



STUDIES ON CONTEMPORARY **CHINESE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT**

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Preface

I am greatly delighted by the publication of this book for it is the first book to fully contribute to the studies of the development of contemporary Chinese women.

My interest in feminism was initiated when *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*) by Simone de Beauvoir was first introduced to China. Then I was greatly impressed by feminism's unique critical perspectives. Therefore, when Yang Feng, a candidate for the doctoral degree under my supervision, proposed to research into human development from the perspective of gender, I readily encouraged her to explore this significant field. To my great pleasure, she has not only successfully completed her dissertation but also further polished it into this book.

During her three years' doctoral studies, Yang Feng had made great efforts to read closely a number of original and translated books on western feminism and grasped a variety of feminism theories ranging from John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft's libertarian feminism to

Gayle Rubin's gender system. Meanwhile, Yang Feng had devoted much more to the exploration of Chinese feminism, from the feminist thoughts proposed by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong in early 20th century to contemporary Chinese Marxist women theories. The abundance of accumulated material well ensured the success of Yang Feng's research work.

The first important characteristic of this book lies in its attempt to fill in the gap in the filed of human development research, namely to research into human development from the perspective of gender. Since 1980s, studies on human development have been enriched and expanded both in theory and practice. Human development researches have been investigated and inquired into from multiple dimensions. However, little has been done to examine human development from the perspective of gender. In fact, the ignorance of gender in studies on human development would naturally obscure human's self - understanding. Therefore, it is highly necessary to study human development from the perspective of gender, which will be helpful not only to the full understanding of men and women but to the comprehensive understanding of human itself. Just as Western feminist Valerie Bryson holds, "any political theories would inevitably be one - sided and poor if feminist thoughts were overlooked," studies on human development, even any kind of human researches, should not disregard the perspective of gender. This book aims to study women's development from the perspective of gender. Focusing on Chinese women in the social transforming period, it analyses why they need the development and how they advance the development. It relates the problems concerning Chinese women's development to human development researches, hence enriching and

ferent expectations and regulations for men and women in social roles, temperaments and manners. This book probes into gender from the following four aspects. First, gender reflects social relationships between men and women. Second, gender is solidly based on social regulations and systems. Third, gender manifests a whole set of social notions and ideologies concerning social roles, temperaments and manners of men and women. Fourth, gender is the result of social construction based on sex.

2. Human's development

How to define human directly determines how to develop human. All through the history ideologists have provided various explanations of human essence and human development. According to Marxism, human essence is concerned with human laboring practice, human sociality, human consciousness and human individuality. As a result, human development contains the corresponding four parts: the improvement of laboring competence, the development of social relationships, the upgrading of consciousness and the enrichment of individuality. Firstly, human development is primarily about the development of human's laboring ability. Marx expounded in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* that as a generic feature of humans, free and conscious laboring activities are the most fundamental feature which distinguishes humans from animals. As a special species, humans are both the products and subjects of labor. Humans exist, evolve and develop with the appearance and improvement of labor. Through laboring, humans change the objective world and themselves. Through the development of

laboring activities, humans develop themselves. In this sense, human development just means the development of human labor and human laboring abilities. Secondly, the core of human development is the development of social relationships. In *Theses on the Outline of Feuerbach*, Marx holds that in practical sense human essence is the integration of all social relationships. Being both the products and subjects of social relationships, a human's existence is inevitably determined by his position in the specific social relationship systems, and human development finds realistic expression in the specific social relationship reforms. In this sense, human development means the popularity of social communications and humans' management of social relationships. Thirdly, human's spiritual upgrading is another significant aspect of human development. In the process of laboring practice, humans develop their thoughts, notions and ideas into a diversified spiritual world. The development of spiritual world mainly involves the deepening of human cognition, the improvement of morals and concepts, and the promotion of aesthetic faculties. Fourthly, the enrichment of individuality is the ultimate goal of human development. An integrated human is the unity of natural existence, social existence and spiritual existence. Humans' natural, social and spiritual attributes all contribute to humans' individuality. Humans need to enrich their individualities by integrating all the attributes based on social practice. The enrichment of individualities is closely linked to human development. In *Anti - Dühring*, Engels points out clearly: "The whole world cannot be well developed without humans' emancipation", and in *Capital*, Marx expounds that "Each human's free and all - round development is taken as a basic principle of communist society".

Introduction

At the turn of the century, Jiang Zenmin remarked in his speech at the 80th anniversary of Chinese Communist Party, “Based on the development of socialist material civilization and spiritual civilization, we should commit ourselves to human’s development in an all – round way.” Later, “promoting human’s development in an all – round way” was reiterated in the report of the 16th National Congress of CPC. That is to say, both our Party and government have made “all – round development of human beings” a key goal of social development. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the 4th World Conference on Women, Jiang Zenmin, on behalf of Chinese government, promised solemnly to the whole world, “Chinese government has always held the equality of men and women as an important gauge of social civilization. Since the foundation of People’s Republic of China, Chinese women have become the masters of the state and the society. We attach great importance to the development and progress of women. The equality of men and women has been stipulated as a basic state policy to promote

China's social development. " It is clear that the promotion of women development is one of the significant missions of China in the 21st century. Therefore, sufficient attention should be paid to women development researches.

I. Basic concepts

1. Gender

As a loanword, gender originally refers to a grammatical category, so it has no equivalent in Chinese. In the middle of the 20th century, in order to confront the then prevalent "Feminine Mystique", which advocated biological determinism and claimed "a good wife and loving mother" was the single ultimate goal for women, some Western feminists began to adopt "gender" to differentiate it from sex. Gender was later developed into a core concept of feminism. American scholar Gayle Rubin was the first to apply gender in this sense. In 1975, he put forward that the task of women's studies was to probe into how the society constructs gender based on sex. Henceforth gender was taken as the term different from sex. In 1980s, the concept of gender had been clarified and widely accepted in the West. Circa a decade later "gender" was introduced to China.

"Gender" has been defined in many ways, but Western feminists all agree that gender is the result of historical, cultural and social construction instead of being determined by biological differences. Gender emphasizes social differences between men and women, specifically dif-

deepening human development researches.

The second feature of this book is that it makes a thorough survey of contemporary Chinese women's development from the perspective of general human development, thus presenting a panoramic view of contemporary Chinese women's development. Since China's reform and opening - up to the outside world in the late 1970s, a series of problems concerning women's development, such as being full - time housewives or career women, laid - off women workers, the prejudice against women college graduates in employment, have gradually emerged and aroused heated debates in the society. These problems seem to be marginal for many people and have never been substantively solved. Under this circumstance, some Chinese scholars on women's development depend wholly on western feminist theories; some rely totally on domestic women liberation theories to find effective solutions. They tend to confine their studies only to women and women problems instead of introducing and applying human theories to the researches of women's development. According to human theories, women should first be considered as human and be endowed with all the attributes and features of human. Women's liberation means human's liberation in essence, and women's development is closely concerned with human development. Therefore, Marxist human theories should be taken as the starting point and theoretical background in the investigation of Chinese women's liberation and development. Based on the combination of human development theories with feminist theories, this book has made deep analysis of the problems concerning women's development in contemporary China and put forward realistic solutions to these problems.

Women development research is a significant field and requires

more efforts. This book has set a good beginning for Yang Feng's future research work. I expect more books by Yang Feng to be published.

Zhong Minghua

July 2007

3. Women's development

The concept of "women development" emerged in the field of Chinese women studies at the turn of the century. With the profound exploration of human development theoretically and practically, many scholars have made women development studies as a fresh perspective and provided their definitions of women development. Li Jingzhi holds that women development belongs to the subsystem of human development, and it is to research into what can be done to promote women development and how women develop themselves. According to Yang Xiaoning and Li Ping, "women development should neither wholly rely on human development theories in general nor be the reproduction of men development modes. Women development studies, with women's attributes as starting points, should probe into the essence of women's life and reveal women's spiritual world." In brief, women development is the process of self - realization and self - surpassing in which women should constantly shake off external restrictions and transcend internal obstacles so as to obtain an all - round development.

To be specific, two significant aspects will be covered in women development. First, the final goal of women development is to have free, all - round and sufficient development, which is in consistent with human development. In content, women development indicates the comprehensive development of women's capability, sociality, spirituality and individuality. In essence, just as Marx points out "all emancipation is a reduction of the human world and relationships to man himself," the essence of women's emancipation is a reduction of the human world

and relationships to women. That is to say, women will be liberated from the social relationships of gender inequality and be ensured to enjoy their human dignity and independent personality so as to achieve free and all – round development. Second, women development conforms to women's attributes and features. As an indispensable end of gender spectrum, women development has distinctive characteristics different from men development. The most important characteristic is the liberation from sex inequality of any form and to achieve gender equality in real sense, which is the core content and objective of women development. As the main obstacle to women development, gender oppression and inequality have constrained women's capability, sociality, spirituality and individuality, distorted women's real being and value. Another characteristic is the free demonstration of women's unique values and the development of women's attributes and features.

The two aspects of women development are complementary and interrelated. On one hand, women development must make general human development its value target and value orientation. Women and women development should be integrated into the researching system of humans and human development. In this way, women's subordinate gender position which has been constantly emphasized in male power culture could be adjusted and women development could get rid of the restrictions and control from male power culture. On the other hand, women development studies must start from women's attributes and features. In this way the reproduction of men development and the application of men standards could be well avoided in the studies of women development.

II. The current researching situation

1. Studies on human development

Since the late 1970s, studies on human theories have been deepened and expanded to focus on human development researches. Studies on human development have been carried out both in theory and in practice from 1990s. Four theoretical aspects are remarkably explored. The first is concerned with the objects of human development studies. General and integrated humans are the focus of human development studies which aim to present a panoramic view of human development, including humans' prospect, human essences and historical law of human development. The second is about the content of human development studies. It is widely accepted that human development studies cover the development of human's species attributes, namely humans' laboring abilities, the development of social attributes and the development of individuality. The third is concerned with the historical laws of human development studies. Based on Marx's "three phases" of human development, scholars usually probe into the historical laws of human development from the perspectives of individual competence, social bases of individual development and ways of individual realization. The fourth aspect is about conditions of human development. From the perspective of comprehensive conditions, internal factors, external factors and dynamic factors should be covered in the studies. From the perspective of social conditions, productivity, social systems and cultures

will be analyzed in the studies. From the perspective of human, the changes of labor nature, the increase of labor time and the diversification of social relationships will all have some effects on human development.

In addition to theoretical exploration of human development, since the late 1990s, scholars have made more efforts to relate human development studies to socialist market economy. Such realistic studies mainly concentrate on human bases of socialist market economy, effects of socialist market economy on human development, effects of socialist market economy on humans' values and morals, and the relationships between transformation of economic system and that of personalities.

In general, current studies on human development tend to make more abstract and logical analysis with the focus on deduction and induction of concepts and notions. In fact, human development is more concerned with practical issues than theoretical discussions. Therefore, human development studies should come closer to real life and make specific survey of real persons' practices.

In modern China, the construction of a well - off society has set the promotion of humans' all round development as a target. Against this background, women development studies have drawn more attention and become a significant part of human development. The reasons can be investigated as follows:

Firstly, women development is an important part of humans' all - round development. According to Marx and Engles, in the society of gender equality, both men and women could achieve free and all - round development. Marx expresses clearly in *Communist manifesto* that "...do away with the status of women as mere instruments of pro-

duction.... so as to attain each person's free and all - round development. " In *Anti - Dühring*, Engles points out: "It goes without saying that society cannot free itself unless every individual is freed. The old mode of production must therefore be revolutionized from top to bottom, and in particular the former division of labor must disappear.... on the other hand, productive labor, instead of being a means of subjugating men, will become a means of their emancipation, by offering each individual the opportunity to develop all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions and exercise them to the full — in which, therefore, productive labor will become a pleasure instead of being a burden. " Clearly, what Marx and Engles emphasize is each person's free and all - round development, which certainly includes women's all - round development.

Secondly, women development is the important condition for the realization of humans' all - round development. Marx and Engles hold that human being, as the inborn product of the society, could only develop their attributes and personalities in the society. So how a person develops depends on how the persons he contacts develop. In *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engles indicate clearly "free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. " From the perspective of the relationships between humans and the society, women have the same basic interests as the whole society. Women's development is interrelated with the whole social members' development. That means in any given society the degree of woman's development is the natural measure of the general development.

Thirdly, the exploration of women development in the socialist society is a fresh new Marxist subject. In their works, Marx and Engles

have not specially expounded women development. What they have emphasized is women emancipation in the capitalist society, such as the evolution of women's social positions, the forms and causes of women's oppression, the necessity of and conditions for women emancipation, the relationship between women liberation movements and the proletarian revolution, and the construction of women organizations and the cultivation of women representatives. Therefore, in the age of capitalism, the core aims of women movements were to get rid of exploitation and oppression, both class oppression and sex oppression, so as to achieve women's emancipation. As for women development in the age of post capitalism, Marx and Engels have not given direct descriptions, but they have presented a prospect of new human being in future society in which women would have shaken off all oppressions and enjoyed real equality. They have constantly held that women's emancipation and development must have as the precondition the eradication of class exploitation and sex oppression, just as Engels says in *Letter to Gertrud Guillaume - Schack*, "I admit I am more interested in the health of the future generations than in the absolute formal equality between the sexes during the last years of the capitalist mode of production. It is my conviction that real equality between women and men can come true only when the exploitation of either by capital has been abolished and private housework has been transformed into a public industry." However, in real socialist countries, due to their low level of productivity, equality between women and men in all fields is still the primary target of women development and the necessary condition for women's all-round development and the general human development. Therefore, current studies on women development are a new Marxist subject,