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Nitaya Ueareeworakul, Thanavi Chotpradit

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by Nitaya Ueareeworakul
translated by Thanavi Chotpradit

Thai society has become consumerist, putting great emphasis on material consumption despite social conflicts and unequal access to basic infrastructure, for example, those related to poverty, education, intellectual development, income distribution and the decentralisation of power for local government. When these problems in infrastructure accumulate, they lead to various social problems in both urban and rural society. A change that arises in rural society is that young people migrate to urban cities, particularly to the capital, to seek material progress, education and a more glamorous, civilised society. Young men and women sell their labour. Women are seduced, unwillingly, into becoming prostitutes because of unresolved issues with poverty. Young people who have a chance to study in the capital never return to their homeland, because the government has yet to adequately structure rural development. On the contrary, life in rural society is simple and lonesome; some old Thai cultural beliefs still exist among the older generation, even though many things have faded away with time.

While the capital is crowded and full of material progress, pollution, economic competition and widespread information exposure, images of capable, smart women, especially those who have good opportunities and high financial status, have become more acceptable. The idea of an equal role for women and men has started to develop. Women’s rights organisations run by women and men from around the world have been founded. However, in Thailand, most men still think in a traditional manner, viewing women as just flowers, objects of desire. This manifests in a number of cafes or houses of pleasure, love hotels, etc. In the meantime, most women, especially those who live in rural society, still believe that their value depends only on their beautiful bodies

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that tempt male hearts, together with their sweetness and attempts to please, which befit their position as a good housewife. Many rural women lack good education and the opportunity to have a different career that could make their families and themselves proud, unless they leave their homeland to find a job elsewhere. Yet they cannot escape, and have to either sell their cheap labour while never getting rich, or take a shortcut, selling their own bodies as prostitutes both in Thailand and overseas. This image nevertheless attracts tourists from all over the world to come and spend money in the country until there is surplus wealth. As long as the government cannot solve the problems at the root, these will continue to be social issues.

Let's turn back to look at Buddhism. More and more, Thais who avow their Buddhism, following their ancestors, live lives removed from Buddhist teachings. They prefer a Western way of life as they find it more luxurious, even though Buddhist doctrine is not a religious coercion but can heal people, providing a normal and peaceful life. People deny Buddhist spiritual treatment as they do not accept that they are ill at a subconscious level. No one can stop materialism from growing as people struggle to live and earn more money—pieces of paper that have a value beyond anything else. They work harder, both legally and illegally, believing that material objects will bring happiness, wealth and honour. As long as people maintain their endless desires and never learn to be self-sufficient, are without mercy and generosity for fellow humans, and continue being ignorant of social problems that they could help resolve, our country, society and culture will, in the end, decline.