

Study on the Development of Women in China from the Perspective of the Marxist View of Gender

Xinyu Chang

School of Marxism, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, Sichuan Chengdu 610500

Abstract: In the early nineteenth century, Marx and Engels formed the Marxist concept of gender based on the materialist concept of history, and later in the practice of the proletarian movement, the Marxist concept of gender gradually formed a set of systematic and complete theoretical system, which guided the women's emancipation movement in China and even in the world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the current situation of women's development in Chinese society and the existing problems on the basis of a systematic understanding of the Marxist concept of gender, and finally to propose scientific solutions.

Keywords: Marxism, women's perspective, female development

Introduction

For the Marxist view of history, on the one hand, it is possible to look at the various views on women's issues in society with a scientific and dialectical perspective; on the other hand, it is possible to have a more intuitive demonstration of the contribution of socialism with Chinese characteristics to the development of the Marxist view of gender in the new era and the change of women's status in China from the scientific point of view, and on the basis of which a clearer understanding can be gained of the issues of women's status in the new era and corresponding solutions can be derived from the Marxist view of gender. On the other hand, it can show the contribution of socialism with Chinese characteristics to the development of the Marxist view of gender in the new era and the changes in the status of women in China more intuitively from a scientific perspective.

1. Overview of the Marxist view of gender

In regard to the causes of women's emancipation and development, the traditional view has long been that the biological differences between men and women have resulted in unequal status differences between men and women in the course of social and historical evolution. In the 19th century, the Marxism of Marx and Engels, based on the materialistic view of history and a comprehensive study of the social and historical development of mankind, revealed the irrationality of the capitalist system and the unstoppable development trend of the world in the future. World's unstoppable trend of development, pointing out the direction and path of human emancipation. At the same time, Marx and Engels undoubtedly took into account their concern for women, a large group, when discussing the goals of proletarian emancipation and human development in a communist society.

1.1 Basic contents of the Marxist view of gender

In the middle of the 19th century, amidst the rapid development of the capitalist economy and the rise of the proletarian revolutionary movement, Marx and Engels critically founded the Marxist theory of women on the basis of the rational kernel of the bourgeois democratic ideology and the women's emancipation ideology of the ideal socialists, which was later explored and developed into a scientific system through the common study of Marxism.

Marx's earliest concern for women is reflected in his analysis of the alienation of human labor in socio-historical life in his *Philosophical Manuscripts of Economics of 1844*.^[1] Marx pointed out that: "The treatment of women as victims and handmaidens of the common lechery shows the infinite degradation of man in his treatment of himself." Although Marx did not directly address the issue of women's emancipation in the *Manuscripts*, it already reflected Marx's concern and thinking about the situation of women. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx explains that the inevitable historical process of human emancipation includes the emancipation of women in the context of human history. According to Marxism, half of humanity is made up of women, and there can be no talk of human emancipation if women are not emancipated. The proletariat cannot be completely free without fighting for the complete freedom of women. And as far as women are concerned, the complete emancipation of women can be finally realized only in a communist society. In *The Origin of the Family, the State, and Private Ownership*, published in 1884, Engels gave the most systematic, comprehensive, and focused exposition of the problem of women's emancipation. Utilizing the basic viewpoint of historical materialism, Engels deeply exposed the origin of the family and the root causes of women's oppression, marking the initial formation of the Marxist theory of women.

The Marxist view of gender is divided into the following three main aspects: first, Marx believed that the root cause of women's oppression was the collapse of primitive society and the emergence of private ownership; second, a prerequisite for women's liberation was the need for women to rejoin the public service; and, finally, the end point of women's liberation was the need for the realization of a communist society.

1.2 Adapting Marxist views on gender to the Chinese context

As Marxism flowed into China and spread widely, Marxist views on women's development and emancipation were welcomed by intellectuals, and later the CPC combined Marxist women's theories with the actual situation in China to form the idea of women's emancipation in line with China's national conditions. The process of the emergence and development of women's emancipation thought in China is the process of theoretical development of the Marxist view of gender in China.

During the New Democratic Revolution, Mao Zedong put forward the theory of the "Four Cords", which is an important outcome of the exploration of adapting Marxist views on women to the Chinese context. "Political power, tribal power, divine power and marital power, representing all the feudal and patriarchal ideas and systems in China, are the four cords that bind women". At the same time, Mao Zedong also explored the ways of women's liberation, first of all, he believed that: struggle for liberation is the premise of women's struggle for liberation, and women's liberation and China's proletarian revolution are inextricably linked, and he pointed out that "the women's liberation movement should exist as an integral part of the social liberation movement. Women's liberation cannot be achieved without a social liberation movement; at the same time, social liberation is impossible without a women's movement."^[2] Therefore, in order to truly seek social liberation, the masses of women must be mobilized to participate; likewise, in order to truly seek women's own liberation, women must participate in the struggle for social liberation." Mao Zedong attached great importance to the power of women, and during the revolutionary period he referred to women as "a force that determines the victory or defeat of the revolution." After the founding of the new China, he believed that Chinese women were a great human resource, and that it was necessary to rectify all the erroneous ideas that discriminated against and belittled women within the Party and in society, and to fight against the concepts that belittled the women's movement. Only by overcoming these obstacles could women be energized with unprecedented enthusiasm and creativity in socialist construction. Mao Zedong's idea of women's emancipation is the fruit of combining the basic principles of Marxist women's emancipation with the

actual practice of the Chinese women's movement, and was formed and developed during the great course of China's revolution and construction.

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee was an important turning point in the Party's century-long history; since then, China has entered a new period of reform and opening up, with economic construction as the center and the promotion of reform and opening up as the new theme of the times. In keeping with this theme, the Party's women's work has taken mobilizing women to participate in the practice of reform and opening up in their capacity as subjects as its basic direction, while at the same time safeguarding women's basic rights and interests at the economic, political, and social levels, focusing on the improvement of laws and regulations relating to women and emphasizing the cultivation of female Party members and cadres. The Party also pays attention to the training of female Party members and cadres, and supports women in safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests in the light of their special needs; it further stimulates women's socialist activism, strives to improve their own qualities, and guides them to give full play to their roles in the promotion of the development of social productive forces, and the construction of socialist material civilization and spiritual civilization.

As we enter the new era, the Party's emphasis on women's work has been further strengthened, and the means and channels for women's development and the promotion of equality between men and women have been further diversified. On the basis of adherence to the Marxist view of gender, the Marxist view of gender in the new era has been continuously refined and verified in practice.

2. Current situation of female in China

From the time when the Marxist view of gender flowed into China to the present day, the status of women in China has undergone a radical change. The 19th CPC National Congress Report clearly puts forward the major judgment that “socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and the main contradiction in China's society has been transformed into the contradiction between people's growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and insufficient development”. This unbalanced and insufficient development is also a major judgment. This unbalanced and insufficient development also refers to women's development, and one of the prominent manifestations of this imbalance is the imbalance between urban and rural areas on a geographical basis. The status of women varies between urban and rural areas, due to differences in economic foundations, ideological attitudes, and levels of social labor.

In the more economically developed urban areas, the basic national policy of equality between men and women is more fully implemented, women's access to social security has generally increased, and the cities basically provide relatively sound protection in the areas of women and health, women and education, women and the economy, women's participation in decision-making and management, women and social security, women and the law, and so on.

3. Existing problems in Chinese women's development

In spite of the impressive achievements, there are still a series of problems in the development of women in China, which are manifested in the unbalanced development of urban and rural areas, the inadequacy of some laws and regulations, and the low proportion of women cadres at the grass-roots level, and so on. It is of great significance to analyze these problems through the Marxist view of gender and make suggestions for solving them.

Firstly, the economic status of rural women. In Ningbo's villages, the status of women is in a state of contradiction, which is reflected in the fact that women have a higher voice within the family, but externally they usually display the image of traditional women, such as virtuous and docile women, and are shy about participating in the public life of the village; this contradiction in status stems from the huge gap between the economic strengths of men and women in the family. This situation is also common in some villages in other regions. The economic power of women in the family is one of the important factors affecting their independence, subjectivity and social status in the family.

Moreover, women's space for development, that is, the problem of women's employment status; even in China's more economically developed cities, there are still many problems of “recruiting men but not women”. One of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of laws and regulations against discrimination in employment is the lack of an effective enforcement

and remedial mechanism for existing laws and regulations.^[3] When an employer violates the law and discriminates against a worker in employment, the worker lacks effective remedies and the employer who violates the law is not duly punished, rendering the relevant laws null and void and aggravating the phenomenon of discrimination in employment.

With regard to the existing problems, it is necessary, first, to strengthen guidance for rural women, to help women from poor families find their way into socialized production, to guarantee rural women's right to education, to raise their level of education, and to actively encourage women's participation in grass-roots democracy; and, second, to further improve the effective implementation of the laws and regulations on anti-discrimination in employment and the remedial measures, so that the laws and regulations that have already been promulgated can be put into practice; and, third, to ensure that the laws and regulations that have already been promulgated are implemented. The other is to further improve the effective implementation of anti-discrimination laws and regulations and remedial measures, so that the laws and regulations that have already been enacted can be put into practice; and to strengthen the mainstream media's positive guidance of women's status, and to play a positive role in guiding public opinion, publicizing positive images of women, and correctly guiding the Internet and social opinion, so as to further resolve contradictions.

4. Conclusion

For the status of women and women's development is a long-term process closely related to economic development and the development of communism, women are undoubtedly a powerful force for social development, how to play this force correctly, and how to better utilize the Marxist view of gender to guide women's work and women's development under the leadership of the Communist Party is an important issue to be pondered after the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era. The status and development of women should be placed in the context of the overall situation of the Party and the international community, so that it can be closely integrated with the continuous development and progress of political, economic, cultural and social undertakings; only in this way can the realization of the needs of women's groups be guaranteed, the development of the country be given impetus, and women's sense of gain, happiness and security be constantly enhanced.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Karl Marx. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: Dover Publications, 2007.
- [2] Engels, F. *The origin of the family, private property, and the state*. In L. L. O'Toole, J. R., 2007.
- [3] Schiffman, M. L. K. Edwards (Eds.), *Gender violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives (2nd)*. New York University Press, 2007: 12-32.