

Dualistic Behavior of Vietnamese in Folk-songs and Proverbs

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Abstract Folk-songs and proverbs of Vietnam are literature genres combined between mentality and spirit of the country over the history course, and reflect material and spiritual life of generations of the labor masses. Through folk-songs and proverbs, we realize the soul, spirit and characteristics of the country and the unique behavior of our ancestor. And one of the most interesting such characteristics is “dualistic behavior” (a flexible way of treating things under many factors with many point view, sometimes being in contrast with each other). This article will survey the “dualistic behavior” reflected in folk-songs and proverbs in order to point out advantages and disadvantages of this way of behavior, help us obtain a clearer understand from and form a correct thought and response which contributes to social development.

Keywords: folk-songs, proverbs, Vietnamese, dualistic behavior, dialectical

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1. Introduction

There have been various studies on behavior habit of Vietnamese. However, a study researching directly the dualistic behavior of Vietnamese in folk-songs and proverbs has been not available.

There may be several researches on the behavior of Vietnamese such as: The work *Behavioural Culture of Ethnic Groups in Vietnam* by Pham Vu Dung, Tran Binh Minh and Hoang Luong; *Behaviour Art of Vietnamese People* [2] by Pham Minh Thao; *A Discussion on Behavior Culture of Vietnamese* [3] by Nguyen Tat Thinh; *Behavior Skill for a Women against her Husband and his Family* [4] by Doan Phu Vinh; *Behaviour Culture in Family Life* [5] by Nguyen Duc Hung; *Behaviour between a married couple* [6] by Thanh Hang and Thu Hue; *Behaviour rules between a Mother and her Daughter-in-law* [7] by Do Quyen; *Behavior with Elders in Family* [8] by Nguyen Kim Lan; *Tolerance in Buddhism - A solution for Current Behavior Chattiness of Vietnam* [9] by Nguyen Thi Phuong Mai.

In addition, there are works referring to the behavior of Vietnamese people through folk-songs, proverbs and myths such as: The work *Traditional behavior of Vietnamese people in North Delta through folk-songs and adverse against nature and society* [10] by Tran Thuy Anh; *Virtues of human in Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs* [11] và *Behavioral Culture in Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs* [12] by Nguyen Nghia Dan; *Tracking a beauty in Vietnamese Culture of Traditional Behavior*

from Folk-songs [13] by Ha Dan; *Some features of culture, psychology and national characteristics in English and Vietnamese proverbs* [14] by Lam Quang Dong; *Culture of Behavior against Nature of Vietnamese's People in Myths* [15] by Ngo Thi Hong Giang; *Proverbs and Folk-songs on Family Relationship* [16] by Phạm Viet Long. However, for research purpose, these works have no conditions to exploit dualistic behavior of Vietnamese through folk-songs, proverbs.

Folk-songs and proverbs is the voice of the masses which has been passed through generations and generations in various national regions, collected and summarized our ancestors' experiences against changes and challenges of history. Thus, studying dualistic behavior phenomenon of Vietnamese through folk-songs and proverbs will provide a further understanding on this flexible thinking and behavior, on our national culture. Especially, in such a situation of integration like today, to build a culture mixed with unique and Vietnams character, to firm friendship with international countries be what we are is very necessary. For that reason, the study of dualistic behavior through folk-songs and proverbs becomes a meaningful task.

2. Content

2.1. Some Features of Vietnamese Folk-songs and Proverbs

Vietnamese folk-songs is a kind of folk literature including romantic verses with rhythm created by popular

people and passed through generations to generations in which material and spiritual life of Vietnam people is expressed.

Vietnamese proverbs is a kind of folk literature with short and brief sayings including romantic verses with rhythm created by popular people and passed through generations to generations in which experiences and knowledge of the Vietnamese people on nature and society are concluded.

Being a branch of folk literature, Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs take some features as following:

Firstly, being collective works

This is social feature of the folk literature generally, and of folk-songs and proverbs particularly, and constituted from living conditions, labor conditions and public activities of the masses. Verses of folk-songs and proverbs coming to us, people of modern, is as a result of continuous creation from communities in various regions of the country in which, individual creative parts have been mixed together and become common songs of the people.

Secondly, passed down through oral way

As other kind of folk literature, Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs came into being early, when writing unavailable; therefore, the passing way of folk-songs and proverbs is through oral words. Folk-songs and proverbs were mainly created during the course of working and producing in which the people sang their songs and proverbs to express their sentiments and concepts against their works and life.

Thirdly, natural collection

Natural collection shows unspecialized feature of folk literature generally, and of folk-songs and proverbs particularly in terms of skill and content. Natural collection of content is expressed in a fact that Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs is not only a part of folk literature, but also a part of philosophy, natural, historical and geographical science knowledge. Natural collection of skill is expressed through four method of performance: singing, telling, talking and performing. In singing, telling, speaking and performing, language elements will be combined with music, gesture and movement rules to produce lividity for the work. Such elements are mixed together naturally and spontaneously by the performers and artists.

Fourthly, variant existing

Variant factor is an inevitable result of collectiveness, oral passing and natural collection of Vietnam folk-songs and proverbs. Due to being collective works, passed through oral word, and collected randomly, each individual can perform folk-songs and proverbs according to his or her sentiment and taste and treat them by his or her will from content to meaning. Due to being speeded widely among the people, each region, with its own natural and psychological characteristics, will reproduce another version of the same folk-song or proverb. And among such variants, a certain determination of original version can not be proved, so all the versions will take the same value; but the difference is how to use them, in what situation and for what purpose. Variant property makes Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs abundant in quantity and diversified in meaning.

Essential features mentioned above constitute a base to study and interpret the dualistic behavior of Vietnamese people in folk-songs and proverbs. Really, oral tradition

gives each person's ability to express various, sometimes contrast, opinions on the same issue without rising conflict because they appear in different moments with different situations. Natural collection makes the content of folk-songs and proverbs diversified with various aspects. Variant property produces many different versions of folk-songs and proverbs with various opinions on the same issue. However, despite the variance, these folk-songs and proverbs have still been reserved and passed down among the people and become common language of the masses, express "dualistic behavior" of Vietnamese people.

2.2. Manifestations of Dualistic Behavior in Vietnamese Folk-songs and Proverbs

The remarkable feature of our forefathers' mind is humility-dimensional thinking, "dualistic" behavior, and the duality of folk philosophy. When studying all aspects of life, evaluating things, phenomena as well as relationships, our forefathers used to see the world. Their life in various slices, with enormous different shades, expressed multiple colors and multiple appearances of the realistically world vividly and deeply. Thus, in their behaviors, our forefather often had a "dualistic" attitude to adapt to each specific situation without creating contradictions.

Most Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs came into being in feudal periods. Therefore, dualistic behavior of Vietnam in folk-songs and proverbs is a reflection of social and economic conditions integrated with feudal production mode, namely as following:

In the view of the relationship between material life and spiritual life, our forefathers clearly demonstrate the "dualistic". Material life is understood as: rice, clothing, rice, money, sufficient or needy, wealthy or poor, etc. Spiritual life is understood as: morality, behavior, mind, feeling, etc. In that relationship, folk song affirms the decisive role of material life for spiritual life: "Fine words butter no parsnips" [[18]; 51], "Can't make bricks without straw" [[18]; 48], "Necessity is the mother of invention" [[11]; 97], "Honor change manners" [[18]; 130]. "Necessity", "Honor", "Food" is considered to be in the material realm, in social existence; "manners", "invention", "moral" is considered to be in the mental field, in the social consciousness. Therefore, material life determines the spiritual life. Although affirming the decisive role of material life for spiritual life, folk song also affirms that the spiritual and emotional life is very rich, complicated and has its own rules, which is not always subject to the decision of the material life. Indeed, sometimes the nature of things or phenomena is not perceived as it is, but depending on the subjective consciousness of human beings: "Give a dog an ill name and hang him" [[18]; 92], "A burden of one's choice is not felt" [[18]; 151], "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" [[17]; 138], "Love is not everything matters" [[18]; 170]. When there is love, the bad also become good, distorted into rounded, chiseled into in, deviated into weight, sour into sweet. Therefore, the object reflected is considered good or bad, distorted or rounded, opaque or in, deviated or scales, sour or sweet depends on the subjective factors. Despite the same thing, it will be different keep this one and the other. Although the point of view has certain limitations, which do not reflect the nature of things as

they are, they also show the relative independence, the vividness of the spiritual life, the human emotions, the "duality" of the relationship between material life and spiritual life of our forefathers.

In particular, in the relationship between material value and spiritual value, our forefathers also express the concept of "dualistic". That: on the one hand, they affirm, praise the material value over spiritual value, on the other hand also say that the moral values, human emotions are really worthy of respect and worth durability. When affirming the material value over spiritual values, our forefathers have the sentences: "No labor will ever be recognized" [[17]; 144], "Rich in respect, difficult in contempt" [[18]; 80], "Only words of wealthy person have the weight" [[17]; 162], "No one will believe in you until you have succeeded" [[11]; 356]. In folk song, our forefathers pointed out the reverse of this concept. The over-valuing of material value, or the value of money, has made the relationship between man and man become cold and profitable: "Money go first, manner follows" [[18]; 156], "Money can change the heart" [[16]; 205], "Caring is only for the rich people" [[17]; 377]. Even so, the value of money sometimes breaks the spousal relationship; which is a measure of family happiness: "having money having love, no money no love" [[17]; 162]. Therefore, despite the materialism, folk song does not absolutize it and considers the honor, morality, love, human talent as really worthy and sustainability: "Compassion is more precious than material" [[18]; 152], "Honor is more precious than material" [[11]; 109], "Words is more valued than money" [[11]; 133], "Be unrighteous because of greed" [[11]; 410], "Do for meaning, but for material" [[18]; 164]. Our forefather said that poor humanity is really scary, and poor money is only temporary because man will do all by love and determination: "Poor humanity is worrying, poor money is not matter" [[11]; 136].

On understanding position of men and of women, due to influence of male chauvinism by Confucianism, our ancestors highly nominated men, considered them as matter of family and continuity keeper of family line: "Ten girls are not equal to a boy" [[18]; 113] or "Just one son, not even ten daughters, can be counted as offspring" [[18]; 121] (literally meaning a family with just one boy will have offspring, with even ten girls will have no one). However, because of humanity and male appreciation, our ancestors still remains a concept of men and women equality as well as consideration of high value for women: "Son or daughter is not important issue but the living way they conduct is" [[18]; 77]. Therefore, our ancestors in one side attached much importance on men but in the other side remained a determination that men and women are equal as long as they conduct a charity and virtue life, and if men fail to do that, they are even despicable against women: "A woman with a charity and virtue living is more valuable than a man without such" [[11]; 182].

On role of men and women in a family, our ancestors in one side said that: "As a boat going with its driver, a woman must go with her husband" [[18]; 151], in the other side said that "As water flowing by the river, a man should go after his wife" [[11]; 23]. Due to influence of male chauvinism, men in the past kept patriarchal concept which considerate all rights in a family being in hand of

the man. A woman, when living with her parent, must obey her father, when marrying, must follow her husband and serve his family as the saying: "As a boat going with its driver, a woman must go with her husband". However, as we see in reality there have been many men living with his wife's family (mainly being men far from homeland, difficult situation, or men marrying daughter of rich families which have no any son...), for that fact the ancestor said: "As water flowing by the river, a man should go after his wife". At the same time, the concept of "As water flowing by the river, a man should go after his wife" is also the wish of women against the equal reality. In addition, through folk-songs and proverbs, the role of the wives in the family is also affirmed and considered as an important role, a strong backbone contributing to the success of the husband and creating happiness, wealth for the family: "Farming requires buffalos, getting rich requires wives" [[18]; 95], "To trust the virtuous wife when home in disadvantages, to trust good generals when country in disorder" [[18]; 120], "A good wife is a man's best wealth" [[19]; 561]. Recognizing the important role of the wives in the family, folk-songs and proverbs expressed the voice of the husband noting the contributions of his wife, dignifying and respecting his wife: "First wife, second God" [[18]; 121], "Husband's cymbal are not as effective as wife's gong" [[18]; 98]. Although the proverb above surpassed the role of a woman in a humorous way, it contributed to against the patriarchal in the family.

In the view of children about the role of parents, on the one hand, folk-songs and proverbs affirmed roles, merits of father and mother are the same in the birth of child and rearing them; On the other hand, they also assessed that the role and the importance of mother are more than father's ones. Our country's economic base is wet rice farming, therefore, the leading concern of people is the growth of crops and people, and they always looked for lush crops bumper harvests and crowded home. Crops are the products of heaven and land; people are products of the combination of father and mother. And in forefather's conception, the land is identified with the mother, and the heaven is identified with the father. Thus, naturally, man valued both heaven and the earth, both father and mother, and from the beginning man has thought of equality in the relationship between heaven and earth, father and mother: "Father bore and mother brought up their children" [[18]; 37], "Parents' kindness" [[18]; 55], "Father is respected and mother is also worshiped" [[18]; 29]. However, wet-rice agriculture required diligence, hardness, persistence and skill, and this is in line with the characteristics of women and women can handle their jobs effectively. It is the wet rice agriculture that affirmed the important role of women and formed the psychology of respecting women. Thus, it can be said, my root is to respect both father and mother, both male and female but leaning more toward the female and the mother. On the other hand, the hard sacrifice of the mother in raising children was proved by the reality, so the folk-songs and proverbs on the one hand affirmed the great gratitude of both parents but on the other hand always respected and dignifying the role of mother more: "That father born is not as equal as mother's raising" [[18]; 37], "Without mother, the children eat rice with and without father lick leaves in the market" [[20]; 1789]. Mother is the caregiver,

close the most to children. Mother care for each meal and sleep. When being a child, she nursed, nourished. When growing up, she always stood by to take care of, advice and protect. Therefore, in the opinion of the children, even though parents have the same role, but often children love the mother more because the mother is the direct care and closest to the child. Moreover, instinctively, women are always more caring than men; tolerance, sacrifice for the family, children are also often larger than the men. Due to the concept of “three subjections and four virtues of a woman”, “a good woman does not marry twice”, when her husband died, the woman can sacrifice, ready to live without husband for the children. Men, when their wives die, often remarry, causing their children to live in a complex relationship of “a stepmother, husband’s children”. Thus, in the opinion of the children about the role of parents, the mother is often more appreciated.

On relationship between a woman with her husband’s mother, our ancestors presented various opinions: “A mother just spend her concern on her own son, not her son’s wife” [[16]; 108], “A daughter will ultimately go away with her husband, a Daughter in law is really bought to home” [[17]; 351]. Despite difference of such two concepts, they reflect facts in society. A mother always loves her son more than her daughter-in-law. Really, about blood-relationship, a woman is not more than a stranger with a different blood. Moreover, with a daughter-in-law living in the family, the son will surely share his love with his wife, and many conflicts or different thinking’s on lifestyle will happen. All make the relationship between a woman with her husband’ family, especially the mother, very complex. However, real life proved that when being a daughter-in-law in the husband’s family, a woman will have a little time for her original family, but most of her time will be for her husband’s family, and husband’s parent in many case will be cared by the daughter-in-law, so the ancestors said: “A daughter will ultimately go away with her husband”. She is the person living regularly with the husband’s parent and care for them even more than that of their own daughters. Thus, despite lacking a blood relationship, but due to virtue responsibility, she becomes integrated with her husband’s parent even more than their own daughters, that is why to say: “a Daughter in law is really bought to home”. Such fact shows a consideration of important role of a daughter-in-law and her contribution to her husband’s family. So although the two proverbs express two different opinions but reflect exactly complex sentimental life of the people. Therefore, “dualistic behavior” in folk-songs and proverbs is a reflection of complexity and multi-color of real life, and of diversified form of human sentimental and psychological life.

On blood-relationship and non-blood-relationship, our ancestors in one side said that: “A blood is more valuable than a pond of water” [[17]; 347], “Far relations are more valuable than neighbors” [[11], 158], but at the same time they also said: “Far relations are less valuable than neighbors” [[11]; 225]. We can see that our ancestors always appreciate blood-relationship because it is a natural sense of human. However, reality proved necessity of sentiment, closeness and support of neighbors in life of anyone. We all spend our concern to our family and relations, but at the same time no one can separate from community life, from surrounding neighbors. Besides, a

notable element in the behavior of our ancestors is an appreciation of virtue rules which has been considered as the standard for the relationship among people generally and among family member particularly. Therefore, despite of high appreciation of blood relationship, such as in saying: “A bitter blood relationship is valuable than a sweet non-blood-relationship” [[17]; 348], but at the same time virtue rules between people have been also considered as the most standard in communication, as in the saying: “A stranger with faithful lifestyle is valuable than a relation with lying lifestyle” [[17]; 348]. In particular, folk songs and proverbs also expressed the spirit of humanity, progress and open view of forefathers about a universal world: “brothers from four oceans are one home” [[11]; 216]. (Independently of ethnicity, religion, territory, all are one home, the same blood red). This is the spirit of international humanity, expressing the living philosophy of forefather such as openness, harmony, gravity. In that spirit, today, in the international exchange and integration, we implement policy of widely open foreign, diversifying, multilateralism with the motto “Vietnam wants to be friends of all countries in the international community, striving for peace, independence and development” [21] aiming to “maintain peace, expands friendly and cooperative relations, and creates favorable international conditions for the construction of nationalism social and national defense and at the same time contributing actively to the common struggle of the world people for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress” [21].

On marriage, in one side, our ancestor said that: “A wise woman will accept to be a concubine rather than to be a labor” [[16]; 231] (being a concubine will be out of responsibility of undertaking all problems and issue in the family), in the other side saying that: “Dying as a youth is rather than accepting to be a concubine” [[18]; 40] (because a concubine will suffer inequality and disadvantages, lacking of sentiments and materials, having not an important role in the family). As we can see, under the same fact that being a concubine our ancestors express two different opinions; this shows the dualistic behavior and reflects various concepts of Vietnamese against this issue. Under feudal structure, it is normal that a man takes many wives, and that a woman becomes a concubine of a man. However, complexity and conflicts in life of a concubine often push a woman into a difficult and shame situation. They can be a major labor in the family without a worthy role in determining the family issues, suffering inequality and shortage of all things and her husband’s ignorance. For that reason our ancestors, although considered being a concubine as a normal fact, criticized such fact because of its complexity and inequality. On the other hand, the concept that “Dying as a youth is rather than accepting to be a concubine” is a crying of woman suffering life of a concubine, and a call of fight against the polygamy.

On death and living, our ancestors also expressed a duo-sides concept. One side is idealistic, under influence of Confucius considers fate as decided by the Heaven, “Human make plan, Heaven make it failed or get success” [[18], 113]. On the other side is atheistic and practical with the sayings such as: “For alive human you do not care, what meaning in care for a death man” [[18], 138],

or "...All come from human, and the Heaven can not impact on human decision" [[17], 437]. Helplessness of human before inequality in life encourages them to put all happenings upon the heaven. All happiness and sorrows in life are organized by the heaven, and a human just can accept with his or her life. Inequality and hardness make human difficult to find a meaning of real meaning, and thus consider real life as a temporary world of full sorrows, and the after-life is really a happy one where human can leave all their sorrows. Human look for their hope in a imagine world as a way to accept the real life, this make them incline toward idealist. However, it is also the burden of daily life needs forces human not drown in impracticable things, but looking toward the real world and finding a way to improve their life. On the other hand, in our history, there existed only in the form of communal ownership, state ownership of land, no private ownership and private property. Because people ploughed on the land that was not owned by themselves so that they were easy to have nihilistic thinking. Our people have long ago worshiped ancestors and the goddess, the Buddha, the gods, and the heroes who have merit with the country, etc. However, in fact, most of our people often do not follow any religion, not believe in a particular supreme deity. Thus, all of our people's views on fate, the yin and yang are only ambiguous due to external influences (Confucianism, Buddhism) but in fact, our people bring atheism. This is the reason for the fact that besides idealist exists a practical concept of this world.

On relationship between human and environment and living condition, our ancestors stated that the living environment would strongly impact on characteristics of someone: "Living in a ball, you will take a round shape, in a tube, you like a cylinder" [[18]; 128], "being near ink, you will be dark, being near a light, you will be bright" [[18]; 78]. However, our ancestors also believed that will and strength of a man would help him over come and improve a hard situation: "A real good and talented man can be impacted by being near a bad man" [[18]; 84]. We can say that the ancestors' concept of relationship between human and living environment takes a spirit of spontaneous dialectics which reflects a real vision on the life. Living environment plays a decisive role in forming characteristics of a human. However, a human with his will and endeavor can re-influence to a hard living environment and overcome such environment to grow up and remains his virtues.

The nature of dualistic behavior is expressed in different and, sometimes, opposite opinions on the same issue without any conflict but including harmony and reasonableness. And one of factor influencing on opposite nature in the behavior is the appreciation on virtue, talent, and will of human who form a base for human in behavior and action.

2.3. Causes of the Dualistic Behavior in Folk-songs and Proverbs

The dualistic behavior of Vietnamese people reflected in folk-songs and proverbs originates from some main causes as following:

Firstly, the economic base of our country is seasonal rice farming. This has defined the lifestyle, the way people

think. The rice cultivator has many characteristics like water that is the life way of moral values, women respect, harmony, etc. Therefore, although influenced by male chauvinism thought of Confucianism but forefathers always respected, emphasized the role of woman. At the same time, in their behavior, our forefathers always strived for harmony, not losing one's heart in all relationships, creating a flexible, "dualistic" behavior.

Secondly, folk-songs and proverbs is product of the masses, stories of many people with various opinions. Under the same issue will have various point view and treatments? In the other hand, under the same issue one person can express various opinion and behavior depending on his or her situation, purpose and to what subject him or her direct to. Besides, dualistic behavior in Vietnamese folk-songs and proverbs is the reflection of complexity and multi-aspects of real life, and reflecting diversified nature in psychological and sentimental life of the people. All form a dualistic behavior reflected in folk-songs and proverbs.

Thirdly, traditional Vietnam society contains many village with a close economic relationship. Such villages are almost separated as independent islands and thus form a two-side property in lifestyle and thinking of Vietnamese people which is collective and individual. Collective element and individual element constitute psychological characteristics and dualistic behavior of the people which is open and progressive in one side, and close and conservative in the other side; collective and sharing in one side, and selfish and illiberal in the other side etc.

Fourthly, Vietnamese people showed a will of fighting against anti-advance thought through flexible dualistic behavior. Confucism though system which has been integrated into Vietnam life was also strongly criticized among the people. One of kinds of resistance is through folk-songs and proverbs to express a contrary concept to strict and unreasonable rules of Confucism.

Fifth, folk-songs and proverbs not only sent the aspirations of the people wanting to escape the real life but also reflected the real life with hardness and unfairness. It is the combination of reality and aspirations that creates an "dualistic" in the behavior of our forefathers and is reflected in folk-songs and proverbs.

3. Conclusion

From analysis above, we can make a statement that "dualistic" property is one of characteristics in behavior of our ancestor which shows a spontaneous dialectics and a multi-directions look on every aspect of life. The dualistic behavior of our ancestors in folk-songs and proverbs contains in one side many advantages (such as: a flexible way of behavior with multi-directions; harmonious thought for many issues; and being a way to encourage the people accepting what they have, happy with current life) and in the other side many disadvantages (such as: an ambiguous opinion which drives people into difficulty in making a determination; creating a complex and unclear thinking which damage development of human, making human be resigned to his fate and not find a way to improve his life). Such disadvantages reflect a stableness

and closeness with a little change in our ancestor's life which was formed by ancient wet-rice civilization. In spite of these inevitable limitations, dualistic behavior in folk-songs and proverbs has consistently demonstrated the idea of moral values respect and the desire to achieve harmony in relationships of people. Therefore, studying dualistic behavior in folk-songs and proverbs will help us understanding more unique features in behavior and characters of our ancestor from that realize and conduct correct action to promote social development based on a selective acceptance of past spirit values.

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