Ideas from the Women’s Liberation Movement during the Period of the Central Soviet Area

Shanjiu LIU, Junsu LIANG *

Ideological and Political Department, Gannan Medical University, Ganzhou 341000, China

Abstract  During the period of the Central Soviet Area, the women’s liberation movement flourished, greatly improving the living environment and space for women in the Soviet Area, and providing important implication for resolving issues concerning the development of women left behind in current rural areas. Based on the useful exploration in the women’s liberation movement during the period of the Central Soviet Area, and the field research data concerning the Gannan area, we conduct research on the women’s liberation movement during the period of the Central Soviet Area from two dimensions (family and society). At the same time, we conduct analysis on current issues concerning the women left behind; in terms of family dimension, the patriarchal tendency of family interests is the core issue shackling the development of women left behind, extension of the family division of labor further restricts the space for the development of women left behind, and the weakening of family function is the key factor influencing the development of women left behind; in terms of social dimension, system isolation is the direct reason for restricted development of women left behind, weak economic foundation is the root cause of restricted development of women left behind, and the existence of discriminatory attitudes is the deep-seated reason for restricted development of women left behind. From the level of human development, we point out that the first step for the development of women left behind lies in the transformation of ideas. In order to solve issues concerning the women left behind, it is necessary to eliminate the property of individual family as the economic unit of society, and make all the women back to the common cause again.

Key words  Soviet spirit, Women left behind, Family dimension, Social dimension, Women’s policy

During the period of the Central Soviet Area, an independent and self-contained regime was formed, not only to break the enemy’s military encirclement and economic blockade, but also to carry on building of political power, economic construction, building of culture and education and construction of a clean and honest administration, so the connotation and denotation of Soviet spirit involve a very wide range. We think that the Soviet spirit comes mainly from the basic principles of Marxism, the excellent traditional Chinese culture and the practice and experience of Communist Party of China in leading military and civilian in the Soviet Area. The Soviet spirit is beyond the realistic ground of the Central Soviet Area. Exploring the role of the Soviet spirit in promoting the development of women left behind in rural areas under new situation is of great significance to deepening the study of women’s policy history during the period of the Central Soviet Area, giving play to the cultural soft power of intangible cultural heritage, and educating people.

Jiangxi Province is a province with rich labor forces, and the Gannan area is a big city with rich labor forces. With the development of economy and social transformation, the rural surplus labor forces swarm into city, but issues concerning the development of women left behind are in trouble, becoming a major obstacle to the building of people-oriented harmonious socialist society. After the founding of the Central the Soviet Area, the women’s liberation movement was launched rapidly, which greatly improved the living environment and space for women in the Soviet Area. It shows important implications for the issues concerning development of women left behind in current rural areas. According to the preamble of Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats written by Engels, the social system that people live under in a certain historical era and certain areas is constrained by two factors. On the one hand, it is restricted by the stage of development of the labor; on the other hand, it is restricted by the stage of development of the family.

From the level of family and society, we analyze the women’s liberation movement during the period of the Central the Soviet Area, in order to provide a reference for reasonably understanding and solving issues concerning the development of women left behind.

1 The analysis of current issues concerning the women left behind based on the women’s liberation movement during the period of the Central the Soviet Area

1.1 Dimensional analysis of family dimension

1.1.1 Patriarchal tendency of family interests is the core issue restricting the development of women left behind. On when the women gain economic independence can the state of patriarchal tendency of family interests be changed, thereby effectively protecting the rights and interests of women. During the period of the Central Soviet Area, the Central Government issued Labor Law, providing the principle of equal pay for equal work to men and women alike. At the same time, the gender equality was practised in land distribution, greatly stimulating the enthusiasm of women in the Soviet Area. Since the reform and opening up, the family
contract responsibility system implemented in China’s rural areas has made family become the basic unit of production, and greatly improved farmers’ production enthusiasm.

However, due to the influence of traditional thinking, patriarchal customs, historical and geographical factors, the women left behind are attached to the land, family and men under the pressure of survival in the vast rural areas, which becomes the core issue restricting women’s development. According to the research group’s survey data, for the question "Are you satisfied with your household income?", there are 7 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 4.76% of the total number of the group; there are 28 women selecting "relatively satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 19.86% of the total number of the group; there are 58 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 41.13% of the total number of the group; there are 39 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 27.66% of the total number of the group; there are 9 women selecting "do not know" (option 5), accounting for 6.38% of the total number of the group (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 The survey results on the degree of satisfaction of people left behind with household income

1.1.2 The extension of the family division of labor further restricts the development of women left behind. During the period of the Central the Soviet Area, since most of young people in the Soviet Area left home and joined the army, the women took up the important task of economic construction. At that time, in the case of the shortage of funding, the women in the Soviet Area lived frugally and donated their wage and food to the Red Army. Currently, young men in the Gannan area become the main force of migrant workers. Due to the influence of traditional ideology and family division of labor, the women in rural areas long engage in inefficient and unpaid housework. According to relevant survey, in the rural labor forces, women account for more than 60%.

The survey data show that for the question "Are you satisfied with the supply of basic living goods in rural areas?", there are 15 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 10.64% of the total number of the group; there are 36 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 25.53% of the total number of the group; there are 70 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 49.65% of the total number of the group; there are 16 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 11.35% of the total number of the group; there are 4 women selecting "do not know" (option 5), accounting for 2.84% of the total number of the group (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 The survey results on the degree of satisfaction of people left behind with supply of the rural basic daily necessities

1.1.3 Weakening of family function is the key factor influencing the development of women left behind. During the period of the Central the Soviet Area, most of regions under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Area were remote and backward villages, where bumsers floated and bandits rampaged, with many security risks. During the period of the Central the Soviet Area, the party and the government paid special attention to uniting women in rural areas, so as to make up for the deficiencies of weakened family function. At present, the isolated state of family leads to weakening of family’s security features on the part of women left behind as well as the lack of marital affection. Changes in the structure of rural population weaken the security and precaution force in rural areas and family, thus the cases of property abuse and sexual harassment on women left behind are increasing, and they become the group vulnerable to assault. The majority of women left behind are young and middle-aged, and their self-control ability is weak, prone to extramarital affairs and extramarital sex; some even take to the criminal road.

Research group’s survey data show that for the question "Are you satisfied with the construction of rural social security?", there are 11 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 7.80% of the total number of the group; there are 45 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 31.92% of the total number of the group; there are 46 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 32.62% of the total number of the group; there are 29 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 20.57% of the total number of the group; there are 10 women selecting "do not know" (option 5), accounting for 7.10% of the total number of the group (Fig. 3).

For the question "Are you satisfied with the law and order situation in the village?", there are 18 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 12.77% of the total number of the group; there are 42 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 29.79% of the total number of the group; there are 57 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 40.43% of the total number of the group; there are 22 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 15.60% of the total number of the group; there are 2 women selecting "do not know"
The survey results on the degree of satisfaction of people left behind with the construction of rural social security (option 5), accounting for 1.42% of the total number of the group (Fig. 4).

In short, the patriarchal tendency of family interests, extension of the family division of labor and the weakening of family function are the factors restricting and influencing the development of women left behind. As Engels pointed out: "In most circumstances, the husband is capitalist and the wife is proletariat in the family"[2]. Thus, the constraint at the development stage of family is an important factor restricting the development of the women left behind.

1.2 Analysis of the social dimension

In a certain stage of the development of production, exchange and consumption, there will be a certain social system, a certain family, hierarchy or class organization. In a word, there will be civil society[6]. Various kinds of constraints of social conditions, social development, labor development stage are the external factors affecting family and transitions.

1.2.1 System isolation is the direct reason for restricting the development of women left behind. During the period of the Central Soviet Area, the party and the Soviet government attached special importance to women's political rights, and gave appropriate institutional tilt and help, achieving significant effect. For example, Mao Zedong once pointed out: "Now the majority of working women have participated in the management of the country"[3].

Research group's survey data show that for the question "Are you satisfied with the management of rural community?" , there are 12 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 8.51% of the total number of the group; there are 40 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 28.37% of the total number of the group; there are 59 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 41.84% of the total number of the group; there are 19 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 13.48% of the total number of the group; there are 11 women selecting "do not know" (option 5), accounting for 7.80% of the total number of the group (Fig. 5).

This shows that the party's rural policy needs to be further optimized.

Arising from the employment, health care and education system based on household registration system, the urban-rural dual barriers are major obstacles to restricting survival, employment and development of women left behind in the city. At the same time, the isolation of urban and rural system leads to the further expansion of the family division of labor, and the isolation of family of women left behind. The lack of expression mechanism of interests of the women left behind caused by system isolation is the direct factor restricting the development of women left behind.
For almost all of China’s rural areas, in the public domain of deliberation and administration of state affairs, the women there have to pay great efforts to be equal with the men.  

1.2.2 Weak economic foundation is the fundamental reason for constraint of the development of women left behind. During the period of the Central the Soviet Area, due to long-term enemy siege and segmentation by the enemy, the rural areas in the Soviet Area with frequent wars were mostly the remote areas with weak economic foundation. Due to the revolutionary war, the young men joined the Red Army to support the frontline and the plight of labor shortage required the majority of women to participate in agricultural production. At the same time, in order to safeguard the economic support for women in the Soviet Area, the Soviet government also gave appropriate system support.

Research group’s survey data show that for the question "Are you satisfied with the financial policies in rural areas?", there are 12 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 8.51% of the total number of the group; there are 42 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 29.79% of the total number of the group; there are 59 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 41.84% of the total number of the group; there are 23 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 16.31% of the total number of the group; there are 5 women selecting "do not know" (option 5), accounting for 3.55% of the total number of the group (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7 The survey results on the degree of satisfaction of people left behind with the financial policies in rural areas

The social division of labor determined by the ownership of the means of production and other institutional factors make farmers attached to the land, agriculture, and rural areas. The market process taking economic construction as the center has made agriculture become inefficient labor, so that the migrant workers move from rural areas to urban areas, which to some extent emancipates the migrant workers, but makes the left-behind women attached to the land and agriculture. Social unfairness looms again in the family. Most of the women left behind are illiterate or semi-literate, who can only engage in low-tech, time-consuming and low-income labor. Coupled with capital expansion and ineffective role of government, the women left behind are excluded from the social sphere, resulting in weak economic foundation for women left behind, becoming the fundamental factor restricting the development of women left behind.

1.2.3 The existence of discriminatory attitudes is the deep-seated reason for the constraint of development of the women left behind. The existence of discriminatory attitudes is the deep-seated reason for the constraint of development of the women left behind. During the period of the Central Soviet Area, women there were always hardworking. But the traditional feudal ideology was an important concept factor that affected women in the Soviet Area. The secretary of Women’s Committee of Jiangxi Province then took the lead to go to the fields. Plowing and harrowing by women reached a crescendo quickly across the whole province. They sowed seeds, transplanted rice shoots in due time, and reaped a bumper harvest at the same year. From then on, women there no longer believed in feudalistic superstition. Afterwards, women in Jiangxi were called heroine never bowing to Thunder God.

Currently, in rural areas of the southern Jiangxi, the vestiges of traditional feudal ideology have not yet been cleared away thoroughly. And mighty male-dominated culture still plays the main role in the spiritual and cultural area in the countryside. The traditional concept "women should keep indoors all the time" confines the women left behind outside the field of social production. Dross thoughts like "male superiority to female" make the women left behind succumb to patriarchal interests. What’s more, the feudal thoughts like "be faithful to one’s husband to the end" make women left behind mentally attached to men and lose themselves, greatly affecting the development of women left behind. The resulting discrimination in census register, community, gender, employment, birth and other aspects, is the deep-seated reason for restricted development of women left behind.

Research group’s survey data show that for the question "Are you satisfied with the cultural construction in rural areas?", there are 5 women selecting "very satisfied" (option 1), accounting for 3.55% of the total number of the group; there are 34 women selecting "satisfied" (option 2), accounting for 24.11% of the total number of the group; there are 61 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 43.26% of the total number of the group; there are 41 women selecting "not satisfied" (option 4), accounting for 29.08% of the total number of the group; there is no woman selecting "do not know" (option 5) (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8 The survey results on the degree of satisfaction of people left behind with the cultural construction in rural areas

In short, system isolation, weak economic foundation and discriminatory attitudes are social dimension factors restricting the
development of women left behind. The social injustice determined by the ownership of the means of production is increasingly extended and expanded in the family division of labor, and appears in the form of new problems and contradictions. This shows that the constraints at the development stage of labor is the social root cause of constrained development of women left behind.

2 Recommendations for solving issues concerning the development of women left behind based on the level of "human development"

China's Constitution provides that women in the People's Republic of China have equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. China is in a critical period of economic development and social transformation. In the process of building a socialist harmonious society and family with the scientific concept of development as the guiding ideology, opportunities and challenges coexist for the development of women left behind.

Engels pointed out: "The first prerequisite for women's emancipation is to make all the women back to the common cause; to achieve this, it is necessary to eliminate the attribute of the individual family as the economic unit of society."

On this basis, we believe that the first step in the development of women left behind is the change of concept.

2.1 The first step in the development of women left behind is the change of concept During the period of the Central Soviet Area, the women's liberation movement made the women in the Soviet Area combine the revolution interests and their own interests together, achieving huge ideological shift.

For the question "What is the biggest problem in your current work?", there are 30 women selecting "no opportunity to improve ability" (option 1), accounting for 21.28% of the total number of the group; there are 54 women selecting "income not directly proportional to the work done" (option 2), accounting for 38.30% of the total number of the group; there are 11 women selecting "less harmonious interpersonal relationships" (option 3), accounting for 7.80% of the total number of the group; there are 16 women selecting "no sense of accomplishment in the work" (option 4), accounting for 11.35% of the total number of the group; there are 15 women selecting "too much pressure in the work" (option 5), accounting for 10.64% of the total number of the group; there are 2 women selecting "not interest in the work" (option 5), accounting for 1.42% of the total number of the group (Fig. 9).

From the social perspective, China is in a transformation period from a moral society to utilitarian society. The blank of spiritual civilization building in rural areas leads to comeback of feudal thinking, and weakness of spiritual civilization building in urban areas makes the adverse western ideology occupy the field of spiritual civilization. Therefore, we should increase the intensity of the promotion of equality between men and women, use the achievements of socialist spiritual civilization to replace the deep-rooted dross feudal thinking, correct and eliminate the discriminatory attitudes in census register, gender, employment, birth and other aspects.

From the family perspective, China is in the transition process from the families of traditional agriculture to modern industrial families, from birth – economy family community to psychology-culture family community. The center of gravity of family changes from blood relationship to marriage relationship to self-satisfaction. Therefore, in terms of the external factors, it is necessary to eliminate the impact of the backward ideas; in terms of the subject factors, the women left behind should clear the psychological dependence on men, and improve self-awareness.

2.2 It is necessary to eliminate the attribute of the individual family as the economic unit of society Based on the ideals and goals of the social development of human history, Engels proposed to eliminate the attribute of the individual family as the economic unit of society. At the current stage, the main foothold point should be placed on the protection of women's rights. The marriage legislation during the period of the Central Soviet Area reflects the important principle of protecting women.

Research group's survey data show that for the question "Whether your work is recognized by your family?", there are 29 women selecting "great recognition" (option 1), accounting for 20.57% of the total number of the group; there are 58 women selecting "recognition" (option 2), accounting for 41.13% of the total number of the group; there are 41 women selecting "so-so" (option 3), accounting for 29.08% of the total number of the group; there are 6 women selecting "do not recognize" (option 4), accounting for 4.26% of the total number of the group (Fig. 10).

From the social perspective, China is in a transformation period from a moral society to utilitarian society. The blank of spiritual civilization building in rural areas leads to comeback of feudal thinking, and weakness of spiritual civilization building in urban areas makes the adverse western ideology occupy the field of spiritual civilization. Therefore, we should increase the intensity of the promotion of equality between men and women, use the achievements of socialist spiritual civilization to replace the deep-rooted dross feudal thinking, correct and eliminate the discriminatory attitudes in census register, gender, employment, birth and other aspects.
2.3 Let all women back to the common cause

During the period of the Central Soviet Area, although the turmoil of war increased the uncertainty of many factors, the party and the Soviet government paid special attention to the promulgation of labor laws, to protect the interests of women in the Soviet Area.

For example, the promulgation of Labor Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic in June 1930 played a positive role in the protection of women's rights; meanwhile, it provides important reference for solving issues concerning the development of women left behind in rural areas under the current situation.

For the question "Are you satisfied with the current jobs?", there are 37 women selecting "have confidence and ability to do the job well" (option 1), accounting for 26.24% of the total number of the group; there are 34 women selecting "favorite job, but with weak ability" (option 2), accounting for 24.11% of the total number of the group; there are 47 women selecting "not ideal job, but able to do it well" (option 3), accounting for 33.33% of the total number of the group; there are 9 women selecting "unable to give play to the talent, hoping for another job" (option 4), accounting for 6.38% of the total number of the group (Fig. 11).

![Fig. 11](image)

The first issue for the left-behind women back to public utilities is the employment problem. At the macro level, it is necessary to strengthen legislation and law enforcement, implement Labor Law, Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests, and other relevant laws and regulations, intensify the efforts to the left-behind women’s right protection, remove the social barriers which hinder the development of left-behind women. At the medium level, it is necessary to promote the process of socialization for home services, childhood education, old age care, and the process of conjugal relation equalization, build a harmonious and sound social insurance system, and eliminate the family obstacle to the development of left-behind women. At the micro level, we should improve the literacy levels, occupational skills and other human capital factors of the left-behind women, implement the social education, legal education, ideological and political education, remove the main body obstacle to the development of left-behind women.

3 Conclusions

The development of left-behind women is of great significance to building socialist harmonious families, harmonious rural areas and harmonious society. It is the condition for the social development. As Marx pointed out in The Communist Manifesto, "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonism, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." The development of left-behind women is not only the liberation for family, economy and women, but also the liberation for the society, ideology and all mankind.

References