

# “The Philosophy of Ethical Education” In Family Relationships of the Southern Khmer Ethnic Group in Vietnam

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## Abstract

Ethics is an area of social and spiritual life, which born from the practice of social relationships between people. It encompasses all notions and beliefs held by humans on morality, conscience, duty, happiness, justice, and other related topics that associates with rules of evaluation, adjustment, and orientation and human's behavior in that society. For that reason, morality, as a type of social consciousness, always represents distinct facets of the social existence of humans. Which is the value that elevates human virtue as the aim and focal point of growth and a gauge of civilization, emphasizing its role, goodness in the core of the human soul and the advancement of human civilization so the Southern Khmer people in Vietnam always take “Ethics” as the foundation and center of organizing, building, and developing society in their educational philosophy. Starting from the above reason, in this entire article, the author only focuses on researching the moral education philosophy of the Khmer people of Southern Vietnam in family relationships to see the diversity deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of a community with a long history of settlement and birth in Vietnam. For the reasons outlined above, the author only focuses on researching the philosophy of ethical education of the Khmer people in family relationships to see the diversity and depth in a group of people who were born and have lived in Vietnam for a long time.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Khmer, Educational philosophy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The family is the most enduring social unit and the oldest one in existence. The oldest belief is that being a human means having a family, individuals are born, raise, and mature within their families. In the *German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said: “Every day, recreating his own life, man begins to create other people, to reproduce, to flourish; that is the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children; that's family” [1]. The family originates from the relationship between men and women, from the natural birth of children and from the need to nurture and educate the family. Despite having its roots in a very natural necessity, the family is inherently a social phenomenon and institution. Because of this, the nature of production relations, social ties in general, and the degree of socio-cultural development ultimately dictate, rule, and constrain the structure and function of the family, specifically, association. Accordingly, corresponding to each different historical period, the organizational form, scale, and functions of the family also have different changes. The family performs many functions, of which

the function of moral education is particularly important. Because family moral education is the first, continuous, regular, and long-term foundation for each person, it is also the basis for preserving and promoting national cultural identity in the process of development. of each nation. It follows that human conceptions of standards, values, and social norms in family relationships constitute family ethics. In family interactions, every action, disposition, and gesture conveys not just the moral character of the individual but also the moral character of the family. As a result, the development of family ethics is influenced by views and public opinion in addition to legal requirements, cultural norms, and national traditions.

## CONTENT

The family in Southern Khmer societies include two basic family types, which are the nuclear family and the complex or undivided family. There, the main relationships between family members are mainly those between grandparents and grandchildren, parents and children, husband and wife or siblings. Strong

connection is regulated by fundamental ethical values such as:

The "*filial piety*" that grandchildren and children have for their parents and grandparents. In Khmer society, the ethics of "*uong nuoc nho nguon*" its mean is that filial piety toward grandparents and parents and respect for ancestors are considered the foremost moral standards of every Khmer person because filial piety is the main virtue and the core moral values in the depth of human consciousness and lifestyle. Consequently, in *Bat Sophisat* or *But Hac Phiasat* (that are the Buddha's teachings), it is taught that "*Sho-lac tros cho-rouss*" means "falling leaves are not far from the roots" it means "*Wherever people go or whatever they do, they must always remember their family*" to describe the type of instruction and instruct each and every Khmer individual in the value of filial piety. In addition, the idea of filial piety in Southern Khmer society is diverse and linked to the beauty of religious practices like blessing ceremonies, filial piety (as in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, etc.), and family rules and teachings like above and below, before and after, etc. to form fundamental human values, since Khmer people are constantly taught that "*Disrespecting mothers is against Buddha's teachings*" [2].

However, filial piety in Khmer society in the South does not only favor sons, but Khmer women and girls also absolutely value this morality. If a Khmer man shows his filial piety through the act of becoming a filial monk then the process of cultivating virtue for a Khmer woman is carried out regularly, continuously, and with a clear direction. As a result, practicing at home will be a form of choice for Khmer girls, which is a form of concubine or meditation to help them see the past and past lives, thereby helping Khmer girls adjust their actions and behavior in accordance with moral standards at the moment. In addition, fully demonstrate filial piety towards grandparents and parents, each Khmer person also demonstrates their awareness and moral responsibility through traditional ceremonies such as longevity ceremonies or offering flowers and offering clothes to grandparents and parents with the greatest purpose is to show filial piety and gratitude to their parents. This form is clearly expressed in traditional holidays such as *Sen Dolta*, *Chol Chnam Thmay* and some other customs in Khmer culture. However, ethical behavior in Khmer filial piety is not simply a one-way relationship, it is also a harmonious interaction in the close two-way relationship between children and grandchildren, their grandparents and fathers, mom. If children and grandchildren's filial piety toward their parents and grandparents is evident in their appreciation and respect for them, then parents and grandparents should always utilize their example to teach virtue to their offspring.

The Khmer people have a saying: "*Sre-lan kon muoi tau, Sher-lanh chau muoi thang*" which means

"Love your child with an apple, love your grandchild with a bushel", and if your children and grandchildren go astray or go astray, then blame them. responsibility belongs to parents and grandparents. The Khmer proverb advises: "In the East, give rest to po - rosa don, Kôl cho - kong po - roa me - ba" which is understood as "The machete is bent at the handle, The child is damaged at the mother" [3]. For that reason, every daily action of grandparents and parents directly affects the process of forming the personality of children and grandchildren in the family. Khmer proverb has the saying: "Children without parents, no one to educate them". Besides that, in the law of advising children (*Satra Chobap Kon-chau*), the Khmer teach that "children should do good things, stay away from wrong things, lie, and do not deceive teachers - betray friends." (similar to the concept of Kinh people).

**For Example:**

*Nis kir chor-băp krom*

*Pro sô uddom tuôn mean neak phoong*

*Preur oun lum tuorm*

*Kom bey mean chho-koan*

*Prach nha bom phon*

Translate:

This is the rule below

Noble content using human tooth piercing

It is necessary to be humble

Don't be thugs

Wisdom is better.

It is these tips that make people's intelligence higher and their understanding of life's principles better. In particular, the most taboo thing that grandparents and parents always teach their children and grandchildren is to avoid "lying" because that means being a "heathen" not a follower of Buddhism, not a member of the community Phum Soc. Furthermore, the Khmer people of *Satra Chobap* also appropriate objects and phenomena to justify their teachings and moral upbringing for their children. Examples include: "*Lôk tha phalong phlu mean pít nuôs ru pum smô sô-ri-ya*" which translates to "no matter how bright the fire is, it is not as bright as the light of the sun," or "the sound that echoes throughout the sky is not as good as the sound of the Buddha and the human soul." Moreover, there are extremely careful instructions about virtue, children's responsibilities, living ethically and about avoiding bad habits and social evils like gambling, excessive drinking, wasteful eating, etc. In the teachings of songs (*Satra Chobap*), particularly the law of teaching children (*Chobap Po kon*). However, one must be diligent, work hard and work hard to develop family life. To further support the teachings and moral education of their children, the Khmer people in *Satra Chobap* also appropriate objects and phenomena. Examples of these include the sayings, "*Lôk tha phalong phlu mean pít nuôs ru pum smô sô-ri-ya*" which translates to "no matter how bright the fire is, it is not as bright as the light of the sun" and "the sound that resonates throughout the sky is not

as good as the sound of the Buddha, which is the human soul'. Furthermore, there are extremely careful instructions about virtue, about children's responsibilities, about living ethically, and about avoiding bad habits and social evils like gambling, excessive drinking, wasteful eating, etc. in the teachings of songs (Satra Chobap), particularly the law of teaching children (*Chobap Po kon*). However, one must be diligent, work hard, and work hard to develop family life. There is a saying:  
 Silver, gold or rice,  
 Save it, don't waste it.  
 Save money, don't spend it all,  
 Take care of yourself.  
 If you have little rice, don't give it all away.  
 If I had less to worry about,  
 Can you save up?  
 ...  
 It's farming season,  
 Diligently look for good seeds.  
 Lemongrass, ginger, eggplant must be ready,  
 Potatoes, coconuts, vegetables, you have to worry about.  
 Don't be lazy or lazy,  
 Then I begged you,  
 No one has extra money to borrow.  
 (Chobap po-ros - Law to teach sons) [3].

In Khmer society, filial piety is therefore a close, intimately tied two-way relationship between children and grandchildren as well as their grandparents and parents. While grandparents and parents use compassion and example as a teaching tool to instill filial piety and respect in their children and grandkids, children and grandchildren view these traits as paramount.

The quality of "faithfulness" in a husband and wife's union. "Faithfulness" is a trait that Southern Khmer people encourage in husband and wife partnerships. There is a Khmer proverb that says: "Loving yourself requires choosing food, a loving husband and wife must know how to pamper each other. If the soup is not delicious, as long as the soup is hot, black wives are also exempt from knowing how to do business" [2].

There are 225 warnings in Chob Serai that address a wife's fidelity to her husband and instruct Khmer women on appropriate behavior with their spouses in order to uphold morality. This rule also provides guidance on how a husband and wife should behave in a harmonic and fair manner when faced with unpleasant situations. Husband and wife will then need to decide how to handle arguments. In Khmer poetry, when talking about marital love, Khmer people often teach each other:

*Bơ b'đây neang chē*  
*Neang chōl tâu e*  
*Đom-nêk kit sanh*  
*Chênh mô k neang dô k peak tanh*

*Sro-đây ôi onh*  
*Srai tô s nô s tâu!*  
 Stranlate:  
 If her husband curses  
 Please come in  
 Bedroom thinking  
 Step out and choose sweet words  
 Speak skillfully  
 Solve that.

Khmer idioms also teach: "*Pơ ro ponh lò o cho rol chanh pho đây*" and "*Sơ ro lanh phơ đây ôy thơ nom chéch*" which is understood as "A good wife often loses to her husband, and if you love your husband, you must know how to pamper him. It means that a good wife must know how to control her emotions, adjust, attitudes and behavior so that the relationship between husband and wife is always strong. On the other hand, patriarchy has now been established in the family structure of Khmer society, the remnants of matriarchy have not been completely eliminated. This is reflected in the role and responsibility of educating children, in the ability to regulate emotions in the family, as well as the name of the social structure of the head of the village, which often leans towards women. There is a saying: "Wealth depends on a skillful woman, and a family is united thanks to a good wife. Don't learn to exaggerate; your wife will be angry. Don't answer back. If you have much wealth, you will have many blessings and if you have a good wife, you will have many friends." (Khmer proverb). But if the wife's position, role, and behavior toward her husband in family relationships are characterized by the attributes and moral standards of "good behavior," then the husband's "love and meaning" for his women are also utilized as a gauge of marital devotion. In *chobáp Pờ-rô*s (Customary Laws for Teaching Sons), there are 190 articles advising the husband to demonstrate his responsibility as the breadwinner of the family. Such as:

*Nung đơ đol*  
*Ôi t'rau nung chơ báp t'rom chùa kôn!*  
*Riên bách riêng báp chās*  
*Sro đây nung nus plong*  
*Ây ơ anh đấch sách*  
*Đom đia ôi áp srây*  
*Chās tum minh pro đâu*  
*Khê tha kon ots pút*  
*Khê đia dân mẽ âu*  
*Khê sro đây đom chris chum*  
*Ôi oonl oon ách bà rom*  
*Khua proté bách kum ôi!* [4].

These ideas advise Khmer men to try their best to study, speak politely, be gentle, polite, diligent and hard-working in production to be worthy of being the breadwinner of the family.

In addition to emphasizing the role of the husband, in the Khmer *Sô-phia-sát*, it is taught that "*Tuk tâu kim pong nâu*" means "The boat goes to the dock and

stays" to talk about love and the meaning of fidelity in love. The feelings between husband and wife are like the image of a boat and a dock that are forever together. Therefore, as the breadwinner of the family, the husband must wholeheartedly love, protect, avoid doing wrong things to his wife and children, not be lazy, beat his wife and children, shoulder all the burdens of hard work, and at the same time, be a solid spiritual support for the family.

In Khmer society, however, marriage is based on monogamy and is therefore structured in this way. This is a long-standing custom that is incredibly progressive since it upholds faithfulness and is a shining example of the importance of ethnic culture at the core of Khmer society. There is a phrase in the song about getting your hair chopped off during the wedding ceremony:

*“Tro păng peay ơi, xin nàng đến đây  
Anh sẽ trang điểm, cắt tóc cho nàng  
Anh cắt tóc rồi, xin nàng cười tươi  
Được vui hạnh phúc, kể từ hôm nay”*

**Translate:**

*“Tro păng peay, please come here  
He will do her makeup and cut her hair  
I cut my hair, please smile  
Be happy, from today”.*  
(Haircut Song) [5].

Although the husband and father are the owners and breadwinners of the family, the man's role is mainly expressed in production labor or outside communication; the rest of the family's work is done. There is a clear and equal division. Purely feminine tasks such as housework, educating children, managing expenses, etc. are all done by the wife. Particularly, adultery in Khmer society is prohibited because it is a sin and contrary to the morality and customs of the community. Therefore, not only must wives be faithful to their husbands but husbands must also value their relationship with their wives. The Khmer proverb has the saying: "If you're angry, try to endure it. If you're poor, try to do it," to avoid conflicts or contradictions from occurring and at the same time, to cultivate a strong, strong bond in the ethics of husband and wife. In general, the relationship between husband and wife in Khmer society is relatively equal, the family atmosphere is harmonious and there are rarely conflicts or arguments. For Khmer people, whether rich or poor, no matter how difficult it is, most Khmer families still maintain the long-standing traditional virtue of fidelity to stick together in the noble love of husband and wife.

The virtue of "forbearance – peace" in the relationship between siblings. It is a noble virtue formed on the basis of Khmer culture. According to Khmer folklore, people with the virtues of tolerance and harmony mean treating themselves well and having a gentle disposition without worries or troubles. At that time, the value received is the value from the soul

through respect and affection in the interaction between people.

Accordingly, the way brothers and sisters are called. That is a loving relationship between people of the same bloodline in the family. Because they understand and are deeply aware of the meaning of friendship. Because of that, if family members are harmonious, tolerant, and willing to forgive each other's mistakes, it will create a warm and cohesive family atmosphere. On the contrary, if brothers do not get along and are bad, it will make the family atmosphere heavy, lose unity, and be laughed at by the community. Khmer idiom says: *“Kim bích chất đon eng min bãy”* translated *“The knife cannot sharpen its handle by itself”* or Khmer proverbs often remind that: “Brothers in harmony are a happy family” [2]. In addition, Khmer people also frankly admit that children born to the same mother will naturally have different personalities. Therefore, each person needs to close their personal ego, unite and love each other to work towards common harmony. Khmer proverbs teach that: *“Rôn muôi kho - lây công miên toóc miên niê”* the meaning is “There are good and bad fruits in a row of coconuts” [3]. Therefore, "buying close is better than selling far, trading close to home protects the youngest brother" (Khmer proverb).

Moreover, the distinct hierarchical manner of addressing top and bottom in Khmer society also expresses the emotional tie between blood brothers inside the family. For instance, the youngest brother, the fourth brother, the third sister, the second brother, etc. In addition, the hierarchy and orderliness in Khmer families in the South are not monotonous and one-sided, but they also have a gentle but profound influence through the older siblings' way of teaching the younger siblings so that they can do their best. Fulfilling filial piety towards grandparents, parents, and those around them. However, the close bond between brothers in Khmer families sometimes encounters temporary conflicts. At that time, grandparents and parents will be the ones to advise and intervene to avoid unnecessary conflicts, quickly stabilize and reorganize the family routine. From the above, it can be seen that the value of tolerance and harmony is a standard of good values and has great significance in the family education method of Khmer society. It is the basis for building a happy, harmonious family based on blood ties, the same bloodline in family relationships with the spirit of "you endure, I yield" and "brother and sister are like a foot and a hand".

**CONCLUSION**

It can be affirmed that morality is one aspect, an indispensable component in all activities and all modes of existence in human social life. Therefore, there cannot be a human life, a true humanity, without morality and its values and if you want to have a good, happy life without knowing how to follow standard values without morality, you will never be able to achieve what you have built and set out to do. Likewise, the lifestyle of the

Southern Khmer people is greatly influenced by the value system of a long-standing culture, concretized through noble and inseparable moral values. Leaving everyday life, it is deeply ingrained in each person's consciousness through the philosophy of profound moral education. Obviously, the moral education method of the Southern Khmer people was shaped very early. It is a progressive educational philosophy based on the inheritance, adaptation, and fusion of tradition and modernity, folk concepts and religion, which work together to form strong linkages, interference, and dissemination. strong in the overall flow of Vietnamese national culture toward the ultimate aim of human life, "truth, goodness, and beauty."

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