

Thai Ethics and Morality as Reflected in Nee

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Keywords: "Nee"; Ethical and moral thought; Thai family

Abstract: Nee is a novel written by Domaiso, a renowned Thai writer. The novel depicts the heroine Nee, who comes from a noble family, grows up in a feudal society since her childhood, and eventually compromises and condescends under an arranged marriage. In this new family without the foundation of love, there is always an invisible ethical and moral element as the storyline develops. The purpose of this paper is to interpret the Thai ethical and moral ideas reflected in this novel and to explore the reasons for their creation. The purpose of this paper is to interpret the Thai ethics and morals reflected in this novel and to investigate the reasons for them. The interpretation reveals that the Thai ethics and morals reflected in "Nee" are family ethics and social ethics.

1. Introduction

Domaiso (1905-1963), a famous female writer in the history of modern Thai literature, was one of the most important pioneers of modern Thai literature, pioneering the realistic novel approach with family life as the main line. Her works are mostly about Thai aristocratic families, describing their daily lives and customs. Compared with other novels of her time, her works are more realistic, and the character development and emotional changes of her characters are closer to life and in line with the logic of life and emotions. Her characters of the aristocracy are diverse, mainly depicting the changes of the times and their impact on the lives of Thai aristocrats. These novels both praise the aristocracy and lament the impending decline of the aristocracy as a class. In her short life, Domaiso wrote twelve full-length novels and twenty short stories, many of which have become the finest works of modern Thai literature. Since she lived in a noble family, she was familiar with the characters, concepts, habits and manners of this class, which facilitated her to write about the life of Thai society, especially the upper class, through the social theme of family^[1].

The most successful aspect of her portrayal of women is that they are all of noble descent, but each has her own personality. Nee" describes a woman of noble birth named Nee, who was educated in the West since she was young and doted on by her parents at home, and grew up in a sugar jar, with a mischievous and lively character, and eventually grew into an upright, kind, gentle and naive character. In an arranged marriage, she married a husband with no emotional foundation at all, no foundation of love in her new family, and no support from her in-laws. Nee does her best to fulfill her duties as a wife, but suffers reproach from her husband, coldness from her family, and ostracism from her lover. However, even so, she still loves her husband deeply and respects him as her life. Since ancient times, there has been a saying in China that "a woman is married to her husband", and there was also such a concept in the Thai society at that time, and most women had strong moral values and were taught

to be submissive from childhood. Through the analysis of "Nee", we can learn about Thai ethics and morality, the composition of Thai family and society, and understand more about the country of Thailand.

2. The social background of the ethical and moral thoughts in Nee

In 1929, the global capitalist economic crisis swept through Thailand, and Thailand was no exception. In 1932, the Democrat staged a coup d'état and subsequently formulated a constitution that changed the monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. As a direct result of the revolution, the country became a constitutional monarchy, the king's power weakened, the status of the royal family declined, and a new group of Western-educated people entered the political arena. As a young woman of the aristocracy, Domesday was also influenced by Western education, which was revealed in her works. With the infiltration of Western ideas, the mindset of Thais changed dramatically, but Thailand was still in a relatively undeveloped stage at this time, resulting in those traditional yet long-standing ethical and moral elements still influencing the mindset of Thais.

In this context, the Nee implies various social ethical and moral factors. The so-called ethics and morals refer to the social moral concepts that contain various norms of action, which not only include the action guidelines for the adjustment of the relationship between people, people and society and people and nature, but also contain deeper reasons for the human society to follow certain guidelines and norms of action, and the ethical ideas that the author constructs in his work should also belong to different categories. After the author's interpretation of "Nee", the ethical and moral factors in this work include three main categories: first, family ethics and morality, which refers to the basic principles and guidelines for coordinating social relations among family members. The first is family ethics, which refers to the basic principles and guidelines for harmonizing social relationships among family members. The Nee also includes similar elements to other works, such as background characters, storyline, and descriptions of daily life scenes, but the focus in this work is on Thai family scenes, mainly showing the relationship between husband and wife and kinship in Thai family relationships. The second is social ethics, which refers to the moral principles and norms that people should abide by when they associate with external society other than the family. The heroines in Nee are the victims of the feudal underclass society, women are subordinate to men, on the one hand, women have a low social status, on the other hand, they have to abide by a set of moral codes and the principles of the three subordinate virtues, and their fate is the most pathetic. These characters are cowardly and can be considered perfect role models of submissiveness. The integration of these ethical and moral factors into the psychological portrayal of the novel's characters can make the characters more distinct^[2].

3. Ethical and moral factors

3.1 Family ethics and morality

3.1.1 In the family relationship, the husband takes precedence

In the family, besides the relationship between the father and the children, the relationship between the husband and the wife is also the most important link in the whole family, and it is because of this link that the whole family can continue. In general, in the old society, the status of Thai men is higher than that of women, the Thai countryside used to be popular for men to "plug the door", and there are "women are the master, men are servants", especially women in rural areas, their rights and men are basically the same. But for men with wealth and ability, men are still in charge of the family, which is also generally known as a patriarchal family.

Early Thai society was a traditional agricultural society, with agricultural production still dominating large areas of Thailand. During the reign of the Fourth King of the Bangkok Dynasty, Thailand practiced a natural economy of self-sufficiency, always following traditional ethical and moral norms and ways of life and production. Before the reign of the Fifth King, the state practiced monastic education, i.e., monasteries were schools, and only men had the right to receive education. As can be seen, gender oppression was a persistent and far-reaching social problem that was not only reflected in the social structure but also in the family structure. During the Bangkok dynasty, feudal rulers introduced a series of moral codes of conduct to reinforce their rule, thereby imposing constraints and restrictions on women, thus denying them freedom and rights. The supreme "virtue" of women in feudal society was the "three virtues of obedience" as regulated by Chinese rituals, and similarly in Thailand. In order to be a good wife and mother, women must be submissive and obedient to others. In the novel "Nee", Nee has been educated in Western style since childhood, and is cheerful, brave, polite, and loved by her parents. However, after marriage, she faces a completely different fate, because her husband does not like her, and his heart is all about her cousin. Nee tries her best to do well in her profession, but encounters her husband's coldness, her parents' opposition, and her partner's resentment. Even so, she is unwilling to give in, and she keeps on giving in the family in order to have a cozy home for herself. Because as a woman who has been married, she does not want to be ridiculed by society, she wants to win her husband's love and drive his partner out. Nee believed that married couples should love each other deeply and that no matter how bad the husband was, the wife should take care of him with all her heart and soul. It can be said that Thai women in those days took precedence over their husbands, and there was only this one wooden bridge that had to be taken or not. For this reason, she had to compete with her rival in order to win her husband's love. Their happiness was more a gift from their husbands and families than from their own efforts^[3].

3.1.2 Arranged Marriage

"Arranged marriages are often seen as a violation of "parental authority and matchmaking," in which the parents are given the responsibility of making decisions while combining their ideas. However, this behavior ignores the true needs of the united couple, which is what creates a real family. A well-bonded couple's relationship is one that leads to greater happiness for one person, maintains the stability of the community, and even advances the global culture. However, a bad union can lead to emotional disconnection and even conflict between the couple, and arranged marriages to a certain extent prevent communication between the two sexes. Conflicts and contradictions between women usually come from polygamy, where men have a greater advantage in marriage, resulting in an imbalance of power between husband and wife, with both wives and concubines forced to be subservient to their husbands. The marriage of Nee, the heroine of the novel, is arranged. In order to solve the financial difficulties of her family, her in-laws ask her son to find a rich in-law to settle the bank debts for her, and also hope that her son will inherit her father-in-law's estate in the future. And Nee did her best to be a virtuous wife after her marriage, but she encountered her husband's reproach, her parents' coldness, and her lover's ostracism. She did not achieve happiness nor realize her life value, yet she still persevered and kept fighting against various conflicts.

3.2 Social ethics and morals

3.2.1 Male superiority over female

Polygamy is very common in Thailand, and even though Thai society now stipulates that repeated marriages cannot be registered, the phenomenon of keeping a concubine is still quite common. Husbands, because husbands have the right to seek sexual experiences, whether their wives want

them or not, and it is not considered an act of loss of anything, even though the law also provides for monogamy, but husbands can have little wives and write is seen as a matter for men." In the countries of feudal society, women had to be dependent on men, but at the same time they had to abide by a set of basic moral codes. Under the strict requirements of the three subordinate virtues, women were almost submissive, while men seemed to have the absolute privilege of being the rule-makers. From the distribution of male and female responsibilities, men are mainly responsible for work, raising a family, women are responsible for the household chores, more typical male dominant, female dominant pattern, and the requirements for the wife is also a lot, must respect their husbands, major issues to discuss with their husbands and so on. This unequal attitude towards cheating reflects the low status of women, "men are inferior to women" social thinking is still relatively obvious. The heroine in the novel "Nee" is also like that, she lives a new life in a lowly way, facing the great pressure of society alone, and tolerating the betrayal of her husband and mistress. In marriage one can only tolerate, tolerate, humble, obey, and try to find ways to gain her husband's affection, but this is not a good starting point. These low brows to please will only put the marriage relationship in an increasingly passive position, becoming the weaker party and only going with the flow. Women are not in control of their own destiny, even if they are noble women. Therefore, under the influence of the ethical and moral background of male superiority and female inferiority, the heroine Nee's pursuit of happiness becomes a luxury and she is willing to be a housewife^[4].

3.2.2 Belief in karma

Thailand is known as the "Land of the Yellow Robe Buddha", 93.4% of the people believe in Buddhism, and Buddhism has a leading role in social life, and Buddhist culture is at the core of Thai culture, which has a profound influence on Thai people. The religious thinking of Buddhism has had a significant impact on the social concept of Thai people and has penetrated many aspects of Thai people, such as "karma" and "reincarnation". They believe that "good is rewarded with good and evil with evil" and that charity brings good luck and blessings from Buddha. They believe in merit, good and evil, and believe that if they put in enough effort, their next life will be better, and that the fruits of this goodness are the result of the blessings they have accumulated in their previous lives.

4. The factors affecting the formation of ethical and moral ideas

Each literary work is in a specific social situation and reflects a wide range of life. After analyzing the ethical and moral factors in "Nee", we can investigate the reasons for its formation in relation to the various actual situations in Thailand as a country. The characters in "Nee" are a microcosm of their time, and they all have their own personalities and destinies, which are inseparable from social, religious and historical factors. Because the ethical and moral ideology formed by a country or a society is not empty, it always has traces to be found^[5].

4.1 Socio-historical factors

According to the Marxist theory of women, the status of women is not heavenly low, in the early days of human society, women enjoyed a lofty position. Women's oppression, gender inequality, is the development of human history to a certain stage on the social phenomenon, is the product of the development of productive forces to a certain stage. In the Paleolithic era, women were mainly responsible for gathering, while men were mainly responsible for hunting. This is determined by the physiological structure. Women had to breastfeed, and gathering was an activity that could be balanced with breastfeeding and did not require long walks and fast running. But as tools improved, men were able to organize large hunting groups, plus men were physically stronger, while women

were still engaged in gathering, caring for children, and women were tied to the family. Men, otherwise, were able to provide more food and thus had a much higher status, with men occupying a dominant position over women. We can see that the initial gender inequality evolved from different biological characteristics. However, in the culture formed afterwards, the patriarchs used their dominant position to fix this unequal relationship through various institutional designs and creating social perceptions in order to maintain their own dominant interests. However, this patriarchal domination is extremely irrational, both on the biological and social levels. On the one hand, from a biological point of view, men and women are fundamentally equal in their role as co-creators of living beings. And childbirth itself is painful and dangerous; the baby can die, it can take the mother's life or leave her with a chronic disorder. Nursing is equally hard; it is a drain on the life force of the newborn by feeding it with its own life resources. It can even be argued that women give more in it because they provide a stable environment and long hard work for the conception of life. On the other hand, with the development of social productivity, new production methods are gradually moving away from the strict requirements for the physical qualities of the human body, and the initial inequalities based on physical characteristics should be eliminated with the development of society. As long as they were working people, they deserved to be treated equally in the world that belonged to them and to be able to obtain full rights in the development that they deserved to share happily and proudly. In those days, women like Nee lived under the shadow of patriarchy, where the father was the head and ruler of the family and the wife and her children were in a subordinate position. Under the shadow of patriarchy, she felt that she had to comply with the wishes of her elders and thus came to a new family in an arranged marriage by her parents, and at the same time, influenced by this, Nee would be compliant and submissive to her husband.

4.2 Factors of the political system in Thailand

Thailand's Bangkok Dynasty's King Chulalongkorn the Fifth and King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Ninth had promoted a major political change, and their efforts not only completely overturned Thailand's traditions, but also laid a solid foundation for the modernization of Thailand, and their achievements deeply influenced the country's situation. With their sublime wisdom, courage, and great talent for ruling, the kings of Thailand won the trust of the nation and their actions deeply influenced the development of the country. However, with the establishment of the country and the emergence of the national polity, the status of women became lower and their role diminished. Most of the later aspects of economic dealings and political participation were attended by men, and women were not very involved. As a result, more men began to place themselves at the center of family and social life, which in turn may have influenced family relationships. As society develops, the traditional notion of patriarchal supremacy and values are gaining ground, thus having an important impact on family life^[6].

4.3 Factors of Buddhist beliefs

Thailand has practiced Buddhism since ancient times, which has led to the prevalence of the practice of men shaving their heads to become monks, thus creating a patriarchal mindset in the mindset of the people. Most men become monks to pray for the blessing of their family members or those they respect and love, and they firmly believe that becoming a monk will bring them blessings. Therefore, men shave their heads to become a monk in order to do good deeds for themselves in order to receive good rewards in the next life, and to repay their parents for their kindness and virtue. There is a saying in Thailand that "when a son becomes a monk and wears a yellow robe, his parents will go to heaven after death". Therefore, many Thai people are convinced that if a son shaves his head and becomes a monk, it will bring great blessings to his parents. In addition, some people believe that

a man becomes a monk so that his family can learn the dharma and practice self-cultivation, all of which can only be done by a son, but not by a daughter. It can be seen that the Thai nation's sense of preference for sons over daughters is also more prevalent in daily life.

5. Conclusion

The article has investigated the Thai ethics and morality as reflected in "Nee", and has identified the family ethics and morality, social ethics and morality, and the factors that influence the formation of ethics and morality. According to the study of family ethics and morals, it is concluded that in Thai family relations, most of the men are husband-oriented, and the social status of Thai men is much higher than that of women; and the bad practice of arranged marriage has also caused a great impact on marriage, because for women, marriage must be under the command of parents, while men have the right to choose love freely regardless of their status. From the analysis of social ethics and morals it is concluded that in Thai society male superiority over female is more obvious. Thailand has been aware of learning from the West since King Rama IV, but nowadays it has started to introduce Western ideas on its own initiative, and people are becoming more and more open-minded, while feminist consciousness is awakening, and people are beginning to pay attention to matters related to women's rights. The deeper inequality lies in the folk customs and people's inherent perceptions. In the traditional social perceptions, women still have to put the family first, and their externals are still the focus of gazing at women, as if they have nothing if they don't fall in love or get married.

In conclusion, through an in-depth analysis of the ethical and moral elements of the novel "Nee", we find that Thailand, as a constitutional monarchy, its monarch plays an important role in family and social ethics. In addition, the beliefs and teachings of Buddhism also influence the formation of social ethics and morality to a certain extent. As societies develop and cultures change, ethical and moral codes emerge. Each era has its own unique cultural writers whose works reflect the social environment of the time and are influenced by the culture of the time, thus forming a unique characteristic of the era. By examining the social phenomena of the time in Thailand, one can gain a deeper understanding of the moral norms and social ethical values of the time, and thus understand some of the problems that emerged during that period, such as gender injustice and women's vulnerability to domestic violence, which can lead to thinking about the problems that exist in the real society.

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