kaosum-ang, 2005).

The success of the Inpaeng Network is based on the principles of the Sufficiency Economy, which they define as follows (UNDP, 2007, p. 46):

1. *having a secure living with enough food*
2. *having enough to give to relatives and friends*
3. *having enough to contribute for charities and needy people*
4. *having clean and safe food to eat and be healthy*
5. *living in harmony with nature and other people*
6. *accumulating knowledge and wisdom*
7. *developing community-based enterprises*
8. *having community-based welfare schemes and safety nets.*

Asoke

The Asoke community network, which includes twenty-four communities throughout Thailand, was founded on the principles of self-reliance, moderation, local wisdom and integrity before the concept of Sufficiency Economy was formalized. During the 1997 global economic crisis, these communities were among the few not impacted by the crisis. Thus, their way of community life, faith and the governance will be presented as an example of Sufficiency Economy in action.

The first Asoke community, Pathom Asoke, located in central Thailand, came into being in 1984 (B.E. 2527). A large number of followers, who wished to find a less materialistic life-style and live closer to the temple in order to participate in ongoing Dharma (teaching of the Buddha) talks and practices, pooled their funds to purchase 24 acres of land for the community. The land was divided into a residential area, agricultural land and a water reservoir. The members own their houses but not the land on which they are built.

Since then eight fully developed Asoke communities have been established all over Thailand, including one in Chiang Mai province in the north which functions as a training school for new monks, and 16 developing communities spread around the country. Santi Asoke, located in Bangkok, serves as a coordinating center (Mackenzie, 2007, pp. 130-136). However, each community has its own administration and independently manages its own affairs. The fully developed communities are made up of three components: homes, temple and school.

The Bunniyom Society

With the increase of followers and the establishment of more Asoke communities, there was a need to organize and establish a central governing system for an interconnected network. Therefore the Bunniyom Society was established in 2004 (B.E. 2547) to provide guidance and support the network of Asoke communities.

The Bunniyom Society is founded on four principles (Asoketrakul, 2003, p. 176):

1. The power of Dharma (the teaching of the Buddha) in guiding moral principles
2. The power of the group in reinforcing ethical behaviors according to Dharma
3. The power of religion in creating social unity, and
4. The power of Kamma (the law of action) to encourage compassionate actions for self and others.

The Bunniyom principles provide guidance to members and communities and cultivate members who are adaptable and willing to cooperate. They are disciplined, respectful, diligent, and not materialistic as they work toward spiritual development. These are characteristics valued by both the Bunniyom Society and the Sufficiency Economy principles. In order to uphold the direction of their community development, Bunniyom Society concurrently provides policies and guidance to reinforce these values in all areas of community life such as religion, education, politics, business, health, culture and arts, and agriculture.

Asoke Community: An Intentional Community

All community members share common values of anti-materialism and living a simple lifestyle while working hard toward self-reliance, helping society and respecting traditional rural wisdom. Dharma is woven into the fabric of their lives. Members aspire to follow at least five Buddhist precepts with the goal of advancing beyond to eight precepts for self-development. They live simply and moderately by consuming what they grow and growing what they eat as well as producing most things needed for their basic needs. Health care programs are established for all members. Community schools educate children and adults according to their beliefs and culture. Members and leaders are encouraged to continue their education at universities in order to have the knowledge of the outside world. They are concerned citizens, ready to voice their opinions and participate in maintaining the right political movement. Their self-reliant communities are for the most part immune from the impact of economic crises. They are also willing to open their community as a training center for farmers and people from all walks of life to learn from them and vice versa.

In 2009, 102 monks, 21 ordained women and 3,000 lay people were living full time in twenty-four Asoke communities throughout Thailand. Members, both male and female, dress in simple clothes on all occasions and usually walk bare foot for both health and the spiritual practice of being in touch with nature and the energy of the earth. The Asoke people are strict vegetarians and eat only one or two meals a day from what they grow and produce. Every meal is prepared and served in a communal style, and the people in the community are encouraged to eat together. Everything else in their daily life -- such as food, resources, community governance, work and health care -- is communal in nature. This communal consumption way of life was introduced by Sammana (title for Asoke monks) Bhodhirak, the founder of Asoke community movement.

Elements of the Asoke Community Development Model

Communal Consumption

Communal consumption is a system practiced in the monastic community conceptualized by the Buddha. That is, all consumption is communal, which means there is no individual ownership of anything, large or small, regardless of the original ownership. For example, when monks receive food or donation from people, those donations belong to the community and may be used by anyone who needs them (Bhodhirak, 2007, p. 8). Sammana Bhodhirak reintroduced the Buddha's concept to Asoke lay members. Residents' basic needs are taken care of by the community. Asoke residents build their simple, basic houses on common land. They eat together and work together without pay to sustain their community. Asoke communal consumption is a unique and comprehensive system of governance, and a social, cultural and economic system of Buddhist community living shared by all Asoke communities. The foundation that supports and makes communal consumption a sustainable way of community living is the family relationship (Saraniya Dharma), strengthened by the principle of ethical living (meritorious way of life or Bunniyom).

Family Relationship (Saraniya Dharma)

The Asoke communal consumption system is based on principles of family relationship entailing peaceful and thoughtful consideration of others, arising from kindness. The six principles of Saraniya Dharma are (Bhodhirak, 2007, pp. 21-22):

1. Kindness in deed
2. Kindness in speech
3. Kindness in thought
4. Respectful behavior to others
5. Respectful unanimity of purpose, and
6. Communal consumption

In addition, Asoke communal consumption system is strengthened by values and belief in living by integrity (meritoriousness or Bunniyom) which cultivates five characteristics in its members (Heikkilä-Horn, 1997, p. 122):

1. Sacrificing time, work and possessions
2. Working hard
3. Striving for self-reliance
4. Being constructive and creative
5. Not taking advantage of others

The communal consumption system is a developmental model in which each level builds on the development of the previous levels, e.g. living by the ethical principles (meritoriousness /Bunniyom) promotes appropriate family relationships (Saraniya Dharma) and in turn, provides a firm foundation for communal consumption. It is a virtuous spiral development. The process strengthens the community while supporting the individuals in their coexistence.

Without the two pillars of family relationship and integrity (meritorious/Bunniyom), the communal consumption system would not be able to sustain itself (Bhodhirak, 2007, p. 15). The Asoke community is founded on the Buddhist teachings of morality and ethical behavior. The cultivation of family relationship and integrity is a foundation for both individual and community development.

Individual Development

To be a member of an Asoke community, laity must uphold at least five precepts (sila). They are: abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. The next requirement is to live on a strict vegetarian diet, because harming or killing animals is in violation of the first precept (Essen, 2005, p. 47). In the Asoke community, contrary to the general Thai culture, one does not gain respect from wealth, power, social status or age, but rather from exercising more and/or higher precepts. To develop these characteristics, the Asoke communities establish schools and a curriculum designed to emphasize a high moral standard and the ability to work hard -- both are considered by the community to be more important than mastery of academic subjects. Intellectual thinking without ethics and not grounded in practice is useless, according to Asoke beliefs. This is signified by the way Asoke people greet each other and outsiders -- "Charoen Dharma," which can be translated as "May you progress in your development of morality and ethical conduct."

Community Development

Asoke communities believe in natural, organic farming. For members' health and environmental benefits, all agriculture is done using only organic fertilizers and other natural products. In order to be self-reliant, the community depends on the labor of all able members to provide for their daily living.

Members work hard together to provide what they need, such as food, clothing, medicine, farm products, fertilizer, cleaning products, etc. The Asoke slogan “Consume little, work hard, and give the rest to society” expresses their belief (Essen, 2005, p. 51). As a result, members sacrificing time and energy for the good and benefit of their communities has become the normal practice. As a vegetarian community, they plant and mill organic brown rice, grow mushrooms, herbs, vegetables and fruits, and make tofu products, soy bean paste and soy sauce, etc. Their motto is “Eat what you grow and grow what you eat.”

Work to provide for the basic needs of the community has priority over other activities. Nevertheless, members also operate four types of businesses: publications, vegetarian restaurants, and agricultural products and consumer goods for their own community, other Asoke communities, local markets and the public-at-large. Based on their Bunniyom policy, all goods are sold below the market price, and only cash is accepted in payment. All income is turned over to the community to be used for the welfare of the community. In addition, surplus funds in each community are donated to the central Asoke administration to support community network as needed and/or requested.

Their spending policy is based on the concept of getting the most value for the community and society. Because of this principle, even garbage is not wasted. All garbage is separated into four categories: reuse, repair, recycle and reject. Asoke residents believe good health is a relationship of balance among spiritual, mental and physical well-being. The community has created a comprehensive health care program that combines spiritual, mental and emotional wellness, meaningful work, a clean environment, a vegetarian diet, and exercise in a balanced life style.

Last but not least, the Asoke communities support several publishing houses to provide news, educational materials, and transcriptions of Dharma talks by different monks in the communities. The communities also operate their own television stations, providing wholesome alternative programs. Concurrently there is a lot of support for “learning-by-doing” educational system as well as the opportunity to attain higher education.

Traditions, Customs and Rituals

This Buddhist reform movement led by Samana Bodhirak was founded to be more socially engaged in the life of people and communities, and this is the essence of the Asoke community culture. The ideology of the movement has been translated into practices which over time have become traditions, customs and rituals in members’ daily lives. These practices sustain and protect the community culture from the influence of the materialistic culture around them.

From January to December, each community holds at least one event that signifies its customs. For example, the Asoke Community in Ubon Ratchathani province in the northeast celebrates its New Year by setting up a market selling goods such as rice, farm products, fertilizer, cleansing products, herbal medicine, etc., below cost. In order to persuade the community-at-large of the value of a vegetarian diet, Asoke communities operate inexpensive vegetarian restaurants outside their communities and give out free vegetarian meals once a year on December 5th, which is the King’s birthday, and sometimes more often. These are some of the ways the communities contribute to the society (Essen, 2005, pp. 106-108).

In search of spiritual happiness, the Asoke community offers its model of Bunniyom community guided by Sufficiency Economy principles in the areas of economic, social and cultural way of life based on compassion for all people.

The Application of Sufficiency Economy at the Asoke Community

After 30 years, Sufficiency Economy has developed at three levels: individual/family, community, and nation. But the community level is where it’s most advanced. Asoke community and Sufficiency Economy develop in a parallel process and can be traced together as follows:

In the First Stage

The followers of the Asoke socially engaged Buddhist reform movement formed a loose network to participate in ongoing Dharma talks by Asoke monks. They then began their process of self-development by strictly followed the teaching, such as living by the five precepts of abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. They live in moderation, are kind to others and are self-reliant. This stage parallels the individual and family level of the Sufficiency Economy.

In the Second Stage

Early in this stage, in order to reinforce their new way of life, a community of the like-minded was established. The process of separating from the traditional society to create their Utopia community required commitment to live in moderation and be self-reliant, as well as knowledge and wisdom to do the right things at the right time. These are also the principles of the Sufficiency Economy.

Later on, after the necessity of their basic needs of food, shelter and health care were secured the community network began producing more agriculture products and other consumer goods not only for their own community but also for other Asoke communities, local markets and the public at large. They were ready to open the community and reach out to the outside world, which exposed them to the influence of the consumerism culture. With more communities coming into co-existence, there was a need to organize and set up the central governing system known as the Bunniyom Society, to protect its integrity and provide the network of self-immunity -- other principles of Sufficiency Economy.

In the Third Stage

At the national level, with a network of twenty-four communities around Thailand, the Asoke movement has accumulated a wealth of knowledge regarding the Buddhist way of spiritual development, education system of learning by doing, and alternative health care based on local wisdom and organic agriculture. Their reputation has attracted the interest of various other people, including other farmers, the general public, government officials, academics, foreign visitors, and others. Asoke communities are willing to share and exchange their knowledge by setting up training and learning centers such as the Network of Organic Agriculture of Thailand, Living by Dharma for Farmers Project. Recently the Asoke community in Ubon Ratchathani province in the northeast has co-operated with the regional Ubon Ratchathani University to establish a Sufficiency Economy model community on campus as a learning laboratory to demonstrate and study the application of Sufficiency Economy in practice.

At the present stage of Asoke community development, all the principles of Sufficiency Economy -- moderation, reasonableness, self-immunity, knowledge and integrity -- are fully practiced. It is a testimony to the success of the Sufficiency Economy model of community development by people, from people, for people.

Conclusion

The Sufficiency Economy is an approach to life and conduct which is applicable at every level from the individual through the family and the community to the management and development of the nation. (UNDP, 2007, p. 29)

The three main principles of moderation, wisdom or insight and built-in resilience against internal or external change as well as the supporting components of knowledge and integrity, can be applied at all three levels -- individual and family, community and nation. This is because the guiding principles of the King's development model fit in with the Buddhist way of life, culture and tradition of Thai people in general and the majority rural population in particular.

In addition to the principles, the model also provides clear directions of how to achieve sustainable development in steps by:

1. Building on the Buddhist belief of living in moderation and stressing the balance of spiritual in addition to physical and mental well-being.
2. Instilling self-reliance in order to create self-immunity to life-changing events, especially in the globalization era.
3. Cultivating insight or wisdom through accumulation of knowledge in order to make choices and decisions based on reasons and integrity.
4. Building a sense of community and strength in order to deal with the world beyond the community.

People have to do these themselves as demonstrated by the three communities described above. With the current political crisis, Thailand is now a country divided as never before by the root cause of social-economic inequality. Therefore it is important to reflect on the King's wisdom of applying the principles of the Sufficiency Economy to all -- individuals, communities, business enterprise, public officials, politicians, government officials and the nation.

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