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Sangha's Role in Community Forest Management: A Case Study of Wang Tamon Communities [Thum Rakhang Temple], Sukhothai Province

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Abstract

According to the swamp forest covering an area of over 2,134 Rai in three villages by groups that use most of them for the shoot. The group used a bamboo for making broomstick grass and others groups. Problems from using of forest in Wang Tamon community did not have any rules or regulations. Therefore, no one followed rules and it was easy to burn the forest and getting into it for searching the bamboo shoot with commercial purposes without waiting the growth of bamboo shoots to be a bamboo in the next season. The problem continues to accumulate the ecological integrity of the forest and pollution from burning forests. This article is the study the role of Sangha to help solving problems by being the center of community based forest management.

Interview and participatory observation were used for data collection by interviewing the members who have a role in forest management and community involvement which consisted of monks who played a role in bringing the community, director of forest community, and members who sharing the used of forest in the area of study.

The study found that Buddhist monk (Phrakru Kositboonoyopatham from Wat Thamrakang) played an important role in community forest management in a case study of Ban Wang Tamon community, Sukhothai province. He led to the conservation treatment, guided how to share the forest together and established the forest community forests. He has set the meetings on the 12th of every month, issued the jungle rules, set the forest fund for the forest preservation. One who wants to use the forest resources needs to pay for the forest fund. In addition, the application of Buddhist principles was also being used for the community management such as applying share (Dana), the sacrifices (Jaka), knowing how to use (Attha), and harmony as a tool of resource management within the local community. The sharing of community forest management was the main activity that conducted by having temple and Buddhist monks to be the connection. They have used Buddhist principle to encourage people for emerging mind of forest preservation and followed by the concept of "Lam Pee Liang Lam Nong". Bamboo shoots are allowed to grow bamboo and having enough for the propagation before cutting bamboo shoots and the rest of the demand is taken for cooking. Stop using resources beyond the capacity of the forest will restore the forest. The community also has adequate bamboo for sharing the benefit balance in the forest under the joint economic community such as the group of broom grass and the commercial shoot. There are also other natural resources for the community to take advantage by gathering of wild herbs, galangal, mushrooms, flowers and plants. People in the community pays respect to the rule of using forest and realizes to the limited resources. Community has also been led by the adequacy of the supplementary career which having sufficiency resources for the requirement of all members in the community. The community is now help to make a barbed wire fence along the forest community in order to make clear area of the conservation forest.

Keywords: Sangha's Role, Community Forest Management, Community Forest Fund

Introduction

Forest is the community resources of Ban Wang Tamon community that every members needs to use it as the sharing forest. However, there was some conflict occurred and made holistic damage. Therefore, the management of forest sharing is set for all members to come and join for the meeting in order to search for the best way of forest management. This process has developed and can make it successfully by using the concept of Buddhist principles. Monks have played an important role of environmental management. They have made the first thinking, the first person, and the first role of model until emerges the management of community forest in Buddhist way. The method of management was to integrate the concept of consuming, using, and managing of forest sharing. They help each other to design the best practice of community forest management and it can be worked for everyone at Ban Wang Tamon community in Sukhothai Province.

Methods

This research paper had conducted by using field study. Researcher went to the area and visited the members who played an important role of doing forest management and all stakeholders. Participant observation and interview were also used for data collection especially the monk who was the leader of the community. The committee of forest community and some members were given information which related to the study.

Results

Community forest of Ban Wang Tamon is located in Moo 6, Nakhunkrat Sub-district, Srisamrong District in Sukhothai Province. The previous problem was the conflict of people of using forest without considering the effect of losing forest. They used to cut the tree without planting, to burn the forest for making enter route to the forest which occurred the bad pollution to the community as well. People fight for forest resources with selfish. They used natural resources and were not related to the area. Some villages needed bamboo shoots for sell and some villages needed bamboo stem for making the broom grass. As the result, they used only the resources that appropriate for them without considering to other. In addition, the effect of conflict also caused to burning forest which had done by the people in the villages. The effect of burning forest caused the pollution into the temple and the community. From the problem as mentioned above, it was the beginning of monk to take the role of community leader in order to solve the problem. They create the fund for preserving forest and has set the systematic criteria and set the meeting to discuss about the way of using forest. They also designed the method of using forest with sharing until people in the community understand and help each other to use forest with sufficiency and preservation following the concept of house-temple-community.

Discussion

From the study, the results indicated that the monk leader who played an important role to encourage people in the community help each other of sharing forest. The positive effects were occurred within the community with the following aspects. 1. Full of forest within the community in the area of 2,134 Rai. In the forest, there is not only full of the forest, but also having other natural resources for people in the community to search for food such as wild herbs, galangal, mushrooms, flowers and plants. In addition, the community is now help to make a barbed wire fence along the forest community in order to make clear area of the conservation forest.

2. The forest management with systematicity, there are a variety of participants to join in with the committee meeting every 12th of each month. Members from the community are invited to join in with the meeting in order to take part of the meeting decision. This event has showed how they truly gave good attention of forest management. Moreover, each community forest has set the rule of using forest which showed the right of the members of using forest. At the same time, monks from Wat Thamarakang especially the abbot have encouraged people in the community to help each other of preserving community forest.

3. Activities of Preservation and utilization, the usefulness of forest that Ban Wang Tamon community received was gaining family income from making broom grass by using the bamboo stem to make the broom stick. They had shared income from selling broom grass to the community forest fund. This using technique is following by the concept of "Lam Pee Liang Lam Nong". They have to wait the bamboo shoots grow up until it can germinate, then they will cut the rest of bamboo shoots for eating or trading.

4. The process of operation related to the philosophy of economic sufficiency, even though the family can gain the income from making broom grass from bamboo, but people still needed to pay respect to the community rules of using forest resources. Everyone realized that we have limit resources and they also followed the principle of sufficiency in their occupations. This will preserve everyone to have enough forest resources within the community.

5. Monks/Temples/Buddhism with the role of encouragement the emerge community forest, the case study of Wat Thamarakang as the center of Buddhism was played an important role of forest preservation. Monks had given people valuable advice of forest management and support people to live with harmony, unity, and working with kindness to others.

6. Role of Dharma Principles, applying Dhamma in the activities of preservation was very useful to the community such as the concept of sharing (Dana) and the sacrifices (Jāka). This method can provide time for the forest to refresh and the best technique of providing good effort for practitioner. Using the forest one year and stop for the next year is Buddhist way of practice in order to preserve community forest.

7. The role of community leader following cultural and religious way, this role will lead by the Buddhist leader who is the center of community belief and worship. The power of belief and worship can encourage people to respect and to join in with the activities of forest preservation.

The Summary of Community Forest in Buddhist Way

Results occurred from the community forest has become the part of the community through the system of management in term of preservation, using, and management. The positive effect to the community from the forest has provided the most effectiveness for Ban Wang Tamon community within the area of 2,134 Rai. This area is full of bamboo which is the main economic plant that people can use it for making family income. Not only a good taste bamboo root, but the product from bamboo stem also gained valuable income for people at Ban Wang Tamon community. Using of bamboo had applied Buddhist principle for encouragement people to emerge mind of forest preservation and followed by the concept of "Lam Pee Liang Lam Nong". This method can provide people to have enough bamboo and they also help each other to plant the young bamboo for the future as well. The most interesting of this method was to receive prize at good level in Northern region from Ministry of Resources and Environment and received 100,000 Baht for support the fund of community forest preservation.

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Figure Legends

Figure 2 : Aerial Photograph of completed forest at Ban Wang Tamon community in the area of 2,134 Rai under the concept of "Lam Pee Liang Lam Nong"



Figure 1: Meeting and interview Phrakru Kositboonyopatham [Boonchay Satharo] Head of Wat Tham Rakhang Temple who have Role to encourage the management of community forest between house, temple and community in the area of public forest and received prize at good level in Northern region from Ministry of Resources and Environment

