

Guideline for Happy Living According to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of People and Community Leaders in Urban Communities

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Abstract—This research was to analyze personality's activities based on sufficiency economy philosophy of people and community leaders in urban communities. The data were collected through questionnaires administered to 392 people and interviewed with community leaders. It was found that most people revealed that their lives depend on activities in accordance with the sufficiency economy philosophy in high level especially, being honest and aware on sufficiency, occupations, peacefulness in the community leaders' side, they reported on extravagant reduction, planting home vegetable garden, having household accounting, expense planning by dividing into 3 categories; 1) saving for illness cover 2) saving for business cover, and 3) household daily expense. The samples were also adjusted their livings quite well with the rapid change of urbanization. Although those people have encountered with any hardships, their honesty in occupations and awareness on sufficiency remain to survive happily.

Keywords—Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, individual and household activities, urban community.

I. INTRODUCTION

THAILAND has changed from agricultural society into industrialization since 2504 BE leading to rapid development of the country especially on materialization. This results in the change of citizen's behaviors attaching on luxury and technological gadgets. Being more materialism, some new generations see traditional Thai society antiquated while overlook mind development. Economic crisis in 2540 BE clearly reflected the problems on society, politics, social inequality, education, and morality. The failure of the state in terms of law enforcement for the community relocation leads to the lack of area renovation [1] and ethics especially in big cities. The evaluation of the country development based on sustainable dimension, balance of living, good immunity, happy living according to sufficiency economy philosophy showed that the expenses on local wisdom focused on quantity rather than quality in the depletion of capital sources. Social institutes and the religious institute that used to be a mental core of the society result in less self-dependency and less immunity and less important roles [2]. The National Economic and Social Development Plan issue 9 (2545-2549 BE) and issue 10 (2550-2554 BE) applied sufficiency economy philosophy as a core to drive the country economy and social development. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej gave the

royal advice that the people should rely on themselves and conduct their lives and pursue their destiny with dignity. Moreover, His Majesty has been living his life according to the philosophy of sufficiency economy with rationale as a guideline [3]. Sufficiency economy is a philosophy based on the fundamental principle of Thai culture. It is a method of development based on moderation, prudence, and social immunity, one that uses knowledge and virtue as guidelines in living. Significantly, there must be intelligence and perseverance which will lead to real happiness in leading one's life. His Majesty gave the speech in 2517 BE that "Economic development must be done step by step. It should begin with the strengthening of our economic foundation, by assuring that the majority if our population has enough to live on...Once reasonable progress has been achieved, we should then embark on the next steps, by pursuing more advanced levels of economic development." (18th July 2517 BE) This encourages awareness on sufficiency, rationale, self-immunization, including awareness of virtue as a basic of living. It is important to have Sati (sensible awareness), Smadhi (determination and attention), and diligence leading to the real happiness of life. His Majesty also reemphasized this philosophy on 4th December 2541 BE "In 2517 BE, I said that we should live our lives with the concept of having enough to get by meaning Sufficiency Economy. If everyone can live their lives sufficiently, it will lead to Sufficiency Economy of the country's economic. This would be good to the country because at the moment, there has been unbalance between the rich and the poor." [4] In this royal statement, His Majesty concerned that modern development which emphasized only the economic expansion might eventually lead the country to crisis. Therefore, he emphasized on the importance of building a 'good and stable foundation' before further progress could be developed. This, in fact, means that instead of putting the emphasis on the expansion of the industrial sector prior to development, the stability of the basic economy should be established first; the majority of rural people have enough to subsist first. This is a method of development that enables to the distribution of income to build the overall economic foundation and stability of the country before going on to a higher level of development. On a personal level, the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy can be adopted by all people simply by adhering to the middle path. The awareness of virtue and honesty is also essential for people as well as public officials. Virtue to be promoted, comprising the

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awareness of honesty, patience, perseverance, and intelligence in leading one's life.

With the rapid economic growth and the rise of consumerism, these has led to a state of economic dependence and deterioration of natural resources as well as the dissolution of existing kinship and traditional groups to manage them. However, the researcher is certain that Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy can be adapted in any type of areas together with the advance of technology depending on the social contexts in different situations.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this research was to study each person in Urban communities about activities with reference to Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy and to understand how to application in any level of individual and household.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population in this study included people in 26 communities in Dusit District in Bangkok Metropolitan with the total number of 19847 people. The sample group was based on Yamane (1973) [5] through non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling technique that consisted of 392 people with the age over 18 years. The age criteria were important because the people at this age and above could analyze and define the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to answer the questionnaires. The data were analyzed by using research statistics such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, inferential statistics and independent sample t-test. The 5 rating scales consisted of 4.21 – 5.00 very high, 3.41-4.20 high, 2.61-3.40 moderate, 1.81-2.60 little, and 1.00-1.80 very little. The key informants consisted of 26 community leaders to give the information for the in depth interview analyzed by content analysis and descriptive analysis.

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

People living in the urban community in Dusit District, Bangkok Metropolitan reported their activities according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in high level (3.72). Considering in details, it was found that the individual and household levels reported their activities from the highest to the lowest as follows:

- 1) The conservation of natural resources and environment (3.99)
- 2) Living their lives (3.95)
- 3) Helping each other (3.86)
- 4) Expense reduction (3.57)
- 5) Saving (3.50)
- 6) Income increase (3.46)

Some interesting aspects were: 1) being honest in their occupations, no extortion, sufficiency awareness (4.27) 2) being religious (4.22) 3) everyday energy saving including conservation of natural resources and environment (4.35) as can be seen in Table I.

TABLE I
 THE AVERAGE OF ACTIVITIES OF INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL BASED ON SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY PHILOSOPHY

Activities of individual and household level	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Expense reduction	3.57	0.78	High
Income increase	3.46	1.02	High
Saving	3.50	0.98	High
Living their lives	3.95	0.72	High
The conservation of natural resources and environment	3.99	0.70	High
Helping each other	3.86	0.84	High
Total	3.72	0.70	High

1. This can be explained that they reported high awareness on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy because most people who reported high awareness had been trained about this philosophy. The result of the t-test revealed that people who had been trained and who never been trained reported significant difference at 0.05 as can be seen in Table II.

TABLE II
 THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ACTIVITIES OF PEOPLE WITH TRAINING AND WITHOUT TRAINING ON SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY PHILOSOPHY

Training	With training		Without training		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.81	0.65	3.62	0.74		

*The statistically significant level at 0.05

2. Other factor affecting the rate of activities was being membership of the community. It was found that people who are the members and those who are not the members of the community reported their activities at statistically significant level (0.05). People who are the members of the community reported more activities in both individual and household than those how are not the members.

TABLE III
 THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ACTIVITIES OF PEOPLE BASED ON THE COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

community membership	With membership		Without membership		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.92	0.65	3.54	0.70		

*The statistically significant level at 0.05

Most of the community leaders are male with the age over 50 years and the average education level of Matayomsuksa 6 (high school) or vocational certificate level. They are Buddhism with the average salary income over 15000 baht. They shared the same attitude that community leaders should live their lives sufficiently. They spent most of their time on the community benefit. They had the household accounting and planting home vegetable garden. They increased the family income by selling handicrafts made from left-over materials. Moreover, they planned their expense by dividing it into 3 categories, e.g. 1) saving for illness cover 2) saving for business cover, and 3) household daily expense. On the community communication, there were activities and meeting among the people in the communities such as sporting, politics

promotion, religious activities, and so on. They also stated that the community leaders had to cooperate with the government sector and the private sector to support the needy. If there were any conflicts, it should be resolved by face-to-face communication with forgiveness, sharing, and harmonized living.



Fig. 1 People and community leader monthly meeting



Fig. 2 Training and Doing household accounting in the Community

Some guidelines for happiness living according to sufficiency economy philosophy:

- 1) Being honest in your occupations, no extortion, being aware on sufficiency, and being religious no matter how hardship we face with, also living their lives with Sati (sensible awareness), Smadhi (determination and attention), and Panya (intellectual) according to Buddhist teachings.
- 2) Realizing on sufficiency economy philosophy and applying it in everyday life. This can be done by joining the training and following the philosophy regularly.
- 3) Trying to join social activities in the community or some organizations outside the community.
- 4) Setting up the determination to follow the sufficiency economy philosophy and relying on oneself in any situation.
- 5) Community leaders need to know and understand the sufficiency management focusing on kinship and helping

each other rather than using dictatorship. They should be aware that there are diversities of people with different modes, cultures, occupations, and ways of life.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that people and community leaders in urban communities were aware of managing the activities according to sufficiency economy philosophy, especially energy saving. They mentioned that they would fix the broken appliances before buying new ones. They also had awareness on global warming by choosing a product with less effect on the environment together with the energy saving qualification. They reported the importance of being honest in their occupations, no extortion, being aware on sufficiency, believing in Buddhism principles and leading their lives with moderation, knowledge, and virtue. The decision concerning the level of sufficiency must be made rationally in consideration of the factors involved and careful anticipation of the outcomes that may be expected from such action. They also lived their lives with Sati (sensible awareness), Smadhi (determination and attention), and Panya (intellectual).

VI. DISCUSSION

The activities of individual and household based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of people and community leaders in urban communities in Dusit District, Bangkok Metropolitan revealed high awareness on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy with the highest report on energy saving such as turn on and off the electric appliances when not in use leading to the selection of Number 5 electrical appliance usage [6]. People in the urban community reported similar activities on saving, for example, they know how to control the expenses, cut the unnecessary expense, know how to save, be more economical, and do the household accounting. However, people in several communities did not follow the philosophy regularly because they concentrated on making income and did not have time to do the monthly household accounting [7]. Also some people in the communities neglected the philosophy because they stuck with indulgence luxury especially when being sociable. They tended to compare their status according to materialism, high income, and high position.

Research results also revealed that most people in urban communities had debts, but they could deal with. Rather, they knew their expense potential and knew how to survive in urban community and in economic crisis. Also they believed in Buddhism principles and employed them by living their lives properly and moderately. As a consequence, they could pursuit happiness and be satisfied with their lives [8]. Furthermore, people and community leaders knew how to control themselves in both household and individual expenses. They realized that they have main responsibility on household expenses such as food, utilities, and education. A result of the case study in Dindaeng District could be assumed that there has been an employment of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in people's lives though not in the official form with clear

objectives. The in-depth study showed that people who lived their lives according to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy can pursue happiness properly and moderately [9], [10].

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