

Ensuring women's rights in the family according to Ho Chi Minh's thought in the new era of national development

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● **Abstract:** Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights, including women's rights, is of timeless value and makes an important contribution to the formation and theoretical development of the Communist Party of Vietnam. This article approaches the issue from the perspective of human rights and gender equality to provide an overview of Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family and the creative application of this by our Party over the past 40 years of renovation. Based on this, the article proposes a number of solutions to ensure women's rights in the family in the new era of national development.

● **Keywords:** Ho Chi Minh's thought; women's rights; Vietnam; new era of development.

1. Introduction

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh repeatedly affirmed the important role of women in both society and the family. He pointed out that gender equality is not only a right but also a responsibility of society and each individual. According to him, women not only preserve the family but also play an important role in social activities, economic development, and the education of the younger generations. Therefore, protecting and promoting women's rights in the family is an important issue, contributing to building a fair and civilized society and to the promotion of the country's internal strength.

2. Content

2.1. Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family

Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "...many families put together make up society. If society is good, families will be better; if families are good, society will be better. The nucleus of society is the family. It is precisely because we want to build socialism that we must pay attention to making the nucleus good"⁽¹⁾.

Ho Chi Minh always emphasized respect, love, and equality between husband and wife in the family. He stressed mutual love and support between spouses,

asserting that for a family to be sustainable and happy, the husband and wife must be in harmony and agreement, and that harmony must be built on genuine love. He quoted the proverb “If husband and wife are of one mind, they can drain the East Sea” and reminded people: “If you want a harmonious marriage, then marry someone you truly love”⁽²⁾.

With the dialectical thinking of an exceptional leader, whose heart and vision transcended his era, President Ho Chi Minh always held in high regard the role of women in the cause of building and defending the Fatherland, as well as in family life. His thought on this issue are closely linked to gender equality, respect for human rights, and the great role of women in all areas of social life, first and foremost in building each family home.

President Ho Chi Minh consistently led the struggle for women’s liberation so that women could be equal to men in all fields: “Under the feudal colonial regime, women were oppressed and tortured, and had no right to speak up”⁽³⁾. He was deeply concerned: “Our women are a great force in building the Fatherland and building socialism. However, compared to men, the status of women in society is still too low”⁽⁴⁾; “In the cause of defending the Fatherland and building socialism, our women have made great contributions. (...) But the status of women is still not properly respected”⁽⁵⁾.

President Ho Chi Minh said: “We must respect women. We develop our revolution to fight for equal rights so that men and women have equal rights. Lenin taught us: Women are half of society. If women are not liberated, then society itself is not liberated”⁽⁶⁾.

President Ho Chi Minh understood that women can only be guaranteed equal rights and obligations in the family when they are cared for in health care, especially reproductive health care, because it not only affects women but also affects the future of the family and the country. He reminded: “We must find every way to protect pregnant women...”⁽⁷⁾; “Women must take great care to protect the health of their children, because children are the future of the nation”⁽⁸⁾.

Deeply understanding that the most important rights of women in the family include the right to honor, dignity, and personal safety, thus, he strongly condemned acts of domestic violence. He demanded: “The barbaric habits of beating wives and coercing children must end. Women’s rights must be truly guaranteed. Women themselves must fight for self-reliance and independence to assert their rights”⁽⁹⁾; “Beating your wife is very bad! How can someone be loving and close one moment, then violent the next? If you beat your wife, you must correct yourself, for that is barbaric and illegal. Men are citizens, women are citizens too, even as husband and wife, one citizen hitting another is against the law”⁽¹⁰⁾.

President Ho Chi Minh identified the root cause of the failure to recognize women’s potential, of lingering prejudice and the restriction of women’s rights both in family and in society, and of the persistence of domestic violence and spousal abuse: “Because the preference of men over women, it is a habit that has been passed down for

thousands of years. It is deeply ingrained in the minds of everyone, every family, every social class”⁽¹¹⁾. He believed that achieving gender equality in the family is not simple, but it is truly a revolution: “Many people mistakenly think that it is an easy task, just: today you cook, wash dishes, sweep the house, tomorrow I sweep the house, cook, wash dishes, that is equality. Big mistake! It is a major and difficult revolution. (...) The force of this revolution is progress in politics, economics, culture, and law. There must be a revolution for each person, each family, and the entire population. Though it is large and difficult, it will certainly succeed”⁽¹²⁾.

President Ho Chi Minh recognized the role of women in the family and deeply understood that women’s rights in general and women’s rights in the family in particular, can only be guaranteed by the socialist regime. These rights must be constitutionalized and specified in legal documents to constitutionalize the responsibilities of the State, family, society and the obligation of women to strive for self-improvement. This is clearly demonstrated in how President Ho Chi Minh directing the drafting and promulgation of: The 1946 Constitution (inherited and developed in the Constitutions of 1959, 1980, 1992, 2013); Decree No. 159/SL dated November 17, 1950 regulating divorce, eliminating inequality in grounds for divorce between husband and wife; the 1959 Law on Marriage and Family (amended and supplemented in 1986, 2000, 2014).

He constantly reminded leaders, managers, people and women themselves to remember and implement these principles. In the article “Women’s Rights Must Be Truly Guaranteed” published in Nhan Dan newspaper on December 28, 1962, he emphasized: “Under our socialist regime, women have been liberated. The Constitution clearly stipulates women’s equality. The Law on Marriage and Family clearly states (...) Article 12 - In the family, husband and wife are equal in all aspects. Article 13 - Husband and wife have the obligation to love, respect each other, help each other progress... to build a harmonious and happy family”⁽¹³⁾. He said: “The laws of our State have stipulated that women have all the same rights as men. To truly achieve equality, women must strive and fight”⁽¹⁴⁾; “Many people still misjudge women’s abilities or are prejudiced and narrow-minded. That is very wrong. (...) I hope that comrades will truly correct prejudice and narrow-mindedness towards women”⁽¹⁵⁾.

He called on women to be the first prevent and fight against domestic violence: “If we want to stop the evil of wife beating, women and young people must take responsibility for this. We must respect our rights (...) You must strive and fight against this evil yourself”⁽¹⁶⁾.

He clearly stated the responsibility of all levels of government, society, and of the family in ensuring women’s rights: “Another important issue is the liberation of women. The more our economy develops, and public kitchens become more widespread, women will be freed up to participate in the labor force. Only then will women be truly liberated, and men and women will have true equality”⁽¹⁷⁾; “We must pay close attention to our future generation of communists. Furthermore, efforts

should be made to organize good public kitchens to liberate women from household drudgery"⁽¹⁸⁾; "On the issue of taking care of children - If mothers want to work well in production, we need to organize good childcare centers and kindergartens"⁽¹⁹⁾.

According to Ho Chi Minh, women themselves must strive to rise up: "Women themselves must fight for self-reliance and independence to preserve their own rights"⁽²⁰⁾ to escape from the mentality of inferiority and narrow-mindedness to fight for liberation and protect the rights of themselves and their gender, contributing their efforts and intelligence to building the country. "Women themselves must strive to rise up. That is a revolution that brings true equality to women"⁽²¹⁾. "To fulfill that glorious mission, our women must eliminate the mentality of inferiority and dependence; must have the will to be self-reliant and independent; must constantly improve their political, cultural, and technical level"⁽²²⁾.

He reminded: "Our women still have certain shortcomings, such as shyness, confusion, inferiority, and lack of confidence in their abilities; on the other hand, they also face many family- and child-related difficulties. To overcome these challenges, they should not rely entirely on the Party or the Government, but must commit to studying, promoting creativity, having faith in themselves, and enhancing collective spirit and solidarity to help one another overcome all obstacles women face in administrative work"⁽²³⁾.

He instructed: "Our women must clearly recognize their status and duties as masters of the country; they must adopt a new determination, new ethics, new style to fulfill their new duties"⁽²⁴⁾; "Women must strive harder to study and fight to achieve true gender equality"⁽²⁵⁾; "If you are determined, you will definitely learn"⁽²⁶⁾; "Women are also masters of the country. To be worthy of this role, women must strive to increase production, practice thrift, organize and develop cooperatives effectively, ensure the family becomes increasingly prosperous, and fulfill their duties to the State"⁽²⁷⁾; "Women should not sit and wait for the Government, wait for the Party to issue directives to liberate them"⁽²⁸⁾.

Thereby, it is clear that Ho Chi Minh reminded women to understand their rights and obligations, encouraged them to participate in labor outside the home, and to contribute actively to household duties - while also being decision-makers in important family matters. He believed that women could and should participate in making the crucial decisions of both family and society.

2.2. Overview of the application of Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family during the renovation period

The creative development of Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family during the renovation period is an important part of the process of building a modern Vietnamese society. Throughout the renovation process, our Party and the State have absorbed and creatively developed Ho Chi Minh's thought on gender equality, promoting the role of women in the family and society. Ho Chi Minh Thought has become the theoretical foundation for policies and laws related to

women's rights in the family as well as in the work of protecting women's rights over nearly 40 years of renovation.

The Party and the State have implemented various policies and strategies to ensure women's rights in the family during the renovation period.

Recognition of gender equality in the Constitution and laws: The Party and the State of Vietnam have affirmed that gender equality is a fundamental principle in the process of building a new society. The 1992 amended Constitution and subsequent legal documents have guaranteed women's rights not only in social activities but also in the family. This is a creative development of Ho Chi Minh Thought on gender equality.

The promulgation of the 2006 Law on Gender Equality demonstrates the creative development of Ho Chi Minh Thought on gender equality in all fields. In particular, the Law on Gender Equality specifically stipulates in Article 18 on women's equality in the family: "1. Husband and wife are equal in civil relations and other relations related to marriage and family. 2. Husband and wife have equal rights and obligations in the ownership of common property, equal in the use of the couple's common income, and in deciding on family resources. 3. Husband and wife are equal in discussing, deciding on, and using appropriate family planning measures; using time off to take care of sick children according to the provisions of law. 4. Sons and daughters are cared for, educated, and given equal conditions by the family to study, work, play, entertain, and develop. 5. Male and female members of the family have the responsibility to share household chores".

Accordingly, women's equal rights in the ownership of common property are reaffirmed in legal documents related to the ownership of land and housing - the most important common property of husband and wife. This aims to address the issue of one spouse's name being omitted from land or housing ownership documents.

According to Clause 4, Article 98 of the 2013 Land Law, "In cases where land use rights or ownership of housing and other assets attached to land are jointly held by husband and wife, both their full names must be included in the Certificate of Land Use Rights, House Ownership, and Other Assets Attached to Land, except where they agree to list only one name". Clause 1, Article 34 of the 2014 Law on Marriage and Family stipulates "In cases where an asset is jointly owned by husband and wife and the law requires ownership or usage rights to be registered, the certificate of ownership or usage rights must include both spouses' names, unless they have agreed otherwise". This provision was reaffirmed in Clause 4, Article 135 of the 2024 Land Law.

Implementing various programs and projects to enhance the status of women to promote their rights in the family and society. This demonstrates creativity in applying Ho Chi Minh Thought on women's rights into practice. Evidence is the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011 - 2020, the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2021 - 2030, creating equal opportunities for women in accessing services, jobs, and development opportunities. Both of the aforementioned strategies have many aspects related to protecting women's rights in

the family, including protecting women's rights in divorce cases, dividing family property, as well as protecting women from domestic violence.

Applying Ho Chi Minh Thought on preventing and combating domestic violence and protecting women's rights: During the renovation period, the State has paid special attention to preventing and dealing with domestic violence, thus protecting the rights and safety of women. This is a creative development of Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family.

The promulgation of the 2007 Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence, amended in 2022, is an important step forward in protecting women's rights, especially women in violent households. The law clearly stipulates women's rights in the family, protecting them from all forms of violence.

Applying Ho Chi Minh Thought on developing policies to support women in education and labor: To ensure women's rights in the family and society, our Party and the State have issued various policies to create conditions for women to access education, careers, and labor and economic development opportunities.

Numerous activities have been launched to gradually bring the Party's policies and the State's laws on ensuring gender equality and women's rights in the family into practical life. For example, information and propaganda on mass media from central to local levels about marriage and family, gender equality, building a cultural family, etc. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism built an electronic information page on family and domestic violence prevention and control to enhance and proactively improve communication on these issues⁽²⁹⁾.

Mass organizations have creatively conducted various advocacy and educational activities such as the campaigns such as "Exemplary grandparents and parents, dutiful children and grandchildren", "Lighting the flame of love in every family", "For a family without violence", etc. In addition, a number of models for preventing and combating domestic violence and supporting victims of violence have been organized, including consulting services, legal support, job creation, and so on.

These efforts by Party committees, authorities, organizations, and the whole society have actively contributed to ensuring gender equality and women's rights in the family.

Some limitations in applying Ho Chi Minh Thought on ensuring women's rights in the family during the renovation period.

Although many policies and guidelines on gender equality, respect, guarantee and protection of women's rights in the family have been issued, the implementation and enforcement of the Party's policies and the State's laws are still limited. Public awareness among society, families, and women themselves about women's rights in the family is not adequate. Laws on women's rights in the family are slow to come into effect. Many are only framework laws, requiring secondary legal documents for enforcement, which are often issued with great delay.

In some places, the understanding and implementation of ensuring women's rights in the family remain incomplete and inaccurate. According to one survey, 31.6% of

women have suffered at least one form of violence in the 12 months (since the survey), and 1 out of 3 women (32%) have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands. 90.4% of women who have been physically and/or sexually abused by their husbands do not seek help, and only 4.8% seek help from the police⁽³⁰⁾.

According to statistics, up to 74.2% of ethnic minority households are headed by men who have independent ownership of land and credit rights⁽³¹⁾.

With the support of international organizations, Vietnam has conducted two national surveys on domestic violence against women (in 2010 and 2019) but has not had any national surveys on gender equality. Therefore, the development of policies on gender equality in the family and ensuring women's rights in the family still faces certain limitations.

In essence, the division of labor based on gender still exists. Women's responsibilities in housework and family care have decreased insignificantly and are not commensurate with their increasing participation and contribution in the labor market. According to the results of the 2019 labor and employment survey, women's housework time is 2.1 times higher than that of men. This falls short of the targets set in the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011 - 2020⁽³²⁾. The "double" labor burden has significantly affected women's development, both physically and mentally, thereby affecting family happiness to a certain extent - one of the causes for the increased divorce rate and the growing trend of women wanting to live independently or become single mothers.

Women in rural, remote, isolated, and ethnic minority areas still face many difficulties in accessing and enjoying health care rights, especially reproductive health.

2.3. Solutions to continue creatively applying Ho Chi Minh Thought on ensuring women's rights in the family in the new era of national development

Firstly, strengthen communication and education on Ho Chi Minh's thought related to gender equality and women's rights in the family

Continue to widely propagate Ho Chi Minh Thought among all classes of people, emphasizing the role of women in the family and society, affirming their equal rights and legitimate rights. Effectively implement national communication on gender equality, as well as prevention and control of domestic violence; highlight the responsibility of the political system, family, and women themselves to improve the status of women in the family.

Integrate gender equality content into the education curriculum from primary to university levels to promote understanding of gender equality and shift perceptions of gender roles. Focus on developing model families in which male members understand and fulfill their responsibilities, respect women, and share both domestic and social duties. Ensure that every family and community is well-informed and actively practicing gender equality, laying the foundation for sustainable development.

Secondly, improve and enforce laws ensuring women's rights in the family

Continue to review, amend, supplement, and improve laws on ensuring women's

rights in the family, particularly in the prevention of domestic violence and protecting women's rights in family relationships, equal rights to property, and deciding on important family issues. Update and improve laws related to women such as the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence, and other laws related to women's rights in accordance with the new context, especially the changing role of women in modern families. Pay attention to women in families with foreign elements, single-parent families, and families with only elderly people.

Thirdly, create conditions for women's economic development and financial independence

Women in the family must have financial autonomy and be able to contribute to the economic development of the family and society. Therefore, vocational training programs for women must be strengthened, especially in rural, remote, and isolated areas. Develop start-up models for women, creating conditions for them to access financial and technological resources. Eliminate discrimination in employment opportunities between men and women, ensuring that women can access high-income jobs, have opportunities for promotion, have financial independence, contribute positively to the economy, and are not dependent on the income of others in the family.

Fourthly, promote health care policies for women in the family

Ensure women have the right to full health care and protection of their rights in matters related to reproduction, child-rearing, and family health care. Expand reproductive health care and mental health services for women, especially pregnant women, women giving birth, and women after giving birth. Promote community health care, ensuring women's rights to access quality health services. Ensure all women have full reproductive health care, free or at low cost, especially in rural, remote, and isolated areas.

Fifthly, women themselves must strive, be proactive, and be confident, self-reliant, and independent in accessing and enjoying equal rights in the family and in society

The new era of national development places great demands on every individual to contribute to the common development of society. To meet these demands, women need to be confident and assert themselves to overcome social prejudices and achieve real equality; continuously study to raise awareness of their rights; actively participate in family decision, such as finances, children's education and social issues; be confident and proactive in expressing their views and wishes so that their voices are heard and respected. They must proactively build careers and achieve financial independence. This will help each woman gain autonomy, take control of her life, and help build a happy family. Women should proactively participate in social organizations and communities, giving them opportunities to grow and raise community and social awareness about gender issues.

Women need to initiative in learning and updating their knowledge and skills to meet the increasing demands of the labor market, while contributing to the development of science, technology, education, culture, and politics. They must strive

to become leaders and managers in socio-political organizations, businesses, and in community activities.

3. Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's thought on women's rights in the family remains relevant today, especially in the new era of national development, when social progress demands the active contribution and participation of women across all fields. The creative application and development of Ho Chi Minh Thought on women's rights in the family is an necessary requirement. It is necessary to continue to strongly implement specific solutions to ensure women's rights in the modern family. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen propaganda, raise awareness of gender equality, improve laws and support women in economic development, and affirm their position and role in the family and society, to help achieve the goal of gender equality, empowering women in the family and contributing to the building of a sustainable society ■

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