

# The Progress of the Chinese Gender Awareness Reflected in the Transition from the Equality Between Men and Women to the Gender Justice

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**Abstract:** "Mainstream gender awareness" is a global strategy decided by the united nations for promoting sexy harmonious development. Gender awareness refers to find the adverse factor in society about the harmony of gender through sexy analysis. This article tries to prove a discourse turn from equality of men and women to gender justice by analyzing the background and their meanings to words of equality of two sexes and gender equality, therefore, to justice the Chinese gender awareness progress.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Gender awareness, Gender justice

## 1 Introduction

At present, there is few reports on the discourse turn from equality between men and women to gender justice, only one article reviewed the discussion on the equality between men and women and the gender justice during 30 years, the main purpose is to offer the initial consideration on the future development of socialist theory on Chinese women. Therefore, there is still very big space for the study on the discourse turn from the equality between men and women to the gender justice. This paper used the method of literature analysis, thinking discourse turn from the equality between men and women to the gender justice, to justice the Chinese gender awareness progress. This is the innovation of the research angle. This study will help the development of the Chinese localization of social gender theory.

## 2 From the Slogan of Equality Between Men and Women to the Sate Policy of Equality Between Women and Men

### 2.1 The background of the slogan of equality between men and women and the state policy of equality between women and men.

Before the opium war in 1840, China was still an independence of the feudal autocratic country. Women were bound to Confucian Ritualism that female roles were strictly limited in a given standard, "women having no faculties would be virtuous". They had to be required to respect their men as their God, to follow "the three obedience and the four virtues". Women should have qualities of motherhood and modesty. Women in the face of marriage had no freedom, who passively listened to their parents' dictation and matchmakers' arrangement. The men can be polygamy, but women must be faithful to one's husband unto death, and keep chastity to death, be not allowed to remarry. If women violated the rules, they would receive the cruel punishment. So, women are the accessory of their husband. "When a girl is born, let her sleep on the ground, wear a bed gown, and play the tile spindle", which embodied the differences in the treatment of male and female. Women must give in to men. The status of men and women is dramatically different in either the family or the society, women have very little status.

After the opium broke out, the western culture coming to China, which broke down the Chinese several thousand years of the situation of seclusion. The progressive thoughts of transformation from the western impact the traditional Chinese culture. In order to save the national crisis, the Qing dynasty bureaucrat was forced to launch the westernization movement to the east, to make "the liberty, equality, philanthropy" and the theory of natural rights of the bourgeoisie spread gradually in China. In addition,

some preacher severely attacked patriarchal ideology. They imbued "the equality between men and women" by Christianity into Christians and student, making it the enlightenment to women's liberation. So, the early bourgeois reformists were inspired to put forward the slogan of equality between men and women, such as "The natural principle, feminine and masculine; the human principle, female and male.", "female and male are born equal".

The turn of the century, revolutionary propagandist Zou Rong in the <Revolutionary Army>, appealed to equality between men and women. Chen Tianhua as the early feminist in the < Jing Shi Zhong>, mobilized women to overthrow the Qing dynasty. In August 1905, the pioneer of China's revolution, Sun Zhongshan, founded China's coalition in Tokyo, Japan, they clearly proposed at the declaration of government: ".we are all the Han nationality, we are all equal to each other." In 1915, the New Culture movement broke out, the New Youth magazine published theoretical work and literary work such as "Theory of Chastity", "Doll's House" etc. which reflected women's oppression and resistance, sharply criticized the traditional Chinese moral culture, laid a solid foundation that put forward to the slogan of "equality between men and women". In 1919, Chinese women of different social classes joined in positively the May 4 movement, established women organization, held the speech and strike, clearly put forward the slogan of "the liberation of women, women freedom". Thus, the social gender consciousness first buds in China.

Since then, from the foundation of Communist Party to the early liberation of all China, the movement for equal rights as women almost occurred all the revolutionary historical stage. The thought of equality between men and women had begun to enjoy popular support. Mao Zedong as the leader of Chinese Communist Party realized that, men were subject to three kinds of power system *i.e.* (a) The national system of a country, a province up to a township (regime); (b) The parents system of a ancestral hall, a temple up to the head of a family (clan authority); (c) The grave system consist of King of Hell, King the city god temple up to Land Bodhisattva and the celestial system consist of Jade Emperor up to all kinds of Genies, referred to the ghost system (religious authority). As for the women, in addition to the domination by the above three kinds of power, they were still dominated by men (manus)."He analysed the right and restriction of male and the under-domination status of female. During the Anti-Japanese War, Mao Zedong required that "protected the interests of youth, women, children, succored teenagers who dropped out of high school, and organized teenagers and women as equal status to participate in the work, which was beneficial to the Anti-Japanese War and social progress up to achieve freedom of marriage and equality between men and women, Youth and children get the opportunity to learn." At the beginning of the new China was founded, in order to improve the social productive forces and change the situation of China's poverty and backwardness, he put forward a famous assertion "the times are different, as both men and women are equal, women also can do things like men", which greatly inspired the enthusiasm of women to participate in the socialist revolution and construction and the status of women had earth-shaking changes. Women in China's socialist revolution and construction had proved "the power of the half-sky" by the practical action and the splendid performance, the thought of equality between men and women had enjoyed popular support.

In the international politics, the main focus of the United Nations was kept on promoting equality between man and women and improving the status of women. From the 1970s, the United Nations successively held four World Conferences on women. For this reason, women's problems had attracted worldwide attention, putting forward "mainstream gender consciousness into the decision". In order to improve the image of the big country in the international society, China positively responded the call of the United Nations. In 1995, a time when China was in the key period of reform and opening up in the world, Jiang Zemin, promised that "the equality between men and women into the basic national policy" at the fourth World Conference on women. So far, "equality between men and women" had developed from a slogan to a state policy. This is a positive response of the county to the "mainstreaming gender consciousness".

## **2.2 Academic connotation of the slogan of equality between men and women and the basic national policy of gender equality**

The slogan of "equality between men and women" and the basic national policy of gender equality are two basic forms that realize the concept of equality between men and women. The slogan refers to a principal inspiring short sentence by oral shot. Basic state policy is the national basic policy about the social development. Through the comparison of both academic connotation, we can clearly see that the process of development gender consciousness in China.

2.2.1 From the view of the cognition of the standard of equality, equality what the slogan of equality between men and women propagandize is the form of equality, namely, men and women are the same, so women must be treat like men". To compare the women today with those in the past, I think that, if women get rid of fetter of feudal ethics and rites up to the same as men, equality will materialize. At this time, about the standard of equality, the cognition of our country is one-sided. In 1975, the United Nations held the first women's Conference, passed Mexico Declaration, which firstly proposed the definition of equality between men and women, namely, equality between men and women referred to equality of the dignity and worth of human beings and responsibilities, rights, and opportunities. According to this, the basic national policy of equality between men and women gives a complete comprehension on the standard of equality.

2.2.2 From the view of the influence of all people, the slogan of equality between men and women has two special characteristics, such as spontaneity and variability. The basic state policy of equality between men and women has two special characteristics, such as stability and mandatory. In different historical stages, many elites who had the power made all kinds of slogans. The aim is to proclaim the slogan of equality between men and women. After these slogans were published by media, many elites who had the power didn't require a very responsive crowd, but all people's attitude had self-consciousness. As time went on, the influence of the slogans was crumbling, some of the old behaviors that were bad for the equality still stood long as a criterion in society. In contrast, the basic national policy of equality between men and women is a norm for policy decisions, which has the characteristic of politics and authority, specifically, it requires all citizens must strictly abide by the state policy and thus makes up the shortcoming of the influence of the oral form to promote equality between men and women. At the same time, the equality between men and women became a basic policy in the country in a relatively long period, and had some of the stability. So, from the slogan of "equality between men and women" to the basic national policy of equality between men and women, gender issues has been more emphasized heavily recently.

2.2.3 From the participation of both sexes, the slogan of "equality between men and women" inspired the enthusiasm of women to strive for equality. Women get awakening out of ignorance. But female responded to the slogan of equality more intensively than male. Equality between men and women was considered as a matter of female. Therefore, to achieve equality between men and women, both sexes need to change and participate in common. The basic national policy of equality between men and women makes up for the shortage of the slogan. As one of our basic state policy, it makes equality between men and women enter public policy field. In our country, the public field is a predominantly male field. By the implementing of the basic national policy of equality between men and women through our country, male begin to participate in social activities about sexual equality, which is beneficial to resolve the problem of Gender inequality.

## **3 From Gender Equality to Gender Justice**

### **3.1 The discourse background of gender equality and gender justice**

If we note that the present situation of the cultural field since the 1990s, it was found that gender equality concept had already quietly instead of the equality between men and women in the concept. The generation of discourse is dependent on a certain procedure. Then discourse is controlled, selected, organized, coordinated and redistributed, which determines that discourse is not self-discipline, but

under-domination. Discourse is placed in complex and fickle social network, formed in the restriction of the society and historical conditions. Therefore, in different historical conditions, discourse will happen to change. On one hand, the idea of Women's Rights in western has begun to spread in China since the reform and opening up. Some of term and concept about western feminism discourse, especially, the concept of gender was introduced into China, causing hot debate of academic circles. On the other hand, scholars learned the western feminist launched a reform movement, and strived to find words with color gender discrimination. So, feminism has put forward sex equality (physiological gender equality) was replaced by gender equality with (social gender equality), which obtained the UN approval.

Chinese scholars are carrying western feminism discourse as main discourse, began to consider words of linguistics that contained sex discrimination. It is also for the influence of western feminist thinking, the researchers discover the irrationality of the word of "men and women". On one hand, male is in the front of female, female roles is a "behind man" woman. This is the representation of traditional gender divisions of labor in China. Peoples erroneously say equality of "men and women" is the pursuit of physiological gender equality. Feminist think that physiological gender do inequality not lead to women oppression. If men and women is replaced "gender", we can at least research the phenomenon of gender by physical, social and psychological perspective. Therefore, the concept of "gender" has more scientific and highly-recapitulative than that of "men and women". This is the vicissitude of word from equality between men and women set in the penetration of western culture concept.

In 2004, at the party's fourth plenary of sixteen session, the strategy conception that build a socialist harmonious society was put forward by Hu Jintao who pointed out that the socialist harmonious society should be fair and justice, faithful and friendly, active, stable and order, harmonious between people and nature society. In 2006, at the party's sixth plenary of sixteen session, committees passed *Central CCP's resolution on several great issues of building harmonious society*. It emphasizes that social fairness and justice was the basic condition of social harmony. Follow the principle of fairness and justice, which is helpful to the steps of society running and sustainable development. Finally, the society that the community can do their best to live in harmony will be formed because the slogan of equality between men and women has its own limitations. That is why fairness and justice state-dominated and authoritative discourse was introduced into the field of gender study.

### 3.2 Theoretical analysis on gender equality and gender justice

Equality is halve, namely the equality of men and women, which emphasis on homogeneity of gender. Justice is to advocate the differences between men and women in remaining a reasonable limitation and harmony. The controversy of equality and justice is the problem of differences and similarities. Early liberalist feminism claimed that men and women had homogeneity and ignored men and women had physiological differences. Beauvoir from the point of view of rational denied gender differences. By the 1970s, post-structuralism feminist questioned the Beauvoir's statement, emphasized difference, the standard of male to require yourself is wrong. They think the view of the early feminist that female emulate male for the achievement of equality. This destroyed feminine image. They said that equality should not emphasis on homogeneity of gender but only be used in the short term strategy level. If exaggerated emphasis on that, dominant position of male will be strengthened, being bad for the change of the women's condition. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong put forward the slogan of "men and women alike", based on homogeneity of gender. Although Gender differences has have rationality, but in the immediate aftermath, the phenomenon of inequality will occur. As China's existing retirement policy, considering the physiological difference between men and women, female retire as early as five to 5-10 years than male, virtually women lost the chance of promotion, employment and raise like men. From gender equality to gender justice, this process is not the replacement but the harmonization of each other. This is a dialectical view about the problem of differences and similarities. Scholars recognize that in the specific social life, homogeneity of gender and gender differences are taken into account together, which is more helpful to the realization of real equality between men and women. Obviously, the process from gender equality to gender justice is the process of the neglect of sexual difference to

the ratification of differences to the harmonization of differences and similarity, performed the progress of gender consciousness.

#### **4 From Equality Between Men and Women to Gender Justice to Look at the Process of the Chinese Gender Awareness**

##### **4.1 Strengthen the difference of men and women and then make up for the shortcomings of homogeneity of sexes**

The slogan of equality between men and women advocates that women should obtain the same success as men. However, women were making themselves like men, and lost their main character gradually. Equal emphasis on the homogeneity of sexes, but often get the difference of sexes away. Engels pointed out that women's liberation was a prerequisite for participation in social work, as long as women who only engaged in the private labor of the family still was excluded from social productive labor. So the present and future of women's liberation and equality with men, is not in the cards. Under the guidance of the concept, women in society get rid of their own personality and gender who participate in social work like men, think that women's liberation is that self-identity is equivalent to the recognition of social role and participate in society productive labor, In contrast, women is not freedom. For instance, during the cultural revolution of women did not allow to have long hair, perm, wear high heels, skirts and colorful clothes, women allowed to wear army suit, which is shaping the image of women what recopy traditional Chinese culture of gender. Gender justice don't pursuit the same for men and women, but bases upon physiological differences and different need of both sexes, both sexes is given different treatment and women began to do different things with men. That shows that women had their own autonomy in the family and society. Country begins to consider the difference and justice of gender when drafting state policy. For instance, it is a concrete manifestation of gender justice that women can take maternity leave. From gender equality to gender justice, from emphasize homogeneity of gender to look at gender difference, country have realized the standard of equality for women and men, more and more humane and begin to focus on the feminine main body, which is the embodiment of the progress of gender consciousness .

##### **4.2 Enhance the awareness of gender sensitive, found the phenomenon of sex discrimination behind the basic national policy of equality between men and women**

Gender-sensitive consciousness refers the perspective of gender analysis must be added in the observation of various fields of social life to avoid the occurrence of gender discrimination and promote the harmonious development of the sexes. Since equality between men and women appears in the public domain in the form of basic state policy, there are some policies under the banner of equality and in the process of implementing existing gender inequality although the phenomenon of discrimination against women brazenly has disappeared gradually. Women have only got the formal equality, but could not achieve the final equality. Women can get the same career as men. However, they maybe lose opportunities because of maternity, and paid less than men on the reward. Equality policy is not beneficial to women necessarily, such as men and women get different payment with same work. In contrast,, the unequal policy will achieve real gender equality, such as men must fulfill military service at the present but women do not, just "inequality" may be benefited to the construction of the harmonious gender relationship. It is obviously that putting forward gender justice reflects that the raise of people's sensitive consciousness. People without gender sensitive consciousness, will not find out these implied unequal factors which behind the seemingly equal policy. As a result, the consciousness of social gender has slowly started to internalize the thinking activities of people.

##### **4.3 Expand the field of gender analysis, reduce the possibilities happen to gender-blindness**

Because equality regulate gender relations by the personality and legal rights, in specific field, people seldom use an angel to have a clear and objectively understanding of gender relations in life, still follow

the Chinese traditional gender notions to the existence of gender inequality, namely the phenomenon of gender-blindness. Gender justice solves the limitations of the theory of equality between men and women. People with the scales of justice to regulate the relations of gender, can find the society exist on a dominant and recessive gender inequality, to regulate the gender relations is not harmonious. From equality between men and women to gender justice, expanded the gender consciousness in Chinese ontology of practice, and to reduce the possibility of social gender blindness.

## **5 Conclusion**

Although early the slogan of equality between men and women in a certain extent broke on the situation that women were oppressed by patriarchal. But along with the change of social environment factors, such as the economic structural transformation and so on, the power of the slogan of equality between men and women was low gradually. Women were suppressed by the male power. Passes through the long-term historical precipitation, the concept of traditional gender was not fully removed from people's hearts, still affects the trend of gender relations. It is visible that the trend of gender relations must experience endless the process under the influence of our country special traditional culture. A discourse turn from equality of men and women to gender justice, it is to show the effort of the people, is the result of the promotion of gender consciousness. The author thinks that, as gender consciousness constantly improved, the discourse turn still occurs. Comparing equality between men and women and gender equality with gender justice, we can find that gender justice can promote the harmonious development of both sexes. Under the social environment with intricate, the new problem that affect gender relations is bound to appear constantly, then gender justice may not better to restrain. Therefore, we must always have gender sensitive consciousness. Once we find that the restriction of gender justice becomes weak, we will actively explore a new discourse that adapts to the social environment for making up for the limitations of gender justice.

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