

# The humanity of the Vietnamese culture outline - motivation to build and develop sustainable national culture in the Ho Chi Minh era

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**Abstract:** *The humanity of the Outline on Vietnamese Culture 1943 originates from the source of national culture, the origin of its birth, to the content and direction of awareness and action of the masses towards values of Truth- Goodness - Beauty. Consequently, the Outline is the crystallization of the Party's humanity in carrying out the mission of using culture to "light the way for the nation" to gather the strength of great national unity, in every step of leadership, safeguarding, building and developing the country and the people of socialist Vietnam. With its pervasive humanity, the Outline has always been an important foundation and driving force in both theory and practice, actively contributing to the building and developing sustainable national culture, at the same time contributing to the long-lasting development of the country and the Vietnamese people in the Ho Chi Minh era.*

**Key words:** *Outline on Vietnamese culture; humanity; national culture; Ho Chi Minh era.*

## 1. Vietnamese Culture Outline – the humanity in the source of national culture

### *The humanity in the Outline's origin*

Throughout the long history of our national construction and protection, the precious cultural values with the spirit of solidarity, patriotism... in the national cultural flow are the constant source of national strength that created the victory of our struggles. Clearly understanding that precious cultural crystallization, our Party chose culture as an important spearhead for revolutionary struggle when our country was under the double yokes of Japanese fascism and French colonialism. The Party issued an *Outline on Vietnamese culture* which was drafted by General Secretary Truong Chinh and approved at the Central Standing Committee Conference in February 1943. The birth of the *Outline on Vietnamese culture* was a strategic choice, expressing the Party's era vision with the deep humanity since it was still

operating in secrecy. This strategy aimed to gently, subtly, promptly, deeply, naturally influence the awareness and ideology of various social classes, based on scientific and logical arguments. Consequently, people understood, believed and voluntarily followed the Party, enthusiastically contributing to building a scientific, popular national culture; turning revolutionary consciousness into correct and timely revolutionary action.

In terms of historical role and significance, the Outline was born to practically supplement *the Political Platform and Brief Strategy* - the first important platforms of the Party, creating a connected and harmonized system to serve the noble humanity purpose: liberating nation and the people from oppression and slavery. This once again proved the Party's knowledge and political courage of the era. In the Outline, our Party truly firmly determined its position and stature in the heart of the nation with the flow of thousands of years of civilization. The birth of the Outline demonstrated the Party's legitimate desire to clarify the awareness of the classes at that time about the position, role, history, nature, and dangers of Vietnamese culture; clearly pointed out the urgent task of Marxist culturalists, that is, to stand up and fight for national liberation, win independence and freedom for the country, and build a new regime and new culture. That is the desire and humanistic awareness based on the Party's clear awareness of the importance of culture in the revolutionary struggle as well as in practical life. That is also the root cause for the Party's humane purpose: to concretize people's wishes by creating an *Outline on Vietnamese culture* that demonstrates the importance of culture in the national revolutionary process and mobilization of the people's power.

In terms of creativeness, the *Outline on Vietnamese culture* was drafted by General Secretary Truong Chinh - an excellent student of President Ho Chi Minh. The content of the Outline is a continuation of the ideas by many previous generations about national spirit, cultural identity, and the role of the people, such as Ly Thuong Kiet's "Nam Quoc Son Ha" poem, Nguyen Trai's idea of "The act of kindness is to keep the people at peace", Quang Trung - Nguyen Hue's "Fighting to protect our custom and tradition (long hair and blackened teeth); Fighting to make history know that the heroic South has its owner!". At the same time, it demonstrated the penetration of the Party's views and Ho Chi Minh's thought on the important role of culture "a torch that lights up the way for the people to move forward"; clarified that culture includes ideology, academics, and art; clearly defined the relationship between culture and economics and politics: the cultural front is one of three

fronts (economic, political, cultural). These viewpoints were the refinement, continuation, and creative promotion of the nation's traditional cultural values, expressing the humanistic motive and purpose of respecting and promoting the value of culture. It is also a demonstration of ideological unity and solidarity within the Party, an evidence for the behavioral culture and humane intellectual culture of revolutionaries.

***The humanity in the content of the Outline***

The content of *the Vietnamese Cultural Outline* includes 5 parts: Problem statement; History and characteristics of Vietnam's culture; The risks of Vietnamese culture under the French and Japanese fascist yoke; The issue of Vietnam's cultural revolution; The urgent task of Indochina Marxist culturalists. *The Outline* demonstrates humanity in its orientation: Affirming the mission "culture lights up the way for the people to move forward", which reflects the guiding light of progress, knowledge, science and truth, of the continuation and transmission of national cultural values, combining national strength with the strength of the times for "opposing fascist, regressive, enslaving, ignorant, and deceitful culture", promoting democratic culture through fighting to protect dialectical and materialism doctrines and ideas. The Party also demonstrated the depth of knowledge and crystallized intellectual beauty by setting and determining the direction for building and developing "the socialist culture which the Indochina revolution must implement".

*The Outline* illuminated and clarified the process of Vietnamese cultural history so that the entire people can better understand and appreciate the depth of the nation's culture, clearly stating the current state of Vietnamese culture in society at that time, which was semi-feudal and semi-slavery, or semi-feudal, semi-capitalist and completely colonial. Then, it created a consensus of awareness about anti-assimilation and cultural enslavement, affirming that: "The influence of fascist culture makes the feudal and enslaving nature of Vietnamese culture stronger; at the same time, under the influence of new democratic culture, Vietnam's new cultural movement is trying to overcome all obstacles to flourish". This statement objectively reflected historical reality, demonstrating humanity in the content that directs the people to progress, scientific awareness and the choice of culture as one of the correct revolutionary methods.

Reality has proven that after *the Outline* was published, writers, artists and people from all walks of life became more aware of and enthusiastically participating in cultural activities to contribute to liberating the country and gaining national independence. Making the people understand, believe and

follow voluntarily, by their self-awareness, not by coercion- that is the art of the Party's leadership imbued with humanity. From the ways of disseminating information and ideas, creating voluntariness among the masses, approaching and influencing the masses through the form of an Outline, the Party clearly demonstrated and affirmed its humanity by empowering people to make decisions, promoting people's mastery. This demonstrated the Party's superiority and its art and science of leadership in the complex and chaotic society before the August Revolution in 1945.

Based on three principles: nationalization, science, and popularization, *the Outline* demonstrated the harmonious combination of national spirit, consciousness, and cultural identity to combat all enslaving and colonial influences, aiming at liberating the country (nationalization); opposing everything which makes culture unscientific, anti-progress (science); respecting the people, taking the people as the root, opposing all policies and the act that make culture against the interests of the masses or away from the masses (popularization). The three principles have become a new revolutionary resource, theoretically and practically, creating a bond binding the Party and the nation, especially intellectuals, writers, and artists; between the past, present, and future. That is, the light of intellectual humanity, orientation, illuminating the path of knowledge for the entire people.

***The humanity in orienting the mass's awareness and action to the values of Truth, Goodness, Beauty***

*The Outline of Vietnamese culture* clearly showed the orienting people to the value of *Truth value* - on the ground that the *truth* is culture, an important element existing in society, which brings about the good values that our ancestors as well as true humankind wish to achieve; on the ground that the *rightness* is the culture's objectivity and pivotal role not only in the revolutionary struggle but also in the cause of building, safeguarding and developing the country. *Truth* is also the sincerity in the motivation and purpose of *the Outline*, also of the Communist Party - aiming at changing the awareness and ideas of intellectuals, writers, artists and people from all walks of life so that they can clearly realize their historical mission in the struggle for national liberation. From that *truth* and *rightness*, the *Truth value* in *the Outline* is convincingly spread, clearly demonstrating the purpose of strategic thinking and the scientific content of tasks, problems, and roles of the Vietnamese cultural revolution and Vietnamese Marxists culturalists.

The epoch-making *Goodness* value of *the Outline* is expressed by taking culture as a means and a core tool to influence and contribute to creating

awareness and ideology, thereby promoting right revolutionary action of the masses, not by coercion or bribery... *Goodness* is also demonstrated by using culture as an important factor and tool (along with the use of revolutionary violence due to demands and inevitable question of the revolutionary struggle at that time) to actively contribute to the revolutionary struggle to liberate the country, the people from slavery and misery, in accordance with morality, ethics and legitimate desires of the people.

*Beauty value* is expressed in the whole, comprehensive combination of intellectual depth, academic breadth, and length of national culture when our Party clearly defined the content, scope, role, nature, and connotation of culture in the revolutionary course of national liberation, as well as the immediate and long-term socialist revolution: "Culture includes ideology, academics, and art." At the same time, the *Beauty value* is expressed in the guiding ideology: "Culture lights up the way for the people to move forward", in building socialist culture, in the dialectical relationship between political revolution and cultural revolution, in the view that "the cultural front is one of three fronts" (economic, political, cultural fronts), as well as in the three principles of nationalization, science advancement and popularization... Those elements highly crystallized cultural values, serving as the key elements constituting the national culture throughout historical periods, and still retain their topical significance today.

***The humanity in the objective of gathering great national unity strength under the Party's leadership***

As the Party's first official document on cultural and artistic work, the *Outline on Vietnamese Culture* properly analyzed the situation of cultural life under the yoke of French colonialism - Japanese fascism, and outlined revolutionary cultural guidelines. and the immediate tasks, moving towards building national and people's culture. Logical and scientific arguments about the importance of the country's culture and the tasks of Vietnamese Marxists culturalists demonstrated the spirit of national self-respect and self-esteem, understanding the importance of culture, affirming the legitimacy of using cultural power in the struggle. That aims to create unified awareness among not only the intellectuals, writers, and artists, but also among the majority of people, not coercively but through scientific argument, therefore, *the Outline* went straight to people's hearts, enlightened awareness, and influenced thoughts, opinions, and feelings related to people's living values, motivated them to volunteer and stand together in the same front line to fight against the French colonialists and Japanese fascists, to win national independence.

Finally, it clearly demonstrated the continuation of the ideological source throughout the nation's history, that is, to respect the people, be close to the people, "take the people as the root", creating the strength of great national unity in both breadth and depth.

However, the strength of great national unity would be unable to promote effectively without the Party's leadership. *The Outline* clearly demonstrated strategic thinking and vision, which is also the source of correct revolutionary awareness and action by affirming: To succeed, the Cultural Revolution must definitely be led by the Communist Party. In the context of many failed uprising movements at that time, the Party was able to gather Communist organizations in all three regions (Northern Vietnam, Central Vietnam, Southern Vietnam) in a unified organization. This demonstrated the centralized representation of the great national unity bloc, satisfied requirements and proved the ability to seize opportunities to promote the strength of great national unity under the Party's leadership. Those were convincing evidence for the argument about the indispensable role of the Party associated with the correct revolutionary path chosen by the Party that *the Outline* affirmed.

## **2. Motivation to build and develop the country sustainably in the Ho Chi Minh era**

*The Outline of Vietnamese culture* created a unified whole of humanity that is imbued with nationalism in form and neo-democracy in content, closely linked to the Party's leadership role and the culture of the people, by the people, for the people. The humanity converged in *the Outline of Vietnamese culture* has become one of the core cultural values which is persistent, penetrating deeply and widely in practical life, becoming a guideline "lighting the way for the nation"; the driving force in both awareness and action, theoretically and practically, serving the cause of building, perfecting and developing a new culture not only in society at that time, but also in the present and future.

The humanity in *the Outline* has spread and clearly demonstrated the humanistic spirit of our Party in both thinking and strategic vision when considering culture as a front, showing respect for the role of the masses, gathering forces and social classes into the bloc of great national unity. The openness about gathering forces and uniting the entire people in the early days of the revolution changed social awareness; The opening of cultural ideology and the direction of returning to the nation and the people under a dialectical perspective brought new inspiration to cultural workers and intellectuals who wished to change and find a way that they have not seen

yet. Thereby, creating endogenous strength and value for humanity-oriented culture, becoming the ground for cultural development closely linked in dialectical relationships with politics, economics, society... in the path of revolutionary struggle, building and developing the country and people in the Ho Chi Minh era.

*Theoretically, the Outline* summarizes the fundamental principles of Vietnamese culture: nationalism, science, and popularity. Over the past 80 years, we have continuously continued and protected those principles by strong will and blood to build a new socialist regime with the goal of making the country strong and civilized because understanding thoroughly the Outline's value of opening up and laying the ground for the cause of building a socialist culture is also contributing to building the country. The continuation and protection of the principles in *the Outline* manifest the continuity of our Party and people's knowledge and theory on humanity, and is also the motivation for future generations to continuously inherit and develop it.

The values of *the Outline*, especially the principles of nationalism, science, and popularization, and the perspective that sees culture as one of the three fronts (along with economics and politics), have become topical and a fundamental theoretical motivation for us to build and develop a Vietnamese culture that is "advanced, rich in national identity", and "integrated, not dissolved". That is also the motivation for us to know how to balance culture with economics, politics, and other fields of life, building a new culture associated with building a socialist society with harmonious development, "no one is left behind". The humanity in *the Outline*, therefore, has been continuously extended through the flow of time and affirmed its correctness and value, being the driving force for the country's cultural development at new levels.

Despite being the Party's first declaration on culture, *the Outline* still has some theoretical limitations, such as the relative independence of the superstructure and spiritual consciousness that was not thoroughly paid attention to because the application of Marxism was still in its early stage. Although it showed a far-sighted vision, *the Outline* was an orienting draft for building a new culture, with great principles of the cultural movement, not the entire set of principles, relationships, values, problems of a culture. People, as the subject and object of culture, were mentioned in drafts... These limitations are the motivation for us to constantly review and continue to learn from our experiences after 80 years to supplement, and further improve theoretical perspectives and perceptions of culture to suit practical conditions

and situations. For example, we have broadened cultural connotations that include ideology, ethics, lifestyle, science, education - training, mass media, literature - art, beliefs, religion; From 3 principles (nationalism, science, popularity), we affirm that our country's culture is national, modern, and humane (1992 Constitution), building and developing an advanced culture imbued with national identity (Resolution of the 5th Central Committee, Session VIII, 1998).

At the 9th Plenum of the 11th Central Committee, Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW, dated June 9, 2014, demonstrated the inheritance of the Party's fundamental views on culture in previous periods, closely linking culture transform with people, absorbing the quintessence of world cultural theories according to the Party's innovative spirit. At the 13th Congress, the Party affirmed its viewpoint in a unified, dialectical relationship: Preserving and promoting cultural values and the strength of Vietnamese people in the cause of building and protecting the Fatherland and international integration.... Theoretical insights are constantly being added, have demonstrated the inquisitiveness and humanity of our Party in absorbing and inheriting for development. It is a humanity development in applying theory in *the Outline* to build and perfect cultural theory in the process of building the country and people in today's era. Accordingly, we are motivated to constantly create, review and develop *the Outline* from new perspectives, and apply it in accordance with current conditions and realities based on a steadfast stance on Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought with socialism orientation.

*Practically*, right from its inception, despite the lack of favorable conditions for research and full awareness, *the Outline of Vietnamese culture* quickly penetrated deeply into people's hearts, spreading throughout society with humanity based on its foundation and political ideology of the period before the August Revolution in 1945. That humanity is based on the enlightenment of ideas through the path of knowledge, creating a change in revolutionary awareness consciously among the masses, motivated the people to unanimously follow the revolution under the Party's leadership, under the cultural light that "lights the way for the nation". From there, *the Outline* created great motivation to contribute to promoting the national liberation revolution, associated with promoting revolutionary action of the masses, leading to the victory of the August Revolution. *The outline* was also a source of encouragement for the revolutionary periods of national liberation, as well as for the cause of cultural development associated with the current course of building and developing the country.

*The outline* was an important driving force urging our Party and people to use, promote, develop culture, and continue to affirm and consolidate national cultural values as a sharp weapon in long-term nation's resistance war, associated with the heroic participation spirit: "Culture and art are also a front, you are soldiers on that front", promoting the spirit of "Overcoming Truong Son range to save country". That participation spirit spread widely into the movements "Three-ready", "Three capable", "Singing drowns out the sound of bombs" to create glorious victories. It also made a milestone and spread national cultural values associated with the spirit of patriotism and solidarity, "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom", cultural development associated with human development in every step of the country's building.

*The Outline* also creates motivation for a series of practical activities associated with promoting the role and position of culture in political and social life, demonstrating proper leadership and foresight of our Party's in culture. From Party's Documents through many congresses, to cultural development strategies, events and cultural activities organized diversely in practice over the past 80 years, such as the Cultural Festival of Vietnamese Ethnic Groups, the National cultural conference, and such has affirmed the value and importance of culture. Consequently, creating favorable conditions for culture to develop deeper in life, truly becoming the spiritual ground, the driving force, and goal of the country and people's development.

*The Outline* was also the driving force to promote the development of both material and spiritual cultural life of the people, proving the persuasiveness of continuing the humanity in *the Outline* to spread into practice through campaigns and production movements, such as "All people unite to build a cultural life", "Build a civilized lifestyle and cultural family". Those values arouse internal strength of the nation, thus, making culture penetrate deeply into each family and each person, perfecting the new value system of the socialist Vietnamese people, reaffirming the humanity of *the Outline*. *The Outline* has truly become the Declaration of Truth - Goodness - Beauty of the Party and our nation regarding culture, a driving force in promoting the cause of building and developing sustainable culture, and also continuously contributing to the cause of the country and people's sustainable building development in the Ho Chi Minh era.

Today, continuing to promote the humanity values of *the Outline*, using it as a driving force to build and develop our country's sustainable culture is one of the important tasks for the entire Party and the entire people. It is

necessary to constantly preserve, apply and develop new cultural theories suitable to the socialist path; Raising awareness, promoting propaganda about the position and role of culture, considering developing cultural causes as the responsibility of the entire Party and the entire people. Besides, continuing to promote investment in building the comprehensive development of Vietnamese people to create resources for sustainable cultural development; Strengthening the quality and effectiveness of cultural activities, cooperating and exchanging internationally on culture, promoting science and technology to serve the preservation and development of culture in both breadth and depth; Focusing on the relationship and harmonious development between culture, economics, politics... These are the core solutions to make *the Outline of Vietnamese culture* with its humanity always live in the heart of the nation, truly becoming a driving force for building and developing culture - also contributing to the sustainable development of the country and people of Vietnam in the Ho Chi Minh era./.

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