

**Buddhist Innovation for Developing Thailand: A Case Study of
The Cattle And Buffalo Bank for Farmers According to His
Majesty The King Phumipol Adulyadej Innovative Projects by
Tarvorn Chittatavaro-Vongmalai Foundation**

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Abstract

Cows and buffalos are always closely related to the way of life of Thai people since the ancient time. They are only single factors and labors for rice production in every step, from tilling the land, fertilizing, harvesting to transportation. The use of buffalos' labor was reduced when new technology and machinery come to replace it. The new technology has adverse effects on environment and not only farmers but also farmers' product consumers. They become aware of the effects and would like to bring back the old time way of life. Again poor farmers, the backbones of the country, confronts with problems that buffalos are so expensive for them to afford. They do not have money to buy buffalos to replace the machines. So a Buddhist monk by the name of Tavorn Chittavaro-Vongmalai undertook the King's initiatives Project to establish the Cow and Buffalo Bank to collect cows and buffalos from various donors, and make controlling records, to distribute and loan buffalos to needy farmers to look after, to raise, to increase the populations of buffalos and use their labor for organic rise production. In return, farmers reduce and stop using chemical fertilizer and insecticide. They have better quality of life according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The King Bhumipol Adulyadej donated a modern rice mill to the community for rice processing with the royal advice that the paddy should be processed into only brown rice, not polished rice. for good nutrition. This project has been beneficial directly to the poor farmers to live in harmony with nature, to restore the endangered species, the buffalos, from vanishing. This project has been adopted by many agricultural projects in many provinces throughout the country. This is the real Buddhist Innovation.

Keywords : Buddhist Innovation, Developing Thailand, The King Phumipol

Introduction

Cattle and Buffalo bank for Farmers is the banking systematic concept of buffalos and oxen are collected together under a proper accounting system for due maintenance, distribution and rental for laboring purposes. It is designed in line with banking system to benefit agriculture and to increase the populations of buffalos

The cattle and buffalo bank is a truly new concept that arises from the necessity of the present time when machinery is widely used in agribusiness. The rising prices of gasoline, maintenance cost and environmental effects make machinery less cost-effective. Farmers would like to return to the animal labor as they used in the ancient time But it is not that easy to turn back to the past without a proper guide and because the buffalos become scarce and expensive while farmers are still poor. (Commemorative Book, 2006 : 12-13). They do not have enough money to buy cows and buffalos, mainly buffalos, to work in their farmlands.

His Majesty's Endless Compassion

During his visiting to villagers in all parts of the country, His Majesty the King Bhumipol Adulyadej learned that a number of poor farmers had to hire expensive cows and buffalos for farming. In order to help them, His Majesty came up with the idea of setting up a cattle bank where farmers could buy cows and buffalos at reasonable prices in the form of a hire-purchase contract or other methods, offered by government agencies or private organizations. In response to this royal initiative, the Department of Livestock Development established the Royal Cattle-Buffalo Bank for Farmers in 1979. Today, the Royal Cattle-Buffalo Bank for Farmers has been well-recognized as a royally initiated project that really helps needy farmers.

Aware of His Majesty's benevolence in bestowing this useful project upon farmers in order to increase their productivity, the Department of Livestock Development, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, has launched a project on Cattle Redemption and Ownership Transfer. The project is intended to encourage all sectors of Thai society to show their loyalty in honor of His Majesty the King and to mark "The Celebrations on the Auspicious Occasion of His Majesty the King's 7th Cycle Birthday Anniversary (Falvey, Linsay Religion and Agriculture, 2005 : 23)

Under this project, donations are accepted to redeem the lives of cows and buffalos from the public and private sectors and the people, as merit-making for

His Majesty. The cattle must be female with good features. They will be distributed to farmers, under the Royal Cattle-Buffalo Bank for Farmers project, in 76 provinces nationwide

Farmers to be selected to join the project must meet the criteria set by the Department of Livestock Development. For instance, they must have good records and be ready to act in accordance with the contract. Donors will also be invited to take part in the ownership presentation ceremony to

Bless the cattle as merit-making for His Majesty the King.

Apart from showing loyalty to His Majesty on the occasion of his 84th birthday celebrations, the project is also meant to respond to the wishes of His Majesty, who wants farmers to own cattle for farming and increasing their productivity. It is also intended to promote the use of and buffalos cows dung, replacing chemical fertilizer, in rice fields. The use of bio-fertilizer helps improve the soil quality and reduce production costs for farmers. In addition, the project will encourage local communities to participate in joint decision-making. Farmers who strictly follow the agreement set in the contract will be presented with cattle ownership. In this way, they will have better opportunities to engage in their occupations. More importantly, all people involved will be happy to make merit through cattle redemption as a tribute to His Majesty on this auspicious occasion of His birthday.

His Majesty the King Bhumipol Adulyagej initiated the Cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers in the year 1979 to help poor farmers to have their own buffalos or to rent or other mean with low price for farming. The King addressed the audiences of government officers, civilians and general public who came to well wish Him on the auspicious occasion of His birthday at Saladusitdalai, Amporn Garden on December 4, 1982 “Cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers, I always support all along, the Department of Life Stock Development takes on duty to carry out the project and they have done it successfully in many places. Sometimes, there are people who raise these animals for sale to farmers with expensive prices. Poor farmers are in suffering because they have to buy laboring animals with high prices. At present, animals for heavy duty works, such as buffalos are difficult to find and farmers have to have them, otherwise they cannot work. They have to pay more money. These are the problems. The cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers has solved this problem in many places by helping farmers to have animals of their own with the fair prices. They have animals from donations and those animals are raised at the Livestock Development Stations around the country.

Farmers can get animals from those stations donated as the capital.” (The Golden Jubilee of His Majesty, 1982 : 1-7).

"The buffalo bank is reminiscent of commercial banks which are, by definition, involved in operations of useful and valuable matters. The establishment of buffalo banks, however, does not involve construction of factories to keep buffalos and oxen. Only centers are needed. The Livestock Department, for example, can serve the purpose."

"Those who wish to donate to the bank need not give buffalos or oxen. The donation can be in the form of money...."

The above is an excerpt from an address given by His Majesty the King to a group of farmers who had been given a royal audience in the grounds of His Majesty's agricultural projects at Chitralada Palace on Farmers' Day, May 14, 1980.

During that time a Buddhist monk, Venerable Phrarajpipattanatorn (Tavorn Chittatavaro), Assistant Abbot of Wat Patoomvanaramvaraviharn, the director of Tarvorn Chittatavaro-Vongmalai Foundation, his ranking name at that time, received the Royal permission to set up Muangsahakorn, the Cooperative City, according to His Majesty Initiative project in 1991 and that year the project received cows and buffalos from donors and their lives were redeemed from slaughtering as merit-making for His Majesty the King Bhumipoladulyadej on the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's birthday on December 5 every year. In the same year, Venerable Phrapipattanatorn (Tavorn Chittatavaro) received cows and buffalos on the occasion of his own birthday and with the Royal permission, Venerable Phrapipattanatorn formed a committee to set up Cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers at Ban Nonesilalerng, Kongchai sub-district, Kalasin Province in 1991 and has distributed buffalos (just buffalos) to needy farmers since then.

Those in need of buffalos during the planting season can also rent animals at an inexpensive rate.

Services provided by the bank can be classified into five different categories, as follows:

1. Loan of buffalo for breeding purposes. Under this plan, a poor farmer can borrow a female buffalo from the bank. One year after it has given birth, the farmer can keep the calf and return the mother to the bank, but if he wants to keep the mother so that he can have more calves, he can obtain approval from the bank.

The first, third and fifth calves subsequently born must be given to the bank one year after their birth while the farmer can keep, the second, fourth and sixth for himself.

2. Leasing to enable farmers to own their own buffalos. The easy, interest-free plan is for farmer to pay for the buffalos within three years: 40 percent the first year, 30 percent the second year, and the remaining 30 percent by the third year.

3. Loan of male breeders to villagers who have no less than five female buffaloes loaned by the bank for breeding purposes.

4. Buffaloes are rented to till the land at 300 baht a year per head.

5. Farmers wishing to rent livestock for services other than those mentioned above must seek approval from the Provincial Livestock Office or the bank itself.

Farmers wishing to avail themselves of the bank's services must be Thai nationals at least 20 years old. They must be poor, engaged in agriculture, and be willing to cooperate with bank authorities. They must not have used the service before, and must have the ability to care for the animals. The bank has a screening committee to determine the applicants qualified to receive assistance.

Applicants Qualification:

Farmers who are entitled to receive assistance from the Cattle and Buffalo Bank must have the qualifications in line with the rules and regulations of the Bank as follows:

1. Thai citizen with 20 years of age or older
2. Engaged in an agricultural occupation; farming, gardening or livestock raising.
3. Good behavior and willing to cooperate with the government agencies
4. Never before received assistance from Cattle and Buffalo Bank
5. Appropriateness to take care of cattle and buffalos
6. Incomes not exceeding the basic need line 1 or receiving the approval from village committee or community that the applicants are entitled to receive the assistance. (Phra Brahmaganabhorn P.A. Payutto, 2005 : 23).

The farmers who receive the right to an assistance must sign contact with the Bank with a guarantor and promise to pass the contract right on to the inheritors in case of the first contractor's death

The Cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers Project according to the Royal Initiative Projects undertaken by the Tarvorn (Chittatarvar) Vongzllbzmali Foundation located at Ban Nonsilalerng, Kongchai Sub-District, Kongchai District, Kalasin Province sets up the rules and regulations for those who gain assistance from the Bank abiding by the rules and

regulations of the Department of Livestock Development, article 8 and 9 and rule 4.1 of Tarvorn Chittatavaro-Vongmalai Foundation stating that when the needy farmers receive the cattle and buffalos from the Bank to raise for the sufficiency economy in the family, if the mother buffalo gives birth to the first calf, male or female, that calf belongs to the Foundation and the farmer will keep it with them for one year to three years. Then the Foundation will redistribute them to other needy farmers. The rule 4.2 states that the second, third and forth calf belongs to the farmer. If the mother buffalo died after they are 10 years old, farmer has to replace it with new mother buffalo and that buffalo belongs to the Foundation for rotating distribution. The rules issued by Venerable Phrapipattanartorn that were to be strictly abided by are that neither selling nor exchanging of buffalos are allowed. Death of buffalos must be legally proved and cascades must be buried only. If buffalos cannot be appropriately cared, they must be returned to the Cattle and Buffalo Bank.

Venerable Phrapipattanartorn (Tarvorn Chittatavaro) has undertaken the Cattle and Buffalo Bank in line with the Royal Initiative projects, new agricultural theory and the Cattle and Buffalo Bank for farmers to launce the campaign to farmers so that they understand and comprehend the good effect of farming with human and buffalo's labor and the use of organic fertilizer from buffalo's dung which is good for environment and health of farmers. Besides, the Cattle and Buffalo Bank helps farmers reduce their debts and better their quality of life so that they can be strong and healthy backbones of the country.

Impact of the project

The Cattle and Buffalo Bank for Farmers according to the Royal Initiative projects initiated by a Buddhist monk, Venerable Phrapipattanartorn (Tarvorn Chittatavaro) as the pilot projects at Kalasin, Provinces helped farmers in the areas understand the new agricultural theory. The Venerable could collaborate more than ten thousand rais of farmland and the farmers at Banbungkhæ, Kongchai district, Kalasin Province participated in the organic farming, using buffalos for labors and dung for fertilizer. They brought back the folk wisdom, the agricultural productive culture which are the beautiful and healthy way of life from the past. The beloved King Bhumipol adulyagej saw their good and earnest inspiration to pursue the old but modern method of farming had donated a modern rice mill to the community to process the stock paddy into only brown rice, not polished rice, for good nutrition. Now the

projects have been adopted at many provinces such as Patumtani, Ratchaburi, Prachuab, Nan and Nakornnayok provinces. (Commemorative Book, 2006 : 33). This project is still actively carried out by the group of Buddhist monks, the meditation teachers for social development, to inspire other areas to set up network of cooperatives and cattle and buffalo banks. As of present, there are activities at Banbungkhae, Pakplee District, Nakornnayok, Banwangdao, Muang District, Nan Province. All these cattle and buffalo banks work as network for society and country development as a big Buddhism contribution to country development according to the Royal initiative projects by the Righteous King who ruled the country by Rajadhamma, ten Royal Virtues:

Conclusion

Religion is a powerful expression of culture that is the most obviously expression in our relationship with nature. The major meeting point with nature is food. The Cattle and Buffalo Bank provides the fertile field for cultivating ancient wisdom from agriculture and Buddhism which is the essence of sustainability. Buddhist monks can play the big roles in initiating many projects for sustainable development of Thailand. The initiation of the cattle and buffalo bank by a Buddhist monk can have impacts on the society and can help keep paddy fields and buffalos as the important parts of Thailand sustainably forever. My concern, as a farmer's son, that one day the paddy fields and buffalos will vanish from Thailand. So I wrote a song called Farmer's son as:

I am a farmer's son
Have fun working paddy field
My life is happy and real
Paddy field grazing buffalos
I work in the field all day
And play with my buffalos
Coming home when the sun is low
Life is so simple and gay
Paddy fields now are in jeopardy
Factories are on the way
Paddy fields will be gone someday
To give the way to the new enterprise
Please help me keep paddy land
Where I plant the rice all my life

Keep away this new enterprise
So the rice, buffalos will remain.

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