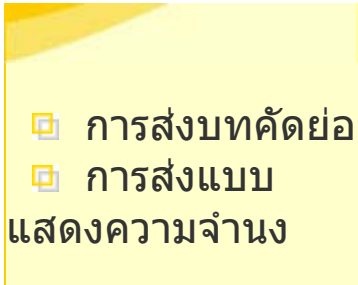




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Looking at America to Turn Back Modernizing Thai Society :

An Analytical Perspective of Phra Brahmaganabhorn

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Venerable Phra Brahmaganabhorn (Prayudh Payutto) is widely acknowledged and respected in Thailand, especially among Buddhist scholars and intellectuals of almost all spheres, as the author of *Buddhadhamma* and for his profound insight on how to apply Buddhist teachings to the world civilization and concrete modern problems. He has also written essays and published numerous booklets presenting Buddhist perspectives in many academic fields ; education, economics and the science, etc. The application of the *Buddhadhamma* to a wide range of social issues is thus a specific characteristic of Venerable Phra Brahmaganabhorn's writings.

Phra Brahmaganabhorn views American society as a model of progress and can be referred to as representative of Western societies. Many countries in the world admire the American society as their model for creation of a peaceful and prosperous society. The progress of American society as the most developed country in the world related to and abundance of material goods, convenience and various comforts. But at the same time, American society now is experiencing a cultural crisis which may result in radical changes in the near future. The case of American society is cited and criticized by him in many places, especially in “Looking to America to solve Thailand’s problems” (1987), “Looking at the World Peace through the background of globalization civilization” (1999) “Getting to Know America, Turning Back to View Thai Potentiality”(2003) and others.

Phra Brahmaganabhorn investigates the background of American society in several aspects, i.e. human rights, democracy, education, family, equality, freedom and so on. He founded that American society as the symbol of the modern civilization now is turning to decline and is still far from desirable society. This means that, in his opinion, modern civilization is the legacy or bad *Kamma* have created by human beings in the twentieth century, which is going to exert an influence on humanity of the twenty-first century. The citizens of the twenty-first century are going to have to deal with problems which are the legacy of the twentieth century. He analyzed that American society is representative of capitalism. In his opinion, capitalism and socialism, ostensibly two different and opposing systems, are both, in reality, united under materialism. The collapse of communist socialism does not spell the soundness of capitalism. On the contrary, it implies that, of the two predominant forms of materialism, as the failure of one has been witnessed, that of the other can be expected.

In his perspective, Buddhist wisdom is very valuable as it can solve our problems and create modern civilization. Because the Buddhist wisdom see human beings as neighbors co-habitants of this world. We are all equal in the eyes of the natural laws, being equally subject to the laws of nature. This is a master wisdom in Buddhism because it is the source of knowledge and other principles. For him, Buddhist wisdom is the foundation of modern civilization