

Filial Piety and the Implementation of Taking Care of Elderly People in Vietnamese Families at Present Time

Dr. Nguyen Thi Tho

Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam
Email: thodhsp@gmail.com

Nguyen Thanh Binh

Free University of Berlin, Germany
Email: binh1980gdct@yahoo.com.vn

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Abstract Filial piety is a concept originating with Confucianism. In somewhat general terms, filial piety means to be good to one's parents; to take care of one's parents; to engage in good conduct not just towards parents but also outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors; to perform the duties of one's job well so as to obtain the material means to support parents as well as carry out sacrifices to the ancestors; not be rebellious; show love, respect and support; display courtesy; ensure male heirs, uphold fraternity among brothers; wisely advise one's parents, including sorrow for their sickness and death; and carry out sacrifices after their death. But a core ideal of filial piety is the fulfillment of child's obligations to the parent. In every stage of history, Vietnamese people always attach very much importance to filial piety. Children always try to do best things for their parents to repay their sacrifice for them.

Keywords: elderly people, families, filial piety, taking care of, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

After twenty years of renovations, Vietnam has gained great economic achievements, which are historically significant in building a socialist oriented market economy. The economy grew quickly, society progressed, living standards improved, etc. However, during the years of renovation, social and family moral standards have been declining. Many families haven't paid enough attention to teaching children resulting in difficulties. It is time for all families to pay attention to, to review, and renew family traditions and ethics. It is a must to think of filial piety and order in the family and society, which will lead to civilized and cultural routines. Because every person has parents, expressing piety to parents is not only a duty and a responsibility for children but also a holy right of every person. Educating children to understand about filial piety was highly important for Vietnamese families in the past and continues to be important. Insufficient attention paid to educating about filial piety in the family is a mistake. It must be considered a most essential basis of society and human morality that appears to have been forgotten.

There are children, who are good examples of filial piety to their parents. But in a rapidly changing society, there are children who neglect their duty are immoral, show no respect, and even rude to their parents. Some children even see serving parents a burden. Some think that if they contribute money to support their parents that they have fulfilled their duty. There are families avoiding serving or taking care of parents because they are in poor circumstances. There are wealthy people, who hire a stranger to take care of their parents as a way of showing gratitude to their parents but leave their parents lonely and sad. That's caused a circumstance like:

*"Không ăn thì ốm thì gầy,
Ăn thì nước mắt chan đầy bát cơm"
hoặc: "Cha mẹ nuôi con bằng trời bằng bể,
Con nuôi cha mẹ con kể từng ngày"*

("Parents' merits like the sky and the sea always remain / But children's repayment is about to boast and complain")

The positive and negative phenomena of ethics occurring in society have raised pressing issues that need to be

addressed. Besides promoting good practices of filial piety from children to parents, we need to condemn and criticize children who maltreat their parents.

This article tries to clarify the practice of filial piety in taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families at present time. To do it, firstly I introduce the definition of filial piety, and secondly I analyze the implementation of taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families nowadays.

2. Findings

2.1. Definition of filial piety

"*Filial piety*" has a long history dating back to its association with ancestor worship. Later it was developed and institutionalized as a moral standard of Confucianism. Basically, "*filial piety*" is a positive sentiment, which means as a child you must show reverence and devotion to your parents. Regarding filial piety practices, despite the heavy influence of Confucianism, the Vietnamese have their own concept of "*filial piety*", which is not as highly strict and fixed as expected by Confucianism. Particularly, the "*filial piety*" tradition of the Vietnamese people was taken up and improved in the idealism and code of conduct of Ho Chi Minh. For Ho Chi Minh, the concept of "*filial piety*" had been revolutionarily changed. In the current conditions, I suppose we should further emphasize the role of "*filial piety*" in the family as well as in society. Filial piety should be taken on board and developed according to the spirit of Ho Chi Minh in association with the development requirements of newly developed families.

Traditionally, our great grandparents considered highly the need for the moral education of grandchildren with the primary emphasis on filial piety:

"*Làm trai nét đũ trăm đường,
Trước tiên điều hiếu đạo thường xưa nay*"
("As a man, filial piety is on top")

It means a person who shows no filial piety to his parents or grandparents, neither loves nor respects them and has difficulty in becoming an empathetic person loving those around him or her.

The responsibility and duty for grandparents and parents is summarized in the concept of filial piety. Filial piety is seen not only a top ethic but also an origin of happiness:

"*Điều hiếu đũng vũng,
Muôn điều thiện theo
Phúc thiện đũng đạo,
Phúc lành đũng gieo*".
(*Xuân đình gia huấn*)
("If filial piety is highly appreciated/ Followed by acts of charity/ Have luck and fortunate").

Accordingly, each an individual must follow regulations, family ethics and traditions, i.e. "*respecting the elderly and making concessions to the younger*". Any deviation from this behavior is considered neglect of their duty. According to Confucius, compassion is rooted in love and respect while love and respect are rooted in filial piety. When talking about the rule of kings, Confucius said:

"*Compassion grows if a person loves his relatives as much as he loves his parents, and so he is able to teach his people of filial piety. If a king teaches his people, he should start with the older citizens. A king who teaches his people with compassion is loved by and seen as a family member of his people. A king who respects older people is loved and then followed by his people. If a king worships his parents with filial piety in accordance with ethics, his morality is extended and he is obeyed by all his people*" (translated and cited from Nhan, 1999:18).

So, Confucius used filial piety as the core of moral education. According to Confucius, the practice of filial piety consisted of many requirements. *Firstly*, children must serve their parents when they get old and carry out traditional procedures when they die. Confucius said: "*When parents are alive, children serve them following rites; when parents die, children hold a funeral following rites; and as they worship, they follow rites, too*" (translated and cited from Sang, 2002:245). It means a child must show filial piety to his parents whether they are alive or dead. Confucius said children must serve

their parents with respect, if not they are considered neglecting their duty. Even dogs and horses are raised, so to serve parents without respect is likely raising beasts. Therefore, it is the most important for children to serve parents with respect though children have poor quality rice to eat but their behaviors please parents, it is called filial piety. *Secondly*, children should have capacity and conditions to go on their father's career. Such a family is called happy. A father has a son and his son then should have a son, too. It means he should have a grandson, if not his family is called unhappy and his son is called no filial piety. Because it had paid too much attention to going on family name and due to historically limited awareness of human biology, Confucius' judgments were highly strict. *Thirdly*, as a child, he/she was not allowed to disobey his parents. In the early of Confucianism, the concept of filial piety was certainly positive. For example, Confucius said: *"As long as parents are alive, children shouldn't travel far away from home. If they do, they should tell their parents beforehand"* (translated and cited from Sang, 2002: 282). If parents have done something immoral, children should stop them in a peaceful manner. If parents don't accept their counsel, children should continue to show filial piety and be respectful of parents and patiently persuade them about the right things:

*"Những điều gì tốt trông cha mẹ nên,
 Những điều hư hèn trông cha mẹ khỏi"*
 ("Desire parents to follow good deed and to avoid bad deed").

Those humanitarian features are needed not only for earlier Confucian society but are also important for filial piety to parents in a modern society today.

According to Confucism, children who demonstrate filial piety are the ones who are able to follow their parents' will and ambition, learn good things from their parents, and are able to differentiate between good and bad things. Confucius said: *"Judge a child when his father is alive for will or ambition and when his father dies, look at his behaviors. If he remains himself unchanged for three years, he is called filial piety"* (cited and translated from Sang, 2002: 225).

When teaching filial piety, Confucius said it is a must to keep it being neutral. According to Confucius, parent worship doesn't mean filial piety. Filial piety should lead to morality because filial piety means moral. Filial piety and moral go together; therefore highly positioned persons in society should pay special attentions to piety. *"If a gentleman who has a high position is fully filial piety to his parents, his people will be oriented to morality, too; if a gentleman with a high position doesn't neglect his friends, the people will not be ungrateful"* (cited and translated from Sang, 2002: 358-359). Gentlemen are persons who have power and high positions and are good examples for others. If such people neglect their duty, they fail to make people compassionate.

Therefore, filial piety has a positive meaning and it originates from a traditional belief that children have to show piety to their parents. This emotional and moral requirement is widely popular in many nations - particularly for Eastern nations, including Vietnam. Vietnamese historical records have many good examples of children who demonstrated piety children to their parents.

In terms of the practice of filial piety, Confucianism heavily influences Vietnamese people. However, Vietnamese piety is unique. It is not so draconian or as rigid as Chinese Confucianism. Even Vietnamese people of older ages who were fully trained in Confucian ways, acquired the practice of piety adapted it and made it a value and a moral standard with a uniquely Vietnamese character.

For instance, in the Tran dynasty, when Tran Lieu was on his deathbed, he urged his son, Prince Tran Quoc Tuan, to avenge what he felt was a personal shame. Tran Quoc Tuan, however, ignored the personal shame, focused on national benefits, and kept concord with Tran Quang Khai to fight against the Mongol Yuan invasions to show gratitude to the nation.

On the occurrence of the Minh invasion, Nguyen Phi Khanh was captured and marched off to Chi Lang. Nguyen Trai followed his father to Ai Nam Quan. Nguyen Phi Khanh said: *"You must return to avenge me and the country. You shouldn't follow me to cry"*. Following his father's words, Nguyen Trai went back. He spent days and nights thinking about avenging his father. He did his best to support King Binh Dinh to fight the Chinese invaders.

In the Nguyen dynasty, Phan Boi Chau nurtured his father's ambition, studied hard, and gained the first laureate to please his father who was on his deathbed. He extended his practice of piety for his father to his nation and people and engaged in revolutionary activities to become a patriot well known in the early 20th century.

In the general, filial piety is expressed in lulling words for newly born babies:

*"Công cha như núi Thái Sơn,
 Nghĩa mẹ như nước trong nguồn chảy ra
 Một lòng thờ mẹ kính cha,*

Cho tròn chữ hiếu mới là đạo con"

("The fatherly immense toil is as big as Thai Son mountain / The constant motherly devotion is similar to the stream of water flowing out from spring / You ought to honor your parents with all your heart / In order to decently fulfill the solemn precept of filial piety").

Filial piety is very simple, practical and applicable to the masses. Sincere filial piety is just appropriate. Sincere filial piety means concern, care, and wishes for parents to enjoy good health, long life, and happiness. It also implies making efforts to maintain and take advantage of family traditions such as being grateful to ancestors, grandparents, and educating the generations to follow.

The tradition of filial piety was taken up and improved in Ho Chi Minh's philosophy and personality. Faith and filial piety as ethics were used in parallel and considered by Ho Chi Minh to be the highest standard of human behaviors. According to Ho Chi Minh's philosophy, the piety cited in the statement *"faithful to country, filial piety to people"* is not only the accomplished ethic of children for parents but also serving for all people and serving because of people. Children should show love for their parents and the parents of others. Ho Chi Minh said: *"The most revolutionary person is the most pious - the most dutiful and loyal. Why? If such a person doesn't take part in revolutionary activities, not only his parents but million parents of others will be oppressed by empire and feudal lords. We save not only our parents but also the parents of other and parents in the whole country as well"* (translated and cited from Ho Chi Minh Volume, 2000).

For Ho Chi Minh, showing filial piety to people means to be a servant of the people and take root of the people (see people as the fundamental in society). In the past, Manh Tu said: *"Loving people is the highest and the best, followed by love of the country and the last is love of the king"*. This means that the advantage of filial piety is its acknowledgement of people being its root. Following Confucius, Ho Chi Minh didn't place himself higher than his people or apart from his people. For him, being loved by his people was the power. He always placed himself in the heart of his people, considered himself to be a servant of the people, and obtained public benefits in his life, his career, and the realization of the goals of the revolution: *"There is nothing more valuable than people in the world. There is nothing stronger than public union"* (translated and cited from Ho Chi Minh Volume, 2000). In other words, he changed people from the dependency on kings, lords and commanders into owners.

For Ho Chi Minh, the ideology of filial piety to the people no longer meant loving people as persons that need to be educated and given favors, but as people who need to be best served. That's why, it is necessary to be close, to respect, to learn from, to rely on, and be rooted in people. According to Ho Chi Minh, leaders should master an understanding of the masses of the people, understand their wishes, often care about improving their living standards and enjoy rights but fulfill responsibilities. For a revolutionary, a leader with such a moral attitude will be trusted, loved, respected, and certainly generate power for revolutions.

Regardless of having such a broad meaning, filial piety is associated with faith. Ho Chi Minh himself is an example of such an association. Depending on certain people, Ho Chi Minh defined the content of faith and filial piety appropriate to revolutionary duties. Ho Chi Minh was excellent and creative at inheriting the traditional piety of Confucius. For him, filial piety had been changed with a revolutionary meaning - filial piety to people included parents.

In conclusion, filial piety is a concept originating with Confucianism. In somewhat general terms, filial piety means to be good to one's parents; to take care of one's parents; to engage in good conduct not just towards parents but also outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors; to perform the duties of one's job well so as to obtain the material means to support parents as well as carry out sacrifices to the ancestors; not be rebellious; show love, respect and support; display courtesy; ensure male heirs, uphold fraternity among brothers; wisely advise one's parents, including sorrow for their sickness and death; and carry out sacrifices after their death. But a core ideal of filial piety is the fulfillment of child's obligations to the parent.

Filial piety is a social norm that parents should love their children and that children in turn should love and respect their parents (Lew, 1995) to repay the comfort and aid received: *"Children were made to feel keenly that they owed parents a moral debt so immense as to be unpayable. A child was supposed to try to please his or her parents all the time and in every way, to increase their comfort, to accede to all their wishes, to fulfill their aspirations, to lighten their burden of work and of worry, and to comply with their wishes in all matters, great and small"* (Jamieson, 1993:17).

From that, we could define the filial piety is the responsibility of each person to respect their parents, obey them, take care of them as they age, advise parents, and of course to love them.

2.2. The practice of filial piety in taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families

Since the old days, Vietnamese people attach very much importance to the man's morality education for their

descendants; especially *"filial piety"* is on top. Among the relations in family, the relationship between the later generation and the preceding one is the filial piety. Although that relationship trends to be changed by social change, its core is unchangeable including gratitude, respect, obedience, support, taking care of parents who have given birth, fostered and educated their children. That is attention, care, wish good health, long life, and pleasure for parents. It is also the endeavor to keep and promote the family's order, discipline and tradition, gratitude to ancestors.

Filial piety in Vietnamese families is expressed in many ways but highlights are as follows:

Firstly, children must be grateful to and respect their grandparents and parents in families. When they are alive, children must give respectful support, care to them. When they are older, such support and care must be more thoughtful. When they passed away, children must bury them properly.

Secondly, a child with filial piety is the one who know to protect himself, his moral behavior, health, especially to improve his moral behavior and knowledge to become the one with good personality, the person of great righteousness and generosity, bringing fame to his family. This child with filial piety must establish his position in life, have successful career of which his parents may be proud.

Thirdly, a child with filial piety is the one who never do anything which may cause negative influence on his family's honor, able to take over from his parents' career, continue their will, follow their good example, protect family's order, tradition and way of life.

In this article, we focus on the first way in realization of filial piety in Vietnam as this is considered prominent expression, the nucleus and basic meaning in the realization of filial piety in Vietnam families. It is children' care for the elderly in families. By that virtue, the filial piety in families is defined: *"Filial piety is respect, taking good care of parents wholeheartedly"*¹. Parents' love and sacrifice to give birth, foster and educate their children is so great which can never be compensated, higher than sky and deeper than sea: *"Parents' love and sacrifice to give birth, foster and educate children / Never forget all day and night/ Higher than sky and deeper than sea"* (Trai, N. 1952)

Children must show gratitude to their parents by performing specific action. When parents are alive, children must wholeheartedly support, always take care of, visit them; if unfortunately to live a beggarly life, hungry with only maize or manioc, children must try to provide parents with food and drink, give what more delicious, better for parents, desiring parents to live longer to receive repayment: *"Old mother lives in a thatched hut/ Only visiting her day and night makes children' mind easy"*. The family education of feudal system of Vietnam highlighted: *"Parents are the most respectable ones/ Providing them with support and requital when they are old/ Never forget parents' grace/ Children must repay their parents"* (Cang, C.V. 2006 p. 181). Parents give birth, foster and bring up children, sacrificing their youth for their children's maturity, success. When children grow up, their parents are old, bad health, need good care from children. So many children are aware of this and repay their parents. They always pay attention, take care and encourage their parents, making them feel pleasant with their old age. There are the children who are very busy with their works but they have saved time to visit, to live with their parents, shared weal and woe with their old parents, learnt about their inmost feelings and expectation and repaid their parents.

About the way of support: The parents who are in good health, wealthy often live separately from their children. Those who are old and weak or poor live with their children. Children who are wealthy give their parents the best amenities; serve them the best delicious food and drink. Those who are poor still know to give their parents good meal. There are children who live and have meal separately from their parent but they give their parents money monthly as support. Those who live very far send their parents' gifts or money sometimes.

In material term, when parents are old, children must serve their parents wholeheartedly. As a child, he/ she has to know their parents' meal taste, depending on his/ her financial capacity, to cook what their parents want to eat. There are something to be noted that the elderly, with weak teeth and stomach, so children should prepare for them soft, easily digestive meal which is nutritious and suitable to parents' taste. About clothing, elderly are easily affected by weather so children must prepare suitable clothing for their parents, wool clothing in winter, silk clothing in summer, help them feel strong enough to resist changeable weather. Special attention should be paid to parents' sleep, it is very difficult for the elderly to have good sleep and easily awake by noise, children must prepare appropriate bedding for their parents' good sleep, quiet during their sleep, go to bed after and get up before their parents.

There are children who are wealthy, have provide for their parents both materially and spiritually. These children have build house for their parents, buy necessary amenities for them including good bedding to use in frosty winter, give medicine when they are ill. In some families, the children who are wealthy invite their parents to travel around the country or abroad. Some children who are not so wealthy but have repaid their parents with many deeds, which make others

¹ Institute of Linguistics (2004). *Vietnamese dictionary*, pp. 439.

moved.

Everyone has to go through birth, aging, disease, and death. When parents are sick, children must take care of them conscientiously, invite doctor, buy medicine for parents. Some elderly suffer from hemiplegia, cannot take care of themselves, have meal and relieve themselves at the same place. The children who have parents like that should not be fearful of serving their parents, should remember that when we were a small child, our parents were not fearful of serving us.

In the morning of 22nd August 2007, the fourth National festival of dutiful children opened in Ho Chi Minh city. There were 196 delegates of so many dutiful children from many provinces and cities of the country, of whom 65 distinguished dutiful children have been awarded certificates of merit by the Central Committee of Vietnamese fatherland front².

Mr. Vu Dinh Dau, 63 years old, living in Hoang Mai district, Hanoi has also been commended as a dutiful child. He has 3 children, 6 grandchildren but he by himself cooks meal for his parents who are 100 years of age. He shared the experience to take care of elderly: *"The elderly are always fear of being stranded because they think they are unnecessary so we have to give them due attention, carefully explain for them to understand. Food must be soft, vegetable must be washed by ozone machine"*.

Mr. Bui Quang Tuan, a teacher in Binh Hoa commune, Chau Thanh district, An Giang province. He is 37 years old, not married. He said: *"Everyone wants to get married but I am too poor, have not thought about getting married yet"*. His family has 6 children, 3 younger sisters got married, and two elder brothers have to earn living far away. Only Mr. Tuan stays at home to take care of old mother.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam (28 years old, living in residential quarter 2, Thoi An ward, district 12) is another dutiful child. Everyday, he takes care of his adoptive parents as his biological ones. Since the day when his adoptive mother suffered from fatal disease, cannot sit or walk, Mr. Tam is both bread - winner and does housework. The daily unnamed works such as going to market, cooking meal, extracting medicine, washing their parents have taken all time of a young man. However, he always says with fun: *"Not only girls are capable of doing housework, boys can go to market, cook meal, medicine, wash parents!"*.

On old days, it is said that filial duty a child must: *"fan parents when it hot, warm up when it is cold, visit them day and night"*. Fan means in hot summer, children must stay up all night to fan their parents; warm up means in frosty winter, bedding is cold so children must lie down in bed for it warmer for their parents to have good sleep; visit day and night as the elderly are not as strong as young people. They may be in good health in the evening but may be ill the following morning; their health is changeable so children must visit their parents in the morning and in the evening to know their condition of health, to give them medicine in timely manner. Above is material repayment and about spiritual aspect, children must repay with all their heart. We have to understand that elderly always feel inferiority complex, self-pity when their children do not give them due attention. Therefore, children must conscientiously take care of sick parents and always talk with them. If children live far from parents, sometimes children must call to know their parents' condition of health because if we don't do so when our parents alive, we will have no more opportunity when they passed away.

Another reason, the elderly are always fear of sorrow and do not want nuisance to happen because it is very difficult for them to forget, to move such sorrow out of their heart once it happened. Therefore, children must try their best not to do wrong thing, which may make their parents be sad.

It is said that: *"Grass grows on soil, bad habit in elderly"*, parents at old age always feel aches and pains, pull-brained, unpleasant, sometimes they scold their children not for justified cause or even they have just been fed but said that they have not been fed, etc. Children must understand and sympathize with parents every time they changes their mood, not bear a grudge against parents. Filial piety, firstly, children must be always observe parents' intention and must not make them feel sad and worried.

Children must try best to live a moral life and studious, make parents feel pleasant because elderly are always happy when their children are dutiful and successful. Moral life and success of children are always invaluable gift for their parents, are happiness and pride for their parents at old age.

Children should respect their parents' pleasures and hobbies because young people have their own pleasures and elderly also have their own pleasures. For example, the parents who settled down far from their homeland always want to come back to their native land, children must save money, provide them with favorable condition, to satisfy their expectation. This means as a child, he or she must respect parents' hobbies and expectation and try best to meet their needs to make parents happy.

² Dan Tri newspaper, 23rd August 2011.

A higher level of repayment is spiritual repayment, a child with full filial piety is the one who become the spiritual support for his or her parents depend on.

Filial piety is one of moral standards, which must be done originated from the heart, voluntarily, regarding it as essential need. Public opinions always commend, encourage, wake up human conscience in realization of filial piety.

Over the current years, with the country's development, children have better financial condition to realize filial piety. Many children who have strength of will, great learning, high social position, have provided for their parents both material and spiritual life, help their parents spend their old age peacefully. Nowadays, in addition to good financial condition, many families are happy with their good spiritual and moral life, preserving their family tradition, which become the very strong support for each family member.

In every stage of history, Vietnamese people always attach very much importance to filial piety. In a festival of dutiful children held in Thanh Hoa province, a middle-age child said that: *"Love, respect old parents, aware of their great love and sacrifice. I always teach my children to be dutiful, grateful. I hope such dutifulness will make our parents live longer. I think: regardless of how old we are, if our parents passed away, we are orphaned. I am always awake of my duty as child, desire to provide for my parents and receive advices from them"* (Kiet 2006 p. 120).

Or in history of Vietnam, the story *"Chung cake, Day cake"* has showed parents' credit to give birth and bring up their children. Lang Lieu, the eighteenth prince, a dutiful, good-natured child has given his father, the King, Chung cake and Day cake. Chung cake symbolizes the earth, Day cake symbolize the sun, considering parents' love and sacrifice as high as sun and as wide as earth, protecting their children to live a peaceful life. Therefore, Hung King agreed to entrust him with throne. Such awareness is a part of national culture to build a long-standing moral standards and principles. Chung cake and Day cake became one of traditional products, an evidence of moral standards. These cakes are always offered to ancestors in occasion of Lunar New Year holiday and annual holidays and festivals.

For all the children, the important thing is showing love and attention to their grandparents, parents both material and spiritual aspects, especially their spiritual life. As for the elderly, it is very important to take care of their spiritual life, encourage and console them. Only grandchildren and children can give the best consolation to their grandparents and parents. When parents are old and weak, sick, their children' care and help are much more valuable than tonic of any kind or expensive gifts. Meaning of support, repayment for grandparents and parents is not valuable over money but sincere heart. Love and respect are the most important for the children to foster and take care of their parents. Children' love and filial duty, repayment make parents have peace of their mind, not feeling lonely. Parents find themselves in their children, their contribution to the society.

In Vietnamese fold verses, moral standards demonstrated the national cultural tradition have been agglomerated over many thousands of years. With simple and easily understandable words, parents' love and sacrifice have been highly praised, fold verses are not academic literature but simple and popular over so many generations: *"Parents' love and sacrifice are so great/ Fostered us since early days/ Children must show deep gratitude to parents"*.

If we wish our parents had creditability, we have to establish our position in life by learning a trade or pursue higher education, which will benefit the community and society, satisfying our parents' expectation.

In the present context with so many complicated changes and difficulties, beside the dutiful children with benevolence and righteousness to their parents are the ones who are irresponsible for taking care of their parents, absorbed in pursuing personal purposes, not fulfilling filial piety as a child. These children are usually criticized: *"Why you leave your old mother alone/ Who tidy up bedding for her sleep/ Who make tea for her"*. Especially some children who have left their parents alone but when parents passed away, they organized luxury funeral have to come under heavy criticism by the community. These children are considered great filial impiety: *"Not feed parents when they alive/ Luxury funeral when they dead"*. In other words, they seemed not to know filial piety. They only know how to satisfy themselves, unintentionally or intentionally forget their responsibility to their parents.

Some children have understood filial piety as cold as marble. In 2008, in the media such as television, newspaper, etc. some heart-breaking stories about filial piety have been reflected, which make everybody, who has good judgment have to meditate. That is the son beats and ill-treats his biological mother when she was 85 years old³. Or Vinh Phuc Province People's Court has just heard and tried the last case, rejecting the petition submitted by Mr. Ngo Xuan Thanh who claimed his mother to repay him money that he has fostered his mother⁴. This may be the *"rare"* information that son claimed his mother for nearly VND 150 million and asked half of the house of gratitude presented by the local government for the martyr's mother. The case that Mr. Thanh claimed his mother, Mrs. Truoc for fostering money calculated from

³ News Program -Vietnam Television, evening 19th November 2008.

⁴ Vietnam News Agency, 19th June 2008.

1997 to 2005, VND 50,000 each day and total is VND 146,050,000, the Jury decided that children are responsible for fostering their parents, there is no regulation by law that mother has to repay fostering money for children, etc. For some people, is money more important than morality, ethics that make them forget core value?

Some people often blame on situation and cause many pitiful stories in relation to filial piety. In their opinion, nowadays children have no enough time to show their attention to, care for, and have happy meal with parents or stay with parents when they are sick. Therefore, they find it the best solution to hire helpers or take their parents to elderly centers so that they can spend all their time and effort to their work. Thus, many people who have a lot of children and grandchildren but have to live with helpers. Weekly or monthly, their children send them an amount of money as fulfillment of their obligation. However, for parents, money is not all...because the elderly do not have much material demand. For them, spirit is more important. Many people who have not cared for their parents when parents alive cried a lot and organized luxury funeral as consolation and repentance when their parents passed away... It is a pity that such late filial piety has been popular.

Negative manifestations relating to filial piety in the current society, which has caused many pressing and urgent issues, contrary to national fine habits and customs require the special attention and urgent solution.

The society is "aging" meanwhile population in each family has rapidly decreased (originated from guideline "each married couple should have only one or two children"). That means the number of people who shoulder the family affairs such as support grandparents and parents has been rapidly decreased also. In such context, it is supposed that the caring for the elderly cannot be fully taken by each individual family but it must be included as an important social policy. Thus, in Vietnam, paying attention to and caring for grandparents, parents and the elderly aiming at improving and promoting the elderly in Vietnam currently have become a significant and consistent policy of the Party and the State, responsibility of the whole political system, and obligation of each family, community as well as society. It is very necessary to issue the Law on elderly to form legal corridor for organization of the association, serve the lofty cause of caring of the elderly and make contribution to realize filial piety in the new context.

3. Conclusion

We can realize that filial piety has positive meaning, derived from human sacred, and from obligation as a child to repay for their parents' love and sacrifice. By fulfilling filial piety in families, we shall succeed our family's business, bring fame to ancestry and make contribution to social stability and development. In current situation, we should continually confirm the role of filial piety, attach it with establishment of new cultural families, satisfy requirement of social modernization and build a comfortable and happy life.

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