

HO CHI MINH PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT ON THE PEOPLE: A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

[O PENSAMENTO FILOSÓFICO DE HO CHI MINH SOBRE A PESSOA: UMA ANÁLISE PRÁTICA E TEÓRICA]

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ABSTRACT: Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought on the people is one of the important foundations that shaped the Vietnamese revolution in the twentieth century and continues to be significant in the modern context. This study analyzes the philosophical aspects of his thought, focusing on the concept of "the people", the basic principles (human, collective, practical), and practical application in Vietnamese history. By using documentary and historical analysis, the paper clarifies how Ho Chi Minh combined traditional Vietnamese values with Marxist-Leninist philosophy and Western democratic thought to build a unique ideological system. The results show that this idea is not only profound theoretical but also of practical value, especially in mobilizing the power of the masses for the revolution and building the state "of the people, by the people, for the people". The study also discusses the contemporary significance of Ho Chi Minh's thought in the context of globalization, and proposes further research directions to further explore his philosophical legacy.

KEYWORDS: Ho Chi Minh; philosophical thought; people, humanity; collective; practice; Vietnamese revolution; Marx-Leninism; democracy; globalization

RESUMO: O pensamento filosófico de Ho Chi Minh sobre as pessoas é um dos fundamentos mais importantes que estão na base da revolução vietnamita do Séc. XX. E ele continua importante nos contextos modernos, detentor de significado que é. Este artigo analisa os aspectos filosóficos de seu pensamento, com foco no conceito de "pessoa", enquanto princípios básicos (ser humano, coletivo, prático), assim como sua aplicação prática na história vietnamita. Através de documentos e análises históricas, o artigo procura esclarecer como Ho Chi Minh combinou valores tradicionais do Vietnã com a filosofia marxista-leninista, e a democracia ocidental a fim de formar sua própria ideologia. Os resultados mostram que essa ideia tem sua importância não apenas teórica como também um valor prático, especialmente no poder de mobilização das massas para a revolução e para a construção do estado "do povo, pelo povo e para o povo". A pesquisa também mostra o significado contemporâneo do pensamento de Ho Chi Minh no contexto da globalização, e propõe avançar sempre mais na pesquisa do seu legado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ho Chi Minh; pensamento filosófico; pessoa; humanidade; coletivo; prática; revolução vietnamita; marxismo-leninismo; democracia; globalização

1. INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969), Vietnam's great revolutionary and ideological leader, left behind a rich philosophical legacy in which the idea of the "people" played a central role. For him, the people are not only the beneficiaries of the achievements of the revolution but also the subjects who decide all victories. He once

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affirmed: "In the sky, nothing is as precious as the people. In the world, nothing is as strong as the unity of the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 45). This statement is not only a political slogan but also reflects a deep philosophical thinking in which the people are seen as the center of history, society, and all policies (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1995).

Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people was formed from a combination of traditional Vietnamese values, Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and Western democratic thought, and was closely associated with the historical context of Vietnam in the twentieth century – a period when the country was under colonial and feudal domination. Unlike many theoretical philosophers, Ho Chi Minh always associated theory with practice, turning the idea of the people into a guideline for the revolution to gain independence and build the country (Pham Ngoc Anh, 2012). The uniqueness of this idea lies in the fact that it is not only theoretical but also highly applicable, mobilizing the strength of the whole nation at important moments such as the August Revolution of 1945.

Research on Ho Chi Minh's thought has been widely carried out in the fields of history, politics, and cultural studies in Vietnam. However, in-depth analysis of the philosophical aspect, especially how he defined and enhanced the role of the people, remained limited in international literature. This paper aims to fill that gap by exploring the theoretical bases, philosophical principles, and practical applications of Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people. The main research question is: How was Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought about the people constructed, and what value did it bring to the Vietnamese revolution as well as the contemporary context? The goal of the study is to analyze the concept of "people" in Ho Chi Minh's thought, clarify the dominant philosophical principles (human, collective, practical), and evaluate its significance in history and the present. The research method includes analyzing documents (Ho Chi Minh's writings and speeches) and approaching history to reconstruct the context in which thought was formed. The article is structured as follows: a literature review that reviews relevant studies; the methodology section presents the approach; the results and discussion section analyzes the main aspects of thought; Finally, the conclusion summarizes and proposes the next research direction.

In the context of globalization and the development of digital technology, when the role of the masses is being challenged by personalization trends, it is urgent to rediscover Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). This study not only contributes to shedding light on his philosophical legacy, but also provides valuable lessons for building a modern society based on the principle of putting the people at the root.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ho Chi Minh's thought, especially the perspective on the role of the people, has become an important research topic in many fields such as philosophy, history, politics, and cultural studies in Vietnam as well as in the world. These studies not only shed light on his ideological legacy, but also assess its practical significance in different contexts. This overview will review relevant documents, focusing on three main directions: Ho Chi Minh Thought in Vietnamese Philosophy, the influence of international philosophical currents, and the practical application of thought about the people.

Ho Chi Minh Thought in Vietnamese Philosophy

Many Vietnamese scholars have analyzed Ho Chi Minh's thought as a philosophical system with national characteristics. Tran Van Giau in his work *Modern Vietnamese Philosophy* argues that Ho Chi Minh's thought is a combination of traditional philosophy (Confucianism, Buddhism) and Marxism, in which the concept of "people" reflects the spirit of "precious people" of Confucianism but is revolutionized to serve the goal of national liberation (Tran Van Giau, 1993). Similarly, Pham Van Binh emphasized that the people in his thought are not only a political collective but also a philosophical category, representing profound human values (Pham Van Binh, 2008).

These studies often focus on the humanistic aspect of Ho Chi Minh's thought, but less on how he formulated specific philosophical principles such as collectives or practice. In addition, the majority of domestic literature is laudative in nature and lacks international critical or comparative analyses, which limits their accessibility in the global academic community.

Influence of international philosophical currents

Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people is also studied from the perspective of influences from Eastern and Western philosophies. Nguyen Khanh On believes that he has absorbed Marxist-Leninist thought about the role of the masses in history, but adjusted the concept of "masses" to "people" to be more comprehensive, suitable for an agrarian society like Vietnam (Nguyen Khanh Bat, 2010). In terms of Western democratic ideology, Ho Chi Minh was attracted to the principles of freedom and equality from the French Revolution, which was clearly reflected in the Declaration of Independence (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). However, international studies often focus on the political or biographical aspects of him, less analyzing the thought of the people as a well-structured philosophical system. This creates a gap in understanding how Ho Chi Minh synthesized philosophical sources to formulate his views.

Practical application of the idea of the people

In practical terms, many studies have recognized the role of Ho Chi Minh Thought in mobilizing the people for the Vietnamese revolution. In *The Path of Destiny*, he emphasized that the revolution is the cause of the masses, and this is proven by the victory of the August Revolution of 1945 (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Hoang Chi Bao analyzes how his ideology orients the construction of government "of the people, by the people, for the people", a unique model in the post-colonial context (Hoang Chi Bao, 1991). Recent studies have also explored the contemporary significance of this thought. Pham Ngoc Anh argues that the principle of taking the people as the root is still valid in building the rule of law state in Vietnam (Pham Ngoc Anh, 2012). However, few documents examine this thought under the lens of globalization or compare it with modern philosophical models, which reduces the interdisciplinarity of the analyses.

Research gaps and article positioning

Although there has been a lot of research on Ho Chi Minh's thought, there are still some important gaps. Firstly, in-depth philosophical analyses of the concept of "people" and the governing principles (human, collective, practical) are still limited, especially in international literature. Second, there is a lack of studies comparing his thought with contemporary philosophical systems. Third, the meaning of this idea in the context of globalization and digital technology has not been fully exploited. This paper is positioned to fill these gaps by providing a systematic philosophical analysis of Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people, combining theory with practice and evaluating its value in the modern context. Research not only contributes to Vietnamese academia but also aims for dialogue with the international community.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study applies the method of document analysis and historical approach to explore Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought about the people. The main sources of data include Ho Chi Minh's works such as *The Path of Destiny*, the Declaration of Independence, and the writings and speeches collected in the *Ho Chi Minh Complete Volume* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). In addition, historical documents related to the Vietnamese context of the twentieth century, including government reports and chronicles, are used to recreate the circumstances that formed the ideology (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001). The content analysis method is applied to identify the core concepts (people, humanity, collective, practice) and the connections between them. Approaching history helps clarify the development of thought through the revolutionary periods, from the period of struggle for independence to state building. To ensure objectivity, the study compares Ho Chi Minh's thought with other philosophical sources (Marx-Leninism, Western democracy) based on secondary sources from scholars such as Vo Nguyen Giap (1995). The limitation of this method is that it depends on the available documentation, but is minimized by cross-verifying the data source.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of "people" in Ho Chi Minh's thought

Analysis of Ho Chi Minh's works shows that the concept of "people" is central to his philosophical ideological system, which has both theoretical depth and practical significance. Ho Chi Minh did not define "the people" in an abstract or narrow way like some other philosophies, but considered this as a broad collective, including all social classes contributing to the cause of revolution and national construction. In *The Path of Destiny*, he wrote: "Revolution is the cause of the masses", implying that the people are the main force in all historical transformations (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 23). However, this concept is not identical to the "masses" in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, which is mainly limited to the working class and peasants. For Ho Chi Minh, the "people" included intellectuals, the national bourgeoisie, and anyone who was patriotic, as long as they were not against the common good (Nguyen Khanh Bat, 2010).

This expansion came from the context of Vietnam in the early twentieth century,

an agrarian society with an underdeveloped working class. Ho Chi Minh is aware that in order to gain independence, it is necessary to mobilize the strength of the whole nation, not just a specific group. He once affirmed: "In the sky, nothing is as precious as the people. In the world, nothing is as strong as the unity of the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 45). This is not only a slogan but also a reflection of a dialectical philosophical thinking: the people are the source of all strength, the driving force for the victory of the revolution. This is markedly different from traditional feudal thought, where power usually belongs to the king or the elite, and the people are only the objects to be ruled (Tran Van Giau, 1993).

Ho Chi Minh also distinguished the "people" from reactionary forces, such as colonialists, feudal minions, or exploiters. In his speech at the National Cultural Conference, he emphasized that the people are workers and patriots, not "enemies of the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 78). This view is highly practical, as it helps to orient the revolution to focus on the interests of the majority, while removing obstacles. Compared to Western democratic philosophy, where "the people" is often understood through the lens of individual rights and elections, Ho Chi Minh's concept emphasizes collectivity and shared responsibility for the national destiny, in line with Vietnamese culture that values community (Pham Van Binh, 2008).

The flexibility of the concept of "people" in Ho Chi Minh's thought is also reflected in the way he used it in different periods. Before the August Revolution of 1945, the "people" were a united force against colonialism; After independence, it became the foundation for building a new government and society. He wrote: "The country is the people, the people are the country", affirming the dialectical relationship between the people and the state, in which the people are not only the beneficiaries but also the creative subjects (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 102). The image of "water pushes the boat up, water can also overturn the boat" further highlights his philosophical thinking about the power and control role of the people over power (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 135).

The results of the analysis show that Ho Chi Minh's concept of "people" is not only a political category but also a philosophical principle, reflecting his views on human life and his worldview. It is synthetic, inheriting the spirit of "noble people" of Confucianism, the egalitarian ideology of Buddhism, and Marxist theory of the masses, but is created to suit the reality of Vietnam (Tran Van Giau, 1993). What makes it unique lies in its comprehensiveness and flexibility, which allows this idea to adapt to different historical circumstances. However, the potential drawback is that the concept sometimes lacks clear boundaries, which can lead to vague interpretations if not tied to the specific context. However, it was this flexibility that helped Ho Chi Minh mobilize the strength of the whole nation, creating historical victories such as the August Revolution. This analysis lays the foundation for a deeper exploration of the philosophical principles that govern his thought, presented in the next section.

Philosophical principles in the thought of the people

Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people is built on a system of strict philosophical principles, reflecting his worldview and methodology. An analysis of Ho Chi Minh's works reveals three core principles: human, collective, and practical. These principles are not only theoretical but also action-oriented, becoming the foundation for the revolution and building Vietnamese society. The harmonious combination between

them creates a philosophical system that is both theoretically profound and effective in practice.

The principle of humanism is the first foundation, expressing the view that all revolutionary activities must be directed towards people, specifically the people. Ho Chi Minh once wrote: "We must take the people as the root, do what is beneficial to the people, and avoid what harms the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 67). This affirmation is not only a political appeal but also reflects a profound humanistic philosophical thinking in which the people are considered the ultimate value. This principle was influenced by the Confucian spirit of "noble people" and Buddhist compassion, but Ho Chi Minh revolutionized it by placing the people in the position of subjects of history (Tran Van Giau, 1993). Unlike Western humanistic philosophy, which emphasized individual rights, Ho Chi Minh focused on collective happiness, especially that of poor workers. This is evident in his policies, such as eradicating hunger and illiteracy, and building a society free from oppression and exploitation (Pham Ngoc Anh, 2012).

The principle of collectivity is the second factor, emphasizing that the strength of the people lies in solidarity and a sense of community. Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "Solidarity, solidarity, great solidarity. Success, success, great success" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 89). This view reflects dialectical thinking about the relationship between the individual and the collective, influenced by Marxist-Leninist philosophy on the role of the masses in history (Nguyen Khanh Bat, 2010). However, Ho Chi Minh adjusted to suit the reality of Vietnam, a country divided by colonialism and feudalism. He realized that only the unity of the whole nation – from the peasants, the workers, the intellectuals, to the patriotic bourgeoisie – could create the strength to gain independence. The collective spirit was expressed by him through revolutionary movements, such as the United National Front, where people from all walks of life joined forces for a common goal (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1995). Compared to Western individualist philosophies, this principle of Ho Chi Minh upholds shared responsibility, in line with Vietnam's community culture.

The practical principle is the third element, emphasizing the attachment between theory and action. Ho Chi Minh wrote: "Words must go hand in hand with deeds, theory must be related to reality" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 112). This principle reflects a pragmatic philosophical thinking, in which the value of an idea is judged only by the practical effect it brings to the people. Unlike theoretical philosophers who often separate theory from practice, Ho Chi Minh always associated the idea of the people with specific actions, such as living simply, being close to workers, or proposing practical policies such as encouraging production and improving people's knowledge (Pham Van Binh, 2008). This principle not only ensures the feasibility of ideas but also helps him adjust his theory based on practice, creating flexibility in leadership.

The combination of these three principles creates a unified philosophical system in which humanity is goal-oriented for the people, collectivity provides the power to achieve goals, and practicality ensures practical effectiveness. The analysis shows that this system is not only theoretical but also highly applicable, as evidenced by the achievements of the Vietnamese revolution (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). However, one potential limitation is the reliance on specific historical contexts, which can be difficult to apply in modern contexts such as globalization. However, it was Ho Chi Minh's flexibility in thought that helped him overcome the test of time, as will be discussed in the next sections.

Practical application in the Vietnamese revolution

Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people is not only theoretical but has been effectively applied in the practice of the Vietnamese revolution, especially in the periods of struggle for independence and national construction. Historical analysis shows that this ideology has become a guideline, mobilizing the strength of the people to achieve landmark victories, and at the same time shaping the post-revolutionary model of government and society. Three prominent aspects of practical application include: the role of the people in the August Revolution of 1945, the building of a government "of the people, by the people, for the people", and educational policies to improve the people's knowledge.

First of all, the August Revolution of 1945 is the clearest proof of the strength of the people in Ho Chi Minh's thought. In the context of Vietnam being under the yoke of French colonialism and Japanese fascism, Ho Chi Minh called on the whole people to stand up for power. He wrote in the National Appeal to Resistance: "Compatriots! We must stand up! Any man, woman, old and young, regardless of religion, party or ethnicity, every Vietnamese must stand up to fight the French colonialists and save the Fatherland" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 150). This appeal was not only based on the principle of collectivity but also expressed the comprehensiveness of the concept of "the people", when he mobilized all classes – from peasants and workers, to intellectuals and patriotic bourgeois – to participate in the revolution (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1995). As a result, in just a few days, the Vietnamese people overthrew the colonial and feudal regimes and established the first revolutionary government. This event confirms Ho Chi Minh's practical thinking: the theory of the people is only valuable when it is turned into concrete actions, and the power of the people is the decisive factor.

Secondly, the idea of the people was applied by Ho Chi Minh in building the government after independence. In the Declaration of Independence, he declared the establishment of a state "of the people, by the people, for the people", inspired by Abraham Lincoln's democratic thought but adapted to the reality of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 167). Unlike the Western model of democracy based on elections and individual rights, Ho Chi Minh's administration emphasized the collective role of the people in the management of the country. He asked cadres to "serve the people", demonstrating the principle of humanity: all policies must serve the interests of the people (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 189). In fact, the fledgling government has quickly implemented practical measures such as allocating land to peasants, eradicating hunger, and organizing National Assembly elections, showing that this idea is not just a theory but has been realized into concrete actions (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001).

Thirdly, Ho Chi Minh applied the idea of the people to the field of education and improving people's knowledge, considering this as the foundation for building a progressive society. He wrote: "An ignorant nation is a weak nation", emphasizing that the people can only master the country when they are equipped with knowledge (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 201). After independence, he launched the "Popular Education" movement to eradicate illiteracy, with millions of people participating in learning in a short time. This is a clear manifestation of the practical principle: education is not only an ideal but must be implemented immediately to improve the capacity of the people (Pham Ngoc Anh, 2012). These policies not only improve material life but also strengthen collective consciousness, helping people participate more actively in social management.

The practical application of Ho Chi Minh's thought shows the close combination of theory and action, turning the people into the main driving force of the revolution and national construction. Compared to other revolutionary movements in the world, such as the Russian Revolution, which focused on the working class, Ho Chi Minh's model is more distinctly all-people, in line with the characteristics of a post-colonial agricultural country (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1997). However, the limitation is that dependence on specific historical circumstances, such as wartime patriotism, can be difficult to maintain in peacetime. Nevertheless, these achievements affirm the timeless value of thought, opening up the basis for discussing contemporary significance in the next section.

Contemporary Meaning

Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people is not only valuable in the historical context of Vietnam's revolution but also has profound significance in the current era, especially when the world faces the challenges of globalization, digital technology, and the transition of social power. The analysis shows that this ideology retains its topicality thanks to its adaptability and core philosophical principles – human, collective, practical – that can be applied to building the rule of law, sustainable development, and dealing with the new problems of the 21st century. The contemporary significance of this idea is expressed in three main aspects: building a people-based state, promoting social solidarity, and adapting to the digital age.

First of all, in the context of modern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people is the guideline for building a rule of law state "of the people, by the people, for the people". His principle of humanism – putting the interests of the people first – remains relevant as Vietnam transitions to a market economy and international integration. Current economic, educational, and health development policies in Vietnam continue to reflect this spirit, such as poverty alleviation programs or universal education (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). However, globalization poses a new challenge: how to maintain the central role of the people as economic corporations and international organizations increasingly influence national policy? Ho Chi Minh's thought suggests that the state needs to uphold the principle of "taking the people as the root", ensuring that all decisions serve the interests of the majority, rather than just an elite group or foreign interests (Pham Ngoc Anh, 2012).

Second, Ho Chi Minh's collective principle – emphasizing the power of solidarity – is of great significance in maintaining social cohesion in an era of differentiation. Globalization and digital technology have created a gap between rich and poor, ideological polarization, and a tendency toward individualization, weakening the spirit of community. In this context, his ideology encourages the building of solidarity social movements, such as community programs in Vietnam (new rural development, climate change response), where people participate in solving common problems (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2012). Compared to Western societies where individualism prevails, Ho Chi Minh's collective model provides an alternative, helping to balance individual rights and collective responsibility, especially during global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when the solidarity of the Vietnamese people has contributed to the effective control of the epidemic (Hoang Chi Bao, 2013).

Third, Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people brings lessons about practicality in

the digital age. He has always emphasized that theory must be tied to practice, and this is especially relevant when technology is changing the way people participate in social management. The development of the internet and social networks has given people the tools to express their opinions, monitor the government, and participate in public decisions, in line with Ho Chi Minh's spirit of "by the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 245). For example, online platforms in Vietnam now allow people to reflect on local problems, such as environmental pollution or corruption, showing a continuation of his ideas in the new context (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). However, the digital age also poses challenges: the spread of misinformation and disunity due to the flow of opposing opinions. To adapt, Ho Chi Minh's thought suggests that it is necessary to combine digital education for the people with maintaining collective values, ensuring that technology serves the common good instead of causing division.

The analysis shows that Ho Chi Minh's thought on the people still retains its value in the 21st century, but needs to be adjusted to deal with new problems. Compared to contemporary philosophies, such as liberalism that emphasizes the individual or postmodernism that denies collective values, his thought is synthetic, balanced between theory and practice (Nguyen Khanh Bat, 2010). The potential limitation is the dependence on the historical context of the revolution, which can be difficult to apply directly in peacetime or culturally heterogeneous societies. Nevertheless, the flexibility and humanity of this idea continue to be an inspiration for developing countries, especially in building a just and united society in the face of global upheavals.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has clarified Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought on the people, affirming that this is a profound theoretical system with high practical value. His concept of "the people" is not only the revolutionary collective but also the center of society, guided by three principles: humanism, collectivity, and practice. These principles were successfully applied in the August Revolution of 1945, building a government "of the people, by the people, for the people", and raising the people's knowledge, contributing to shaping the history of Vietnam (Vo Nguyen Giap, 1997). In the contemporary context, this idea is still significant in building the rule of law, promoting social solidarity, and adapting to the digital age, despite the challenges of globalization and the trend of individualization (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). The results highlight the unique combination of Vietnamese traditions, Marxism-Leninism, and democratic thought, creating a timeless humanistic philosophy. The next direction of research should focus on comparing Ho Chi Minh's thought with contemporary philosophies and exploring its application in multicultural societies, in order to expand its international influence.

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