

Ethical Education During Ly – Tran Dynasties

¹Nguyen Phan Thi Thuy Dung

¹An Giang University, Vietnam, npttdung2008@gmail.com

Abstract

The educational content of the Ly - Tran dynasties was strongly influenced by the educational purpose: to educate knowledge, improve spiritual life; in order to train talented people and scholars to maintain social stability and development and to improve the national spirit and patriotism for the people of Dai Viet at that time. In order to achieve the educational goals set out, the educational thought of the Ly - Tran dynasties focused on the role of moral education. The content of moral education is considered to be the most prominent thought in educational thought of this dynasties. This article mainly focuses on introducing ethical education during Ly - Tran dynasties, which is clarified through the following basic contents: the appreciation for ethical education as a human; concerns towards educating ethical standards in society; views in terms of cultivating personal ethics in society during the Ly - Tran dynasties.

Keywords: Ethical education, the Ly - Tran dynasties, ethical ideology.

INTRODUCTION

V Ethical education is one of the outstanding features in the ideology system during Ly - Tran period. On the basis of an independent and autonomous country, along with the impressive development of politics, culture and society in Dai Viet history, the development of education in the Ly - Tran dynasties, including educational ideology, has greatly contributed to solve the problems throughout centuries; Not only were the requirements of training the sage team to serve contemporary society met, but also the foundation for Confucianism was formed for later dynasties. The ideology of education in the Ly - Tran period always praise the value of ethical aspect, considering ethics as the most important value in each individual. The ethical education in Ly-Tran period can be categorized into three major themes: Ethical education as a human was appreciated during Ly-Tran period; Ethical standards education was noticed in Ly-Tran period; viewpoints on the approach of cultivating personal ethics in the society during Ly - Tran period.

Research Method

Purpose: The study clarifies the issue of ethical education in the Ly –Tran period from the viewpoints that value ethical education as human beings, shows concerns towards educating ethical standards for people in society and presents viewpoints on the approach of cultivating personal ethics in society during the Ly - Tran period.

Methodology: The paper's approach is based on the worldview and methodology of Marxist philosophy, and uses specific research methods such as analysis and synthesis, logic and history, induction and deduction, abstraction, generalization, comparison, collation and especially quotation.

Main findings: The study illustrates the ethical education in the Ly – Tran period, which appreciates ethical education, cares for ethical standards education and viewpoints on the approach of cultivating personal ethics in the society during Ly - Tran period.

Literature Review

The research on humanities in the educational viewpoints in the Ly – Tran period can be divided into the following main themes:

Firstly, the research works referring to the social background and premedes of the formation in Ly - Tran period from Vietnam's history pioneering society in general, including: *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (Complete Annals of Đại Việt), Social Sciences, Hanoi, 1998; Phan Huy Chu, *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (Rule of the dynasties is copied according to the classification), p.1, p.2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006; Truong Huu Quynh - Dinh Xuan Lam - Le Mau Han; Ha Van Tan - Pham Thi Tam, *Cuộc kháng chiến chống quân xâm lược Nguyên - Mông thế kỷ XIII* (The war against Nguyen - Mong invaders in the 13th centure) of the People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003, Institute of History; *Studying Vietnamese society in the Ly - Tran period*, by, Hanoi Science Publishing House, 1980; ...

Secondly, the research works, reffering to the characteristics in the Ly - Tran period, gained from the knowledge of the ideology in Ly-Tran period in general, including: *Viện Văn học, Thơ văn Lý - Trần* (Institute of Literature, Poetry of Ly – Tran), Publishing House. Social Science, Hanoi, 1989; Nguyen Lang, *Việt Nam Phật giáo sử luận* (History of Vietnam's Buddhism), Literature Publishing House, Hanoi, 2000, Truong Van Chung, Doan Chinh, *Vietnamese Thought in the Ly - Tran period*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008; *Lịch sử tư tưởng triết học Việt Nam từ thời kỳ dựng nước đến đầu thế kỷ XX* (History of Vietnamese philosophical ideas from the period of nation-building to the early twentieth century) by Doan Chinh (editor), National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2013, ...

Thirdly, the research works of studies, assessments and comments on historical value and significance of the ideology under the Ly - Tran period, including: *Lịch sử Giáo dục Việt Nam trước cách mạng tháng 8 - 1945* (The History of Vietnamese Education before the August Revolution – 1945) by Nguyen Dang Tien (editor), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1996; Hai Tri Tien Duc Publishing House, Hanoi, 1941, Tran Van Giau, *Sự phát triển của tư tưởng Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XIX đến Cách mạng Tháng Tám* (3 tập) (The

development of Vietnamese thought from the nineteenth century to the August Revolution (3 chapters), the National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1996; Institute of History, *Tìm hiểu xã hội Việt Nam thời kỳ Lý - Trần* (Learning about Vietnam's society in the Ly - Tran period), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1980;...

Results and Discussion

The appreciation towards moral education as human beings in the content of moral education in the Ly - Tran dynasties

Human morality is a way, principle, and meaning that people have the duty to preserve and follow in the society life. A person is considered ethical in society when he or she understands the ethics of being a human and this is reflected in every word and action they take. "Human morality" is the basis for an ethical person to perform well in relation to nature, society, and himself according to his/her identity.

The issue of morality as a person in particular and moral education in general in the Ly - Tran dynasties were profoundly influenced by Confucian conceptions. This is because that the historical and social requirements of the Ly - Tran dynasties at that time were the demand for a talented team to maintain social order and accompany the nation in the development. In terms of the history of human thought, in restropect, only Confucian doctrine could meet this requirement of Dai Viet society. Although Buddhism is deeply rooted in Vietnamese social life, it cannot become a doctrine, a theoretical basis for maintaining social order nor an ideology of the Vietnamese Vietnamese feudalism regime during the Ly - Tran dynasties. For that reason, the Three Moral Bonds, Five Moral Bonds and Five Constant Virtues in Confucianism made a significant contribution to the content of moral education in the Ly - Tran period at that time.

Absorbing Confucian moral thoughts, the thinkers and kings in the Ly - Tran dynasties advocated that human beings must have five basic virtues (The Five Contant Virtues): benevolence, justice, courtesy, wisdom, faith. "Five" is often considered as the main principles for people to well perform the five common

relationships in society (the five moral bonds), which are the relationship of king - servant, father - son, husband - wife, big brother/sister - little brother/sister and social friends. Among the three moral bonds (three basic relationships in society: king - servant; father - son; husband - wife), the king - servant relationship is most appreciated. The Three Moral Bonds represents the social order associated with the five constant virtues, which laid the foundation for political and moral principles of the Feudal system. Nevertheless, Confucianism had a strong influence on the moral aspect of the Ly - Tran period; However, the concepts of the the Three Moral Bonds and Five Constant Virtues are understood and applied flexibly; It was transformed specifically, in accordance with the characteristics and requirements of the society at that time, and was vividly expressed in the words and actions of kings and generals. Therefore, these ethical concepts are deepened and added value, because it is no longer just a theory but is practiced through moral examples in history.

Profoundly influenced by Confucian moral conceptions, Kings and mandarins of the Ly - Tran dynasties always upheld human morality and practiced an exemplary lifestyle for their servants and the next generation to follow. During the Ly - Tran dynasties, the concept of a matcho and a sage was introduced, considering a sage is who conceives morality as the top value, lives for the humanity, loves people, aware of the responsibility and obligations to the nation. In the poem Kieu Nguyen Lang, Tran Nhan Tong mentioned the morality of a man as:

“To love all people equally is the divine virtue of God/ To live without helping the world is the shame of a man” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 477).

Or, in *Discussing on Self-Serving* by Le Van Huu, he mentioned the morality of being a human being that the heavenly son's life purpose is must be for taking care of people and for the country : "Heaven gave birth to people, but also presented a King , it is for the King to govern the people, not for the king to serve himself" (Institute of Literature, 1989: 381).

In addition, during the Ly - Tran dynasties, a sage must be voluntary for the most difficult things so he could get the rewards later, be caring before people start to care for themselves

and enjoy the rewards after his people do. As in “*Hịch Tướng Sĩ*” (Translation: Tran Hung Dao's proclamation to his officers), Tran Quoc Tuan told his officers: “In the battlefield, we live and die together; If our happy life, we laugh together” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 391).

Human morality during Ly - Tran dynasties back then was not only expressed in the words and actions of kings and mandarins, but also particularized into regulations and laws to regulate ethical behavior in a clear and transparent manner. In *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (Rule of the dynasties is copied according to the classification), Penal Law (II), contains provisions on the Ten evils to deter and maintain social order. The Ten evils clearly demonstrated Confucian-Buddhist thought, for the purpose of training people to live for the rights, live for the good, not to be greedy, to hate, to steal, not to commit sins and live life to the fullest as a human, includes the following objectives: : betrayals, rebellion, division, wickedness, immorality, disrespectfulness, filial piety, incorruptibility, unrighteousness and internal rebellion. In order to strengthen the relationship between King-Servant, and encourage filial piety, King Ly Thai Tong met his courtiers at Dong Co temple on 1028 and together swore: "Should I am unfilial as a son and disloyal as a servant, God can kill me!" (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 1998a: 251).

In general, the human morality in Ly - Tran dynasties was mainly influenced by Confucian conceptions, but exposed and particularized in a vivid, practical way, suitable to social circumstances of Dai Viet at that time, in which the contents of the precepts of Buddhism was absorbed and incorporated, especially the philosophy of meditation and the Taoist concept of wu-wei and purity. Therefore, it has significantly contributed to raising people's awareness, adjusting the moral behavior of individuals in society, "consolidating people's hearts, revitalizing career", is one of the causes of the great victory in Ly - Tran dynasties during the national defense resistance war and affirming the independence and sovereignty of the nation.

Concerns towards educating moral standards for people in the Ly - Tran period

Moral standards and virtues are the expression and particularization of human morality. Therefore, no matter how diverse the categories and ethical standards are, they do not deviate from the trajectory of human morality.

During Ly - Tran dynasties, moral education paid a special attention to training talented people, gathering all the talents with high quality of moral standards to become a sage being capable of winning people and soldier's heart in the resistance war protecting the imperial court and maintain social order stability. Therefore, moral standards and virtues are always highly praised, which requires everyone in society to take it as life purposes and a way of evaluating an individual's personality.

First of all, it is about virtue. The kings, mandarins and thinkers in the Ly - Tran dynasties considered "humanity" as the root of morality, to practice "humanity" is to act with your kind-heart. Humanity is the most basic ethical category and standard and almost all virtues come from "human". Therefore, the person who possesses "humanity" is seen as the most perfect person, the sage, is someone who knows how to love the lovable and hate the hateful. For the kings of this period, "humanity" was believed as a very necessary virtue, the more "humanity" the king was, the more he was trusted and loved by his people. "I love my people as much as I love my children. As the parents of the people, I am very sorry to see people mistakenly doing something and being punished for that. From now on, no matter how serious or minor a crime is, the law will be tolerated", said King Tran Nhan Tong (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 1989a: 232). It can be said that the expression of "humanity" is extremely diverse, because they are all rooted from "human". For that reason, it is not only in the context of moral education of the Ly - Tran period that there is a need for "human", but in most of other economic activities such as political, social, ... also need to take "human" as the core.

Second, along with humanity, loyalty and filial piety are the two ethical standards receive special concern. However, the word loyalty and filial piety in the Ly - Tran dynasties were expressed very vividly and had a wide connotation, which is different from the original Confucian concept that the servant must remain loyal to the King and serve the King only, being

"loyal" here is to the king, to the dynasty, and the nation; Filial piety is not only filial piety to parents but also filial piety to the people and country. The reason is because, during this period, Dai Viet was facing the invasion of Nguyen - Mong invaders, the risk of national independence was lost, the commune was in danger, if only loyal to the King, it was impossible to keep the country. As long as the nation's destiny still remains, the King and the dynasty will still remain, this requires the meanwhile ruling class to reconcile class conflicts and sacrifice class interests so that "the King and servants are of one mind, people are in harmony with each other." ... build an army of one heart, like father and son" (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 1989b: 79), for the survival of the nation. That is how the word "loyal" and "filial" became that vivid and particular.

Loyalty and filial piety are emphasized as an important requirement for the resistance war to protect the country. The loyal servants in Ly - Tran dynasties were always a good example that followed by later generations. General Tran Quoc Tuan was a man not only with his talent heroic strategy, but also with a heart to preserve loyalty, he also educated his lieutenants: "From ancient times, loyalists and martyr sacrificed their lives for the country always presented. For example, those who insist on following the usual female interest will die and stuck forever in the corner, how can they create history together with heaven and earth, forever and ever?" (Institute of Literature, 1989: 390). And even Tran Quoc Tuan's two servants, Da Tuong and Yet Kieu, also showed their loyalty while listening to Tran Quoc Tuan share his father's words, he said: "... We swear that we wish to be a servant until our last breath rather than be a mandarin with disloyalty that is accepted to be a teacher only by taking people as goat's meat" (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 1989b: 79-80).

Although there are different categories, the Kings, thinkers and mandarins in Ly - Tran dynasties believed that there was a close relationship between the categories among loyalty, filial piety, obedience, love, etc. that can share a mutual expression.

Loyalty must be associated with filial piety; Filial piety includes loyalty, is the root of loyalty. Loyalty is also filial piety, and disloyalty is also unfilial. Tran Quoc Tuan told

his son Tran Quoc Tang: “The traitor comes from an unfilial son” (Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences, 1989b: 90). On the other hand, obedience played an important role in directing the relationships in the Three Moral Bonds and the Five Constant Virtues in the society at that time, in order to ensure that human-to-human relationships follow the hierarchical order from the family, to the country and the world. It is not a coincidence that Confucius encourages the slogan “First is obedience, second is knowledge” in educating people.

In addition to upholding the word “human” in Confucianism, the word “mind” in Buddhism is also one of the standards in the content of moral education in Ly - Tran period. The word “mind” plays a fundamental role. All problems and ethical categories, no matter good or bad, always revolve around the main axis which is “mind”. Mind, considered the most basic category in Buddhism, dominates throughout the Zen philosophy of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism and has deep roots in previous Zen types. Specifically, the Zen school of Bhikkhuni Da Luu Chi, introduced the concept of mind seal. Mind seal means that the mind is completely free, has been sealed of its own nature. The second Zen sect is Vo Ngon Thong with the concept of mind-ground. Mind-ground is the original mind, the self-nature, the Buddha nature inherent in each person. It contains and completes everything, to attain that mind is to attain true suchness, self-nature, buddha nature, nirvana.

Inheriting the conceptions of mind of the previous Zen lines, Tran Thai Tong – is a symbol of the history of Vietnamese philosophy, introduced the concept of “tâm hư không” (A conscience of emptyness), “không” implies the objective factors, “hư” expresses the empty status inside each human’s mind. A mind with emptyness is the manifestation of emptiness in each person's mind. “The conscience of emptyness” is natural, pure, covers the universe, covers all dharmas, is the original of all dharmas, towards the inner subjectivity. According to Tran Thai Tong: “The conscience that arouses all the good, means having a good thought. When good thoughts arise, good karma returns. The conscience that arouses all the evil, means having bad thoughts. Evil thoughts give rise to evil karma. Like a mirror showing an image, like a shadow following an image”

(Institute of Literature, 1989: 84-85). Therefore, according to Tran Thai Tong, the process of cultivating also sheds the lights to take back the pure, original mind of each being, erase all ignorance, all thoughts that arise evil karma, reach the state of emptyness.

In the time of sergeant Tue Trung (Tue Trung Thuong Si), despite of being inherited the concept of “conscience”, he introduced another concept of “mind”. He said that the mind is the origins of all things, the essence and the source of all, which is available in the nature of one’s being, only obscured by dual views and delusions. In *Phật tâm ca* (Buddha's heart song), he wrote:

“...If mind is born, Buddha is born

The mind is destroyed, Buddha disappears

Absence of Mind but presence of Buddha still?
This is impossible

Absence of Buddha but mind still exists, like
always

Want to learn Buddha’s mind, mind ceases to be
born...” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 273).

Even Tran Nhan Tong also mentioned the mind, he introduced the concept of a still mind, which is a completely still, pure, absolute, endless immensity, unable to be bound by words, thoughts, no good, no evil, no birth, no death. According to him, when one has reached a tranquil mind, one will be able to eradicate greed, hatred, and delusion, and attain Nirvana. When the mind is clear, then the Buddha Dharma can be fully understood, except for the three karmas, the mind will be purified:

“Stop three new karma to quiet your body and
mind;

If you have one heart, you will be able to
communicate with your ancestors” (Institute of
Literature, 1989: 507).

Thus, the delegates in Tran dynasty greatly focused on the category of mind in their ideological views. Thereby, it shows that the mind is the most basic category that has a positive influence on the moral life of many generations of Vietnamese people. In addition to the influence of Buddhist categories in the spiritual life of the people, the content of moral education in Ly - Tran period in particular and

the socio-political ideology of this period in general, is ethical standards in Confucianism as the foundation. However, they were modified to be practical and flexible with their own characteristics and became effective tool for kings and mandarins of the Ly - Tran period to fulfill their national mission.

Perspectives on the approaches of cultivating personal morality in society during the Ly - Tran dynasties

The ways and the methods of cultivating morality is considered as a practical foundation for people to reach perfection in their personalities. Because if it only sets out human morality and suggests high moral standards without explaining how, then implementation is not convincing enough and possibly impractical.

There are many ways and approaches to cultivate morality, but in general, the methods and approaches are all created by human and heart. Keeping a pure mind and living with humanity are what basically builds a person with good morality. In general, Vietnamese ideological representatives have proposed many specific ways, each with a different characteristic and are expressed mostly in essays, sayings, meditation poems, which contain valuable ideas and moral lessons.

For instance, Tran Thai Tong conceived of taking precepts as the starting point for all moral cultivation processes. He wrote some essays on precepts including: Essay of commandment of killing, essay of commandment of stealing, essay of commandment of lust, essay of commandment of gossip and essay of commandment of drinking. The Five Precepts written by Tran Thai Tong are for the purpose of educating and admonishing people not to kill animals, greed for wealth, beauty, fame, alcohol, meat, etc... to avoid leading to "erroneous speech. Gas bursts the intestines; Wine taste breaks the heart. Mental disorders; mental coma. Mother and father renounce; Five evils always committed. Or rambling bazaars babbling mouths singing; dancing naked ; not caring about visiting Buddha or pagoda. Illness is also born from that; Losing the country also caused by that"... (Institute of Literature, 1989: 93). Tran Thai Tong always urges people to practice the Ten Good Deeds: not killing, not stealing, not committing fornication, no lying, no double-tonguing, no weaving, no harsh words. No

greed, no anger, no delusion... Tran Thai Tong believes that these are not only precepts that practitioners must strictly adhere to, but they are also essential ethical standards that everyone must follow to maintain the correctness and purity of the body and mind.

Serheant Tue Trung supposed that the path to reach the truth, cultivate morality, and achieve Buddha realm at heart is to meditate with the spirit of breaking barriers, surpassing all conventional dogma, discipline and precepts. Meditation according to Tue Trung Thuong Master here is not something difficult, magical, nor concerned with vegetarianism or salty foods, or reciting the Buddha's name, zazen, observing precepts, etc. just simply by living a simple life and be friends with nature. When the Senior Sergeant attended a party with Empress Dowager Nguyen Thanh Thien Cam, when he saw fish, he ate it. The empress dowager wondered: "If you practice meditation and eat meat, how can you become a Buddha? The monk smiled and replied, "Buddha is Buddha, you are you. You don't need to be Buddha, Buddha doesn't need to be you. Haven't you heard the ancients say: "Manjushri is Manjushri, liberation is liberation"? (Institute of Literature, 1989: 545).

With the spirit of radical breaking and living by truly himself actively, Tue Trung Thuong is considered by progeny to be a bodhisattva at home, different from the contemporary Zen masters; These ideas have positively influenced the spiritual life of Ly - Tran society in particular and brought a new color to Vietnamese meditation in general.

If Tran Thai Tong focuses on keeping precepts and Tue Trung Thuong Thu advocates meditation to break attachment, Tran Nhan Tong focuses on cultivating morality and wisdom, removing all ignorance to attain enlightenment. and liberated by the combination of cultivation, precepts, concentration, and wisdom of Buddhism with the practice of morality, humanity, and meaning of Confucianism and Taoism's purity and vigor, taking meditation as the core. He pointed out that religious practice must be associated with forging the bright character, suppressing hope, cutting off the human ego, ending greed and hatred, keeping morals, etc. In Cu Tran Lac Dao Phu, he wrote:

"Preserve a bright mind for peace;

Compress the death, the stop does not fall.

Eliminate the ego, then the real diamond will shine;

Stop being greedy to find enlightenment” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 505).

“Accumulating people, cultivating morality, who does not like Shakyamuni;

Holding the precepts, cutting off hatred and greed, no one else but Maitreya” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 506).

No passion for pearl, as long as the first meal is vegetarian, the other one is rice soup.

Clean the precepts of the heart, clean the precepts from inside, so the bodhisattvas should be dignified” (Institute of Literature, 1989: 507).

Besides, he also pioneers in practicing all the good things, entering the world, not only did he personally go around preaching the "Ten Good" but the King himself, after leaving home, lived extremely pious and simple life:

“A lightbulb shadow on a half page, a bed full of books,

The leaves fell on the autumn yard, slightly cool at night.

Waking up not knowing where the pestle is,

On the bunch of cinnamon flowers, the moon has just shines." (Institute of Literature, 1989: 465).

A prominent feature of this period is that the famous Zen masters who had great influence on the monks were kings and military generals, which created the profound embodiment of Buddhism in the Ly - Tran period. It was this incarnate thought that brought the Buddhism in this period a solid social foundation for survival and development, and had an influence on contemporary society ; helped the internal conflicts in society drastically reduced, created a peaceful society, people live for the good, love and support each other.

Conclusion

In general, morality is an important topic in Dai Viet's social history in general and in the educational content in Ly - Tran period in

particular. The categories and ethical standards in Ly - Tran period no longer keep the original meanings and scholastics like Confucianism and primitive Buddhism; they were Vietnameseized in a very practical, particular and vivid way in accordance with the historical, social and cultural requirements of Dai Viet back then. The content of moral education in the Ly - Tran dynasties about human morality, ethical standards and categories, and the way to cultivate morality has a profound humanity and influence on life, which contributes to stabilize the maintenance of social order in this period. Moreover, they also contribute to training the talents to serve the defense of prosperous Dai Viet nation, play a significant role in training people to possess both political integrity and professional competence and promote ethical education for the youth and adolescents in our country today.

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