

# The Influence of Chinese Patriarchal Society on Men and Women

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**Abstract.** Patriarchal societies have evolved over a long period of time to become the prevailing system in today's society and maintain a relatively balanced state. During the 21th century, more and more people pay attention to the social question of gender, especially in Southeast Asian countries. In the history of most countries, most of them were patriarchal societies. The authors chose China as the main research object. The groups which are affected by the patriarchal society is not only female, but also males. However, patriarchy ultimately puts men in a dominant position in society and women in a position of inferiority and subordination, so it has certain effects on both men and women. Because of the foundation laid by the patriarchal society, it is a system that is difficult to overthrow, and therefore, radical feminism has emerged in the process of women protesting and fighting for their rights, and at the same time, it has certain effects on society.

**Keywords:** Patriarchal society; radical feminism; social influence.

## 1. Introduction

During the 21th century, more and more people pay attention to the social question of gender, especially in Southeast Asian countries. In the history of most countries, most of them were patriarchal societies. The authors chose China as the main research object. The research of this attitude can help people keep the balance of two genders' rights and duties. The groups which are affected by the patriarchal society is not only female, but also males. Although female's awareness is waking up and the situation of females changes a lot, the society is still patriarchal. Now there are many females who people call them "radical feminism", this kind of groups has been active these years. This paper discusses these perspectives from four areas: the restrictions on men, the pressure for females, why it is hard for people to change the patriarchal society, and the reasons for radical feminism created.

The paper uses qualitative analysis and analyzes from these angles respectively. In first part, it analyzes from social effects, psychology and history for males, whether males should take responsibility. The second part discusses the problems for females faced recently and set up several examples: one is about female doctors and asks why the number of female doctors is far lower than males, and the reasons for few women in the leadership. For the third part, the authors talk about why males and females have been distinguished clearly from thousand years ago from their bodies. People have been adapting this idea and the theory created by the male-dominated society. The paper lastly examines the so-called radical feminism from three points: people have mistaken about why feminism is necessary and the aims for creative feminism. Also, as radical feminism oppresses men and women hold men to high standards, some females might expect too much from males, even many males cannot reach their expectations. In the authors' opinion, radical feminism is similar to machismo, some of them hope for a matriarchal society.

## 2. Male in Patriarchal Society

From the perspective of historical materialism, patriarchy is a social consciousness, and a political and legal thought. It originated from the primitive social material life and production mode, which was determined by the level of productivity development at that time. In the early primitive society, a matriarchal society first emerged, which was due to the fact that men hunted and women collected at that time. Because of the limitations of simple production tools, hunting was difficult to ensure the material life of family or tribal members. Although the collection work was not efficient, it could maintain the production needs of families or tribes. The basic conditions under which women dominate material production determine the birth of a matriarchal society. With the improvement and upgrading of production tools and the continuous improvement of hunting organization mode and level, men gradually took on the responsibility of material supply. The social status of men and women began to change, and then gradually transitioned to a patriarchal society. With the development of agricultural civilization, after the emergence of private ownership, patriarchy also emerged. It can be said that patriarchy is based on the scarcity of material materials and the means of obtaining material materials [1].

Putting women in a vulnerable position and making men take responsibility and protect them from the wind and rain is the performance of the current patriarchal society. This is one of the reasons why men often use it to refute what women perceive as discrimination. Similarly, it is also the reason why men can show their superiority to women. It is a carrier of ideology that is extremely irresponsible and used to oppress men, because it will increase people's expectations for men and add a lot of unnecessary obligations to appease them. They also have not received the dividend as men, and the single pursuit of male values under the patriarchal system, as well as the severe suppression of male desire. Therefore, the traditional value of men is to make contributions, and the standard of success for men is the positive image of perseverance and bravery [2].

Gender conflicts exist everywhere. Although many men experience oppression in a patriarchal society, they may still be potential beneficiaries of patriarchy, just as women can be potential beneficiaries of feminism. However, in the patriarchal system, there are many high-risk jobs that require no recruitment of female employees. Most of the military, police, firemen and other high-risk occupations have formed a trend of more men and less women. Men's physical strength is higher than that of women, which is a natural advantage. In contrast, women are indeed less competitive than men because of the influence of fertility, physiological period and physical weakness. For high-intensity work such as aerial work and miners, Chinese laws stipulate that female workers are prohibited from engaging in such work and work with Grade IV physical labor intensity as stipulated by the state. Men are more likely to engage in dangerous jobs because of their male status.

In China, men are not supposed to cry easily, otherwise, it makes them look weak. In a general view, men are the backbone of a family, so they should be strong. Men who cry easily may be described as cowards. This is the society's stereotype of male gender roles. Crying is a way for human beings to express their feelings, which may hinder men from expressing their inner feelings through crying. Because they do not want to appear helpless, nor do they want to ask for help, or do not think that their crying can be understood and helped by others, because this society does not give men the opportunity to express their emotions. In the diagnosis of some emotional problems, such as depression and anxiety, the reporting rate of men is lower than that of women, while the suicide rate is higher for men than for women [3].

The narrative around "sissy pants" or "feminine men" is being discussed in the same breath as the country's demographic crisis. "Sissy pants" mainly means that a man's behavior, voice and tone are too feminine. Many people believe that the feminization of men's makeup, dress and behavior will have a bad impact on society, which is also the stereotype of gender characteristics in society. If there are people who do not conform to the behavior and other characteristics of the group, they will be labeled as "alien". But in fact, there are also many male fashion masters who have made many contributions to the country's economic and social development.

### 3. Females in Patriarchal Society

Nowadays people discuss patriarchal oppression of women. Several parts, including society, family, and work, show this problem. This part talks about social policy's effect on females when they are under patriarchy. Moreover, females are always experiencing sexism and gender harassment. However, according from China's National Bureau of Statistics (2016), female employees almost occupy about 36%, and from 1996 to 2016, the number of female workers in a nation keeps the leader of the world. The requirement of female workers is increased. Compared with other developed countries, China's female labor force participation rate is at a high level, but there is still a big gap between women and men in terms of occupation and income.

Each company and university have set up different standards and policies to different genders. Here is an example about the medical industry, especially in some specific departments, the number of male doctors is more than the number of female doctors. Because to be a doctor is often more demanding than any other majors and needs more time to graduate. In China, almost every female begins working as a doctor around 26 or 27 years old. In this period, females faced a common problem: females get married and have babies in these ages. However, after they have babies, they need to stay at home during maternity leave, because they are the ones who often accompany and breastfeed babies. Hence, if they are in some departments which are seriously lacking in workers, it is easy for them to be refused. Moreover, the leaders in these departments prefer to choose male workers because they need to make sure that the jobs are filled. Also, in China, female workers not only need to face maternity leave, lactation, pick up and take care of children and other family chores, but also need to finish their company's work. Women often face some unemployment problems after giving birth.

In medical institutions, women are traditionally considered to be subordinate because they mostly provide patient care, while men hold higher administrative positions and most of the former doctors were men. Nowadays females are not only limited by family problems, but also still experience workplace harassment. Especially for some female doctors who have night shifts, it is normally for them to be harassed when seeing male patients, even some of their teachers or superiors might be sexually harassed them. In addition, some female doctors fail to get timely, effective and correct solutions when reporting such problems to their superiors, or even allow such incidents to occur again. It means that the result of the diversity of sex power and status is sexual harassment. According to a report published in the journal JAMA in 2016, in medical institutions, almost one third of females had experienced workplace harassment; it also contributed to the lack of women in the medical profession [4].

Whether in the medical industry, or other normal careers, like lawyers, preschool teachers, inequality still exists. The problem of women receiving pressure from the Patriarchal society still happens in different places and we still find that leadership in many countries still has more male leaders than female leaders.

In the traditional patriarchal society, the concept of social division of labor between men and women is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Women's division of labor is mostly required to focus on the family. Women are oppressed by both inside and outside the social family. And in Chinese traditional opinions, females should pay more attention to the family, and their husbands only need to work outside to make more money [5].

The need for women to give birth or nurse a child is a need for innate human development, so it is the same as many of the departments mentioned above that refuse to recruit female doctors. In the traditional patriarchal society, the concept of social division of labor between men and women is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Women's division of labor is mostly required to focus on the family. and their husbands only need to work outside to make more money [6]. This view affects many females, most females give up promotions at the peak of their career or still on the rise and even some moms change to be a housewife.

Males still occupy the majority of senior executives in many Chinese companies. No matter what the current society or patriarchal society is, if women want to receive the equal status and voice as males, they need to spend more hardworking and make greater sacrifices. For example, males do not

need the vacation after they have babies, so it is more popular for them to be chosen in the job market. Moreover, females are more easily harassed. Therefore, for males, they do not need to care about these things, the only thing for them is to earn more money. They have more energy for work. However, women are oppressed by both inside and outside the social family.

According to some history and research, people find that females lack decisiveness. It makes it harder than males to make an important decision. It results in a problem which is that people subconsciously cannot believe the cooperation with female leaders, it is an insidious prejudice with women. These also make it impossible for women to fully stand at the top of the society like men.

#### 4. Why Are Patriarchal Societies So Hard to Overthrow

A patriarchal society is a social consciousness in which men are the most authoritative people, ruling over all areas of society such as law, politics, economics, family and so on, and females are the weaker gender in this society. This shows the most important feature of patriarchal societies is inequality between men and women. To understand why patriarchal societies are so difficult to overthrow, it is necessary to first understand why they are formed. It is an established fact that male is physically stronger than females, so in agrarian societies, where there is a lot of manual work, men have a dominant position. Then women were slowly excluded from the main production. In Engels' *The Family, Private Ownership, and the Origin of the State*, he mentioned the decline in the status of women in agrarian societies has resulted in most of the works of women becoming domestic production activities, this is considered non-commodity and private, so the labors of women excluded from the total social work, thus, women became the private property of men [7], which led to inequality in social status and men became dominant in society, therefore a patriarchal society was formed.

Based on this formation, the first reason that patriarchal society is difficult to overturn is the differences in sex between men and women. For example, men are often physically stronger than women, and women can get pregnant. These differences are inherent and cannot be changed, so there is inevitably inequality between men and women in certain ways. The differences in the human bodies of men and women are therefore of an unchangeable nature, which makes it difficult to overturn a patriarchal society.

As production in society now becomes more mechanized and mental work becomes more important, there is no difference between men and women. Why is it still difficult to overthrow a male-dominated society? This is due to the fact that patriarchal society has been going on for thousands of years. First of all, because of the long-term influence of patriarchal society, men have the upper hand in society, and most of the top jobs in society, such as politicians and presidents, are men, which proves that men control the top of society. Second, as the society is not entirely based on technology, there is still some manual work in agriculture, manufacturing and other industries. Most of this work is done by men who are more physically capable. Thus, many of the jobs at the bottom of the social ladder are also done by men.

Both these top and bottom jobs are very important in this society because the top jobs/management jobs make this society work and are the authorities. This is the basis for the functioning of society, for example, the fruits of peasant work are a necessity for people (although cleaning and babysitting, for example, are also jobs at the bottom and are predominantly done by women, but the fruits of these jobs are not a necessity and therefore not as important as the bottom jobs done by men). Because men hold important management and important basic jobs, meaning that men now still hold very major things in society due to previous influences, this makes it difficult to overthrow a patriarchal society. This previous influence refers not only to the kind of social division that men and women have become accustomed to, but also to a set of theories that is mentioned by Yuval Noah Harari in his book *Sapiens* [8]. They include that patriarchal society has constructed a set of orders, one of which is the patriarchal genetic theory. It is presumably that the male gene is competitive and ambitious, and the female gene is subtle.

Therefore, it leads to the third point, which is that this more entrenched ideology and social duties also makes it difficult for women to change their status. This is because that this genetic theory labels women as child-bearers, while men do not have to take care of children. As a result, the competitiveness of women in workplace is greatly reduced by children. Many women are unable to balance children and work, thus cannot perform both jobs after having children. This is exactly the opposite of the labor force needed in a capitalist society. Because in the free market, companies aim to maximize profits, and every year there are new graduates, so companies get rid of people they do not think they can bring the most value and these people are usually women, especially mothers who are often less competitive in the labor market after having a child.

In addition, according to Marxist feminism idea, since women's work was excluded from the total social labor in the past, women's work is still regarded as less valuable and less valuable than men's work in the current society where labor is commercialized [9]. This also makes it more difficult for women in the workplace. This explains the difficulty of overturning a patriarchal society because the practical result of this in society is that it leads to problems of unequal pay for equal work, or women being unable to find work. This means that the economic status of women as a whole is not improving fast enough. Because once the economic status of women rises, the social status would rise automatically. Once the social status rises, it can be much easier to overthrow patriarchal society.

## 5. Radical Feminism in Patriarchal Society

Radical feminism is strongly and distinctly opposed to patriarchal society. For radical feminists, women's personal problems can be elevated to political issues, and they believe that women's unequal status is all about men's oppression of them. They believed that women's unequal status was a result of male oppression, and that social and political organizations in general were inextricably linked to patriarchal societies, so they tried to break them. Radical feminism has formed because of their misunderstanding of feminism. Normal feminism should advocate for men and women to have and enjoy all rights equally. But radical feminists demand more rights than men because women have lived under male oppression for so long in a patriarchal society. They do not believe that political decisions and legal regulations alone can break the long-sustained patriarchal social system. Therefore, in their perception they can only rely on some radical behavior to fight for more rights for women and to break the social phenomenon that women have been oppressed by men.

Feminism is misunderstood [10]. Radical feminists can produce a lot of bigoted behavior and rhetoric in their attempts to seek more rights for women, which can lead to a stereotype of feminism among people who do not understand it. They may think that feminist claims are that women should have more rights than men, and this can somewhat intensify gender conflicts.

Lower fertility and marriage rates [11]. Radical feminism may terrorize marriage and childbearing in order to emphasize gender equality, and they want to use a radical approach to rouse women to rebel against men. As a result, some uninformed people may believe the exaggerated descriptions and thus fear marriage and childbirth. It cannot achieve equality between men and women in society, but instead oppresses men to some degree while degrading themselves.

Radical feminism is a transgender version of machismo, and that their claim that women should be taken care of more is actually a disguised claim of "female supremacy". They argue that by using feminism they can make men take on most of the responsibility in society and give women more rights than men at no cost to them. At the same time, the high standards that some women have for men are objectifying themselves. Some radical feminists advocate for women to have a higher status than men, and women also have high standards for men. Radical feminists believe that women's status is measured by how much time, energy, and money that men invest in them. If they fail to meet their standards, it is proof that men do not value women. This has now become a popular trend on the Internet, where men are denounced by radical feminists if they cannot live up to certain criteria. They will make radical statements and "relationship views" on the internet. Thus, instead of improving the status of women, it objectifies them and makes them more dependent on men.

## 6. Conclusion

Most women are aware of the severe structural discrimination and exploitation of women in a patriarchal society, where men are dominant and at the top, and so feminists have worked hard to change the subordination of men, even to the point of radical feminism. But this research has shown that both men and women are oppressed in a patriarchal society and that many men are just as oppressed as women by society's "invisible hand" without realizing it. Because patriarchal society labels both men and women separately, both are restricted. Because patriarchal society has labelled both men and women separately, both men and women are restricted. Thus, although men are empowered and have higher "status" in a patriarchal society, they also pay a lot of costs accordingly. Among our thousands of ordinary people, are men given preferential treatment by society because of their gender? A patriarchal society puts more responsibility on men, adds many unnecessary obligations, and some men become fodder of class, the lowest rung of the hierarchy destined to be used, yet they get nothing in return either. The unequal treatment of women in society is not the result of male oppression, but of class oppression of ordinary men and women. Therefore, if patriarchal society can be changed, it will not only give women freedom and more choices, but also release the imprisoned ego of men.

However, it is difficult to change a patriarchal society, because its origins are based on the biological differences between men and women, and because patriarchal social consciousness has been developed over thousands of years, the confined minds and social duties are not easily liberated and changed. The development of the modern human mind has led to a growing awareness of the constraints placed on men and women in a patriarchal society, but the failure of many people to understand the original intentions of feminism has inspired radical feminism, which has exacerbated the gender dichotomy and made it more difficult to spread awareness of gender equality to the general public. This study informs the reader of the effects of a patriarchal society on men and women, and allows the reader to understand the gender bondage and oppression of men and women in a patriarchal society, in the hope that the reader will become aware of the original purpose of feminist development and the oppression of men and women. It is obvious that patriarchal society cannot be changed in a few generations. It is difficult to interfere with the social system. But people can do more to make ourselves more advanced and everyone should not be limited by old ideas. Equality between men and women is not just something that women have to fight for, it is something that men and women have to fight for together.

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