

From Ho Chi Minh's instructions of “making people know how to enjoy democratic rights, know how to use their democratic rights” - to practicing democracy in line with the Party's orientation

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Abstract: *Hồ Chí Minh Thought on democracy, especially the thought on building a democracy with its core being the idea of the people's right to mastery and their subjective role, and the people “know how to enjoy democratic rights” as well as “know how to use democratic rights” in practicing democracy, has shown an extremely profound theoretical and practical significance in the cause of national liberation revolution and building socialism. It was Hồ Chí Minh's guidance on fundamental issues in the process of building democracy in the Vietnamese revolutionary cause that has practically formed a great strength to guide the nation from one triumph to another. Up to now, along with the “aspiration to develop the country” in the spirit of the 13th National Party Congress, the highest promotion of Hồ Chí Minh Thought on democracy and practicing democracy, especially the people's right to mastery and their subjective role, will ensure our greater achievements in the coming time.*

Key words: *Hồ Chí Minh Thought, right to mastery, practicing democracy.*

In the entire system of Hồ Chí Minh Thought, the thought of democracy always shows its essential connotation of the people as the masters and the people's right to mastery. Thus, in comparison to many typical thoughts and viewpoints on democracy in the history up to now, it can be affirmed that Hồ Chí Minh's on democracy prominently shows a very profound theoretical thinking and practical significance, in which the people is always placed on top, and the people's subjective role in practicing democracy is always defined as “the people know how to enjoy democratic rights” as well as “the people know how to use democratic rights” to promote the combined strength of the nation in the cause of national liberation and building socialism.

1. Hồ Chí Minh Thought on the people's right to mastery and their subjective role in practicing democracy

In any aspect of Hồ Chí Minh Thought, the concept of the people always plays

a central role, especially in building democracy and practicing democracy. On that basis, in the spirit of the 9th Party Congress (April 2001), on summarizing the great guiding role of Hồ Chí Minh Thought in the Vietnamese revolutionary cause, it was clearly stated that Hồ Chí Minh Thought prominently includes the ideology of national liberation, class emancipation, and human liberation, on the basis of promoting the people's right to mastery, at the same time building a State that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Democracy in Hồ Chí Minh Thought is the crystallization of traditional national thought and deep awareness of the role of the people in the history of human society. With that meaning, Hồ Chí Minh said: "People are the most precious, the most important, the supreme", and "In the sky, there is nothing more precious than the people. In the world, there is nothing stronger than the united force of the people"⁽¹⁾. At the same time, by affirming the historical subjective role of the people, Hồ Chí Minh generalized: "The people are the root of the country and the revolution", "Revolution is the cause of the masses", "When the people are united, anything can be done. If the people do not support, nothing can be done"⁽²⁾; "The country takes the people as its root. Only when the root is strong can the tree stand. Building a tower of victory on the people's foundation"⁽³⁾. In Hồ Chí Minh Thought, the subjective role of the people is recognized to become the theoretical basis for the formation of the methodology of the Vietnamese revolutionary cause, in order to mobilize and converge the great strength of the people.

By clearly pointing out the subjective role of the people as the main subject that created a great driving force for historical movement, he once again emphasized: "The people's force is the greatest one. No one can defeat that force"⁽⁴⁾. Furthermore, according to Hồ Chí Minh: "The unity of the people forms a bronze wall around the Fatherland. No matter how cruel and cunning the enemy is, if they confront that wall, they will be defeated"⁽⁵⁾. Based on the practical conditions of Viet Nam, an agricultural country, Hồ Chí Minh pointed out that the role of the peasant class is also the potential and largest revolutionary force, and if "this force is well organized and guided, it will turn the world upside down, and all colonialists and feudalists will be defeated by this great force"⁽⁶⁾.

Besides emphasizing the people's great strength, Hồ Chí Minh also highlighted the need to unleash that great source of strength, which must first of all be realized as a prerequisite for freedom, equality and justice. Those rights are both the goal and the driving force of social progress on the basis of

promoting the people's subjective role, but first of all, it depends on the people's awareness of that role as the driving force, then people turn it into action. Hồ Chí Minh Thought on fundamental rights have been evidently based on the reality of the Vietnamese revolution. These fundamental rights are both the goal and the driving force of social progress. Therefore, they have become the real strength for the people who lost their country to regain their mastery not only in the national liberation revolution but also in socialism construction when the subjective status and mastery role of the people are increasingly affirmed and promoted.

Basically, Hồ Chí Minh's asserting the people's right to mastery and subjective role in practicing democracy is always based on the association of building a State of the people, by the people, for the people. He said: "Ours is a democratic country. All benefits are for the people. All powers belong to the people"⁽⁷⁾. This demonstrated the nature of Vietnam's democratic regime at the highest level of democracy, that is, the power belongs to the people. He said: "Ours is a democratic regime which means the people are the masters"⁽⁸⁾; "Ours is a democratic country, the highest position belongs to the people, because the people are the masters"⁽⁹⁾; "...Ours is a democratic government, no matter how big or small, it must rely on the strength of the people to serve the interests of the people"⁽¹⁰⁾.

To reaffirm the people's right to mastery and the subjective role of the people that determines the nature of the Vietnamese democratic regime, Hồ Chí Minh said: "Our State today belongs to all the working people... The working people are the collective owners of all material and cultural wealth, and are equal in rights and obligations"⁽¹¹⁾. The important thing is that, in order to protect the democratic regime that ensures the people's right to mastery and the subjective role of the people, Hồ Chí Minh also pointed out the dialectic between "democracy and dictatorship". He explained: "Every regime has dictatorship; the question is who is dictatorial with whom... Like a treasure box, it must have a lock. A house must have a door lock... Democracy is like the most precious thing of the people and dictatorship is the lock, it keeps the house safe from saboteurs... Thus, democracy also needs dictatorship to preserve it"⁽¹²⁾. From there, Hồ Chí Minh generalized and emphasized: "Our State must develop the democratic rights and political activities of all people, to promote the positivity and creativity of the people, to make all Vietnamese citizens truly participate in managing State affairs, strive to build socialism and fight to protect the Fatherland"⁽¹³⁾.

The above thoughts of Hồ Chí Minh continue to play a guiding methodological role in building and perfecting the socialist democratic regime in Vietnam, first of all promoting the people's right to mastery and their subjective role in practicing democracy. On the basis of thoroughly grasping the spirit of "taking the people as the center" pointed out by the 13th Congress, it is the basis for continuing to promote the people's right to mastery and their subjective role in "knowing how to enjoy democratic rights" and "knowing how to use democratic rights" to promote the synergy strength of the entire nation in the new stage of building socialism.

2. Following Hồ Chí Minh's instructions on promoting the people's role in "knowing how to enjoy democratic rights" and "knowing how to use democratic rights" in practicing democracy

Over the past 40 years of renovation, it is obvious that the great achievements have been determined by the process of building and perfecting the socialist democratic regime, and by promoting the strength of practicing democracy based on promoting the right to mastery and the subjective role of the people, i.e., first of all, by making the people "know how to enjoy democratic rights" and "know how to use democratic rights". Up to now, the practice and widespread promotion of socialist democracy stemmed from the promotion of the people's right to mastery and their subjective role are not only in the viewpoint and orientation but also have become the driving force and internal requirement in the viewpoint, guidelines and policies for national development. The Party's leadership has created a legal foundation for the practice and promotion of socialist democracy, in terms of awareness of and practicing the people's right to mastery in social life. With that spirit, the documents of the 13th National Party Congress continue to supplement and highlight the role of the people in practicing democracy, which is: "people know, people discuss, people inspect, people supervise and people benefit"⁽¹⁴⁾. This is the basis for the increasingly perfecting of the socialist democratic regime that consolidates the people's right to mastery and their subjective role by promoting the people's right to mastery to the highest level.

During the cause of building socialism in Vietnam, socialist democracy in the renovation process has always been identified as the nature of socialism. Inheriting the spirit of previous Congresses, in the 13th Congress, our Party continued to identify the role of practicing democracy based on the people's right to mastery and their subjective role as the basis for regulating the people's right to mastery. The 13th Congress documents emphasized:

“Promoting the strength of great national unity, socialist democracy, and people’s right to mastery; strengthening the rule of law and ensuring social discipline”⁽¹⁵⁾; and: “promoting the subjective role and the central position of the people in the national development strategy. Promoting the active political and social engagement, rights and responsibilities of the people in building and rectifying the Party, building a socialist law-governed State, the Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations, building a contingent of Party members, cadres and civil servants; having a mechanism to unleash all potentials, strengths and creativity, and mobilizing people to participate in economic development and social development management”⁽¹⁶⁾. Besides, the 13th Congress Documents also clearly state that it is necessary to “... resolutely and persistently fight to firmly protect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Fatherland, protect the Party, the State, the people and the socialist regime. Maintain political security, ensure social order and safety, human security, economic security, cyber security, build an orderly and disciplined society”⁽¹⁷⁾ and “timely and strictly handle organizations and individuals who take advantage of democracy to cause internal instability, destabilize politics and society or violate democracy, harm the people’s right to mastery”⁽¹⁸⁾.

Through the reality of promoting socialist democracy in the renovation period, ensuring the people’s right to mastery on the basis of always thoroughly understanding the people’s right to mastery and their subjective role in practicing democracy, it can be seen that up to now, the practicing and promotion of the people’s right to mastery in the socialist democracy regime has become a great driving force for national development. However, the subjective role of the political-social system always plays a great role in ensuring the promotion of the people’s right to mastery, which is shown in two aspects:

Firstly, the development of the socio-political system under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam has created a legal foundation for the practice and promotion of socialist democracy, as well as the promotion of the people’s right to mastery in all aspects of social life. That has opened up a wider space for promoting the people’s right to mastery as well as enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and implementation of responsibilities of the political system, especially the State apparatus.

Secondly, practicing democracy in promoting the people’s right to mastery is carried out simultaneously in both forms of direct and representative democracy, through implementation in the organization and operation of

the Party apparatus, the State and socio-political organizations, and people's unions. This deeply demonstrates the holistic relationship between the leadership and ruling role of the Party, the management role of the State and the mastery role of the people. This is the basis for practicing socialist democracy, in which the people's right to mastery becomes more and more substantial, ensuring comprehensiveness and genuineness in content and form of implementation, contributing to strengthening the great national unity bloc, minimizing social polarization trends in the market economy mechanism and international integration. However, in the reality of democracy nowadays, as the 13th National Party Congress also assessed, there are still some limitations: "The strength of great national unity and socialist democracy has not been fully promoted at some times and in some places"⁽¹⁹⁾. This is because "... people's opinions and recommendations have not been truly respected and their legitimate and legal rights and interests have not been promptly resolved. The people's right to mastery is still violated sometimes and in some places; there are still manifestations of procedural democracy"⁽²⁰⁾ that separate democracy from discipline and law. Those are limitations that we need further overcome today.

To say that does not mean only until the 13th National Party Congress had those limitations in practicing democracy on the basis of promoting people's right to mastery been mentioned. In fact, those limitations had been mentioned earlier in the process of national renewal.

It can be seen that, from the inheritance of Hồ Chí Minh Thought on practicing democracy, promoting the people's right to mastery in both content and form, right from the 1991 Platform, it was determined that the socialist society our people are building is a society where the working class are the masters. The Platform also clearly stated: "Fully implement the people's democratic rights, strictly maintain social discipline, and dictatorship against all actions that violate the interests of the Fatherland and the people"⁽²¹⁾; "Democracy goes along with discipline, discipline must be institutionalized by law and guaranteed by law. The State promulgates laws to define civil rights and human rights, rights go along with obligations and responsibilities"⁽²²⁾. Also in that spirit, to further raise awareness for further enhancing people's right to mastery, in the 9th Congress (2001), the Communist Party of Vietnam clearly stated: "Promoting democracy with maintaining discipline, strengthening the rule of law, governing society by law, propagating and educating the entire population, raising awareness of

law compliance”⁽²³⁾. Then, the 2011 Platform once again generalized and clearly stated: “Socialist democracy is the essence of our regime, the goal and the driving force of national development. Building and gradually perfecting socialist democracy, ensuring that democracy is implemented in real life at every level, in all fields. Democracy is closely linked to discipline and order and must be institutionalized by law and guaranteed by law”⁽²⁴⁾. Thus, it can be seen that the methods and forms of practicing democracy and promoting people’s right to mastery must always stem from awareness of “knowing how to enjoy democratic rights” as well as “knowing how to use democratic rights” as Hồ Chí Minh once said.

The reality of comprehensively renewing the country over the past 40 years in all aspects, including political renewal with the affirmation of the socialist nature of the democratic regime and practicing democracy, first of all, aiming to continuously promote the people’s right to mastery, requires thoroughly grasping the following guiding viewpoints:

Firstly, the Communist Party of Vietnam is the vanguard of the working class, the working people and the Vietnamese nation. Therefore, in order to promote the people’s right to mastery, strengthening the Party’s leadership in building a complete, synchronous, unified, feasible legal system that is highly adaptable to practical requirements must always be based on affirming the people’s right to mastery and their subjective role in practicing democracy, always putting the people’s legitimate and legal rights and interests above all. However, with the ruling role of the Party, the legal system in Vietnamese society is the institutionalization of the Party’s Platform, viewpoints, policies and guidelines. To strengthen the people’s right to mastery, it is necessary to constantly build the Vietnamese judiciary system that is professional, modern, fair, strict, honest, serving the Fatherland and the people. Closely linking law-making with law enforcement; effectively preventing and combating criminal activities and law-violating acts that infringe upon the legitimate interests of the people.

Secondly, in practicing democracy, although the people’s right to mastery in both content and form has been increasingly promoted, the 13th Congress frankly pointed out: “The people’s right to mastery is still violated sometimes and in some places; there are still manifestations of procedural democracy, separating democracy from discipline and law”⁽²⁵⁾; “discipline and law are still taken lightly sometimes and in some places”⁽²⁶⁾. Therefore, to grasp and handle this relationship well, we must both expand and practice democracy

and strengthen discipline and order, but first of all, we must build people's legal awareness. At the same time, strengthen the reality summary, contribute to the development of the theory of democracy and the practice of socialist democracy according to the viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, as an orientation to achieve the goal of building and perfecting the socialist democratic regime of Vietnam, thereby constantly consolidating the mastery position and the role of the people in practicing democracy, specifically in the cause of building socialism in Vietnam today.

Thirdly, it is essential to promote the people's right to mastery, attract people's participation in State management to overcome degradation, bureaucracy, lack of democracy, corruption and wastefulness; promote the people's right to mastery at the grassroots level, and effectively implement "grassroots democracy". It is necessary to ensure that work related to people's lives must be made public; work related to mobilizing people's strength must be discussed and decided by the people, and projects must be inspected and supervised. Strictly comply with regulations on prohibited acts, such as: not implementing or violating the provisions of the Ordinance on implementing democracy; suppressing complainants and denouncers; taking advantage of democracy to violate national security, social order and safety, infringe upon the interests of the State, the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and individuals, etc. In particular, according to the spirit of the 13th Party Congress, it is required to well implement the motto: "People know, people discuss, people do, people inspect, people supervise, people benefit"⁽²⁷⁾. We must recognize that "people benefit" is a very important content to ensure the effective mechanism of practicing democracy, and is a new content added by the 13th Party Congress. However, to promote the guiding role of this motto, we must continuously and deeply grasp the viewpoint on the people's right to mastery, first of all, the awareness so that the people "know how to enjoy democratic rights" and "know how to use democratic rights" that were earlier said by Hồ Chí Minh, which has profound guiding significance for building and perfecting the socialist democratic regime in Vietnam.

Hồ Chí Minh Thought on the people's right to mastery and their subjective role in practicing democracy reflected in the people "knowing how to enjoy democratic rights" and "knowing how to use democratic rights" has been deeply understood by our Party in the national renewal policy. His profound guidance in thought on building and perfecting Vietnam's socialist democracy has become an important ideological foundation for promoting

the national comprehensive strength so that our country “has such fortune, potential, position and international prestige” as it does today in the new era of national development. This is also the foundation for successfully building a socialist Vietnam with “rich people, strong country, democratic, equitable and civilized society”./.

(1), (12) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, Vol. 8, pp. 276, 279.

(2), (3), (5) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Ibid*, Vol. 5, pp. 293, 409-410, 151.

(4) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 20.

(6), (8) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Ibid*, Vol. 7, pp. 185, 499.

(7) Hồ Chí Minh (2011), *Ibid*, Vol. 6, pp. 232.

(9) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 276.

(10) Hồ Chí Minh (2011), *Ibid*, Vol. 9, p. 77.

(11) Hồ Chí Minh (2000), *Ibid*, Vol. 10, p. 310.

(13) Hồ Chí Minh (2011), *Ibid*, Vol. 12, p. 374.

(14), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (20), (25), (26) Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Congress*, National Political Publishing House, H., Vol. I, pp.173, 50, 51, 117, 174, 88, 89, 89, 89.

(21), (22), (23) Communist Party of Vietnam (2005), *Documents of the Party Congresses in the renovation period (Congresses VI, VII, VIII, IX)*, National Political Publishing House, H., pp.316, 327, 676.

(24) Communist Party of Vietnam (2011), *Documents of the 11th National Congress*, National Political Publishing House, H., p. 84.

(27) Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Congress*, National Political Publishing House, H., Vol. I, p. 173.