Gender Equality: Analysis of the Current Status and Suggestions for Future Development

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Abstract. This study centers on the current situation and future direction of gender equality. In the backdrop of global modernization, although women have extensively participated in social production and awakened to their rights consciousness, structural gender inequality remains deeply entrenched. Men still dominate social resources and decision-making processes. Traditional family concepts restrain women's freedom, and gender discrimination in the workplace remains prevalent. Despite the vigorous emergence feminist movements, improper thoughts and online public opinion have aggravated the confrontation between men and women, impeding the progress of gender equality. This study conducts a comparative analysis of the stances on gender equality at home and abroad, traces the historical roots of gender inequality from prehistoric society to capitalist society, and reveals the underlying social structure and economic foundation. A critical examination of the current gender equality ideology reveals issues such as an excessive emphasis on ideology while neglecting the realistic foundation, the pursuit of equality yet tacitly accepting male "privileges", women's empowerment confined by the male-dominated framework, blurred boundaries between equality and consumerism, differentiated interests within feminism, and the confrontation between men and women. Based on this, this study proposes future strategies for promoting gender equality, emphasizing the need to transform the realistic foundation, enhance women's social value, increase women's access to social resources and voice, and strengthen social consensus and cooperation to drive the substantive development of the cause of gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality, social structure, economic foundation, feminist movement, confrontation between men and women.

1. Introduction

In the global context of widespread modernization, rapid economic development and continuous innovation in network technology, women are playing greater roles in social production and awakening their awareness of rights. However, structural gender inequality still objectively exists in many countries/regions, where the majority of social resources and decision-making bodies remain controlled by men. Traditional male-dominated family concepts continue to limit the freedom and rights of some women. Crimes and violent incidents targeting women due to physiological differences between genders still exist, workplace discrimination against women is common, and some patriarchal ideas continue to oppress women in the spiritual realm.

As women's awareness of gender issues grows, resisting crimes against women and advocating for their rights have become a consensus among women in many regions in China. However, during the feminist movement, various inappropriate ideas have emerged, exacerbating gender antagonism. Some feminist ideas have been misappropriated and distorted, spreading widely on the Internet, causing significant negative social impacts, and undermining the pursuit of gender equality and the protection of human rights.

In the West, American feminist thought has been severely demonized, and political struggles have turned it into a formality that has little real effect on genuine human rights protection, resulting in the current trend of "political correctness."

In the East, countries like China, Japan, and South Korea, with long feudal histories, still experience significant remnants of patriarchal ideas. Feminism in Japan and South Korea has at times become extreme, failing to address gender issues meaningfully and instead intensifying social conflicts. China, featuring five thousand years of feudal social thought, combined with its ongoing

development and the incomplete spread of modern higher education, also shows evident gender contradictions. Feminist thought that can take root in a socialist country has not matured, leading to domestic feminist movements being influenced and distorted by Western capitalist ideologies. The pursuit of gender equality is in a predicament and faces many threats.

Therefore, it is evident that the issue of gender equality is a severe problem that the entire international community must confront.

2. Basic Positions Domestically and Internationally

2.1. International positions

The issue of gender equality is a widely discussed topic worldwide. The development of equality ideologies is most advanced in Europe and North America due to their higher levels of economic development and public education. Some Nordic countries have essentially achieved overall gender equality. The proportion of women in various sectors in Europe and North America is also quite high. However, due to political struggles, feminism in these regions, particularly in the U.S., has been distorted, taking a path that does not contribute effectively to the maintenance of women's rights.

In East Asia, feminist thought has started relatively late, and the lingering social gender contradictions due to a long feudal history are quite severe. Influenced by Western ideas, East Asian feminism, led by Japan and South Korea, has not formed a scientifically systematic theory suitable for local conditions, leading to serious social contradictions and not contributing sufficiently to the development of equality.

Some backward and war-torn regions, such as the Middle East and Africa, have not fully entered a modern society that meets basic living needs, where the ideas of gender equality are even more backward or have yet to emerge, with many women still living under oppression.

2.2. Domestic positions

In China, Mao Zedong once said, "The day women rise up across the country will be the day of victory for the Chinese revolution." As a socialist country based on Marxist thought, China seeks to protect not only the rights of the proletariat but also the rights of women as a "double proletariat."

Friedrich Engels, in The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, posits that capitalism and patriarchy jointly exert dual oppression on women. Due to physiological differences and pre-capitalist social structures, men acquired private property before women, leading to working-class women being exploited as both proletarians in class relations and as property in familial relations. Under capitalism, men serve as the primary labor force, while women can work as laborers but, due to their reproductive capabilities, are also seen as means of production, creating a continuous supply of new labor for capital circulation. Thus, in the eyes of the profit-maximizing bourgeoisie, if women enter the workforce, their reproductive value diminishes. To ensure a continuous increase in labor supply, the bourgeoisie is reluctant to welcome women into employment, leading to gender discrimination in the production field. Consequently, women find it difficult to compete equally with men in the workforce, and most women are left to marry and bear children, hindering their economic independence and positioning them as proletarians within the family, subjected to dual oppression by both the bourgeoisie and male workers. [1]

Engels objectively and comprehensively points out the issue of gender inequality in capitalist modern societies, becoming a precursor to modern feminism. The socialist thoughts of Marx and Engels, as guiding ideologies in China, naturally align with the protection of women's rights.

However, politically, as a socialist country, China's approach to protecting human rights differs from that of Western capitalist countries, making the implementation of women's rights within the legal framework a challenging issue. China currently lacks precedents to follow, and with thousands of years of feudal history, the remnants of patriarchal thought remain significant, making it difficult to resolve these issues in the short term. This has resulted in problems within the construction of women's rights protection in China. For example, the "crime of hooliganism" at the founding of the

new China led to many unreasonable convictions and judicial chaos due to vague criteria for defining the crime. Today, although the gender equality cause still has a long way to go, China's economic development is insufficient to maximally support the interests of vulnerable groups, and a gender equality ideology suitable for China's national conditions has yet to emerge. Additionally, Chinese feminist thought is distorted by capitalist ideology, and a more robust legal system to protect women's rights has not been fully established. Therefore, enabling women to participate more fairly and widely in social production and achieving gender equality will be a long journey both in China and around the world.

3. Social and Historical Roots of Gender Inequality

The issue of gender equality is a widely discussed topic globally. As a woman, I have also engaged in deep and extensive reflection on this issue. Currently, particularly in my country, feminist thought is developing rapidly; however, I believe there are many misconceptions within this discourse.

First of all, we need to discuss: why has the issue of gender equality become such a hot topic in contemporary society, and why is it still unresolved?

I believe that gender conflict is the most enduring conflict among all human societal conflicts. Gender will always exist and will not change; perhaps class and racial differences may fade or even disappear with changes in social forms and deeper globalization. However, the differentiation of gender is something that can never change. Thus, the conflicts and inequalities between the sexes are issues that humanity must confront and address.

However, when discussing gender equality, we cannot solely focus on the contradictions inherent in gender itself. Since these contradictions exist within human society, they must be examined in conjunction with the era and social form.

3.1. Historical roots of gender inequality in prehistoric societies

In prehistoric or primitive societies, gender conflicts can be simply reduced to the natural physiological differences between the sexes: men generally possess greater physical strength than women, resulting in women being at a disadvantage in mere physical confrontations. In the absence of a moral or legal framework in prehistoric societies, this physical disadvantage often placed women in passive positions.

3.2. Historical roots of gender inequality in feudal societies

In feudal societies, gender conflicts primarily arise from societal structural demands. The basic system of feudal society is land ownership by landlords, where the ruling class monopolizes land, controlling peasants who are dependent on the land, effectively making them perform unpaid labor. To stabilize this self-sufficient economy, the ruling class tightly binds peasants to the land, compelling them to labor continuously. The ruling class promotes ideologies such as "the Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues," utilizing the feudal marriage system to deeply tie the peasant class to land labor through familial structures. The thoughts of the ruled class are controlled through kinship systems, ensuring they remain anchored to their families and land.

The agricultural production model inevitably favors men, who become the primary labor force. In familial relationships, fathers often act as rulers, engaging in production work, while mothers bear children, responsible for reproducing the labor force. Sons, upon reaching adulthood, establish new families, becoming rulers of their households, while daughters marry, assuming reproductive responsibilities for other men. To maintain this stable production model, ideologies like "the father as the guide for the son," "the husband as the guide for the wife" and "the ruler as the guide for the subjects" emerged. Wives were expected to serve their husbands—who dominated family relationships—by bearing children and managing household affairs, thus allowing men to engage in productive labor. Children were required to obey their parents' decisions; sons inherited their fathers' labor responsibilities while daughters inherited their mothers' reproductive duties. This system

ensured that generations of peasants remained tied to land production, perpetuating the kinship hierarchy.

In feudal society, production occurred at the family level, and when viewed through a lens of class relations, lower-status families had to submit to higher-status ones—small landlords were subordinate to larger landlords, and ultimately, the emperor ruled over society. The ideological superstructure of the "Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues" was closely integrated with the economic base of agrarian society, maintaining a stable social order for feudal society. During this phase, due to low productivity and reliance on physical labor, women, burdened by natural physical disadvantages, were largely confined to domestic roles, responsible for childbirth and caring for husbands. All private property was controlled by men who engaged in production, leaving women with no property rights and no means to integrate into society. Thus, marriage during the feudal era was fundamentally a form of dependency; women had to rely on marriage for survival, often selling their own labor. This dependency meant women had to submit to men, making them, in many respects, akin to commodities without autonomy, existing merely as objects attached to men. This is often referred to in feminist discourse as "objectification"—the relationship between the sexes being one of dependency, where women, much like slaves in slave societies, lacked agency: husbands could divorce wives, while wives could not end marriages at will. Children were assigned to the father's lineage, obeying the father's family rather than the mother's. Men retained family wealth, while women married into other families to serve the men of those families. Wealthy men could take multiple wives, while women became tools for showcasing male social status, bought and sold as commodities. Practices like "foot binding"emerged [2]as expressions of patriarchal society's objectification of women. Restrictions on women's education, employment, and participation in production, alongside the expectations of the "Three Obedience and Four Virtues," were designed to solidify male-dominated social structures and facilitate the operations of smallholder economies, preventing women from obtaining education and developing consciousness that could lead to resistance. Therefore, there is a significant gap in social status between women and men, and women do not have the right to speak. Correspondingly, the language and culture nurtured by social reality inevitably carry discriminatory colors towards women.

Thus, the compatibility of patriarchy with smallholder agricultural production was extremely high, leading to the peak of patriarchal development during this period.

However, in essence, patriarchy and feudalism are distinct concepts. Patriarchy cannot exist as an independent social form; it must emerge alongside compatible socio-economic conditions and exert its influence. The discussion above pertains to the patriarchy of the feudal era, where production tools relied on human physical labor. Social production could only operate smoothly on the basis of traditional family units. In this period, patriarchy was particularly solid and coherent. However, different countries exhibited variations in their feudal patriarchal systems[3]: in regions rich in resources, such as China, where environmental conditions favored agriculture, feudal rule became more stable and complete, relying solely on self-sufficient smallholder economies. In contrast, European countries, characterized by limited land area, diverse climatic conditions, and scarce resources, could not sustain their societies solely through agricultural means; thus, they required commerce, trade, and even colonial expansion to compensate for their weaker development conditions.

Feudal smallholder economies are essentially characterized by slow cyclical development. Due to the significant natural limitations on this production mode, individuals find it challenging to upgrade technology and are stuck in a "planting-harvesting" routine, with little to no competitive relationships. Each individual merely aims to meet their family's basic needs on their own land. Consequently, the productivity growth rate of agrarian economies is extremely slow, which explains why China's feudal era, predominantly agrarian, endured for thousands of years. In contrast, European feudal economies were not exclusively agricultural; they relied on commerce, trade, and colonial expansion to supplement the inherent disadvantages of agricultural production. Once these regions connected with the outside world through trade and colonization, they began to break through the closed nature of

feudal economies, leading to rapid innovation in productivity, production technology, and ideas. The development of capitalist industry and commerce eventually dismantled feudal economies, causing European nations to experience a shorter feudal period than China, and they entered the Industrial Revolution and capitalist production methods earlier.

3.3. Historical roots of gender inequality in capitalist societies

As the world transitioned from feudalism to capitalism, the characteristics of patriarchal societies naturally changed. The rise of large factories replaced the original family workshops, and industrialization and globalization dismantled the closed smallholder economy. Physical labor ceased to be the primary form of social division and leadership. With advancements in industry and technology, many simple tasks could now be performed by machines, leading to a greater need for high-level laborers capable of complex tasks and intellectual work. Consequently, the physical differences between genders had a noticeably reduced impact on social production, allowing women to enter the labor market.

During this period, production technology significantly improved compared to feudal times. The advancement of technology enhanced productivity, which, in turn, spurred rapid economic growth. This economic acceleration, alongside the wave of globalization, broadened people's horizons and led to the emergence of more advanced ideas. The rapid development of private ownership and globalization brought about fierce competition within classes, driving productivity increases and prompting individuals to recognize social contradictions, including the rise of female consciousness.

From this period onwards, as women gained the right to education and entry into the labor market, they began to develop a sense of agency, becoming aware of various forms of oppression faced by women and starting to consciously resist. Today, with further economic development, increased educational opportunities, and the widespread influence of the internet, the pursuit of gender equality has become a shared consensus among women.

4. Analysis and Critique of The Current State of Gender Equality Development, Along with Suggestions

4.1. Overview of the basic logic of contemporary gender inequality

Although gender equality has significantly improved compared to the past, gender contradictions still exist under the current capitalist dominant background, impacting society.

The foundational logic of gender contradictions in a capitalist society has been mentioned in question (2). In summary, while capitalism is more advanced than feudalism, it still operates on the family as the basic social unit, just in a broader context. Moreover, capitalism remains a class-based society founded on private property. The ruling class, driven by profit, leads to a situation where women, despite being allowed into the labor market, are often valued more for their reproductive capabilities than their labor value (as new labor force production is essential for societal economic operations). As a result, women still face workplace discrimination, have less career advancement compared to men, and may be compelled to return to domestic roles, thus remaining in a relatively passive position. Hence, it can be seen that capitalism still relies on patriarchy to maintain social order, albeit in different forms.

The above summarizes the basic logic of contemporary gender-structured inequality. The following is my reflection on some important aspects of the current gender equality movement worth discussing.

4.2. Critical analysis and suggestions on important topics in contemporary gender equality

4.2.1. Contemporary gender equality discourse overemphasizes ideas while lacking in-depth analysis of reality

In today's gender equality discourse, especially in China, women fiercely oppose patriarchal ideas such as "son preference" and "male supremacy." While this criticism is valid and can lead to social progress, many women may not recognize that these ideas are supported by a particular social foundation: the reason patriarchal thinking is more pronounced in China and East Asia than in the West is the historical depth and longevity of feudal patriarchy. China's feudal period lasted for thousands of years, while the feudal era in the West was much shorter (the most advanced thinker, the United States, never truly experienced feudalism). As previously discussed, the depth and breadth of patriarchal oppression during feudal times were most profound, meaning that the legacies of such ideas persist more strongly in regions with longer feudal histories.

Furthermore, contemporary Western countries are mostly developed nations with advanced economies and production technologies, leading to more progressive ideas. In contrast, China still has large rural areas where patriarchal thinking is rooted in agricultural economies. Additionally, many families lack sufficient economic strength, making patriarchal ideas almost inevitable. In some remote villages, traditional patriarchal marriage views are still very severe, even leading to serious issues such as human trafficking. These cannot be solved merely through improvements in thought; significant changes in the underlying realities are necessary. Thus, comparing China with Western countries with fundamentally different realities has limited practical significance.

Therefore, while it is correct to criticize patriarchal thought, women must not stop at addressing ideas alone. Having a realistic foundation that can accept advanced thoughts is crucial for practical implementation. Devoting efforts to support education for girls in rural areas, improving rural economies, and creating more social positions for marginalized women is far more practical than merely critiquing and correcting thoughts.

4.2.2. Pursuing equality while accepting some "privileges" granted by patriarchal society

Currently, women pursue equality, hoping to achieve equal employment standards and eliminate workplace gender discrimination; social resources should be directed toward capable women to ensure gender equality in social status; in gender relations, men should understand gender differences and interact on an equal footing. These ideas should be encouraged. However, it is essential not to accept "privileges"granted to women under patriarchal contexts while pursuing equality. Examples include "ladies first," expectations for men to be "gentlemen," and male roles in relationships as those to be depended upon.

While these privileges may seem beneficial, they are part of patriarchal thinking. Such privileges, when compared to the injustices faced by women in patriarchal societies, are trivial yet can obscure and even reinforce these injustices. The ideas of "ladies first" and "gentlemen" appear to stem from the belief that women are physically weaker than men. Yet, if we consider that physical strength among racial groups varies, why isn't there a concept of "yellow-skinned people first"? Furthermore, men also have physical strength disparities among themselves; why is there no admonition that "men must not hit women" but rather "no one should hit those weaker than themselves"?

From this, we can conclude that these seemingly advantageous privileges do not arise from natural physiological differences but rather from unequal social standing. In a patriarchal society, where men are the primary figures controlling production and resources, while women are secondary and dependent on men, this hierarchy continues to subtly influence societal operations. Though the distinctions are less extreme now, the foundational logic remains consistent.

Moreover, such privileges can inadvertently reinforce women’s secondary status. Beliefs such as "ladies first"can lead women to perceive themselves as the weaker party in need of help; men taking on dependent roles may cause women to view themselves as reliant on their partners, thus affecting their independence and reinforcing societal expectations for women to fulfill reproductive responsibilities.

Finally, some unsupportive men use these privileges to argue that women's status is already sufficiently high, thereby obscuring true inequality and creating public opinion that sees women's rights movements as unreasonable, hindering the pursuit of gender equality.

Thus, women must recognize that these superficial privileges do not yield genuine benefits but instead represent a mild, misleading manifestation of patriarchal thought. In striving for equality, women should not only oppose the injustices they face but also remain vigilant against such deceptive privileges. Refusing to accept these so-called "privileges"is an integral part of advancing the cause of gender equality.

4.2.3. Redefining women, but not only within the framework of patriarchal society

In today's discourse advocating for gender equality, a significant portion of the narrative is focused on redefining women in response to the stigmatization and misunderstandings perpetuated by patriarchal society, acknowledging and celebrating women's excellence. While this perspective is undoubtedly correct and is necessary for awakening women's consciousness by shedding patriarchal stereotypes, almost all discussions aimed at redefining women are confined within the framework of patriarchal society. They fail to genuinely consider equality or even feminism from a higher standpoint. The following examples illustrate this point:

4.2.3.1 Praising certain "feminine qualities" while criticizing "masculine qualities"

For instance, many women are striving to break free from the stereotypes of being "indecisive" or "emotional" that patriarchal society has imposed on them, emphasizing that qualities like gentleness and sensitivity are also commendable. At the same time, they criticize the negative impacts of socially revered masculine qualities such as courage and rationality, highlighting that these traits can also embody violence and emotional neglect. Some opinions even vehemently oppose all masculine traits, arguing that society should not solely acknowledge and celebrate masculine qualities while stigmatizing and hiding feminine ones. This mindset aims to combat patriarchal stereotypes against women and foster self-acceptance among women, thus promoting the advancement of feminism. However, it overlooks a critical point: the so-called feminine qualities being redefined may not inherently belong to women; rather, they have been shaped and conditioned by the patriarchal social structure.[3]

When men are seen as the primary agents responsible for social production and women as the secondary agents responsible for childbirth and home care, it becomes necessary to educate men with an open approach, fostering aspirations toward bravery, combativeness, and toughness to encourage their emergence in society. Conversely, to ensure that women accept the responsibilities of childbearing and family care, conservative education is employed to limit their aspirations for social integration, instilling in them the recognition of gentleness, empathy, and restraint. Thus, the qualities being redefined as feminine are, in fact, labels designed by the patriarchal society for the second sex, just more advanced and aligned with contemporary values compared to the traditional "three obedience and four virtues."

In everyday life, we can see that girls are expected to be interested in dolls and idol dramas, while boys are thought to be inclined toward cars and action films. This is why the concept of "gender traits" arises—it stems from societal dictates. The stigma against feminine traits exists because social production is the direct driving force of societal advancement, creating tangible social value visible to all, while the responsibilities of home care remain hidden behind social production. Despite the fact that without family stability there can be no stability in social production, the latter is often overlooked. Patriarchal society naturally prioritizes and celebrates masculine traits while neglecting the invisible contributions of women who care for the home. This is also the root of the so-called "misogyny"—it arises not from a hatred of women per se but from a desire to maintain the unequal socioeconomic structure that positions men as the first sex and women as the second.

Many women are also striving for societal recognition of their interests. Hobbies traditionally associated with men, such as sports and military pursuits, are often regarded as valuable, while hobbies associated with women, like fan culture and beauty, are seen as frivolous or even shameful. This issue mirrors previous points; these hobbies are not inherently "female" or "male" but are social

constructs developed to reinforce the economic foundation of patriarchy. Men, given their societal role as producers, are educated from a young age through narratives centered on honor, the world, and technology, leading many men to naturally adopt such interests. Women, assigned the role of maintaining the family, are instead educated in narratives related to entertainment, aesthetics, and emotions, making them less interested in the ideologies of social production and more inclined to accept their responsibilities in maintaining the home.

Consequently, the societal dismissal of "women's hobbies" is inevitable, as society prioritizes production over familial maintenance (only social production can directly create societal value), thus only recognizing ideologies designed for production.[4]

Therefore, while many women are redefining and promoting their consciousness, they must not confine themselves to the labels constructed by patriarchal society. The qualities of bravery and rationality are not "feminine traits" simply because they have not been assigned to women by patriarchal structures; qualities like gentleness and sensitivity can be positive, but they are ultimately labels designed for women to reinforce patriarchal society. Women should not narrowly criticize or praise certain traits; rather, they need to reflect on why these traits are exclusively designed for men and why women are not given the opportunity to embody these traits. Women should celebrate not "feminine traits" but the excellent qualities exhibited by women; what we need is not societal recognition of so-called "women's hobbies" (since these hobbies are assigned to women precisely because they lack societal acknowledgment) but to question why society only classifies certain interests as "women's hobbies."

The concepts of "gender traits" and "gender hobbies" arise from the unequal status of men and women, and while women's consciousness awakening and redefining themselves is a progressive endeavor, it must not be limited to the frameworks constructed by patriarchy. Even if it seems self-consistent, it ultimately follows the patriarchal ideology that views women as the second sex. Being confident in these "feminine traits" is essentially to be confident in the labels assigned by patriarchal society. Only when genuine social equality is achieved can individuals freely develop their own traits, allowing women to choose for themselves rather than conforming to traits prescribed by society or the "feminine traits" required by patriarchal structures. Thus, this self-consistency is not conducive to the rapid advancement of the equality movement in the long run.

Women's pursuit of equality must not be content with the "self-consistency" within the patriarchal framework. They must transcend this perspective and genuinely consider what forms of consciousness will emerge when women become the first sex or when both genders are regarded as equal. They should lead the endeavor of redefining women and promoting women's consciousness awakening with an ideology that embodies feminism and gender equality. It is crucial to contemplate how to effectively elevate women's social status, enabling them to stand on equal footing with men in the production sphere, breaking free from the constraints of the second sex, and supporting genuine initiatives that can enhance women's social standing, as well as exploring real social reforms that could facilitate this elevation. (For example, the primary factors obstructing women's economic independence and limiting their development in production are the societal need for women's reproductive value. If women wish to gain more opportunities in production, they must address the conflict between surplus value and productive value. Women's desire for childbirth inevitably hampers their participation in social production in terms of time and energy. Currently, many women reject childbirth, but this does not address the root of the issue. Society objectively still requires women to fulfill their surplus value to create labor force. Merely rejecting childbirth will not change societal needs, and it will not fundamentally alter the unwelcome environment for women in production, nor will it provide more spacious living conditions for women who choose to have children. Although this may improve women's status to some extent, it fails to solve the core problem. Therefore, women should focus more on how to change the realistic foundations that hinder their emergence as the first sex, such as promoting advancements in reproductive science and technology, allowing them to fulfill their reproductive responsibilities while minimizing the impact on their participation in social production.)

4.2.3.2 Advocating for women’s freedom, but not merely freedom

Today, many women recognize that in the past, they were socially forced into childbirth and childrearing, which limited their ability to develop in society according to their own desires. Consequently, contemporary women vigorously criticize these traditional notions, advocating for women’s independence and freedom.

In this advocacy, a mainstream perspective posits that "women should live according to their own interests." If this viewpoint stems from a rebellion against the feudal patriarchal control over women, then it is correct. However, if it is intended to pursue gender equality, this notion is still far from sufficient. Consider why society does not impose the idea of "just live according to your own interests" on men, the predominant figures in society. This is because men, as the primary holders of social resources and production, exist in a first-position capacity, and society must demand that men achieve something rather than merely live freely. Only by driving men with this perspective can societal production progress and maintain the status quo of social resources being largely held by men, thus sustaining the stability of patriarchal society.[5]

Therefore, women should contemplate that if they only pursue a free life without striving for achievements in society, they will never possess equal social resources as men. The patriarchal societal framework will continue to operate. Perhaps women with good economic conditions can live as they wish, but within this framework, women from lower strata will have no choices, ultimately having to comply with the requirements of patriarchal society. Therefore, pursuing gender equality and striving to liberate women from the conditions of the second sex cannot merely be about self-consistency in independence and freedom. This is merely the first step of feminism’s separation from patriarchal ideology; however, to genuinely enable women to attain more social resources and achieve social status comparable to or exceeding that of men, there must be an advocacy for women to achieve success and become strong figures in society. Only with an increase in such women can the status of women genuinely change. (However, it is equally essential to support practical initiatives that genuinely enhance women’s social status and to explore real societal reforms that could facilitate this elevation, as mentioned earlier.)

4.2.3.3 Opposing patriarchal oppression in the spiritual realm requires a shift in perspective

Patriarchal society not only exerts oppression on women in material terms but also manifests similar phenomena in the spiritual realm. For example, the so-called "male gaze,"societal scrutiny of women’s clothing, and harsh standards regarding women’s appearances all reflect this. These forms of spiritual oppression parallel the "chastity gates" and foot-binding of feudal times, where men of high social status could choose women like products, while women, dependent on men for survival, had to prioritize their appearance to attract them. This results in the objectification of women as "dependents"of the second sex (since dependents are inherently positioned as objects, objectification becomes inevitable). Although women’s status has significantly improved compared to feudal times, society remains in a stage of patriarchal development, continuing to position men as the first sex and women as the second, thus the objectification of the second sex persists, albeit in different forms.

Currently, mainstream views among women resisting the spiritual oppression of patriarchal thought are somewhat limited. For instance, when some men gaze at women in revealing clothing with ill intentions, many women strongly resist this, advocating for "freedom of dress" for women to gain societal respect. However, consider the reasons behind why women’s clothing is often much more revealing than men’s. The design of such clothing also carries a degree of objectification—during the feudal agricultural era, societal production necessitated stable family ties centered on land cultivation, requiring women to remain at home, which led to the demand for female "chastity." Consequently, women’s clothing was conservative, a form of objectification from that time.

In contemporary society, with changes in production methods and further division of labor, social production has become organic and integrated, diminishing the necessity for traditional familial ties that were once restrictive. As a result, more liberated views on romance and marriage have emerged, and the demand for women’s "chastity" has gradually diminished. Therefore, women’s clothing no longer needs to be conservative. However, as society remains patriarchal, while traditional demands

for women's chastity may have faded, women from lower socio-economic backgrounds still exhibit some level of dependence on men. Thus, the ideologies of objectification from the first to the second sex continue to exist. The revealing nature of women's clothing and the emphasis on aesthetic appeal in women's fashion stem from the patriarchal belief that women (or their bodies) should possess visual appeal.

Similarly, discussions around women's attire essentially revolve around whether it satisfies the demands of patriarchal society (for instance, revealing clothing is deemed more likely to incite malicious events, stemming from the patriarchal perception that women's bodies are both appealing and vulnerable). In contrast, society's aesthetic standards dictate that men should be strong while women should be frail. This is another aspect of patriarchal society's demand for women to exhibit non-aggressiveness. Furthermore, women are expected to wear makeup at important events, whereas men are not, reflecting yet another way in which patriarchal culture demands that women embody visual appeal. Many believe that this is simply due to women's innate love for makeup; however, young girls, who have not yet been socially conditioned, do not inherently possess an interest in makeup. Thus, the notion that "women love makeup" is a product of social expectations and indoctrination.

From this, we can observe that although women's subjective consciousness is awakening and they are continuously resisting the objectification and spiritual oppression imposed by patriarchal thought, they themselves are also unconsciously accepting the products of such objectification and oppression. Engaging in endless debates without stepping outside the patriarchal framework will not genuinely resolve these issues. There is no need to argue over the so-called "freedom of dress" regarding how much or how little women should wear or "how respectful women should wear"; over-focusing on this issue only traps women within patriarchal thought. Regardless of how one debates, it all remains within the framework of patriarchal society.

To truly escape patriarchal logic, women should prioritize comfort in their clothing choices over appearance, just as men do. Women need not overly concern themselves with their looks, body shape, or makeup; only objects are subjected to demands for beauty. Groups possessing social status are not required to be aesthetically pleasing; women should, like men, focus more on their careers and social standing rather than their appearance. Women must change their aesthetic values, rejecting the patriarchal ideal that equates femininity with frailty, and instead pursue health and strength, akin to men. In relationships, women need to shift their mindset, avoiding a passive, objectified position and instead seek more agency and voice. Additionally, women should alter their perceptions, placing value not on their bodies or appearances but on pursuits that possess genuine social value and opportunities for self-fulfillment.

4.2.4. Advocating for gender equality must part ways from consumerism

With the rapid spread of feminist thought, capital has also identified business opportunities within it. Today, we see corporate cultures, product concepts, and advertising campaigns infused with feminist elements. This phenomenon is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the widespread adoption of feminist ideas in the marketplace reflects the progress achieved in the pursuit of equality, indicating that society is increasingly embracing these values. Furthermore, the promotion of feminist ideals in consumer markets contributes to the further spread of feminist thought, enhancing its social impact.

However, the use of feminist concepts by businesses is ultimately aimed at encouraging consumption among women. These remain profit-driven commercial strategies. A more dangerous trend emerges when businesses package feminism and consumerism together—promoting ideas such as "independent women" while associating this identity with specific products. As a result, purchasing these items becomes a way for consumers to affirm their identification with feminist ideals. If women respond to feminist messaging by uncritically following the consumerist concepts presented by capital, they fall into the trap of consumerism.

Consumerism, at its core, stems from the private ownership system of capitalism, which in turn requires collaboration with patriarchal structures. The problem becomes evident: when women

embrace consumerism, they inadvertently support the growth of patriarchal institutions and ideologies, obstructing the movement toward gender equality.

Thus, women must sever ties with consumerism while promoting gender equality. They should resist adopting the male pattern of self-affirmation and social validation through luxury and consumption and actively counter the spread of these ideas—especially among women. It is crucial to recognize that the social conditions enabling men and women to achieve "primary" status are not the same, nor are the manifestations of their dominance. Consumerism and capitalist patriarchy are mutually reinforcing, but they are incompatible with a society striving for equality and feminism.

Therefore, we need a scientific analysis of gender equality and feminism, along with independent thought. It is imperative not to blindly adopt the methods employed by men when they occupy dominant roles. We must reject ideologies that appear beneficial but, in reality, hinder the progress of gender equality.

4.2.5. Feminism does not apply to all women: Differentiating internal gender interests

Feminism advocates for women's rights and aims to unite women in defending their interests so that those unwilling to conform to patriarchal norms can develop freely. However, feminism is not a one-size-fits-all solution for all women. It is essential to distinguish what constitutes freedom for all women when advocating for liberation.

The starting point of feminism is women's desire to break free from patriarchal constraints, gain higher status in society, and pursue their own will. However, if a woman's goals reinforce patriarchal structures—for example, by aspiring to be a housewife—such choices do not align with the objectives of feminism or the gender equality movement. If a woman's aspiration is to become a housewife, this "freedom" is not something the equality movement should support.

Becoming a housewife perpetuates the patriarchal division of labor, where men are responsible for social production while women handle reproduction and household duties. This division inevitably results in fewer women participating in the workforce, while men enjoy greater access to production roles and, consequently, more social resources. As the disparity in access to resources grows, women's social status declines, and the economic foundation of patriarchy becomes more entrenched. Additionally, many women's desire to become housewives is often a reluctant choice influenced by patriarchal pressures or a lack of awareness.

Instead of endorsing these choices, feminists should guide women toward participating in the workforce and explore ways to enable women to balance reproductive and productive responsibilities.

Feminism should also focus on supporting women from working-class and lower-class backgrounds, rather than prioritizing elite women. The core logic of capitalist patriarchy marginalizes women from the labor force because the ruling class seeks to maximize their reproductive role to produce new laborers. If more women participate in production, it threatens to reduce their reproductive capacity, which conflicts with the interests of the ruling class.

In contrast, elite women are exempt from such trade-offs. They are not required to contribute to the labor force, and their children are not raised as workers but as future members of the ruling class. As such, elite women do not experience the same kind of patriarchal oppression. On the contrary, these women—being part of the ruling class—may exploit lower-class women. For example, surrogacy is a form of oppression where elite women benefit from the labor of working-class women.

Therefore, feminism and the equality movement must prioritize the needs of working-class and lower-class women. In the pursuit of equality, it is crucial to recognize that not all advocates have a deep understanding of social structures. Simple gender-based alliances are insufficient. Only by understanding the internal interests within gender dynamics can the movement advance meaningfully.

4.2.6. Advocating for equality should not create gender opposition

One of the most serious problems in the development of the equality movement today is the severe opposition that has emerged between men and women in the process of fighting for rights. Discussions about equality on the internet often lead to intense arguments and confrontations between

the sexes. The root of this polarization lies in the lack of in-depth analysis of both equality and patriarchal society, resulting in misunderstandings on both sides.

Because, in a long-standing patriarchal society, the oppression of women appears to have been carried out by men, it seems as if men have taken away rights that rightfully belong to women. Many women, having personally experienced oppression carried out by men, naturally harbor resentment towards them. Without understanding the social foundations of oppression, they mistakenly believe that men, as a gender, are the ones oppressing women. This oversimplifies systemic oppression into a conflict between biological sexes, turning opposition to patriarchy into hostility towards men. It leads to the mistaken belief that the interests of men and women are entirely opposed, thus rejecting cooperation and creating antagonism between the two.

On the other hand, men, as the relative beneficiaries of patriarchy, tend to develop stronger self-awareness. The underlying misogynistic views within patriarchal society further reinforce the belief that male-dominated structures are rational and legitimate, while women are unfit to lead. As a result, men may believe that equality is illogical. They also see women's fight for rights as a loss of their own privileges, which makes them resistant to equality. At the same time, the criticism directed at men by feminists can generate strong resentment, further deepening the divide between the genders.

In reality, both this opposition and the factors that create it are based on misconceptions arising from the lack of analysis of social foundations. The following breakdown will provide more clarity.

From a female perspective, the misunderstanding arises because the oppression experienced throughout patriarchal history appears to have been enacted by men. However, the real cause lies in the socio-economic foundation and the patriarchal system, not in the biological nature of men. The reason men were able to oppress women is that the prevailing socio-economic conditions required patriarchy for its maintenance (as previously discussed regarding the historical roots of gender inequality in feudal and capitalist societies). Patriarchy needed men to play leading roles in society, giving them the appearance of oppressors. Without deeper exploration of social foundations, some women mistakenly believe that it is men, as a biological group, who are deliberately oppressing women, rather than recognizing that it is the socio-economic system objectively causing oppression.

From a male perspective, the misunderstanding arises from the fact that all societal structures throughout history—except the most primitive, low-productivity matriarchal societies—have been patriarchal. Since all technological and civilizational advancements have occurred within patriarchal systems, some men conclude that men are inherently more capable and therefore better suited to lead. This line of thinking mirrors the misunderstanding on the female side: both fail to grasp whether subjective gender intentions come first or whether objective societal changes do. The answer is clearly the latter.

The reason that only primitive societies were matriarchal is that their low productivity made survival a struggle. At that time, humans lacked technology and private property, living in tribes where food, obtained through hunting, was shared equally among all members. However, since food could not be stored, there was no accumulation of wealth. Because of their reproductive capacity, women were prioritized to maintain the survival of the tribe, making them the focal point of early societies.

At the end of the primitive era, advances in technology allowed people to engage in farming and food storage. Men, due to their greater physical strength, were more productive and began to accumulate private property, leading to the collapse of matriarchal societies and the rise of patriarchal ones. All subsequent societal systems were based on private ownership (as previously discussed regarding the link between private property and patriarchy). These systems required physical labor to sustain production, and men, being stronger, naturally assumed higher social status and leadership roles.

This history reveals that men's dominance was not the result of inherent superiority or a deliberate intention to oppress women, but rather a consequence of changing material conditions. As these objective conditions evolve—such as through technological advancements that reduce the need for physical labor and enable women to balance reproduction with work—an egalitarian society becomes

both possible and reasonable. Thus, the belief that patriarchal society is natural and that equality is illogical is fundamentally flawed.

The opposition between men and women over equality stems from a lack of thorough analysis of these social foundations. In reality, there is no inherent conflict between the sexes. In fact, equality has the potential to liberate both men and women, and many of their interests in this pursuit are aligned.

Patriarchal society does not benefit all men equally. Most working-class men are also oppressed under the capitalist-patriarchal system. The elite class exploits working-class men, while working-class women face dual oppression from both their male counterparts and the ruling class. Although women experience more severe oppression, the majority of ordinary men also suffer under this system.

For ordinary men, equality offers the opportunity for greater freedom. In an egalitarian society where women can balance work and reproduction without societal pressure, men will no longer be solely responsible for leading economic production. Traditional family structures will no longer bind them to specific gender roles, and they will no longer be expected to support families financially on their own. Men will also be free from societal expectations to achieve high status or success. This would reduce the discrimination men currently face due to insufficient economic power in relationships, marriage, and society, allowing them to live more authentically according to their own desires.

Women, too, will no longer be confined to domestic responsibilities and can pursue their aspirations alongside men. It is clear that both men and women have shared interests in the pursuit of equality. However, the emotional polarization between the sexes in online debates today has become highly counterproductive. Both sides seem focused only on venting frustrations toward each other, rather than engaging in rational analysis or identifying common interests. This emotional conflict not only deepens misunderstandings but also obstructs meaningful progress toward equality by hindering the development of practical strategies.

As the primary advocates for equality, women must recognize that their efforts are not about venting anger or winning arguments but about achieving real equality and securing tangible benefits for women. Feminists should begin with an objective analysis of social foundations to develop more practical and feasible approaches to equality. They should also identify the shared benefits that equality offers to both genders and work to communicate these ideas to men, helping to change men's attitudes from indifference or opposition to support.

The struggle for equality is not a class struggle; men and women are two biological genders, not two opposing classes. They must coexist rather than overthrow each other. Isolation and opposition between the sexes will only deepen misunderstandings and strengthen male resistance, ultimately hindering the progress of equality. True equality is a collaborative effort that requires broad societal consensus to move forward.

5. Summary of Perspectives

Based on the above discussions, constructive suggestions for advancing the cause of gender equality in contemporary society can be drawn.

Achieving true equality requires the most crucial step—reshaping the social structure and redistributing social rights and obligations. Society relies on labor to function, and in patriarchal systems, responsibilities are assigned based on the family unit: the need for labor is fulfilled by women's reproductive role, while material production is provided by men through paid work, generating economic value to sustain the family. This division results in men handling production and women handling reproduction, which makes women economically dependent on men, leading to lower status within both the family and society (e.g., limited decision-making power at home and less influence in public discourse).

The supposed "protection" of women under this system masks the role of women as dependents. On the other hand, the responsibility imposed on men to provide economically, while conferring

higher social status and greater access to resources, also burdens them with societal pressure and expectations to achieve. Therefore, if women wish to challenge this economic dependency and the inequality it engenders politically, ideologically, and culturally, they must first change the patriarchal social structure—a task that requires immense effort. Women need to take on both reproductive responsibilities and enter the workforce in larger numbers, creating equal or even greater social value compared to men, and acquiring equal or more resources. Only through such efforts can the economic foundation of patriarchy be transformed, elevating women's societal status.

When women accumulate sufficient resources and achieve comparable leadership roles in society, the social system will naturally allocate more resources to them. This will lead to favorable policies benefiting women (e.g., technologies that reduce the cost of childbirth or policies prioritizing women for high-paying jobs after childbirth), resulting in a virtuous cycle—greater female influence in society will lead to further resource allocation toward women, which will, in turn, increase their influence.

However, achieving this goal will require tremendous effort from contemporary women.

5.1 To achieve this goal, modern women need to raise their awareness: fighting for rights requires hard work. The focus should be on self-improvement and enhancing the overall social capacity and status of women as a group, rather than on demanding more resources and benefits from society. A harsh reality is that society does not allocate more resources and benefits to groups with lower status. However, when a group becomes strong and highly influential, resources and benefits naturally flow toward it.

5.2 This transformation must begin at the smallest unit—the family. In today's society, the family is the smallest unit of production, and the value created by each family contributes to the overall social value. In patriarchal systems, the division of labor within families assigns reproductive roles to women and productive roles to men, giving men more opportunities to engage in the workforce and accumulate resources, which in turn results in men holding more power at the societal level.

To reshape the social structure and enable women to control more social resources, change must start within the family. Women need to challenge traditional family roles by striving for equal or higher incomes and career positions than their male partners. Additionally, child-rearing responsibilities should be shared more equally between men and women to free up time for women to participate in economic production. As more families adopt this model, societal resources will become more evenly distributed between genders, raising the status of women overall.

5.3 Choosing not to marry or have children is not a viable solution. While women aim to change the social structure, the need for reproductive labor will not disappear, nor will the family unit cease to function as the basic production unit. Marriage and childbirth remain necessary societal demands. If most economically privileged and well-educated women opt out of marriage and childbirth, the burden will fall disproportionately on poorer women who have fewer choices and must rely on men for survival.

This would be counterproductive to the overall goal of increasing women's social standing because women with better economic conditions are more capable of balancing reproduction and economic production. In contrast, poorer women often lack the resources and awareness needed to pursue equality while juggling both roles. Thus, although choosing not to marry or have children may express frustration with the oppression faced in a patriarchal society, it does not improve the social standing of women as a group.

The most effective strategy, as mentioned earlier, is for women to enter marriage and have children while redistributing caregiving responsibilities to their male partners. This approach allows both men and women to participate equally in the workforce, rather than confining women to the household, which perpetuates their disempowerment. The traditional belief that men must be the primary breadwinners must also be challenged. If every family depends on men for financial support, men will dominate the workforce and control most societal resources. Women seeking equality must shift this mindset toward equal economic responsibilities or even situations where women are the primary earners.

5.4 Women should focus more on creating tangible changes rather than relying on public opinion. Many women today still associate feminism primarily with defending women's rights in thought, language, and culture. However, such ideas are rooted in specific social conditions, and without changing those conditions first, advocating for ideological shifts alone will not result in substantive change.

Thus, women should prioritize altering the underlying social structures—by participating more actively in economic production, achieving more accomplishments, and acquiring greater resources. However, focusing on tangible actions does not mean neglecting thought leadership; promoting progressive ideas can accelerate change. Women must also develop unified strategies: while engaging in broader economic production, they should contribute to the equality movement by supporting marginalized women, raising awareness among less educated populations, creating more job opportunities for women, advocating for policies that lower the cost of childbirth, and fighting against workplace gender discrimination.

5.5 Men and women should seek common interests. In the traditional social structure, men, as the dominant group, held more resources and power but also faced greater social pressure, while women, as dependents, experienced both "protection" and oppression. Although patriarchal systems oppress women more, they do not entirely benefit men, as men also bear significant burdens.

Achieving gender equality would result in both genders sharing equal status. In such a society, women would no longer be oppressed but would also lose the protection they currently receive. Conversely, men would gain more recognition for their struggles and receive greater societal care, as traditional expectations to always "be strong" would no longer apply.

In the family, women would gain more freedom for self-development beyond household duties, and men would experience less pressure to be the sole financial providers. A balanced division of responsibilities would benefit both parties, encouraging mutual support in maintaining the household.

Therefore, equality is not a zero-sum game between men and women, nor does it imply that women must infringe upon men's existing rights. Instead, both genders should work toward shared goals for social progress. Men need to understand the benefits of equality and support women in advancing the movement.

5.6 Achieving gender equality also depends on the development of social productivity, as well as advancements in technology and social systems. As economies grow and education improves, more people will become aware of and support equality. Economic development will provide more individuals with the means to contribute to the cause.

Technological advancements will enhance productivity, lower production costs, and reduce dependence on human labor through automation. As robots increasingly take over routine tasks, the importance of physical differences between men and women in the workforce will diminish, resulting in more equal employment opportunities.

Moreover, improved healthcare technologies will lower the cost of childbirth, allowing women to devote more time and energy to economic activities. Thus, the progress of gender equality will be closely tied to societal advancements. As the global economy continues to grow, the influence of equality movements will expand, reaching more regions and populations.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, women striving for equality must recognize that the world remains dominated by a capitalist and patriarchal system. The reality of male-dominated societies has not changed, and although we may wish otherwise, this reality inevitably gives rise to discriminatory thoughts and practices against women. A crucial mindset that equality advocates currently lack, but must adopt, is the understanding that the general public is limited in its perspective. These limitations are shaped by the era and the social roles assigned to people by that era. Human technology and economic development have not yet reached a stage where full equality across nations, classes, races, and genders is achievable. As long as these realities remain unchanged, inequality cannot be eradicated.

Men, as the dominant figures in both society and family, cannot fully comprehend the plight of women, who remain a marginalized group, due to differences in biology, social status, and education. Likewise, those at the bottom of the social ladder, limited by economic conditions, class experiences, and educational attainment, find it difficult to adopt progressive ideas. In countries like China, where modern development is relatively recent, and feudal traditions linger, outdated ideas are inevitably more prevalent.

Equality advocates need to understand that within the current patriarchal context, the concept of equality is still an advanced idea ahead of its time. Without the necessary social foundation to support it, it cannot be fully embraced by the public. Most people continue to adhere to ideas aligned with the status quo, as these ideas reflect existing social realities. This is especially true for men, who, benefiting from the privileges of a patriarchal society, are less likely to recognize the injustices that also affect many of them. Women, having experienced more injustice, are often the first to resist oppression and adopt progressive thinking. However, the deeply ingrained divisions between men and women complicate efforts for equality, as men may react emotionally against the movement, reinforcing opposition to equality.

In this context, women advocating for equality must acknowledge that fundamental inequalities in thought and reality cannot be resolved simply by demanding change or correcting specific thoughts and behaviors. Ideas and phenomena are products of their underlying realities; without changing those realities, even the best-intentioned efforts will only result in superficial progress and formalized equality. Confrontational opposition with men is also counterproductive. As long as men hold dominant roles in society and families and control more resources, creating antagonism will only provoke hostility towards equality, ultimately harming both women and the equality movement.

Therefore, equality advocates must base all actions on the goal of changing the underlying social realities. The focus should be on concrete efforts—elevating women's social value, gaining more resources, and acquiring a stronger voice in society. Only then can true equality in thought and language be achieved, rather than relying on the rights conceded by a patriarchal system. Advocates must understand the public's limitations and ensure that their progressive ideas do not remain isolated within their own circles. It is essential to consider the limitations of non-advocates and seek ways to align equality with their interests to achieve broader acceptance.

At the same time, advocates must continuously reflect on their own limitations. Although equality is a progressive idea, inadequate analysis of current realities or a lack of scientific foresight regarding future social foundations could result in impractical, unfeasible, or even misguided strategies. Thus, equality advocates must deepen their understanding of society, scientifically analyze existing inequalities, and develop actionable plans. They should also make thoughtful predictions about the framework and characteristics of a more equal society, striving to overcome their own limitations and lead the movement with a genuinely progressive vision.

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