Similarity in the conceptions of heroic character of India’s epic Ramayana and Vietnamese’s epic Damsan

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Abstract: The epic was born at the dawn of humanity, depicting great events of the era when society transformed itself from primitive communal society to a higher organizational form. Epic is a complete picture of people’s lives in the form of telling the story of a hero in the past. In epics, heroic characters play a central role in the epic art world, representing the spirit, talent, courage. Through the hero symbol in the epic, a symbol for community aspiration and dream, we understand more about the spiritual life, cultural and social activities of people in here. This article uses textual analysis, comparative and type method to study the literary works: Ramayana of India and Dam San of Vietnam to find similarities in the concept of heroic characters in epic works and similarities in culture of the two nations. The heroes in the Indian epic, Ramayana, and the Vietnamese epic, Dam San, are clearedsighted kings, idealistic and perfect leaders with beauty, power, talent, courage and virtue, great desire, and lofty ideals, and their ideas represent the ideals of the ethnic community. The hero is placed in many relationships with the characters in the epic to create a system of characters and events to make the structure of the work. As a secondary element, other epic characters have an important role to play in highlighting the physical and moral qualities and talents of the hero.
various conflicts and events to enforce moral action under responsibility and duty. Therefore, over thousands of years of existence, the Indian epic, *Ramayana* and the Vietnamese epic, *Dam San* still has a strong attraction for readers, listeners anywhere and any era.

**Subjects:** Education - Social Sciences; Higher Education; Literature

**Keywords:** heroic character in the epic; epic *Ramayana*; epic *Dam San*; India; Vietnam

### 1. Introduction

In the heroic epic, the central character is always a perfect hero, and the other characters only play a secondary, fuzzy role that enhances the beauty of the hero. In the Indian and Vietnamese epics, a heroic character expresses the generalization, social ideals and aesthetic ideals of the era.

This article uses textual analysis method (Van Dan, 2006), the comparative method “as manipulations of thinking, comparing literature as a research method” (Van Dan, 2011, p. 60) to find the typical characteristics of heroic characters in epic works and the type method to “study the commonality among phenomena to prove the similarities among literature of nations” (Van Dan, 2011, p. 112) to discover similarities in the concept of heroic characters in the epic *Ramayana* of India and the epic *Dam San* of Vietnam.

The *Ramayana* epic focuses on the aspects of ethics, responsibility, and obligations of an ideal man in ancient Indian social relations. The epic *Ramayana* is a typical epic for the relationship between Indian art and Hindu ethics. With the values of ethnic and art, this epic has a profound influence on the culture and literature of the countries in the world, in many different ways, especially countries in Southeast Asia. The relationship between art and Hindu ethnic conceptions of India, Ramashraya Sharma is affirmed in the *Ramayana Epic Study from a political and social perspective*, which emphasizes that ideal ethics in the ideal social life is a factor that makes the narrative structure and artistic value of the work. Therefore, studying this relationship in the epic *Ramayana* is particularly interesting because the ethnic ideal is the root of the creation of this work (Sharma, 1971, p. 149). Kate Milner Rabb affirmed in national epics that the ethnic values imbued with the Hindu dogmas in the *Ramayana* epic have created true values for the work and have a profound and long-term influence in the mind of the Indian. It is this epic that “preserves the belief which anyone hears or reads it about, or just glimpses, is freed from evil sins” (Phuong Chi, 2011, p. 19). Romesh C. Dutt in the translation of the *Ramayana* epic in English has highly praised the characters in the epic through situations and events in which the qualifications are expressed in accordance with Hindu moral standards. And “the enthusiasm for the past is full in this great epic; noble respect for the truth and greatness in the character of the human is full in this work; and the description of family life and the qualities of ancient Hindus in the flush of love and emotion, are loved by the Indians until now” (Dutt, 2005, p. 134). Furthermore, the author affirmed that the artistic conceptions in *Ramayana* epic have a close relationship and are under the control of Hindu opinion (Sharma, 1971, p. 136). Sharing this same opinion, Richard Lannoy mentioned the epic *Ramayana* in the book, *The Talking Tree* as an integral part of Indian culture and society. The writer presented his deep insights into the Indian religion (Ha, 2002, p. 35).

In Vietnam, the *Ramayana* epic is studied in many different aspects such as philosophy, aesthetics, and its influence on the culture and literature of Southeast Asian countries, etc. Despite different research perspectives, the researchers have focused on affirming that the value of this work has a long-lasting vitality and a profound influence by ethnic aesthetic concepts, ideal qualities with the living desire of heroic characters in the work through unique artistic tactics. In the *Introduction to Indian philosophy*, Le Xuan Khoa brought Indian philosophical ideas into his philosophical study through two huge and general epics, the epic *Ramayana* and the epic *Mahabharata*. When studying these two epics, the writer has discovered deep and sublime Indian philosophical thoughts. The two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, all praised an ideal ethics built on a foundation of duty and...
The good actions of the main characters are performed at absolute level. According to the author, the ideal nature of the characters and the fierce and vivid struggle in their souls in the epic have created artistic and moral values, which brings the epic Ramayana immortal vitality (Khoa, 1965, p. 155–156). In the article on Ramayana epic and communication in the Vietnam Epic in the context of Asian epic, Pham Phuong Chi has brought a new approach to the epic Ramayana based on the senses of postmodernism. Based on the Ramayana epic approach in all its existing forms, the writer introduces one of the research works of Dr. Anindita Banejee, lecturer in the Department of Comparative Literature, Cornell University, entitled The high-class storytelling under the fire: Epic in Indian contemporary media when studying the Ramayana epic with its contributions to Indian culture and literary life (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2009, p. 351–363). And in the doctoral thesis, Artistic sense in Ramayana epic, the writer studied Ramayana from the perspective of aesthetics and affirmed that the artistic sense in Ramayana is “the result of one long-term process in the historical tradition of Indian religious art sensing. This is reflected in the contributions of this epic to the formation and development of the aesthetic sensing principles—Rasa and the evocative principle—Dhvani” (Phuong Chi, 2011, p. 175). RK Narayan, in the translation of Dao Xuan Quy from the Ramayana—Indian epic, appreciates the values of content and art, and the contributions of this epic to Indian culture and literature. According to R.K. Narayan, the Ramayana epic can be considered as a book of “eternal philosophy” and has provided lessons that can be “applied to all ages and all different conditions in life” (Narayan, 1985). The writers of the textbook Overview on Oriental Culture have affirmed that the Ramayana epic has developed holy and perfect characters that have become the golden rule of the ideal life. Therefore, the characters in the epic have noble spiritual education for all classes of people in ancient Indian society because these perfect characters have reflected all the conceptions of aesthetics, ethnics, life outlook and desire of the ancient Indians (Thu, Hien, & Chieu, 1999, p. 167). When introducing the Ramayana epic in the foreign literary writers and works in the school, Luu Duc Trung affirmed the ideal ethnic qualities of heroic characters associated with Hinduism’s ethnical conceptions; however, it is also very consistent with the desire of the ancient Indian people. Among them, the heroic character Rama represents the talented, brave, virtuous person with passionate love in accordance with the desire of the people in slavery and feudalism society (Trung, 2003, p. 389). Some studies have confirmed the influence of the Ramayana epic on Southeast Asian culture and literature in a very strong way. From the Indian epic Ramayana, the people of Southeast Asia have received and created their own writings in accordance with their national identity. Based on the Ramayana epics, there is Sêri Rama in Indonesia, Riem Ke in Cambodia, Rama Kien in Thailand, Alim in Philipin, Pha Lac-Pha Lam in Laos, ... Through the epic, studying the literary and artistic relationship between Southeast Asia and India, Vo Quang Nhon mentioned the influence of Indian Ramayana epic on Southeast Asian culture and literature.

In this article, the writer discovers and compares the difference between the Ramayana epic and Pha Lac Pha Lam of Laos (Nhon, 1990). In the Introduction of the Lao Literature Collection, the writer Nguyen Nam states that many epics of Southeast Asian countries are written based on the theme of the Indian Ramayana epic. The story, Pha Lac Pha Lam, of Laos, is considered Laos’ Ramayana. According to the author: “Laos has many different versions of Ramayana-based stories. There is both rhyme and prose. Among the above-mentioned versions, Vientiane’s Pha Lac Pha Lam is more unique. Rama’s story has been greatly changed towards the Laos style in the context of Laos” (Phuong, Cuong, & Nhon, 1981, pp. 25–26). In the Indian Ramayana epic localization in some Southeast Asian countries, writer Do Thu Ha specified the receipt and creation of the Indian Ramayana epic into a literary work of national identity in Southeast Asian countries. In particular, the writer goes deeply into the localization of the Ramayana epic in Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand, and affirms that Indian literary works are warmly received in Southeast Asia. Among the works, the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, have a special position in the traditional literature of these countries (Ha, 2002, p. 54). In the article Wayang Kulit Theater—from ancestor worship to the wayang kulit show in Indonesia, Duc Ninh and Ha Tu Anh also affirm the epic Ramayana and Mahabharata are exploited by artists to become the performance contents of wayang kulit performance art in Indonesia “from the period under Hindu influence until now, as if wayang kulit art is consistent with the epic Ramayana and Mahabharata” (Ninh, 2008, p. 258).
When referring to Cambodia’s RiemKe work, Vu Tuyet Loan affirms the great ethnic values of the Indian Ramayana epic and its influence on the countries of the world: “Ramayana becomes the epic of many other ethnic groups. Each nation expresses it in its own language, in line with its religion-ethnic conception (Loan & Tuan, 2000, pp. 49–50).

The first published Vietnamese epic is Dam San of the Ede people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam in 1927 (tailieu.vn/doc/su-thi-dam-san–1470327.html). Since then, many other Central Highlands epics of Vietnam have been introduced and studied in many different aspects: Song on Dam San by Dao Tu Chi (1959), Dam San—É đê epic by Nguyen Van Hoan, Nguyen Huu Thau, Ha Cong Tai (1988), Song on Dam San collected and translated by YWang Mô Duôn Du (1992), Discovering the value of the song on Dam San by Chu Xuan Dien (1960), The poetic and grand beauty in Tay Nguyen epic by Bui Van Nguyen (1975), Song on Dam San as an epic work by Hoang Ngoc Hien (1980), Ede and Mnong folk literature (Ky, 2008) and The main narrative method of Dam San epic by Do Hong Ky (2001), etc. In the folklore of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, the writer Vo Quang Nhơn has identified the genre, content and art in the Ede epic in relation to other genres in the folk literature of ethnic minority, the relationship between this genre and similar works in the folklore of Southeast Asian nations (Nhôn, 1983). In the article, the Central Highlands Epic with the historical reality of the Central Highlands, Phan Dong Nhat summarized some characteristics of the social situation and historical tasks of the Central Highlands people during the epic period and affirmed that the society in the epic is richer and more unattainable than reality, and the Central Highlands epic should not be considered as a historical and sociological document. In particular, the writer analyzed the Dam San epic and affirmed the role of gods in the epic for heroic characters (Nhạt, 1984). In the “Hero Proposing” in the Ede and Malay epics, N.I. Niculin affirmed: In the epic Dam San, his marriage to the Sun goddess is not directly related to reality; it may only happen in a legendary context. The epic Story on Tuah Cave of Malaysia has more realistic details. He judged that “Due to the mythological characteristics, Dam San’s details are even more primitive in the overall structure of the work, and the separation from the folk heroic poetry here is clearly expressed” (Niculin, 1997). In the Basic attributes of the epic (Nhạt, 2003), Contributing to understanding the Vietnamese epic/heroic poetry (Nhạt, 2015), Phan Dong Nhat analyzed a number of specific works of the ancient and primitive epics and then generalize the characteristics of Vietnamese epics (environment, period of appearance, reflected content, artistic characteristics ...). In Ede Epic, the writer analyzes and gives profound insights to the following aspects: the structure of the Ede epic system, the system of topics, the system of heroes and aesthetic characteristics of the Ede epic (Nhạt, 1991). The writer of the Central Highlands epic, invaluable spiritual and cultural values mentioned the Central Highlands epic associated with the names of heroes such as Dam San, Dam Di, Dyong Du, and so on. Called the M’tao by the Central Highlands people, it is affirmed that “The Central Highlands epic honestly and vividly reflects the life of community activities, the struggle for noble humanistic ideas, in which the central event is the image of heroes (M’tao) through brave fights, with their extraordinary talents to bring people to form new, crowded, rich, and glorious communities. ...” (http://www.vanhien.vn/news/Su-thi-Tay-Nguyen-nhung-gia-tri-van-hoa-tinh-than-vo-gia-39498.html). In the unity and diversity of the Central Highlands epics, Ngo Duc Thinh generalized the general characteristics of the Central Highlands epic expressed in the similarity of genre, content, composition, thinking ways and language of expression, mode of performance and transmission ... The writer affirmed, “The consistency of the work content through the action sequence of the hero characters, including the birth, labor, marriage and fighting. The appearance of heroic characters is a miraculous birth, labor power that brings wealth that makes people respect; marriage is made through the action of abduction and fighting against the enemy under the sponsor of spirit for the benefit of the community” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2009). In the article, “The Central Highlands Epic—Treasure of invaluable spirit and culture,” Kim Ngan mentioned the big picture of the Central Highlands epic with typical epics of ethnic minorities such as Ede, Mnong, Bana, ... and affirmed, “The content of the epic contains great national events, a panorama of an era. Heroic characters in the epic are developed; however, they do not focus on personal characteristics, but they represent, symbolize the community, bring both romantic and magnificent desire of the whole community, and they have good shape and strength and extraordinary strength, etc.” (http://www.quehuongonline.vn/ban-sac-van-hoa/su-thi-tay-nguyen-kho-tang-van-hoa-tinh-than-vo-gia-20151116094847125.html). The writer of the article 90 years of the Central
Highlands epic mentioned the famous epics of the Central Highlands people and emphasized that the epic is the soul of the Central Highlands culture, “The Central Highlands people”. Everyone remembers some good verses or names of some protagonists in the epic work. They always dream that they are like the stereotype of the ideal characters described in the story called Dam San, Xinh Nha, Leng, and Mbong, who are always healthy and brave (https://dantocmiennui.vn/van-hoa/90-nam-su-thi-tay-nguyen/131494.html). India’s Ramayana epics are concerned and explored by researchers in many different fields. The researchers agreed on the view of the relationship between religious art and ethnics shown in the Ramayana epic. Thereby, they affirmed the profound influence of this epic on the culture and literature of Southeast Asian countries. The epic Dam San of Vietnam is studied by many domestic researchers in various aspects. In particular, the researchers all agree that the epic opinion of the ethnic minority people in the Central Highlands is the panorama of an era, and the heroic character in the epic is the representative and symbol of the community, bringing the community’s desire with extraordinary appearance, talent, and strength. This article studies the Indian epic Ramayana and the Vietnamese epic Dam San to discover the similarity in the conception of heroic characters in epic.

2. Contents of the study

2.1. Summary of characters in epic and heroic characters in epic

In literary works, characters are an indispensable element. The structure of characters in literary works refers to the organization of the system and organization of the relationships between the characters in the work. Depending on different perspectives, literary characters can be divided into different types: Based on the position and specific content, the plot of the work, literary characters are divided into major and minor characters; based on personality characteristics, the ideal communication of writers and literary characters is divided into protagonists and villains; used on the genre of literature, we have narrative characters, lyrical characters and drama characters; based on the image structure, characters are divided into functional characters, image character, personality character and ideological character.

Characters in epics are perfect persons that are admired and respected by the people. The character of the epic character is immutable and completely “foreignized.” Characters in the epic are often described with a very beautiful appearance, extraordinary power and cosmic stature. Because “in the epic, there is no room for any unfinished, an indecisive thing, a ‘problem’ at all … ” (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 40). Epic characters are primarily expressed through action, which is one of the characteristics of the first stages of development of literature in general and the epic, in particular. Individual actions in epics appear “on the basis of an epic-featured general state of the world.” That state has achieved a harmonious unity between self-expression of epic personalities in a personal form and epic purposes with the whole population feature and combined personal action with epic events that have the meaning of the whole population” (Loc, 2000, p. 117).

The epic people are those who have responsibilities and obligations. They are the heroes of noble mission, who always fight and sacrifice for the common good of the ethnic community. These are people who have a collective face, representing the desire of the masses in the society where they live. The person in the epic is “the man of the absolute past and distant image. In this way, he/she is complete in the whole aspects” (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 67). In the epic, “people are distinguished, constituted and individualized by different positions and destinies, not by different truths and reasons.” At this time, the author’s mind is “the mind of the persons who are talking about the past of our reach, the respectful attitude of the descendants” (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 36). Therefore, the heroic character expresses the social ideal and aesthetic ideal of the era when it is generated. At the same time, the heroic character is also the central character, the main character in the relationship with other characters in the work, constituting a character system.

A literary work sometimes has only a few characters, but there are also great works that have hundreds of characters. However, in a literary work, the character cannot independently exist as
separate individuals. This character needs to exist in a system. When mentioning the character system, it refers to “organizing specific character relations in the work. The usual relationships are often seen as opposition, comparison, contrast, supplementation” (Luu, Su, Nam, Tra, & Hoa, 1997, p. 300). The character system is a combination of characters that reflect, impact each other, and illuminate each other in order to reflect life together. In General Literature Study, G.N. Pospelov said that character is “the first aspect in the form of the work as a determinant for both the plot and the selection of details and means of language and even the structure” (Pospelov, 1985, p. 18). And “the character system reveals the content of the work, but it is one of the aspects of the structure of the work” (Pospelov, 1985, p. 20).

The character system is the center of the image system. In terms of structure, the image system consists of a wider range associated with all the breadth and depth of the content of the work. The structure of the character image means that the writer combines the images together so that when interacting, these images complement each other to only create an overview. Therefore, when mentioning symbolic structure, it refers to the relationship of images. That relationship includes the principles of relations organization and methods of building relationships. The above perspectives often permeate each other and have an interactive impact and expression in a literary work.

In the epic work, “the main characters of the epic are typical heroes and knights representing the physical and mental strength, the will and intelligence, the bravery of the community” (Han, Su, & Phi, 2010, p. 285). The epic “writes about the main character” because “the discrimination of the hero and villain is associated with antagonistic conflicts in social life, formed on the basis of class opposition and thoughts” (Luu et al., 1997, pp. 284–285).

According to G.N. Pospelov, the term “epic hero,” called héros in the Greek language is used to refer to the great men who became immortal as gods. Later, it was used to call the heroic characters in mythology and epic (Pospelov, 1985). In the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Encyclopedic Dictionary, a hero is defined as an admired person for his noble quality and courage” (Oxford University Press, 1992). The Dictionary of literary terms shows that “The heroic character in the epic is the character that represents the spiritual values, beautiful qualities, noble acts of the human being described and appreciated by the writer in the work according to an ideological point of view, a certain aesthetic social ideal” (Han et al., 2010).

As such, the heroic characters in the epic are the persons who represent the power of the community, awareness of ancient citizens and moral standards in the life of their time.

The world of characters in Indian epics is extremely rich and diverse: heroes, Taoist hermits, women, gods, demons, monsters, etc. Most of the heroic characters have appeared in myths, legends and origins from gods and often transform and reincarnate with half god-half human. And animals often carry the human manner. In epic, heroic characters are placed in relation to the main conflicts of the work. The epic has developed a perfect character, hero and villain. Furthermore, the world of characters is expanded in the relationships of heroic characters with gods, animals, women, etc. Thereby, it contributes to enhancing the beauty, strength and virtue of the hero.

2.2. Heroic character in the epic Ramayana and epic Dam San
Regarding physical appearance, heroic characters in the epic often have nice stature and huge size. This is very reasonable because it is the physical resonance of the whole community. And in any community, the epic hero appears in the beauty of appearance based on the aesthetic viewpoint and standards of this community.

The hero in the East epic is developed on sense and religious thinking. The Indians attach great importance to spiritual life; therefore, the appearance is not only the external factor but also the internal perceived aspect. In the epic Ramayana, the heroic character has a holistic appearance because the epic’s technical measures are used in a clever combination with religious elements. In
the work, Prince Rama has “bright eyes like the sun and the moon, ears that hear the music of heaven and earth, and he is an enemy of all envy, anger and cruel crimes” (Trung, 2009, p. 111).

In the Central Highlands epic in Vietnam, the hero’s beauty is associated with the size of mountains, rivers, trees, birds, etc. where the community is living. Based on the type of comparison established on the similarity of the nature of the issue and the admiring and praising nuance evoked by the images, the heroic beauty of the hero Dam San in the epic Dam San has been portrayed. Dam San’s moustache is like clouds in power, his beard is like clouds in rock, and his side-whiskers grow from his chin to his ear. The hair on his legs is curled, the hair on his thighs is thick, his eyelashes are curled, and his face and nose are red-pink like strong alcohol yeast. Dam San’s costumes are colorful to match with his wealth and beauty: “Dam San wears colorful loincloths. His head is covered with a scarf as nice as the chieftain. The shield is round like an owl’s head. The sword is as bright as the sun. Posture is waiting like a squirrel with bright eyes (Chi, 1977, p. 49). A silver ring is worn on Dam San’s left hand, and a gold ring is worn on his right hand; his mouth was like chewing the sâm mule flower; his lips are red like dja vegetables; his eyes are sparkling like bull buffalo’s eyes, his body was white, and his calves are a firm block, etc. (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006). The hero’s weapon is like important jewelry carried by them. In proportion to the hero’s extraordinary ability, the weapon has a bigger size than normal, which can be used by other people. Dam San’s spearhead is big like a column of a house, a long sword placed in the wall, touching the spars. “Hooking knife in the bamboo screen and then sitting in the middle of the house, Dam San looks as flexible as a snake in a cave and a tiger along by the stream. His voice and laughter are like lightning and thunder” (Chi, 1977, p. 63). The basis for measuring the beauty of the body, style and weapon of Dam San is familiar things in the nature of a mountainous area; it is associated with the thoughts and feelings of the Central Highlands people.

The standard of appearance beauty of a hero is not only in the aspect of perfection, but beauty must be in line with the heroic spirit, the task of community protection of the ethnic community. It is also an epic style.

In addition to the size of the cosmic dimension, representing physical strength—the spirit of the ethnic community, the epic heroic characters are shining with the beauty of virtue, wisdom, talent and courage, etc. All are expressed through the noble and brave actions of the hero with glorious victories.

Helen stated that “The brave spirit makes the main interest; the spirit of courage is a state of mind and an activity that is unsuitable with the lyrical expression, dramatic actions, but especially suitable for epic images” (Heal, 1999, p. 595) Epic hero characters cannot exist without overcoming all difficulties and challenges to win a resounding victory and create victories. The hero needs to have great desire, lofty ideals, and such ideals also represent the ideals of the ethnic community.

 Courage, willpower and extraordinary energy are considered absolute ethical qualities of the hero in the epic. In the Ramayana epic, the character Rama is developed as the “perfect” ideal hero. Rama is placed in a relationship conflicting with other characters so that the hero reveals his talents and virtues. The hero Rama in the Ramayana epic is developed to be nice in appearance, and his talents and virtues are as brilliant as the stars in the sky. A chapter in the first song mentions the birth of the hero. “Rama was born” is very brief but generalised the characteristics of personality, talent and virtue of the hero. Among the four children of King Dasaratha, “Rama has an incomparable beauty and grandeur, and his character is nice like the full moon; everyone feels joyful when seeing him. He was a worldly-wise horse rider, a master shooter, and he was able to ride elephants. He is a master archer and doesn’t neglect Kungfu training and caring for his father all the days” (Makhan (Ramayana I), 1988a, p. 43) Especially, the epic has developed Chapter 1-The hero in the second song: The song Ayodhya to portray the image of a perfect hero. In particular, it focuses on highlighting the beauty of moral and religious qualities of the hero: “The guy looks intelligent-looking, and his heart is as clear as a mirror and as talented as his father, etc. He is young, healthy, virtuous, and people regard him as themselves. He has the wisdom of Vedas
and Vedanga, and he is a master of all the used weapons, with or without the support of the Mantra incantation. He is brave, upright and honest, and he is the origin of all good things. He is humble, attentive and always pays deference to superiors, etc. He is extremely superior in philosophy and talented in poetry." The strength and talent in the fight of the hero are portrayed very briefly in the introduction chapter. "He was an experienced mounted soldier, an outstanding warrior, a brave general who led the army to win the enemy, and he was a master of all the tricks of the battle. He was the one who could not be defeated by anyone, even a vassal" (Makhan, 1988a, p. 94) The courage, willpower and extraordinary strength of the hero Rama is expressed in a clearer way when he accepts fourteen years of exile in the forest with all its difficulties and challenges. He received it with a light and calm mood. "No one sees any signs of sadness in his attitude" (Makhan, 1988a, p. 29) Or in fighting, the hero's courage, strength and good weapon made the enemy look horrified. "Rakshasa's troops stabbed in panic and started screaming horribly when seeing Rama, as an elephant must stay away when seeing a lion" (Makhan, 1988b, p. 136).

In the Central Highlands epic in Vietnam, the hero's talent and courage are expressed in two aspects: in the process of tribal governance, hunting, production and in the hero's fights with the head of a tribe to protect the village. The hero plays the role of the village's head to govern the village, building a material life for the community in a more rich and powerful way; therefore, all people expect that their head has important qualifications; specifically, he is talented in production, guiding people to make more wealth, gongs, and buffaloes. Therefore, the hero in the Central Highlands epic is the center of all activities, the commander of all production and cultivation activities of the village. The hero's talent is shown through scenes of hunting, gathering, scenes of building strong villages. The praise ... the consequence that the village has many gongs, cows and buffaloes, and the villagers have time to play, “eat and drink for months,” is also the praise of the head of the village. In addition, he has strength, strategy, courage in fighting. Most of the epics of the Ede people have a common war motif: The hero and villagers go into the forest while the wife is kidnapped by the village head. They went to find and defeat the enemy to regain his wife. In such wars, even though they were not fierce, uphill with the first scene of blood and flesh fly but showed the mental stability and strength of the hero. The Ede epic, especially the epic Dam San, tells about Dam San's fight with enemies who are the chieftains of other tribes who want to appropriate his land, property, and women. The image of Dam San is shown most concentrated through six battles, the confrontation between heroic characters and chieftains: Mtao Gru, Mtao Mxay, Mtao Tuor, Mtao Kuat, Mtao Ea, Mtao Ak. During the battles, San Dam showed his strength. “Dam San vibrates the shield and dances. He danced in below position and the sound of the copper shield plate. He danced for a trot and then, three layers of mountains have been cracked, three hills are sheered out by the roots. He quickly ran alone without anyone following” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006, p. 37). Dam San led the army “so crowded as herd of “ca tong,” so thick as a flock of ephemera, swarming like ants, termites” to fight against Mtao Mxay, famous as a ferocious chieftain who “used to beat people, arrest prisoners, destroy the land”. During the fighting, Dam San did himself justice. “Dam San vibrates the shield and danced. After one rush, he crossed a hill. One rush more, he crossed a ‘lo o’ hill. He rushed at full speed through the east, through the West ... He danced in high position where the wind comes like a storm. He danced in low position where the wind is like a tornado. The huts fall. The trees die ... When he was dancing and running, the three mountains are split, three hills sheered out by the roots” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006, p. 53). In the battle with Mtao Tuor that lasted “all day until evening, night until morning,” Dam San attacked very fiercely. “When making a rush into a small house, he broke it down, and when making a rush into a big house, he broke down a big house. The house flew like a tornado and a mortar pestle flew like a storm ... ” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006, p. 92). The fighting in the epic is the battle between two individuals, two captains, and other characters stand outside to observe. In such fight, the role of other characters such as servants and villagers is almost faint; only the character of the God appears and other characters appear through a few words. The war recreated in the epic Dam San does not have a fierce, cruel or scenes of blood and guts. Although at the end of the work, the scene of the dead
is mentioned; however, then the victorious chieftain asked for the God to bless them to revive, and the servants and the villagers of the defeated chieftains will surrender and follow the heroic chieftain. The chief not only keeps the supreme right of the village but also in the fighting, they were military leaders, deciding the success or failure of the war. War is a situation for heroes to prove their qualifications, strength, singularity, will, courage and martial spirit. The greatest person is the winner on the battlefield. In such sense, Dam San is the typical character for the heroic chieftain, a military leader among the heroic characters of the Ede epic.

The epic hero is a person with lofty ideal and, great aspirations. That ideal also represents the ideal of the ethnic community.

The hero of the Indian epics has pure ideals: the ideals of good deeds, right and morality in life. In the epic Ramayana, the hero Rama always backs away from his actions against his duty. With the ideal belief of “victory belongs to Dharma honors,” the hero Rama always acts according to his duties, noble spirit and altruism. Rama is entitled to throne his father, but his father has promised the concubine Kaikeyi to banish him into the forest to give the throne to Bharata; Rama dares not argue against his father’s order. The promise of the father is honor, the honor of the father is his honor and of the lineage. Absolute obedience to his father’s order is his duty. It is the moral standard of aristocracy and contemporary society. He happily leaves royal life. “There is no greater religion than to serve my father and fulfill my father’s orders, etc. Serving the father is the highest duty of the human,” he said to the concubine Kaikeyi (Ramayana I, 1988a, p. 128). According to the Indian conception, for the ideal hero, in addition to strength, talent and bravery, he must be a man who always performs the Dharma. In the epic Ramayana, the hero Rama is portrayed with the quality of absolute loyalty to his duty, lofty tolerance and sense of honor. All actions of Rama always follow absolutely according to Dharma’s responsibility and duty. A tear-soaked situation is when Rama accuses Xita, this is a challenge to force the hero to choose Honor or Love? Rights, the social order of the community or personal happiness? Rama chose to sacrifice the person he loved the most to choose the pure duty of a monarch in order to build a standard family with a respectable queen of faithful love. Therefore, Rama is considered as the embodiment of Dharma morality by Indians, “is the golden rule of the Ksatriya” (Trung, 2009, p. 112) The epic heroic character is always present in parallel with physical strength and talent, supernatural moral qualities, is a wholly perfect hero and becomes the “golden rule” of physical beauty and the moral power of people of the era. The hero of the Ramayana is a generalization of the ideal aspirations of the strength, talent, bravery, and virtue of all the ethnic communities that produce it. That beauty is a support, the pride of the whole community, so it is always recognized, appreciated, and praised with sacred reverence. The hero of the Ramayana becomes the symbol of the soul, the character of the Indians who love peace, harmony and equality.

In the epic Ramayana, the war between the hero Rama and the demon king Ravana on Lanka Island is also the conflict between the concepts of Dharma and Adharma. In the Indian conception, the nature of every human always has a struggle between the altruistic, charitable, tolerant life, in harmony with the selfish, cruel, and extravagant lifestyle, between light and darkness. And in Ramayana, it is a conflict between Duty and Rights, Honor and Love, etc. Therefore, the ideal hero must be the winner of the darkness, the personal part in the body. Of course, according to the law, the throne must give the eldest son who has the talent and the virtue, and the people are eagerly welcoming the day of the king’s throne. The act of transgressing the right of the concubine Kaikeyi when asking King Dasaratha to banish Rama into the forest and giving the throne to Bharata is the time of conflict formation between good deeds and evil, which is the opening for a series of conflicts in the family of King Dasaratha. Also, from here, the conflict and struggle of inner feelings appears in Rama between Duty and Rights. Following Dharma, it’s the Duty of the son to obey his father’s order; his father’s promise and honor are his own. Therefore, he will abandon the life of a king and the throne to go into the forest for fourteen years with many difficulties, hardships and dangers waiting ahead. In Rama’s person, there is no pursuit of personal interests; he is always willing to act for responsibility and duty to those around him. Facing two
choices between Duty and Rights, the hero Rama makes the decision to follow the Dharma duty of the son in a very gentle and quick way. He happily handed over the throne and quickly entered the forest to fulfill his father’s orders in the hope and worship of his relatives and people.

The exile life in the forest does not subdue the hero, even though his loving wife is kidnapped by the demon king Ravana; he is not discouraged. On the contrary, this is when the hero’s nature, strength, and talent are revealed. He overcomes all dangers and enters into death to save Xita. However, after the separation and remembrance, sadness, overcoming many hardships and dangers, winning every enemy, he intermingles with many moods. Perhaps the moment of reunion is a happy moment to look forward to, but for Rama, there are two moods, two people in him. The conflict between Duty to the community and Love with Xita has made “Rama thinking silly. He utters an onerous, burning sigh” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 235). Instead of the cheerful attitude of meeting Xita, Rama tries to delay meeting her, the person of Rama is intermingling and struggles between two moods. “Rama also knows that Xita is coming, but he is still in deep thought. Gianaki stayed too long in Rakshasa’s house, so when hearing her arrival, Rama is filled with pain, anger and joy at the same time” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 235). As a hero, a king of the people, a man born from the noble lineage, Rama coldly presents a solemn way of the hero’s responsibility, duty and honor when he is humiliated by the enemy. “Those humiliated by the enemy do not use their own talents to revenge, that person is a mediocre guy ... To revenge for the humiliation, I have done what a man has to do, and in those cases, I have destroyed Ravana” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 237). By destroying Ravana on the island of Lanka, Rama affirms that the purpose of the war is not to save Xita, but that it is due to protecting the prestige of a King and his lineage. “I did so for my dignity, to remove the stigma because of the honor and prestige of my famous lineage. I did it to show that I don’t belong to a normal family” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 237). Rama is totally worthy of being a Ksatriya page, which is not due to his personal feelings but to protect peace for the people. Therefore, he coldly condemns Xita during the time she lived on Ravana’s Lanka Island with Rakshasa and does not accept her, forcing her be separated from her family. “How can I accept you when I think of my noble family that gave birth to me?” (Makhan, 1988b, pp. 237–238). If Rama is like a King, coldly condemning and denying Xita, making her fall into the mood of “chooking pain, like a climbing plant wrecked by the proboscis of elephant” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 238), another person in Rama is a husband who loves his wife and is in great pain when condemning and offending Xita. Rama’s miserable mood has not been meticulously portrayed, but from comparative details, it is also clear that an inner person is painful, tormented, and Rama “sits and broods, silently cries” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 240). In the face of the responsibility and honor of the hero, a judicious king for the order of the nation, the happiness of the people, Rama does not tolerate the woman who has lived in another man’s house, “one thing to love”. With a side of personal happiness, passionate and deep love, remembrance after many days of separation of a husband loving his wife so much, Rama falls into which conflict to choose: Duty or Love? The benefits of the nation or personal interest? According to the traditional rules recorded in the Law books of the time, in order to maintain order in society, the life of the king must be “an example of the social order”. A clear sighted king cannot live with the wife who is no longer unblemished and faithful. This puts Rama in a struggle situation between the responsibility of being a king and the demands of personal love and happiness, putting him in a state of hesitation and indecision. Faced with the conflict of Honor or Love, responsibility to the community or happiness, personal interests, Rama decides to sacrifice happiness and personal interests to maintain the social order. However, Rama also cannot avoid suffering and torment. When Rama decides for the benefit of the community and abandons Xita, many modern readers thought it is a “suspicious”, “evil” action and considered it a weakness of Rama. However, the moral virtue of the hero, the Ksatriya class, according to the Dharma dogmas is to retain the honor as to keep the pupil of the eye, making the hero Rama become perfect. It is the people who know the pain, concern and struggle of the inner feelings because of the actions of the self; despite the struggle, the inner struggle is only suggestive in the way of “foreignization” that is often seen in many epics. The pain, concern and struggle in the person of Rama are only really relieved with the help of the gods. According to the Indian conception, the Fire god is present throughout the three worlds and understands and knows everything in the three worlds. So, when Rama suspects Xita, she begs the Fire...
God Anhi for witness of the faithfulness, purity “not guilty,” and she peacefully steps on the pyre. When the Fire God gives Rama and Xita “not guilty with words, actions, or thoughts ... Her heart is pure, and she has no guilt” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 242). Rama is very happy, and everyone praises him as if they praise a victory he had just achieved. When the responsibility to the people of a king and personal happiness is attuned to a man, then the hero truly reaches the pinnacle of the victory, the perfection of talent, virtue and reaches “the exemplary of the social order” (Yogananda, 2003, p. 31).

In the conception of Indians, personal people are always emphasized on moral qualities, always struggle with themselves. The hero Rama in Ramayana always tries to overcome all difficulties and challenges, overcome all personal requirements to achieve perfection. In particular, victory on the battlefield is not the most glorious victory and the whole concern of the character. The epic Ramayana highly praises the hero Rama who always keeps altruistic, loving and harmonious spiritual qualities and “his loyalty to his duties is excellent and illustrious. He even abandons his wife—who is both a wife and a heart of his soul; he sacrifices personal happiness to protect the interests of the community. He is willing to sacrifice his own life to strengthen public sympathy and to be faithful to his duty” (Swami, 1996, p. 101).

The hero of the epic Dam San takes part in the battles not only for the purpose of regaining his wife but more deeply representing the collective will of expanding the land, gathering more manpower, property, forming tribal alliances, is a seed for the birth of a higher form of social organization. In matriarchy, the women play an important role in each family in particular, and the whole clans in general, especially when that woman holds the position of chief. Whenever Dam San’s wife is kidnapped, he always fights bravely with the Mtao, not afraid to sacrifice his life. This is from the emotional attachment to the wives, but a small part is derived from the responsibility of the hero in protecting the female chief—the soul of the village. Besides, the hero also represents the will and aspirations of the whole community to subdue other tribal leaders to expand the strength and influence of their village.

The relationship between the hero characters Rama and Dam San and other characters in the epic

The central character is a hero who never exists alone, who’s isolated in the epic. The hero character always has relationships with other characters in the work, and it creates a system of characters and events to make the structure of the work. As a secondary element, other epic characters have an important role to play in highlighting the physical and moral qualities and talents of the hero.

In the epic Ramayana, the hero Rama has a relationship with many characters in the dark forces, with brothers, with women, with gods, fakirs, animals, etc. Rama is the eldest son of the four princes of King Dasaratha; he is talented, brave and virtuous, and deserves to be a king. But due to the greed for power and selfishness, the concubine Kakeyi takes all the tricks to force King Dasaratha to give the throne to her son Bharata and banish Rama into the forest for fourteen years. Kakeyi considers the scramble of the kingdom for her son as the purpose of her life, so she uses all tricks to achieve it. “If Rama is the king, I have no need for the life to be luxury, even more, I do not need my life” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 109–110). In order to achieve that purpose, Kakeyi takes advantage of the sincere feelings and honesty of King Dasaratha to force the king to give the throne to Bharata and banish Rama: “Bharata must be a king, and Rama must go to the forest today” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 114). He receives this news with a gentle, calm mood. He goes to meet his father to express his submissive attitude, abandons the throne to banish in the forest, and happily accepts the throne for Bharata. All his attitudes, words and actions present calm, ready to fulfill the responsibility of a son. Even when King Dasaratha gives advice, “take me to prison and take the throne” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 153), it could not change the decision to fulfill Rama’s duty. “There is no noble mission more than sacrifice. Devotion to truth, death and human sacrifice are not equal to this duty” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 147). The attitude of jealousy, the act of scramble for the throne of the concubine Kakeyi highlight the image of Rama with filial piety and submissive attitude to fulfill the duty of a son to his parents.
In the epic, there is always the existence of hostile forces, the enemies of the heroes. It is sometimes a devil, a monster—that is typical of a natural enemy, sometimes a human being—representing the hero’s social history enemy. But all the enemies of the hero have one thing in common; they’re brutal and cruel. If the attitude of the community is praising and honoring the hero, they hate and have no goodwill for the enemy. In the epic Ramayana, the forces opposing the hero have dark minds and cruel actions. In challenging battles, the hero has to overcome all difficulties, challenges and dangers to shine the power of talent, wisdom, bravery and virtue. In the world of Ramayana, it is full of devils and monsters with strange, scary shapes and extraordinary powers, mastering martial arts. The enemies of the hero appear during the journey of the hero Rama. Overcoming challenges helps the hero reveal morality, wisdom, strength, talent, bravery and awareness of responsibility to the community. The action of the hero Rama destroying the leprechaun Tadaka “having a magic transformation” not only reveals the strength and talent of the hero but also the responsibility and duty of Ksatriya to his community: “An action may be brutal or sinful, but a ruler must take action to protect the people” (Heal, 1999, p. 53). With this victory, the strength of the hero begins to be revealed, gaining the trust of bureaucrats and is given divine weapons. Sometimes, the hero destroying the demons, monsters are the time to release a curse, saving an immortal soul as in the case of Rama killing a formidable Rakshasa “with big and large chest and no head. His mouth is on his stomach, and his forehead has only one eye” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 346). When the hero Rama cut off the arm of the demon Kavana, it not only does not fight back but also welcomes the brothers Rama, prays to be cremated by Rama before sundown and tells Rama Xita’s kidnapper, instructing Rama on how to save Xita.

The longest and most fierce battle is the battle to defeat Rakshasa and the demon king Ravana. This fighting clearly shows the hero’s extraordinary strength and wonderful talent, but it is also a battle to protect the morality, virtue and the right of Dharma. The demon king Ravana is a whimsical, lustful demon, with many heads and a magic transformation. It seems that no one can fight with the strength of the demon, so he is defiant and despises the right, doing things contrary to morality and the right of Dharma. With the desire to capture the love of the beautiful girl, Princess Xita, the demon king Ravana tramples on all morals in the life, using every trick to kidnap Xita to bring to the island of Lanka and then seduces and bribes her to be his wife. For the act of kidnapping Xita, the consequences are forewarned, but Ravana still ignores them to satisfy his vile desires. Maricha persuades and reminds Ravana not to continue acting unrighteously because of the consequences, not only for himself but also for the disastrous death of his subjects. “If you despise my words and use offensive strength to Xita, then surely you and your friends and relatives will meet death when being defeated by Rama’s arrows” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 298). Giatayu, the bird king, has prevented Ravana when seeing the act of kidnapping Xita and dissuades with legitimate arguments and points out the consequences of not returning Xita to Rama. “Just as lightning destroys Vritra, this hero, with an angry look, he will burn you to ashes” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 317). Even when Rama and the Varana army arrive in Lanka to save Xita, Ravana’s commander foresees the consequences and advises Ravana to return Xita to Rama. Viphisana warns “all Rakshasa and Raksaxi will have to pay for the kidnapping of Xita” (Makhan, 1988b, pp. 15–17). Ravana does not care about any advice or warnings of consequences occurring from things he did, the rights and life of his subjects. Ravana is determined not to return Xita to Rama. “Anything, anywhere, I don’t see anything to be afraid of. It is my will not returning Gianaki to Rama” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 17). Therefore, the inevitable war must take place, and catastrophic failure, death and destruction are inevitable for Ravana and Rakshasa. Therefore, the fighting between the hero Rama and the army of Varana with the demon king Ravana and the species of Rakshasa are often compared with the “ephemera” image that plunges into “fire” that confrontation is the blindness, madness of the villain and destroyed by the light of the fire of justice and right. “Rama’s arrow illuminates all four directions. Rakshasa standing before him is destroyed like the ephemera plunging into fire” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 79). In the fighting on the island of Lanka with the demon king with “high-power magic”, Rama with extraordinary power “launches an arrow into Ravana.” Both of them with equal power are always looking for ways to destroy each other. Ravana has a miraculous transformation, so Rama beheads him, and he grows another head. When Rama uses
the Brahma magic weapon given to him by the fakir Agatxtya and “launches it into Ravana, the dreaded arrow has just rushed away and fallen into Ravana; it splits his heart in half and gets into the ground after robbing Ravana’s life”. It can be said that Ravana’s death is due to the disregard for Rama’s virtue and victory as a victory of morality and talent, and of the right of Dharma. The victory of the hero Rama is the victory of Dharma right before non-Dharma actions. The hero’s action to destroy the demons and monsters “demonstrates the civil society’s orderly establishment on a wild and chaotic world” (Hien, 1999, p. 51). The hero winning against the demons and monsters is not destructive nature but assimilated.

The relationship between Rama and his sibling characters like Lakshmana, Bharata, and Xatruna always shows the leverage art for the hero. These characters have the function of making Rama’s character shine more and more like “the sun, the moon meet Xukra (Venus) and Vorihaaxpti (Uranus) in the sky, Rama and Lakshmana also meet Bharata and Xatruna as so” (Makhan, 1988c, p. 222). Rama’s brothers are compared in the epic as the stars in the solar system entered the most brilliant sun, the hero Rama. All together resonate with the light to dispel all darkness in the earthly life. The epic Ramayana has put the character Rama and his brothers in the same situation when facing the dark forces of the family and society, thereby the characters reveal physical and mental strength. In particular, the hero Rama is highlighted with tolerance and generosity qualities. All his attitudes, words and actions are a good example of his duty, especially for his father. Meanwhile, Lakshmana is extremely disgruntled. When he knows that Rama has to go into the forest and give up his throne to Bharata, Lakshmana is very disgruntled and asks Rama not to accept this order, and he is willing to do everything to protect Rama’s throne. “I swear that I will protect your kingdom; otherwise, after death, I will not be able to reach the heroes’ whereabouts. I will guard your throne as the coast guarding the sea ... I am your servant, so command me, and I will try to bring the whole world under your power” (Makhan, 1988a, pp. 137–138). But when failing to convince Rama not to banish, Lakshmana decides to share all the hardships with Rama in the exile forest because being able to live with Rama is his greatest happiness that cannot be compared to even “heavenly immortality as well as everything of the three worlds” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 148). All the words and actions of Lakshmana show his sincere feelings for Rama. During the exile, when Rama and Lakshmana see the large army of Bharata, Lakshmana is extremely angry and reminds Rama to be ready to fight. Because according to Lakshmana, “Bharata comes here to kill us, to cut off the thorns next to him” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 219), but Rama is calm, gentle, tolerant. The generosity, kindness, and altruism help him to have a correct view of human nature. “He does not desire to harm us, even in thoughts” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 219). When Bharata meets Rama to return the kingdom to his brother, Bharata uses rational, logical words to persuade and plead with Rama to return to the capital to take the throne, but Rama is determined to fulfill his promised duty to his parents. “The king has enough authority or forces me to banish or give the kingdom to me. The mother is as respectful as the father, and when they force me to go to the forest, ask if I could do anything else” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 227). Unable to convince Rama, Bharata returns to put Rama’s sandals on the throne; it is considered that Rama still rules the country, and he only performs the function of a person assuming command. Fourteen years of exile of Rama in the forest are fourteen years of Bharata living ascetically in the capital, and he places Rama’s sandals on the throne as Rama still rules the country. “Whenever you return, I will wear sandals for you, and after reporting to you about everything, I will spend my whole life to serve you” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 243). In this situation, Rama is highlighted as the ideal faithful character to duty, not the material possessions, the status of wealth. In building the Lakshmana, Bharata characters with gestures and words, the epic authors further depict the image of the hero Rama.

In epic works, besides describing fierce wars and praising the hero’s power, the author simultaneously builds the hero’s relationship with women. Women sometimes become the cause of epic wars, but sometimes become symbols of peaceful happiness. But the common feature in most of the female characters in the epics is the kind and tolerant feelings, the enduring spirit and patience, the desire for happy love. Although the woman in the epic era does not play an important role and is not valued in the family and society, they are also a fulcrum, a spiritual
foundation for heroic strength, in particular, and strength of community in general. The woman is able to urge enthusiasm for action, heroic aspirations with her own nobility and deep human emotions. In the epic Ramayana, the woman acts as a secondary element but has the typical effect for the hero’s good qualities and talents. The meeting between Prince Rama and the queen of Koxalya, when Rama reports to Koxalya that he has been dethroned, and he comes to farewell her before carrying out exile in the forest. The queen of Koxalya receives it in a panicked way and “falls down the ground like a tree felled by an ax” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 130). The queen complains about Dasaratha for his lies, for abandoning her. The queen stubbornly prevents Rama from entering the forest in exile by asking to go to the forest with him, but she still could not prevent Rama. She once again takes her death to hold on Rama. “If you leave me in this sadness, I will abide by the curse, fast to die”. The more intense the queen of Koxalya is, the more fiercely she prevents her beloved son from entering the forest of death to endure hardships in the following days. She cannot prevent him, so she decides to go with Rama to the forest. She is choked in tears. “I will go with you wherever, like a cow following its son” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 138). Even though she finds every way, even takes her death, but she cannot hold on the footsteps of Prince Rama. He calmly, gently encourages his mother and reminds her of the responsibilities and duties of a woman and a wife. “It is your duty to take care of the elderly king. The woman who does not serve her husband even in fasting or other rituals, she will live miserably in the future world, but if she serves her husband, she will go to heaven” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 39). Motherhood and all sacred feelings do not prevent Rama’s steps. The more sacred feelings hold on Rama’s footsteps, the more determined he is to obey his father’s orders and the more highlighted the hero Rama’s quality of his loyalty to his duties and honor is.

The character Xita appears next to the hero Rama and shares with him all the unhappiness of life with a spirit of selflessness and faithfulness. Xita supplements and perfects the subject of the work. Princess Xita is built next to the character Rama on the double-wave principle. The defect and negligence of this character are the premise and conditions for other characters to reveal their qualities and ideals. She is worshiped as a heroine in the hearts of the Indian people. Like Rama, Xita has a divine origin but acts like an earthly person. She is the embodiment of the ancient Indian exemplary image, “because of you, Rama destroyed not only the underworld but also the universe, so nothing is not right.” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 160). In ancient Indian society, the women have almost no role or status. “They are always dependent on someone, on their father, on their husband or their son. Legally, they are almost considered real estate. However, through many stories in the epic, this law is not strictly applied and, therefore, the women have a prestigious status in the family and society (Nehru, 1990, p. 168). The character Xita in the epic Ramayana is portrayed vividly and prominently, full of characteristics and typical psychological characteristics in relation to social issues such as religion, class, marriage and especially Dharma dogmas. With all these good qualities, Xita deserves to be considered an ancient Indian woman, a typical image of Indian culture because “through the era, voluntarily or not, the woman always contributes to preserving, reconciling and reviving the traditions and cultures of her country” (Dinh Trung Kien, India, 1995, p. 205). The character Xita as a fulcrum, thereby, the power, will, talent and virtue of the hero Rama are expressed through battles with hostile forces.

Gods—the supporter of the heroes, plays an important role in the epic, in which artistic creation is still dominated by myth. In the epic, the gods appear in a close relationship with heroic characters from the origins to giving power, weapons and even play an important role in the battles of the heroes. In Indian epics, the gods also play an important role in the origin of the heroes; the gods also participate in counsel, helping and giving weapons to help the hero win in fighting with hostile forces. In the epic Ramayana, besides the central character of heroic Rama, there is no shortage of images of gods. The gods play an important role in the difficult challenges of the characters. The hero Rama in the epic Ramayana is not the son of the gods but the incarnation of the god Visnu: “Visnu—Lotus Eyes, voluntarily divides into four and reincarnates into the house of the Dasaratha” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 39). In the Ramayana, the human always believes in the supernatural power of the gods. Every time they face difficulties, they ask for help and protection from the gods. When Rama, Xita, Lakshmana sit on a boat
crossing the Ganges River to enter the exile forest, Xita bowed to the Ganges River and prayed, “Oh, Gange, hope that thanks to your grace, the prince will be able to make peace with the curse” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 170). The gods of Ramayana, though not descending directly to help, also give weapons to help the hero like a bow, an armor, a chariot, a shining xakti tree ... and bestow the forces supporting and assisting the hero like Visnu descending to earth; the gods work together to reborn the creatures supporting the hero. In the battles of the hero with hostile forces or when the hero struggles with challenges, nearing death, the supporting forces of the gods appear to help the hero. During the frightful fighting with Indrajit, Ravana’s son uses invisibility magic in the darkness to shoot at Vanara’s army and Rama, causing the injured hero to lose consciousness. In order to heal Rama’s wounds, the Hanuman Monkey general with extraordinary health and talent in changing the shape and art of traveling thousands of miles to find medicinal plants, does not care about his life to help Rama search for Xita; he is ready to turn into the torch that burns the citadel in Lanka, fights fiercely with the Rakshasa ... The gods send down to Rama the heavenly charioteer Matali, who is the charioteer of Rama in the fight and helps Rama find the way to destroy the demon king Ravana while he is deadlocked. However, sometimes, the hero uses his talent and power to subdue the gods. When he prays with the Ocean God for permission to cross the sea, he waits for three nights, and the god does not appear, causing Rama’s anger. He then raises a bow to shoot an arrow like a fire on the sea, causing the ocean waves to rise violently. The sea and sky are merged, the haze, the chaos, and the Ocean God has to appear and agree for Rama to cross the sea in every way.

In the thinking of ancient Indians, the gods are also powerful forces with spiritual and intellectual clairvoyance in all three worlds, so people sometimes pray to the gods for purity to return to the ego. In Ramayana, the gods’ world is reality, and the human world is just an illusion. Therefore, returning to the divine ego is topmost. The Fire God Anhi plays an important role in the spiritual life of the Indian people. According to them, the Fire God Anhi is present in the three worlds and has the clairvoyance for everything in human life. So, in Ramayana, the God Anhi plays an important role in confirming the purity of Xita. When leaving the arms of the lustful demon and returning, she is convicted by Rama. In order to prove herself, she prays to the Fire God to help her, and the Fire God witnesses her pure and faithful heart. While Xita bravely walks up the pyre, it is also the time when many gods appear to scold Rama that for the divine origin, he treats Xita unfairly. The hero Rama has forgotten his divine origin and only sees his form in earthly life and prays with the bureaucrats. “I am the son of King Dasaratha and consider myself a man. So, please teach me, who am I really?” (Ramayana I, 1988a, p. 241). Hearing that, Brama tells Rama who he is and asks him to return to the world of gods. “You have taken the form of a human to destroy Ravana. Ravana is destroyed; you should return to the world of the gods” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 241). In the Ramayana, the hero is the embodiment of the gods to save the earth in danger. The heroes are just a manifestation of a god’s strength and character. The existing world is just an illusion in relation to the divine nature, and the god world is a reality. The gods hold the nature of the human soul, so returning to the divine ego is the return to the topmost of the hero.

In the Ramayana epic, the hero is imbued with Hindu ideology. The Brahmanism class, “having the relationship between man and god that becomes the highest level in society, higher than the king, means greater authority than the state and the government” (Hien, 1999, p. 42). Therefore, there is a large number of Taoist priest characters in an Indian epic who play a particularly important role for the hero. First of all, the power of monks and Taoist priests are expressed through a series of explanations on the birth of a hero. The birth of Rama’s four brothers also has a close relationship with the Taoist priests. The birth of the heroes was the result of the favors that the Taoist priests gave to King Dasaratha as he was old, but he did not have a child. He wished to have a son so that his descent could be everlasting. In honor of the respect, the Taoist priests were rewarded with many offerings by King Dasaratha and prayed Risyaringa with absolute reverence. “Please give me blessings from my master, so that my descent could be everlasting” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 37). After that ceremony, King Dasaratha’s three queens were pregnant and gave birth to four glorious princes. The Taoist priests play an important role in the hero’s maturity, and they help
the hero to develop the gods’ power in order to win battles. When the four princes of King Dasaratha grew up, the great master Vioamitra, who has a great frame, visited the king and offered Rama to accompany the Taoist priest during the human sacrifice. However, the king did not approve of Rama’s accompanying, which made the great master Vioamitra angry, causing the gods and the three worlds to be terrified. The Taoist priest Vaxitha explained to Dasaratha clearly that the great master brought Rama with him, and he shall play the role of a master to guide Rama to study and self-improve, all of them are for Rama and the King’s benefit. Only when traveling with Vioamitra, is Rama’s god power revealed, challenged and developed. Taoist Vioamitra leads Rama and Lakshmana to the forest, teaching them Mantra magic words, and they will hear about the hard-working cultivation stories of the Taoists, as well as learn the first lessons about the duty of Ksatrya and Balamon when visiting the relics. After that, the great magician bestowed on the hero Rama the magic weapon for use in training fight. “Now, I will give you some magic weapons; thanks to them, you will easily win anything” (Makhan, 1988a, p. 55). All of those lessons and experiences make the hero more physically and mentally mature. In the victories of the hero, all have the help of the masters. Perhaps they are the instructions to decimate the enemy; maybe the weapons are bestowed. To kill the satan Ravana with many heads, he had to use the weapon of the Brama god granted by the Taoist Agaxtya because “Its wings contain wind, its blade is the sun and fire; its body is a large sky (ether); its weight is also the weight of Mount Meru and the Mandara range of mountains. It is drawn from the universe’s spirit. It can shine on its own and has fat and blood applied. It looks like the fire of Judgment Day covered in smoke. . . . In the wrath of Rama, he has shot in Ravana; and then, it entered the land after taking Ravana’s life” (Makhan, 1988b, p. 219). In Ramayana, the Taoists always remind the hero of his duty, that is to destroy the enemy and be responsible for his role. Around the second century BC to the second century AD, Indian Law books were issued at the same time as the Ramayana epics, clearly defining the responsibilities and duties of each class. In it, the Ksatriya class is responsible for fighting to protect the land and rule the kingdom. Therefore, this class is allowed to use violence to fulfill its responsibilities and duties. However, the hero mentioned in the Ramayana is under Ksatriya level, with the ideal of fighting and winning glory on the battlefield; however, he is subjected to the education of the Brahman’s dogmas. The hero of Ramayana is a hero—a Taoist, when being imbued with the ideal depth of the Brahmanism, the hero “Brahman” becomes magnanimous heroes with a spirit of tolerance, sacrificing private benefits for the responsibility of the class, community, and negation of all violent means to achieve goals. The hero in Ramayana fights to destroy the enemy with his true power, both in strength, talent and virtue. The hero Rama can destroy enemies like goblins, Vali, Ravana . . . with all the enthusiasm of a Ksatrya combatant with the support and approval of the Taoist. The Taoist character has a particularly important position in relation to the hero, dominating the hero’s ideals and molding it according to religious ideals. But the hero, no matter what ideals he acts on, “comes from the sense of social duties, the character’s enthusiasm for earthly life and the aspirations of reaching the eternal category of the Brahmanism” (Mai Lien, 1998, p. 131).

In the Ramayana epic, animals appear with a large, diverse population, and they have power and a supportive relationship for the hero. The assistant animals led the hero Rama to save the princess Xita, together with the hero to overcome all difficulties and also participated in the fight to destroy the enemy. In the Ramayana, the animals have extraordinary powers, master martial arts, and they are also a powerful supporter of heroes in fights. In those cases where the hero needs help, these animals are willing to fight; they can even sacrifice their lives. The King of Birds—Giatayu is sleeping on a tree, but hearing Xita’s pleading when she is kidnapped by Ravana, Giatayu uses words to persuade Ravana so that Ravana can abandon that lowly intention and pointing out the consequences that will come with Ravana if Xita is kidnapped. However, for every argument that can’t prevented, the lewd demon, Giatayu, was forced to use the power to save Xita even if he had to sacrifice his life. It seems that the relationship between people and animals here is as close as friends. Witnessing the painful and struggling death of the god bird—Giatayu because of saving Xita, the hero Rama was moved to tears in the eyes of a great loss when losing a close friend. The animals play an important role in supporting and helping the hero in fighting with the enemy. The animals have fought side by side with the hero
Rama, overcoming all difficulties and challenges on the journey to save Xita. The hero Rama and Lakshmana met minor characters in the form of the king of monkey Sugriva, General Monkey Hanuman and received enthusiastic help from these animals. After Rama helped the monkey king regain his kingdom, Monkey King Sugriva did not hesitate to gather the most powerful forces of Vanara monkeys to continue with Rama on his journey to the island. During the fighting between the hero Rama and the Rakshasa monkeys, many talented generals of the monkey and Vanara army fought bravely, were injured and lost their lives. However, all of them did not yield an inch of ground, always determined to stand side by side with the hero. In particular, an efficient loyal assistant to the hero in the fighting is the General monkey, Hanuman. Through the use of exaggeration, mystifying the character Hanuman, the folk author informed this character with characteristics of personality, psychology, emotions equivalent to a human. Hanuman is very loyal to Rama and always performs his duties well, with Rama until death in order to search for Xita. Besides, he is ready to fight Rakshasa to help Rama destroy Ravana. When Rama was wounded, Hanuman was willing to go thousands of miles to get and carry on his back with a cliff to find medicine curing Rama’s wound, and not only that, Hanuman was also ready to turn himself into a torch to burn the city on the Lanka island … And he was willing to stand up and speak out to defend Xita when she was doubted and tested the faithful heart by Rama. Thanks to personification, the animals in the Ramayana are described beautifully, noble, and they have behaviors like the human. They also support the hero and play an important role in respecting the strength and virtue of the hero. The image of a monkey or birds involved in the hero Rama’s exploits, which may be reflected in the imaginary and creative lens of the Southern Aborigines—the Dravidian people, a part that has an alliance with the Arian people. The hostility and confrontation parts that the leaders in the Arian people’s disdain eyes are the demon king, Ravana. Thus, the world of characters in the Ramayana epics has been greatly expanded. In which the hero character plays a central role, and other characters such as women, gods, Taoists, animals or demons, monsters … as a secondary element have contributed significantly to honor the magnificent, holy stature of the hero.

In the Dam San epic, the hero character Dam San plays a central role, deciding the destiny of the whole community. In the village, the chieftain is the head governor deciding all matters; Dam Sam has a reputation of extraordinary strength; he is a wealthy man who has been well-known everywhere, and no-chieftain can be well-matched. In the relationship between the hero and other characters such as his wife, the people in the village … appear faintly and are only mentioned through a few words of the narrator. The narrator’s exclamation and comments contribute to highlighting the characteristics and qualities and expressing the aesthetic viewpoint of the narrator.

Ho Nhi is the wife of Dam San described by the narrator: her body is extremely wonderful! Her back was smooth; her breasts were as smooth as silk. She has tapering fingers, and her calves of legs are slim. Her skirt was fluttering like a flash, and shining like lightning striking among the colorful rays. Her eyes lit up like the most beautiful star at night. Her voice is like Lao gong, laughter is like Hong laughter. It was actually a beautiful girl (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006) ... Only the divine character was mentioned many times and played an important role in the hero’s life.

The god, specifically Mr. Du, Mr. Đệ (the god), personally intervened in Dam San’s marriage to H’ Nhi: If you get married to the person living in the West or the East, you will become a cowherd and a gong cleanser for the rich. When you become a cowherd, you will have a stinky smell; and when you become a buffalo, your body will have the smell of mud, and you will be a cattleman for the rich, the gong holder, and being an occupant of the rich. If you marry Ho Nhi, Ho Bhi, you will become rich. You can afford to buy the elephant or gong. You will be the richest person in the country … (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006). The God seduced and threatened Dam San many times, but he still did not agree to marry, causing the god to take the pipe for smoking to knock his head, causing him to fall into a dead faint, then the god let him re-live. After repeating these seven times, Dam San agreed to marry Ho Nhi sisters. The richness and position of Dam San are arranged by the god. The god gave Dam San a high-quality rice variety to improve people’s lives better. After helping Dam San become a strong chieftain, as well as completing matchmaking for his spouse, the God continued to follow him in the fighting with his enemies, the chieftain Mtao Tuor, Mtao Mxay, and Mtao Gru, ... On the battlefield, the
divine character in the Dam San epic did not participate in the war, nor did he provide military support to the hero; the god only intervened indirectly. The gods are always on Dam San’s side—representing the justice and the future of the community. All enemies of Dam San do not receive any help from the Gods, and the Gods only appear when the hero is actually in a difficult position to win the battle. In the battle with Mtao Mxay, after much effort to fight the enemy without victory or defeat, Dam San pleaded for the help of the god. “Ooh! I might die! I stabbed him forever without dying” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006) ... at this time, the God told Dam San how to fight Mtao Mxay. “Is that so? Then you can get a pestle that you threw at his ear.” (Makhan, 1988b; 54) Dam San followed the advice of the God, and immediately, Mtao Mxay’s armor was felled, and he quickly put an end to Mtao Mxay’s life. The gods and people in the Dam San epic have a long distance. The Gods only appear when Dam San falls into a sleepy status and, at this time, the God does not step down to the realm instructing the hero through dreaming. This god was separate from ordinary life and intervened in the battle in the form of a spirit dwelling on high. During the fight with Mtao Tuor, when Dam San failed to win and lost his forces, the gods also showed him the way. “Hey, if you hold a spear and sword carefully, you will win the ferocious rich man. Please carry the hoe next to you, carry the pickaxe on your shoulder, and call many young men and women, who have a knife to dig a small hole; those with a hoe dig a deep big hole everywhere. Then, through your steps, you should jump well to catch up, dragging your clothes to make dustily like black clouds” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006, p. 93). Through this tactic, Dam San enticed the enemy into the hole that was dug and killed the enemy with a short pestle. Besides, the Gods also helped many of Dam San’s dead people to be revived after fighting the enemy. “So people were killed, captured by demons, and they are now alive again” (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, 2006, p. 95). Thus, in the character world of the Dam San epic, the spirit world is not rich and diverse but very simple. In the battle, the gods only appear and intervene in the main battle to minimize casualties and damage. The indirect support of the gods helps the war to quickly end, helps to lose the power of the hero and only appears when the hero falls into difficulty when the character is tired and has slept deeply.

The *Ramayana* epic is a complete picture of the life of the ancient Indian people with deep moral ideals, human life philosophy and religious conceptions in the narration form of past hero. As long as the river is not shallow, the stone is not worn, the *Ramayana* also have a passion for saving people from a sinful life (Trung, 2009). The *Dam San* epic of Vietnam is the leading famous work of the old clan’s oral literature in Central Vietnam. So far, this work still holds value in the spiritual life of the people here, and when studying the culture and folklore of pre-Indochina, the *Dam San* epic is always mentioned first (Nhat, 1991).

3. Conclusion
The epic is a valuable property of folk literature in each nation, the first literary product resulted from an awakening of national consciousness, presenting comprehensive change of a nation. The epic is a complete picture of people’s lives in the form of telling the story of a hero in the past. In the epic, heroic characters are the central element of the epic art world, representing the spirit, talent, courage, and wisdom of the community. In addition to the size of the cosmic dimension, representing the physical strength—the spirit of the ethnic community, the epic heroic character also highlights the beauty of virtue, wisdom, talent, and courage ... All are expressed through the noble and brave actions of the hero with glorious victories. The *Ramayana* epic of India and the *Dam San* epic of Vietnam have built an image of the hero, an ideal leader with strength, talent, courage, and virtue, as well as great aspirations. These lofty ideals also represent the ideals of the ethnic community. The hero is placed in many relationships with the characters in various conflicts and events to enforce moral action according to responsibility and duty. The similarities in the concept of heroic characters in the epic *Ramayana* and the epic *Dam San* show that the folk literature of Indian and Vietnam was born in same social situations, suitable to the birth of epic genre. Over thousands of years of existence, the *Ramayana* epic and *Dam San* epic still contain an intense attraction for readers, listeners anywhere, in any era.
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