

The Role of the Family in the Formation of the Vietnamese Personality,
Le Thi, The Gioi Publishers, Hanoi, 1999

‘The principle “work according to one’s ability and enjoy according to one’s labour” was dimmed by egalitarianism, which is unable to stimulate initiative and productivity.....Peasants were turned into *members of cooperatives* and distributed in different production teams.....and worked like industrial workers.....much attention was attached to the implementation of State policies, but not much to productivity and individual contribution to the cooperative.’ pp 51-52

‘Generally speaking, in the economic management, the Revolution in production relationship (transforming production individual and private relationships into State and collective ones) was considered at that time the key measure to develop, while not much attention was paid to the norms of economic growth and improvement of the people’s living conditions. In the *medical, educational, cultural fields*, much progress was recorded thanks to large *State subsidies* for public welfare (part of the subsidies came from cooperatives funds).’ p 52

‘In *education*, the system of schools, colleges and universities was expanded.....The knowledge of our intellectuals was improved. The State subsidies made it possible for the *system of crèches and infant schools* to expand in urban and rural areas, contributing to the care for and education of pre-school children. In this period, the *role of schools* was put in the first place. Many families entrusted totally the education of their children to the years of university and post-university study.’
p 52

‘In the field of *health care*, a system of medical stations in communes and wards was enlarged together with district, provincial and central hospitals. The provision of medicines and treatment was the monopoly of the State.... The free medical check-up and treatment provided by different health care establishments helped to lessen the burden of the people’s expenses on health care.’ pp 52-53

‘In the *cultural field*..... itinerant film projection teams and performing art troupes..... offer[ed] free-of-charge services or with small charges..... Libraries and clubs provided free-of-charge service.’ p 53

‘.... the interests of the working class and the collective were highlighted.’ p 53

‘In the *social field*, the role of mass organizations was underlined.’ p 53

‘The *family was almost replaced* by other social institutions with regard to educational function.’ p 54

‘The family.... stopped performing its *economic function*.’ p 54

‘....it was common that the operation of State enterprises and cooperatives was not effective (still there were cases of embezzlement of public property by a number of leading cadres).’ p 54

‘The cooperative and the State were in charge of common problems and general state of affairs. In other words, at that time nobody took care of the family’s life as much as the family itself.’ p 55

‘The system of creches, kindergartens and infant schools, free of charge, greatly assisted mothers with small children. Schools and mass organizations, particularly those of the youth and teenagers made significant contributions to the socialization of children and young people.’ p 55

‘The subsidy system created the psychology of passiveness.’ p 55

‘The collective spirit was underlined, while the interests of the individual and the family were not spoken about. Meanwhile, many wrong doings of a number of leading cadres who abused power and public funds were concealed.’ p 55

‘Many good models of the socialist personality came into being: persons who were wholly (sic) *devoted to the common interests of society*, having a high sense of socialist community and selflessness in work and life.’ p 56

‘For some time, this was the common thinking: the more we develop socialism (old form), the more persons with lofty ideals and perfect personality of collectivism will appear. However, reality did not justify this wish. As the means of production were regarded as public property, labourers became wage-earners with no real power. Meanwhile a number of decadent State cadres abused their power and made use of the weakness of the bureaucratic management mechanism, seeking profit for themselves through State and collective funds and public property. Those people wanted to enrich themselves by exploiting others. Facing the difficulties caused by the socio-economic crisis, ordinary people had to

answer: should they struggle for the interests of the collective or of their own?' p 56

'However, many people, conscious and revolutionary-spirited, strived to get out of the crisis. Noteworthy was the fact that the Communist Party as leader of the Vietnamese nation soon came to realize that the main cause of the crisis was the bureaucratic subsidy-based system of management linked with the old pattern of socialism, which annulled all motive forces for social development, especially for economic growth.' pp 56-57

'... [renovation aims] to move from bureaucratic subsidy-based management mechanism with highly concentrated planning to the market mechanism with different economic components and various forms of ownership in the socialist direction.' p 58

'...to reduce subsidies to ensure free [i.e., privatization and "liberalization"] service in medical care, education and culture; to encourage the development of private services.' p 59

'11 million households in rural areas, and dozens of thousands of households in urban areas are doing business in the form of family enterprises or shops.' p 59

'... the household economy has currently a very important position, making a great contribution to the economic growth of the country. It serves the people and with small-sized enterprises operating in various economic branches and forms of organization.' p 59

'State subsidies for public welfare have been reduced, so the care for the sick, old people and invalids has become a heavy task of families which have to bear great expenses on this.' p 60

'Regarding freedom of marriage, in general, young people nowadays have the right to decide on their marriage, consulting their parents and obtaining the latter's approval.' p 62

'But if we take the minimum amount of calories per person per day (2000 calories) for measurement, we will see that more than half of the Vietnamese population live under the line of poverty: 26% in urban areas and 57% in rural areas (for reference, in Thailand, the figures are 4% and 20% respectively).' p 67

‘Since the years 1990-1993, *the gap* in the living standards of different households has increased.....The gap between rich and poor households is more noticeable in rural areas.’ p 68

‘Forty-five percent of houses have no electricity. About 28% of the households had clean water for daily use; only 15% had proper hygienic facilities.’ p 69

‘Thanks to the achievements recorded in the previous years, the percentage of literacy in Vietnam is relatively high. In 1993, 86.6% of the population were literate. However, the growing percentage of illiterates resulted from the increased number of children and adults who do not go to school or are drop-outs is alarming.’ p 69

‘Since the State subsidy system was abolished, the gap between rich and poor families has been widening in terms of enjoyment of health care and culture in parallel with family living conditions.’ p 70

‘For instance, in Ngo Thi Nham ward (Hanoi) 35% of the families have video players; 95% have television sets; 65% have fridges; 23% have washing machines; 3% have air-conditioners; 68% have motorcycles; 70% have radio sets, 16% have gas cookers, and 1 family has a car.’ p 70

‘In *health care*, due to the reduction of state subsidies, hospitals, medical stations and maternity clinic have deteriorated. The developing private medical services is facilitating the people’s health care, but they are costly.

Poor families and low-income earners particularly in rural areas cannot afford such kind of services.’ p 72

‘It is pleasant to note the growth of the charitable movement in recent years with the enthusiastic involvement of many people and organizations. It is a timely assistance to poor families and children in difficulty.’ p 73

‘..... this [the transition from a ‘traditional’ family to a ‘modern’ one] exerts a bad influence on the building of stable family's education for children as the wife has more burdens of family affairs, staying without a husband.’ p 74

‘It should be noted that the present family is liberated from many chains to boost its economy through different trades. But in a number of families, the economic function absorbs too much labour of the whole family; even of children and elderly.’ p 75

‘High schooling fees are one of the causes for children to abandon school prematurely.’ p 76

‘Many families, although well-off, do not have happiness due to numerous cracks in internal relations. The power of money and pursuit for a materialistic life have resulted in ill-mannered children and supportless old people.’ p 76

‘Violence against women and children is an increasing occurrence, not to mention other crimes (smuggling, murder, sexploitation).’ p 76

‘.... unemployment in rural areas pushes a great number of children and young people to the cities. In fact, poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor are leading to increasing social evils.’ p 76

‘.... we should not attribute everything negative to the market economy which has existed in many countries for several centuries now and nobody has blamed it for the deterioration of the family.’ p 77

‘Meanwhile a number of families have enriched themselves by unlawful means (smuggling, embezzlement of public property, etc.). Those law-breakers have not been punished in time, which raises discontent of those who are honest and righteous.’ p 77

‘In traditional society, the family had almost an absolute role in the education of children especially from 2 to 6 years old. Nowadays, there are creches, kindergartens, infant classes, schools and mass organizations.’ p 79

‘The Vietnamese family has traditionally been extended (at least, 2 generations) therefore contradictions between generations are inevitable. This situation seems to be graver in Vietnam at this period of economic transition and all-round Renovation.’ p 84

‘However, reality shows that in many families, the old parents are able to help their family, sharing with their children experience in many domains of life. Especially, they can take care of their grandchildren.’ p 85

‘For some time in the past, we had committed an erroneous action when we were attempting to “collectivize” the life of families according to a unique model in every aspect (work, leisure time, spending, cultural activities, etc.). Fortunately, we have put an end to this trend. The present family education does not aim at forming citizens of the same type, depriving them of their initiative and creative thinking.’ p 87

‘A number of family adult members are not conscious of their role as “family pillars”. They lead a loose life, being gamblers, alcoholics, drug addicts or even criminals.

There may be several causes. Firstly, the family’s environment is unfavourable for them: there is lack of confidence, care, encouragement in family; they have nobody to turn to for consolation, advice or stimulation when they happen in need. Secondly, they themselves are irresponsible for the life of their whole family, being totally ignorant of the bad effects of their actions on their families.

Apparently, family education has a decisive role in the perfection of adult members’ personality.’ p 89

‘Still, *the family elder members always try their best to preserve their personality, not making troubles* for their descendants.’ p 90

‘The absence of the father in families where the mother has to bring up children alone, has a bad impact on this kind of education [from both the mother and the father].’ p 90

‘*The father* represents the intellectual, the will and the discipline of the family.’ p 90

‘Being close to her children, the mother can discover and redress in time the wrong doings. She is more advantageous than her husband in educating children about the way of life and morality. Tender and subtle, she can ensure the bosom of family for her children even when they have already grown up.’ p 91

‘The elderly have accumulated much experience in life, although some aspects may be regarded as “backward” or “conservative”. In general, this experience is very useful for the young people who know how to inherit it and apply to their life the positive elements. It is more important if the grandparents have a high cultural standard and are retired senior workers.’ p 92

‘Our cause of national industrialization and modernization based on the “doi moi” policy goes hand in hand with the necessity to build a progressive culture imbued with national identity, and a civilized society. This requires families to provide society with far-sighted, sensitive and devoted politicians, talented, strong-willed entrepreneurs and managers; creative scientists capable of absorbing new scientific and technological advances and realizing the realities of the country; popular and high-skilled workers and peasants; gifted cultural workers and artists. Those people should be well-qualified, well-bred and should have culturally abundant life. They should be honest, capable of protecting the interests of their own and of the collective while complying with law and discipline, sympathetic and affectionate towards their compatriots and congeners. They should respect morality, justice and truth, being physically and mentally healthy and capable of fulfilling the assigned duties.’ p 93

‘.... parents are deeply concerned about impact of the market-orientated economy and the manifestations of moral deterioration among young people, and other amoral and law-breaking actions in society.’ p 94

‘Meanwhile, the living environment in cities is more complicated than in rural areas. Therefore, the percentage of workers’ families worrying about the possibility of their children’s depravity is higher than that of peasant families.’ p 96

Refer to p98, the two tables which define the criteria for a wife and a husband.

‘In brief, the Catholic Church has rather all-round programmes of education for the family, suitable for the demands of different ages. The Church also organizes different associations of youths, teenagers, infants or young mothers, etc. and festive days for them. These measures attract a great number of people, especially the youth. Therefore, children of Catholic families are generally obedient.’ pp 103-104

‘On the contrary, Buddhism does not regard the family as a basic unit for education of humans; it requires *individuals* to perfect themselves in virtue and do others good.’ p 104

‘Apparently, Buddhism orientates teenagers and young people towards the morality and dogmas of Buddhism, not highlighting the role of the family as a unit of education.’ p 104

‘In fact, there has appeared a type of people *different from the previous model* of heroic combatants in Resistance war. Modern humans desire to *make a fortune* or to have high incomes to ensure the life of themselves and their family. Among them, many have been cadres of the Revolution and the Resistance; a number of them are Communist Party members. They reject the old way of doing business, striving to find new lawful means of making a fortune. Their aspiration to a happier life and avoiding poverty is legitimate. They want to have more modern comforts for their families. A number of those people *have become rich*. This tendency is observed in various social strata throughout the country. This new model personality is accompanied with the old values changing and the new qualities taking shape. The new man *takes the initiative* in economic activities, not surrendering to challenges and failures. They *study the market*, learn experience from others, create or *seize opportunities*, do not hold to old stereotypes. They are ready for *competition* in a bold manner and ready to cope with *new challenges*.

The present young generation attach great significance to a *high education* and *professional standards*, as well as the capacity of conducting transaction. They wish to go abroad for study. A number of them want to have power and high social status to facilitate their business.

In the past, when engaged in the protection of national independence and freedom, we elevated the model of revolutionary fighter wholly devoted to the nation’s cause.

Nowadays, our task is to build Vietnam into a prosperous and powerful country with a just and civilized society. So, we need another type of persons who strive to do business to make a fortune with legal means. Their activities, conscious or unconscious give an impetus to the development of our society. And they should be welcomed as conforming to the progressive trend of the time. Their ancestors sacrificed themselves for national independence. Nowadays, they are searching for ways to make the nation prosperous.....

However, in the context of a market-orientated economy, negative phenomena tend to increase in a certain section of the population (cheats, depravity, corruption, pursuit for money without attention to the family members or relatives, friends, etc.). A number of people, exploiting the loopholes of laws and the weakness of the State machinery have enriched themselves illegally.’ pp 105-106

‘..... negative impacts come from decadent cultural products. Through the mass media, children today have the opportunity to acquire diversified knowledge and to be quickly socialized. However, at the same time, decadent books, movies and video tapes illegally imported into the country stimulate social evils (robbery, rape, violence, etc.). They are widely circulated by those who run after profit, poisoning both children and adults. Many families care only for earning money, not for their children’s cultural standard, leaving the latter out of their control.’ p 111

‘The economic function takes families much time to meet their material needs. In Hanoi 63.1% of young mothers are engaged in sidelines apart from their permanent jobs.....Low-incomes families cannot meet the cultural and spiritual needs of their children. In many places, small children lack even ordinary school stationary.’ p 113

‘Many mothers are aware of their responsibility in the education of their children, especially infants. But they must work to earn their living, to ensure minimum material needs of the family, thus failing to satisfy their children’s cultural and intellectual needs. Meanwhile, a number of urban families spend a large amount of money on acquiring expensive toys or hiring tutors (sic) who teach various subjects at home. Therefore, though small, children are sensitive to the gap between the rich and the poor, which is unfavourable for their education.’ p 113

‘Recently, the State subsidies for education, culture and health care have been reduced. Therefore, the burden of expenses on these activities of the family is becoming heavier. For school children, families have to pay school fees, expenses on books and other stationary, and to contribute to various funds raised by schools. Many families are either facing difficulties or are unable to afford those extra expenses. This is also a cause of the increasing number of school dropouts and illiterate children.’ p 114

‘In the past, the education of children was entrusted by the family to school and mass organizations (Young Pioneers’ Association, Youth Union and others).

Many people in kindergartens, infant classes, schools, the Pioneers’ Association, Youth Unions, Trade Unions, Party Cells and so on took part in the building of the child’s personality from his childhood to adult.

Nowadays, social education has proved to be of less importance.’ p 124

‘It is necessary to speed up the operation of sporting clubs, classes of music, dance, song and painting, etc. (free of charge, or the fees are not high, to attract more children and young people of different age-brackets). Children’s participation in social activities helps them develop personality in a comprehensive manner (in intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic aspects).’ p 125

p127

Table 16: Families’ concerns about State policies on improvement to their living standards.

More radical anti-corruption campaign	41.5%
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‘*Social policies* are aimed to improve public welfare and security (health care, culture, education). However, the abolition of the subsidy mechanism in this domain affects, first and foremost, women and children, including the education of children, the health care services and cultural enjoyment of the population.’ p 129

‘*Economically*, the State policies should help all families achieve economic development, increase continuously their incomes, develop production and business, and make a fortune with their creativity and legal means.

At the same time, special attention should be paid to according to assistance to poor families to overcome *poverty* as fast as possible.’ p 133

‘The policy to *eradicate hunger and alleviate poverty* should help poor families get loans to develop production.’ p 134

‘Poor families should enjoy medical services *free of charge*, including medical check-up and treatment with simple procedures of hospitalization in order to put an end to the treatment “based on money”.’ p 135

‘The *State should partly subsidize* educational activities.’ p 135

‘Activities of speculation on textbooks for illegal profit should be checked.’ p 136

‘The State should have policies to encourage and help individuals to open private schools, classes, vocational training centres, (Informatics, foreign

languages) to meet the diversified demands of families. At the same time, a regime of inspection to ensure the quality of teaching as well as tuition fees should be set up with regard to these *private establishments*.’
p 136

‘However, the mass media must abstain from the diffusion of products of violence, war, sex, and crimes. The mass-media play an important role in the struggle against social evils. But there should be cautiousness to avoid the possibility of propagating social evils themselves.’ p 137

‘The circulation of a number of black cultural products is a threat to children and young people. The ministry of Culture-Information, together with public security and juridical organs should strictly control this kind of products and punish severely their importers and circulators.’
p 137

‘It may be that young couples should go through a test of their knowledge of this Law [on Marriage and Family] before marriage registration.’
p 138

‘In fact, many parents feel at a loss how and about what to educate their children in the context of a market-orientated economy and open-door policy, when Vietnam is integrating into the world and when there are new and old elements inter-linked.’ p 143

‘The difficult material and spiritual living conditions (unemployment, poverty, low-income, etc.) are also the important causes of ineffective fulfilment (sic) by the family of its educational function.’ p 143

‘It can be predicted that, given the geographical, historical and cultural peculiarities of the country, the future Vietnamese family will not follow the pattern of the USA and European countries.

On the contrary, it will preserve its particular traits.’ p 145