

FREEDOM AS A VALUE OF SOCIALISM: FROM HO CHI MINH'S THOUGHT TO THE CURRENT POINT OF VIEW OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM

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***Abstract:** In this paper, the author analyzes Ho Chi Minh's distinctive view of freedom and argues that, in the current context of Vietnam's revolutionary practice, the Communist Party of Vietnam has correctly and creatively applied Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom. Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a socialist value remains a guiding light and a precious handbook for the Party in leading the country toward socialism. This thought not only outlines the correct revolutionary path and goals for Vietnam but also contains valuable lessons on flexible revolutionary methods and unchanging principles to maintain independence and freedom in a complex world.*

***Keywords:** Ho Chi Minh thought, Communist Party of Vietnam, freedom, socialist values, socialism.*

Introduction

Freedom is a core issue in Ho Chi Minh's system of thought. From the initial awareness of independence for the Fatherland, freedom for the compatriots, through rich revolutionary practice, and approaching, inheriting, and developing the ideas of the founders of Marxism-Leninism on freedom and socialism, to the specific conditions of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh had a very unique thought about freedom as a value of socialism. That thought of his has brought the Vietnamese people to the shore of independence, freedom, happiness, and progress, in line with the development of the times. In the current 21st-century

context, the Communist Party of Vietnam has applied and made certain developments in Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism, thereby leading the Vietnamese people to achieve great successes on the road to building socialism. These issues will be discussed in the following sections.

1. Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Freedom as a Value of Socialism

Talking about Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism, first of all, we must mention the origin of that thought. Those are the primitive

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perceptions of young Nguyen Tat Thanh (Ho Chi Minh) about freedom in the face of suffering and the loss of country and home for the people under the “civilizing mission,” which essentially involved the rule, oppression, exploitation, and exhaustion imposed by the French colonialists. The movements to fight against the French colonialists’ invasion of patriotic politicians failed and were brutally suppressed in turn. That young man had the will to travel abroad to see how other countries achieved liberation in order to return and help his country regain independence and assist his compatriots in regaining their freedom. The country that Nguyen Tat Thanh (Ho Chi Minh) wanted to visit first was France. That awareness of freedom became a red thread throughout Ho Chi Minh’s revolutionary life, as he said in the first spring of independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: “I have only one desire, the most supreme desire, which is to see our country completely independent, our people completely free, for everyone to have food and clothing, and everyone to be educated” (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.4: 187).

Ho Chi Minh’s awareness of freedom was increasingly supplemented and expanded during his contact and participation in international communist movements. An important and landmark milestone in Ho Chi Minh’s awareness of freedom was when he read Lenin’s *Thesis on National and Colonial Issues*, published in the *Humanitarian* newspaper. At that time, as Ho Chi Minh himself pointed out, he had to read and re-read it many times to understand the

“difficult political words” in that Thesis. The thesis of V.I.Lenin addressed very important issues for people in colonial countries, particularly in the struggle for national liberation, and provided a way to free them from oppression. Therefore, V.I.Lenin’s Thesis touched Ho Chi Minh’s passionate, patriotic heart, moved him, and he became excited, enlightened, and “completely believed in Lenin, believed in the Third International.” He wrote: “For all oppressed and enslaved peoples, Lenin represented a turning point in the history of their lives of suffering and disempowerment, symbolizing a new and brilliant future” (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.2:235). Since then, he has “bounced” into debates to defend V.I. Lenin and the Third International, participating in lively discussions on national issues, colonialism, proletarian revolution, and other topics. It can be said that adopting Leninism marks the starting point for Ho Chi Minh’s perception of freedom as a value of socialism, and at the same time, it signifies a new stage of qualitative development in Ho Chi Minh’s understanding of the concept of freedom.

Leninism not only created a turning point in Ho Chi Minh’s awareness of national freedom and independence, but also a “handbook”, a “guideline”, and a “shining sun” for the road to liberate the Vietnamese people from colonialism and lead the Vietnamese people to socialism and communism. Leninism serves as the bridge that connects Ho Chi Minh to Marxism, to the views of

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Marx and Engels regarding freedom as a fundamental value of socialism. Therefore, the thoughts of the founders of Marxism on freedom as a value in socialism within Marxism-Leninism provide the theoretical basis for Ho Chi Minh's concept of freedom as a value in socialism. On the basis of that theory, with rich revolutionary practice and keen intellect, Ho Chi Minh creatively applied the ideas of the founders of Marxism-Leninism on freedom as the value of socialism in Vietnamese conditions, contributing to the vitality of that thought in new contexts and conditions, thereby supplementing and developing the theory of Marxism-Leninism about freedom as a value of socialism.

Through studying Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary writings and life, it can be seen that Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism is reflected in the following two contents:

First, only socialism can bring freedom to all; only socialism can free the oppressed peoples and workers of the world from slavery.

Since knowing Leninism and the instructions of V.I.Lenin on the close connection between the proletarian revolution and the national liberation revolution, between the communists and the national liberation movement in the colonial countries, Ho Chi Minh affirmed that only the proletarian revolutionary path can help oppressed peoples like the Vietnamese people to escape the yoke of colonialism and to regain their independence and

freedom. In this regard, he wrote: "In the beginning, it was patriotism, not communism, that led me to believe in Lenin, in the Third International. Step by step, in the struggle, while studying Marxist-Leninist theory and doing practical work, I gradually understood that only socialism and communism could liberate the nations that were oppressors and laborers of the world from slavery" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.12: 563). Ho Chi Minh pointed out that the force that will lead Vietnam's national liberation revolution to success and bring "all liberations to the people" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.3: 22) is the Communist Party of Vietnam and the proletariat. At the same time, he also emphasized and upheld the self-reliance factor of the colonial peoples in the process of fighting for independence and freedom, which is to "put our strength to liberate ourselves" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.3: 596). He affirmed: "Of course, the help of friends from other countries is important, but do not rely on it, do not wait for others. A nation that is not self-sufficient but relies on others for help does not deserve independence" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.7: 445).

For Ho Chi Minh, the struggle for national liberation and human liberation are issues of humanity. Therefore, in addition to the revolutionary struggle to regain independence and freedom for the Vietnamese people, Ho Chi Minh was also an international revolutionary soldier who fought tirelessly for the independence and freedom of colonial peoples and working people

worldwide. In that process, he consistently emphasized the close connection between the struggle of the proletariat in their home country and the national liberation revolution in the colonial countries, clearly pointing out that the results of this struggle are the prerequisite for the success of the other struggle.

Second, the freedom that socialism brings is true freedom because it helps everyone to develop comprehensively.

In the process of traveling abroad to find a way to save the country, Ho Chi Minh realized more and more clearly that the freedom that the capitalist imperialist countries preached was actually only freedom for a small group in society with certain conditions. accompanied, but not free for all, much less for the working people and the peoples of the colonial countries. However, the reality of the Russian October Revolution and the Soviet State under the leadership of V.I. Lenin showed Ho Chi Minh that only a proletarian revolution and socialism can bring true freedom. He wrote: "In today's world, only the Russian revolution has succeeded, and it has succeeded, that is, the people enjoy the happiness of freedom, true equality, not the false freedom and equality like the French imperialist boasting in Annam" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.2: 304).

In the light of Marxism - Leninism in general, the thought of the founders of Marxism - Leninism about freedom as a value of socialism in particular, Ho Chi Minh pointed out, for each country,

there are different conditions and characteristics so the path to building socialism to realize a prosperous, happy and free communist regime of each country will not be the same, but must be based on the following conditions. According to the specific conditions of each country, he wrote: "All working people in the world have a common goal: to escape oppression and exploitation, to live happily and freely, that is, to implement the communist regime. But to reach that goal, each country must gradually progress according to its practical conditions" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.8: 254). Therefore, with the condition of the nation and the young Vietnam after the August Revolution, Ho Chi Minh always talked about freedom as a value of socialism with very practical and understandable contents for all strata of society, that is: we have already gained independence and freedom but if "after being free and independent, the people keep starving and freezing to death", then "freedom, and independence are useless. The people only know the value of freedom and independence when they are well fed and clothed" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.4: 175); Socialism not only "makes people happy, prosperous and progressive" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.12: 521), makes the people rich and the country strong" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.10: 390) but also gives everyone a "free" life (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.14: 605); etc.

Ho Chi Minh has gradually realized these liberal contents in the process of

being the leader of the country. Before the First National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, he pointed out what the Vietnamese State needs to do to realize freedom as a value of socialism as follows: "Due to the nature of our State and because of our economic and social system, the State not only recognizes the rights of its citizens" (including liberties such as freedom of the body, freedom of speech, press freedom, etc.) "but also ensure the necessary material conditions for citizens to enjoy those rights truly" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.12: 377). The State guarantees democratic freedoms for citizens but strictly prohibits abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State and the people, as stated clearly in Article 38 of the revised Constitution" (Ho Chi Minh 2011, vol.12: 378). At the same time, he also pointed out that it is the responsibility of all citizens to voluntarily fulfill their obligations to the State and the collective while enjoying those rights.

In summary, Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism has brought the national liberation revolution in Vietnam closely linked with the world revolutionary movement and the trend of social progress of mankind; helped the Vietnamese people not only regain their independence and freedom but also reach new and higher values of freedom; There have been certain additions and developments in the theory of Marxism-Leninism in new conditions, making the vitality of

Marxism-Leninism permanent in new circumstances.

2. The Communist Party of Vietnam applies and develops Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism in the current 21st-century context.

The past two decades of the twenty-first century have demonstrated that real socialism has faced, is facing, and will continue to face many difficulties and great challenges, especially as forces hostile to socialism persist in opposing and seeking to abolish it. In this context, Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism serves as a guiding light, a valuable manual for the Communist Party of Vietnam (the Party, for short), in the process of leading the nation and the country toward socialism. Because, in addition to pointing out the right revolutionary direction and purpose for the Vietnamese people, that thought, there are also valuable lessons about the flexible revolutionary method to gradually implement successfully the goals of the Vietnamese revolution; it contains immutable principles for a nation-state to maintain its independence and freedom in the face of complicated changes of the times. The reality of the country's development shows that the Party has properly and effectively applied Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism, and at the same time has made developments to suit the new context of the times. This is especially reflected in the recent important documents of the Party, particularly in the Platform for Building

the Country in the Transitional Period to Socialism (Additional and Development in 2011) and in *the Documents of the 13th National Party Congress*.

That application is reflected in the Party's view of the lessons learned from the Vietnamese revolution. That is, it is necessary to "*hold the banner of national independence and socialism*", to see a close connection between them because "National independence is a prerequisite for realizing socialism and socialism is a solid basis for national independence" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 65). That is, it is necessary to "*combine national strength with the strength of the times, domestic strength with international strength*" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 66), in which independent will and self-control are immutable principles, must be steadfast in any situation for a nation to exist independently, especially in the context of globalization and strong international integration today. That is, the correct leadership of the Party "*is the leading factor determining the victory of the Vietnamese revolution*" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 66).

That application is also reflected in the Party's view of the characteristics of the socialist society that the Vietnamese people have built. The Party affirmed that, in the socialist society built by the Vietnamese people, "people have a prosperous, free and happy life, and have conditions for comprehensive development" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 70). These are the same issues that Ho Chi Minh frequently

mentioned when discussing the true freedom that socialism brings to humanity. However, in the socialist society that some documents of the Party congress and *the Platform for National Construction in the transitional period to socialism (Additional and development in 2011)* talk about, Free features have not been classified with essential features; the top is "Wealthy people, strong country, democracy, justice, and civilization" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 70). Such a defining and characterizing freedom is inconsistent with the ideas of the founders of Marxism-Leninism, nor with Ho Chi Minh's ideas on freedom as a value of socialism.

Along with the application of Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism, the Party also has certain developments in that thought when it has supplemented and clarified more liberty rights in society in the face of the new context of the times in order to enable all people to develop comprehensively such as the right to freedom in economic activities as prescribed by the Constitution and the law, "citizens' creative freedom" (Communist Party of Vietnam 2011: 76), etc. Simultaneously with the affirmation of fundamental freedoms, human rights, and citizens' rights are respected and guaranteed by the State, affirming that the State takes care of the happiness and the free and comprehensive development of children. The Party also emphasized that citizens' rights are inseparable from their civic obligations, and human rights

must be aligned with the nation's rights and interests.

Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom as a value of socialism is the result of a skillful combination of patriotism, Marxist-Leninist theory, and his extensive revolutionary activities. That thought has brought the Vietnamese people out of the yoke of oppression and dependence to become the people of an independent, free, and happy Vietnam. The development practice of Vietnam demonstrates that the Party has correctly and effectively applied Ho Chi Minh's thought on freedom within

the context of socialist values, and at the same time, certain developments in this thought have occurred within the current 21st-century context. However, in order to be true to the thought of the founders of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought about freedom as a value of socialism, freedom needs to be considered as one of the the essential and leading features of the socialist society that the Vietnamese people have built alongside the characteristics of "wealthy people, strong country, justice, democracy and civilization" in the Platform and other important documents of the Party.

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