

Study on the Change and Influence of Women's Social Status in Modern China

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Abstract: Since modern times, the social status of Chinese women was relatively low, which gradually formed in the long history of ancient social changes. From the end of primitive society to the end of feudal society, the status of Chinese women has always been confined and marginalized in people's minds. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, women's social status has been significantly improved, and they gradually got rid of the role of male's vassals. With the change of social thought, women's status has been recognized. In this context, by analyzing the evolution of women's social status in modern China, the transformation of their status and its influence on modern society, this study carries out research from three aspects to describe the influence of women's status in modern China on social economy in the social change.

Keywords: Modern women; Social status; Status change

1. The evolution of women's social status in modern China

1.1 The pursuit of "equality of men and women" in the embryonic period of capitalism

With the continuous development of social productive forces, the status of women has also changed a lot. In the embryonic period of capitalism, people's thoughts were also aware of the pedantry of feudal social thoughts, and thus began to criticize and deny. Li Zhi in Ming Dynasty not only put forward the idea of equality between men and women, but also criticized the Neo-Confucianism of Cheng Zhu and the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius, and advocated the liberation of women and the freedom of marriage. He also opposed the feudal ethical code that women must preserve chastity, and polygamy. Although his ideas were so new, we can still see the reaction in the early stage of capitalism in China, which also played an active role in the liberation of women in the future[1].

1.2 Women's Liberation Movement

1.2.1 Collision of Chinese and Western culture

In the mid-19th century, under the influence of the Western cultural invasion, the Chinese people woke up from their dream, and the concept of "male superiority" made the Chinese people reflect on their thoughts. Since then, the status of women began to be concerned by people.

1.2.1.2 The status of women during the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

During the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, with the continuous import of Western culture, the ideas of "man's natural rights", democracy, freedom and equality were also introduced into China. Hong Xiuquan advocated the idea of gender equality, and not only made a female official system, allowed women to participate in politics, and treated men and women soldiers equally, but also organized women to learn labor skills and participated in work to protect women's social status [2].

1.2.1.3 Women's status during the Reform Movement of 1898

The Reformists advocated giving women due rights and proposed "man's natural rights" and "equality of men and women". Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao advocated gender equality and co-management of the country, which was gradually accepted by people. In this wind of civilization, the Chinese feudal ethics was greatly shaken, promoting the status of women to be improved accordingly [3].

1.2.1.4 The status of women during the 1911 Revolution

With the promulgation of *Education System of School of RenZi-KuiChou* in the Republic of China, after the victory of the Revolution of 1911, the level of female education was not only improved, but also expanded the scale of girls' schools. At that time, women's education was also attached great importance.

2. The change of women's status in modern China

2.1 Employment transformation -- from single industry to diversified industry

2.1.1 Women's employment covers a wider range of fields

Social activities that women participate in are actually a pattern of manifestation reflecting women's social status. After the reform and opening up, the proportion of women in the working population and employment level is relatively large. At the beginning of the reform, 70 percent of women's social labor was mainly in agriculture, forestry and fishing. As the reform and opening up continues to intensify, women's social labor has shifted to business, catering, supply and marketing. Since the beginning of this year, the number of women in professional and technical institutions has also increased significantly. Thus, it can be seen that in the early stage of the reform, women had a relatively low level of employment. However, with the reform and opening up, the transformation of women's employment positions has been greatly improved. The employment fields that women participate in have gradually expanded, and is in transition to high-knowledge and high-technology industries. Women also play an irreplaceable role in society [4].

2.1.2 The gender gap in labor force participation has narrowed

The percentage of people who are able to work and willing to work, whether they have a job or not, is included in the labor force participation rate. It includes both those who are already working and those who are not. Since the reform and opening up, the proportion of women in the workforce has been around 70 percent. Except in 2015, the proportion of men participating in the work was about 80%, although the proportion of women participating in the work was 10% lower than that of men, but after 2015, the gap has become smaller and smaller. Generally speaking, the employment situation of Chinese women shows the development of diversified fields and the increase of labor participation rate.

2.2 Policy tilt -- from ensuring survival to sustainable development

2.2.1 Political participation has steady rise

The People's Congress and the Political Consultative Conference are not only important units to ensure that the people are the master of the country, but also the benchmark for gender equality. Since the sixth National People's Congress and the Political Consultative Conference, the proportion of female deputies has increased. In the 13th National People's Congress, the proportion of female deputies has reached a new peak record of 24.9 percent, and it continues to rise. Among them, 29 women accounted for 12.6 percent, and the number of women has been on the rise since the eighth session [5].

2.2.2 Increasing policy attention

With the reform and opening up, the political power of women has been increasing. In 1992, the promulgation of the *Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests* guaranteed women's right to vote; In 1995, the People's Congress improved the *Electoral Law* to ensure the proportion of women. After 2000, the state issued the *Program for the Development of Chinese Women* and the *Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests*. These documents have played an important role in the political and economic development of the country. Therefore, policies should not only protect women's development but also protect women's social status.

2.3 Education level - from low academic qualification to high

The development of women's status is complementary to their educational level. The higher the educational level, the higher the social participation of women. From 1982 to 2017, during period of 40 years, the women lack of education background has decreased from 28.1 percent to 5.3 percent compared to men, and the gap has gradually narrowed. Statistics show that the proportion of women

with primary education has dropped from 28.1% to 5.3% every 10 years, and the gap is also decreasing. The number of women with education beyond high school also increased by 23 percent over the past 35 years. Those with junior college degrees or higher increased from 0.4 to 13.6 percent in 2017 in 35 years; Therefore, the level of female education also determines the higher female participation in society.

2.4 Marriage acquisition -- from passive to active

First, the *Marriage Act* of 1981 broke the situation that women had no right of marriage freedom. It also means that women's will can be recognized by more people, so that women have a new look from no marriage freedom to marriage freedom transition. Secondly, in 1982, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2017, the divorce rate keeps rising in China. Although divorce is not a good thing for a family, it can reflect women's increasing desire for freedom and happiness, and even more and more people choose to "prefer not to get married rather than own wrong marriage". Furthermore, it shows that the consciousness of women yearning for independence and autonomy as an individual is further improved.

3. The influence of the change of women's social status on modern society

3.1 Boosting economic growth

The report to the 18th National Congress clearly stated that "we should firmly grasp the basic strategic point of expanding domestic demand and accelerate the establishment of a long-term mechanism for expanding consumer demand". The growth of consumer demand can double the growth of investment and thus promote the growth of social economy. Therefore, women's consumption behavior is the driving force for the growth of labor economy and drives the stability and development of national economy. The dominant position of female consumer behavior also represents that female social and political status improves, therefore, women in the consumer market has become a new industrial growth point.

The stable development of national economy depends directly on women's demand of market consumption, whether the consumption demand is good or bad, it will have a direct effect on the development of our country's economy. Female consumption and the national economy complement each other. The growth of female consumption should increase female income. The higher the income, the higher the consumption, and the economic development will be diversified. Diversified economy promotes consumption, and conversely, diversified economy stimulates economic development, so female consumption and social and economic growth interact and complement each other.

3.2 "She economy" giving birth to the female consumer market

The premise of female consumption is economic independence. When women get social labor, they will have corresponding remuneration and sources to maintain their survival needs. Therefore, employment is the guarantee of women's economic sources. At the same time, the issue of female employment has attracted worldwide attention. According to the *New Blue-collar Women's Employment Report* published by new media in 2014, the average pre-tax salary of women in 15 cities across the country is 4,276 yuan, which is a great increase compared with the past, and the employment rate has also become an important guarantee for women's status.

Since the reform and opening up, along with the improvement of women's education, women's occupation and income have also improved accordingly, so women's economic ability and consumption level have been improving day by day. However, in modern society, the higher the social status of women, the more they will pursue more perfect things in material and spirit. According to Maslow's Demand Theory, when low-level needs are satisfied, the incentive effect will decline, and their dominant position will not be maintained any longer. So, they will develop to higher needs. Now women are not only satisfied with the current material needs, but also will have a higher level of pursuit with the development of society. For example: the increase in status, power and financial resources, so the women with higher status will have more ideas and higher taste for noble life. Female consumers have become the forerunner of Chinese consumption market, and will play the role of the vanguard of consumption in the future consumption market. It also better interprets the promotion of female status.

4. Conclusion

In modern China, women were coerced by the wave of women's liberation, and gradually changed from the backward status of feudal conservatism and "men are superior to women" to enjoy the same education rights, employment rights, marriage rights, political rights, etc. In modern China, the old and new changed, and the change of women's social status conforms to the development of The Times, and also reflects the promotion of social progress. In other words, Rousseau said that "all men are created equal". This is the ideal state of social development and the meaning of life that human beings pursue. Only policies that conform to the trend of The Times can arouse public and social reactions to produce certain social effect and cause social change, so as to achieve the effect of imperceptibly affecting the public and thus complete the change of women's social status.

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