

Title : The Duty of Monks According to the Buddha's Discipline :
A Study in the Thought and Role of Phra Khamkhan Suvanno
in Community Development

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Abstract

According to the Buddha's Discipline or the Vinaya, monks' role and duty are primarily dhammic practices, propagation of the dhamma, and leading lay Buddhists toward the end of suffering. Today, social structure is quite complicated. Life is obviously full of misery. Monks become social leaders undertaking all kinds of work for social welfare. They are needed to solve even lay problems such as family problems, economic problems, political problems, and so on. In some cases, they are criticized for being relaxed in their dhammic practices and for transgressing the Vinaya. Monks who work for social development are called developer monks. Phra Khamkhan Suvanno is a developer monk whose work for Northeastern Thai villagers is widely known. He firmly keeps the Buddha's Discipline as well as respects the government's administrative policies. Though his work is significantly useful to villagers on Phu Khong in Chaiyaphum, he scarcely gets any cooperation and assistance from the government, the Sangha, and even the villagers themselves. Most villagers neither understand his methods of work nor try to depend on themselves. Besides, the government and the Sangha still believe that monks' roles are primarily dhammic practices toward the end of suffering (nibbāna) and propagation of the dhamma. If the government and the Sangha correctly understand the roles of developer monks and realize that developer monks are indispensable for Thai society, most developer monks may get more support and encouragement to work extensively for the sake of lay people.