

The Application and Integration of Proverbs from Thai Didactic Literature for Individuals and Society

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Abstract: The application and integration of proverbs from Thai didactic literature for persons and society was conducted in order to manage the knowledge and thinking process of good behaviors and to increase efficiency for the mind, intellect and behaviors of the individual and others in society. Individuals and societies should apply the appropriate proverbs appearing in the didactic literatures to use in their everyday life. These must be done to emphasize individuals' duties according to their status or position. Consequently individuals and societies would live in harmony, know the way to stop and prevent conflicts between people in order to bring peace to the nation, to know the way to spend money carefully, to be industrious in studying, to conduct only goodness and neglect vicious and follow the Dharma principles of Buddhism. The sample this research were 7 Thai didactic literatures. Klong Loganit, Suphasit Pra Ruang, Wachirayarn Phasit, Suphasit Isarayarn, Suphasit Sorn Satri, Suphasit in Sawasdiraksa and Suphsit in Pra Aphai Manee. The results of this research benefit in building the understanding of the background of Thai didactic literatures linking up the way of life of people in the past to the present by means of applying and integrating according to the social status of the users and practitioners. Technology and modern communication trends are needed to modernize traditional Thai didactic literature to update the proverbs and make the verses and messages more appealing widely adapted by modern society.

Key words: Thai, proverbs, didactic literature, application, integration

INTRODUCTION

Developing countries in modern times are competing against each other to reach international standards. This contest has created materialistic values in societies and has forced individuals into the pursuit of material possessions, property, money and objects to symbolize their own success level. Because of materialism, many western countries have been fighting and taking advantage of other countries in order to obtain natural resources. They do not consider other peoples feelings and opinions. Western countries have to search for sources of raw materials to manufacture merchandise and to provide adequate service for consuming, selling and distribution. Wars have been fought to acquire raw materials and other basic economic factors such as petroleum, natural gas and territorial waters. This is totally

different from Asian countries or Eastern nations which value a different culture not based on materialistic values. People living in these countries have always regarded the opinion and feelings of others more than material objects and values. Inheriting a way of life, value, culture, ethics and cultural tradition of Eastern and Asian countries are focused on giving importance to living together in peace and the consideration of other peoples' feelings (Supahp, 1998). Thai societies in the past have been educated to have beliefs based upon Buddhist principles since historic times. The principles are similar among countries in South-East Asia in which Thailand is located. Traditional moral values and way of life are now disappearing because of the inrush of the western culture to almost every country in this region. Moral virtue, ethics and customs have changed because of the rapid expansion of technology, communication and ideology of

consumerism and globalization (Kromwichakarn, 2002). Problems such as corruption, crime, prostitution and abuse are frequent in modern societies and have created social problems, broken families, neglected and abused spouses and youths. People in a competitive society care less about other peoples' opinions and feelings. Individuals are more objective to giving value to material items and give less importance to moral values, virtue and ethics.

Thailand is facing many problems in modern times. The problems concerning with the economy, politics or societies and cultures are very serious. Individuals in the modern society are in the pursuit of power, personal gains and wealth. Thai traditional belief is gradually disappearing. Problems such as having sex before suitable time and age, corruption, misuse of technology, taking advantage from others and greed are spreading to every level of society and occupation. Furthermore, individuals tend to be more violent because everyone is obsessed in seeking for happiness in material objects. This is the concept of Western countries that has spread into Thai society. The concept of unlimited liberty without moral thoughts has forced people to do selfish acts without regards to others (Caphukdee, 1999).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research method: The research is a qualitative research which was carried out from January 2007-January 2008, which is aimed at analyzing documents. The data was compiled from Thai didactic literatures to study the background and the condition of using the literature and the methods in which to apply and integrate the proverbs for individuals and societies. The proverbs used to teach people were grouped accordingly to their contents and occasions to be used in various social activities. All the data was collected and applied and integrated according to the research methodology. Purposive sampling was to the document selections which included literary works titled Klong Loganit, Suphasit Pra Ruang, Wachirayarn Phasit, Suphasit Isarayarn, Suphasit Sorn Satri, Suphasit in Sawasdiraksa and Suphsit in Pra Aphai Manee. The data was categorized according to whom and what the proverbs aimed to teach and the types of teaching whether they were intended for individuals or societies as a whole. The information was affirmed by qualified experts and individuals that have direct indebt knowledge. Proverb users and professionals who are directly involved with proverbs were also approached, interviewed with formal and informal questionnaires. The affirmative process was done by single and group interviewing, observation, operation meeting and 3 pole information

affirmation. This process aimed to make sure that the categorized data was correct, precise and appropriate for individuals and societies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The uniqueness of Thai's teachings since the past has been that Thai children had been taught to be humble, to respect elderly people, to be grateful, to be conscious and to know what should be done and what not be done. Competition and giving priority to economic factors rather than to goodness are considered to be notions of the western countries. Many western cultures and customs have already replaced good Thai philosophy. There were no periods in Thai history that society has been face up with so many critical problems in dealing with morality and ethics as much as what has currently happened today. Female and male youths, government officials, politicians, teachers, professors and monks are the issues mentioned in the front pages of newspapers and mass media everyday as they have committed violent and disgraceful actions. The laws of the nation seem less valued and cannot control the problems. The effects cause violent damages like the spreading of drugs and narcotics in the work place and in educational institutions. It is the signal indicating that it is time for Thai society and all citizens to turn and reconsider their moral and ethical standards.

To set new regulations to obtain a pleasant and peaceful society based on traditional Thai cultural heritage, The Ministry of Culture must appoint this policy as the National Agenda which aims to encourage the population to be moral and uphold ethics according to the resolution of Council of Ministers on August 22, 2006 (Religious Affairs Department, 2007).

The global community needs to be developed in the aspects of moral virtue and ethics which are similar to those in Asian countries. Thailand possesses the methods of contributing good population who are moral, virtue and ethical by using education. For example, Thai ancestors taught their children to love and help each other, not to take advance from others and to always regard others' feelings first. These are examples of learning for improving their mind and intellect, eliminating selfishness, realizing the way to aware their mind to be ashamed and afraid of conducting evil and to follow their religious principles. Naturally, people always tend to behave in the way of their own desires. If the desires do not overlap others' rights, everything is alright. However, when they do, there are conflicts and problems. The members of each society have been taught to behave well and to intelligently and carefully live out their lives.

Adults in general give their children interpretations in order to regulate the rules to follow and what not to do. These didactics have been remembered, taught and passed on as literature in the oral form and later in the written form. These didactics are the results of continued and long accumulation of experience and instructions. Many of the original composers are not known or not mentioned. The majority of those mentioned are mainly compilers and recomposed works by other authors. The 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011) specifies the development plan by using the philosophy of sufficient economy as the official policy of all development plans. The holistic thinking approach idea is, human beings are the center of development, which is stated in item (2.2) of the national status. In addition, in item (1) of the social status of the nation, it states that the citizen have to be developed because Thais are faced with moral value crisis. This crisis is the effect of the overflow of Western cultures into Thailand via media and information technology without proper filtering and selecting. Thai virtues and ethics have been reduced especially in children and youths. The rapid change of lifestyles from peaceful to chaos has changed family, educational and religious institutions. These establishments have fewer roles in educating, teaching and fostering children to be moral and have good ethics. The 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan has determined guidelines to develop the culture of the community by embracing the principle of being independent and in control of their own way of life, culture and to encourage the transferring of knowledge and local wisdom to the next generation. They are to be nurtured, moral, ethical, industrious and realize the importance of the benefit of the general public before personal gains. The visions of Thailand therefore, include, developing the nation to be harmonious and live in a peaceful society; educating Thais to be moral, wise and cognizant of the facts; affectionate families; strong and peaceful community; a quality and moral economy.

The background and cause for using Thai didactic literature: The proper use of proverbs and didactics appearing in Thai literatures which are the intellectual heredity of Thai ancestors are applied and integrated to transfer and used in people's daily life to live together in harmony. The successful application of these concepts will provide the individual and community with morality, ethics and rectitude because they can fabricate immunity by themselves. Good-internal invulnerability is the capability to be ready and accept the effects of any crisis situation. When people can build up their own internal immunity, they can extend it to their families, societies and

to the nation so that they will receive a peaceful life and live in an admirable society (Civil Servant's Pension and Retirement Benefit Fun Message, 2007).

The study of background and condition of using Thai didactic literatures is categorized according to the contents, individuals, characters, thoughts and ways of life of every group of people. For example, some of them aim to teach experienced, intellectual, nice and aggressive people and several were aimed to teach subjects associated with abuse, finding good friends. Others were aimed to teaching monks, rulers and women.

The contents of Thai and Indian principles are quite similar in the way that they compare the didactics to the Stories of Jataka, folktales or Buddhism principles. All of these literary works were composed in rhymes which are beautiful and harmonious. They are beautiful in the language aspect, easy to understand and applied to teach other people (Kongsirirat, 1998). Since Thai philosophy consists of rhymes and a definite metrical scheme, there is clear intonation in communicating in the meaning and it is one of Thai language beauties and advantage. The aims of the didactics are to teach about ethics of people's everyday life and to have morals, virtues, values, cultures and to follow the didactics which are benefit to themselves, their family and the societies in a whole. Moreover, they also try to contribute patriotism and the pride of Thai distinctiveness, to teach about manners, dressing, behaviors and Thai costumes and traditions.

Thai didactic literatures aim to teach Thai people to appreciate other people's help, be grateful, be loyal to their spouse, responsibility to their family, be good models for family members, be moral, regularly make merit by following Buddhist principles and understand the truth of the world. The comparison between plants, animals and environment make the literatures easy to understand and applied to daily life. They teach on how to conduct daily life activities that are good for their own benefit. The literature directly illustrates and suggests which activities should be done, which should not be followed and the actions that will cause repercussions. The practitioners will become intelligent and be able to understand other peoples' needs.

The application and integration of proverbs from Thai didactic literature for individuals and societies aim to teach children to be good social members when they grow up. Children have to be curious to study and gain knowledge to use in their future career. They are taught to be grateful, obedient to adults, have good manners, be humble, have a respect and be modest to adults. For men, societies expect them to be strong so that they can be the leaders of communities and families. They should be courageous and be dependable. Women should preserve

the sense of sweetness, beauty, good behaviors and gentleness. They should preserve their virginity till they have their wedding ceremony, obey their parents, be careful of their manners, manage and maintain household tasks and have ability in cooking. For married couples, they should be together and have a big family that has many members. The spouses should share their faith happiness and sadness and should help each other. Their economic status should be secure so that they can provide for their spouses and be good examples for other people. Elderly people are respected and should be moral and follow ethics. They must have knowledge and understand the religious principles of the Four Noble Truths. They have to be models for the next generation and other people to follow. Rulers and authorities must give love and kindness to their subordinates. They have to take care of them as if they were their own. They should be calm and not abuse their powers, follow religious principles and morality. They should be concerned about making friends with other people. Priests should be strict on keeping their conduct, study the didactics of Buddhism so that they can understand and become an expert and appreciate in those didactics. They should be aware and careful in keeping the precepts at all times. Above all, they should consider the didactics to understand the impermanent, suffering and soul less principles and must behave in solitude to make their minds peaceful.

The proverbs about arranging birthday parties are to stimulate people to realize their parent's gratitude of nurturing and care. The proverbs for arranging the ceremony of entering the monk hood represents the changing of their status of being children to becoming an adult. It also represents quality and age. The ceremony is making merit to compensate for the kindness of others. Priests study the religious principles to gain knowledge in order to apply the understandings to their own life. The proverbs concerning with wedding ceremony teach about earning their own, the appropriation of being spouses who have their own responsibilities and duties to make their family stable. The proverbs used in celebrating new house ceremony teach about making a constant earning and fit occupation that is suitable to their ability. Having a new house can be compared to building the nets of birds in the way that the nets must be compatible with their family size and big enough for their family members. The proverbs of funerals teach about the truth of life that no one can escape from dying, so that people should make only goodness, kind deeds and merit in order to take the merit to the next life. The proverbs of celebrating ranks for priest's royal letter of appointment and position promotion or official transferring presents the value of

goodness which had been obtained from the past. As a consequence, they should preserve their goodness by continuing and having virtue, morals and ethics.

In the study of background and condition of using Thai didactic literature, there is new knowledge which is that Buddhist principle is the important basic concept that expects people to be good, moral and ethic, to admire, to have faith in and to follow the Buddhist principles at all times. Although people nowadays have lessened attention to the Buddhism, they still want and approve the excellent methods compatible with current situations. In the future, the didactic application and integration for individuals and societies will have to be based on religious principles forever. These religious principles are valuable for Thai society and should be passed on to the next generations.

Applying and integrating proverbs from Thai didactic literature for teaching individuals and social activities:

Proverbs should be compared to the didactics which are presented in the way that they are compatible with each individual situation, ages and social group. The way to present the proverbs should be exciting, up-to-date with current information and have a modern marketing plan. The examples are 3-5 min. animation cartoons and social facts put together with proverbs in radio and TV. They can be presented in the form of plays, cartoons or characters' scripts. These examples should be done in order to raise social awareness and create the habit of using proverbs on a regular basis.

Thai proverbs directly teach and clearly compare so they are easy to understand. In addition, the suggested words in the proverb contents determine how one should make use of it to benefit the practitioners' and others. Thais should preserve and use the proverbs to teach their children to create Thai cultural goodness. They should be able to expand the proverbs into every level of the community so that everybody in the society has a chance to experience and become familiar. A good example is the drawing the pictures relating to Thai proverbs on product packages sold in the country and abroad together with Thai, English and other languages. Beautiful and moral Thai art lines and the proverbial didactic literature are both promoted and the economic value of the products is also included.

Souvenir manufacturing or token presentation in special occasions and events should be done in the symbol of Thai proverbs. They can be sold on special occasions inside and outside the country. It is not only done to broaden the proverbial didactic literature but also to add more economic value to the products. Furthermore, it is the indirect way to promote Thai nationalism of using

Thai products and understanding Thai arts and culture. For example, they might want to learn the culture of cooking food which is similar to the proverbs such as, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach., whoever comes to our house, are always welcomed. Another example of giving someone a warm reception and being generous to everyone is, the land of smile. These are cultural assets belonging to Thais. Architecture patterns should be accompanied by Thai proverbs. There should be drawings illustrating proverbs related with dying lesson on the crematorys. Thai art line pictures relating to the proverbs of child learning should be depicted in schools.

The proverbial didactic should be inter in Thai people's every day life. The presentation of proverbial didactic should be done together with the modern situations of the nation. For example, singers, actors and actress should use proverbs to compose their songs to make their songs exciting and up-to-date. Promoting didactic literature is to arrange proverbs in rock style or to arrange them in rhymes such as rap dancing. The music must be exciting and easy to understand as the other modern songs are. This will modernize proverbial didactics and adapt it to the lifestyles of modern societies. Those who enjoy music will also experience and have a deeper understanding and appreciate Thai culture and values.

CONCLUSION

The proverbs from Thai didactic literature for individuals and societies teach people about religious principles, people's way of life, culture and tradition. Most of them can be applied to modern situations, but many are still misused when transferring to message to individuals and societies. Information technological media can be used to properly present them and benefit the community.

Suggestions for using the research findings include, Didactics for children must be suitable with their ages, exciting and true. The stories must be applied to events that children can see in their everyday life. The proverbs can be in the form of a fairy tale. There should be illustrations with conversations. The words used should be charming and graceful. It should teach children to be respectful, be humble, not to presume to act as an equal and to realize their social status. The proverbs for men must teach them to be strong, be a leader to earn money and support the family. They should be taught about the knowledge to earn money and to be loyal. Women are taught to behave in their manner and speech, be a good daughter-in-law, respect their husband's parents as if

they are their own, take care of husband's relative and have an ability to do housework. The value of the ideal women is that they have to be like elephant's back feet and follow the husband's decisions and they should behave and speak gently and humbly. In addition, they should love only their husband, be loyal to him. Couples are taught to give an honor and be faithful to each other. Additionally, they must be models for the next generation in the future. They must also treat each other with respect and congruity and realize their own duties according to the Buddhism principles.

The elderly should behave as they are adults. They must be moral and be respectful. Rulers and authorities have to be the ones who solve the social problems by planning and regulating the ways to put into practice. They should emphasize on justice, loyalty and uphold the law. Being a good citizen is to be soldiers who have the ability of protecting, stopping conflicts, taking care of the security and keep peace of the city. Thai society is close to Buddhism religion so the life philosophy which is abundant in peacefulness mostly derives from Buddhism principles. Monks are the social leaders who teach people to behave well and relentlessly study Buddhist principles. The arranging of birthday party, wedding ceremony, new house celebrating should not be used to show the economic status and to impress others. The primary purpose of funeral is to make merit for dead relatives. It is not arranged to announce the richness of the family. For the celebrating of priest of rank, royal letter of appointment and position promotion of the government officers should be arranged to warn people about goodness and morals of that person.

SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Future studies should be done to analyze the needs of individuals and societies, so that the proper didactics can be applied. The following questions should be asked, What type of society do children want?, How do children spend their life in the society?, How should men treat women in this period of time that they are able to work and earn property, Should women's social role be changed or not?, How should couples help each other to support the family to survive the turbulent economic situation, What are the social and effects of the variables of everyday life?, What should the elderly do in order to make use of their abundant experiences and knowledge so that they are not just living and waiting to die?, How should the head of states treat their subordinates and other people in order to change their status from rulers to being servants of society and serve all?, What should priests and monks do to maintain their social status and respect?

Future research should be aimed to study the proverbs in literatures of Thai rural areas where attitude and values are different. Didactic literatures of Northern Thailand, North-Eastern and Southern Thailand should all be carefully documented and analyzed. Their ways of life, cultures customs and traditions of each community can be fully understood.

Further research should be conducted to study the ways to present proverbs taken from Thai didactic literature by using modern technology and information system. The proverbs will be updated, modernized and create more interest for people to learn. This should be done in order to raise the value level of proverbs from didactic literatures to be comparable to foreign cartoons, computer games and other updated electronic media. Furthermore, the results of the study should be presented via the internet that other people around the world can thoroughly learn Thai proverbs in every aspect.

Research studies to compare the proverbs taken from didactic literatures with the proverbs of foreign literatures in order to study cross-cultures should be promoted.

The experimental researches of using proverb should be done in order to get the feedbacks of the performances and ideas of the people who accept the good didactics to practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chaiyuth Sirisuth from Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University, Dr. Pra Methae Suthaporn, Vice President of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Nakornrachasima Campus, Major Advisor and Co-Advisors, Prof. Dr. Srongkoon Juntajorn, President of North Eastern Arts and Cultural Research Institute, Thesis Committee Chairman, Dr. Boonsom Yodmalee and Thesis Committees who had devoted their time to verify this thesis. Furthermore, I would like to

thank the teachers of Thai Language Teaching and Learning Development Center, group of social sciences, religions and cultures of schools in Office of Nakornrachasima Education Service Area Zone 4. Finally, I am deeply indebted to every literature and proverb expert who assisted me on the issue of useful data for this thesis and helped me to achieve all the goals of the thesis.

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