

Beijing Forum 2019

Women's Initiative and Development over the Course of Civilization (I)

On the morning of November 2nd, 2019, the panel session “Women’s initiative and development over the course of civilization” was inaugurated in Moonlight Hall, Yingjie Exchange Center, PKU. Eight speakers gave speeches on the topic of “The Role and Contribution of Women in Politics, Education and New Economy”.

Vice-president Tan Lin from the All-China Women’s Federation was the first scholar to present her paper, titled “Women’s Dynamic Participation in China’s 70 Years Development: Mechanism, Arenas and Trends”. Vice-president Tan pointed out that it is significant that women actively participated throughout the 70 years of social and civilizational development in China. She suggested several avenues of strengthening women participation, and one such is the legal system – for instance, the Marriage Law of 1949, which attached great significance to emancipate women and tap into their dynamism. Vice-president Tan emphasized that women initiatives in development have had a long history. Another platform she highlighted were administrative mechanisms. Other platforms for participation included the popularized compulsory education (reduced illiteracy rate from 15% to less than 7.3% in 2017). She referred to “Women hold the Half Sky in Economic and Social Development” as a chant that previously was only a slogan but has now become reality. She concluded with an observation that women’s participation has significantly improved, suggesting that as women’s roles become more and more apparent and legal guarantees become more enabling, inherent rigidities and challenges will be completely eliminated.

The second presentation, by President and Professor Kim Heisook of Ewha Womens University, was titled “Women’s Leadership in Asian Context”. She pointed out that gender discrimination was not a lone problem in Korea but a common issue in countries across the world. Women have challenges meeting their duties while dealing with inherent inequalities. She said women universities have the ability to build women’s autonomy and initiate a paradigm shift that will allow the evolution of radical new viewpoints and practices. Another point stressed was that to build women leadership, it is important to establish self awareness – thus building attitudes and psychology by enhancing self-awareness, self-confidence and women’s capabilities and

mutual empowerment. In conclusion, she mentioned that women must pioneer the topography of knowledge, but there still remains a long way to dismantle the longstanding normative system that stands in the way of women participation in development.

Professor Sun Qixiang from Peking University was the third scholar to present her paper, titled “Economic and Social Change and Women’s Value”. She pointed out that the value of women is reflected by the modernization process, but the difficulties and challenges in the process still remain, and the opportunities for equality and competition are consistently being called for. Although women’s status in society is not as high as we desire, the recent developments present auspicious opportunities for better participation. In sum, Professor Sun shared that women should not feel intimidated to participate and take up higher roles and positions in society.

The fourth presentation, by Professor Cheung Fanny Muiching from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, was titled “Structural Challenges and Agency of Women Leadership in Higher Education”. She pointed out that equal treatment and equal outcomes are not equivalent. Many universities believe that as equal opportunities employers, they should be treating men and women equally. She summed by stating that more resources were needed to advance work in inter-institutional platforms for development.

The fifth presentation, titled “Women in Cross Cultural Communications,” was given by Professor Yuan Ming from Peking University. She begun by emphasizing how impossible the work on women’s development she is doing at Yenching Academy was 50 years ago or even 30 years ago. She said the cross disciplinary and cross cultural approach is the only way to prosper. She talked about the important work of the students and the presentations at the Yenching global symposium. She expanded more on the work of the Yenching forum and how they pay particular attention and observe development taking place in China around on the impact of development in China. Overall, she concluded, “it’s about progress and how women can contribute to development”.

Professor Li Mu, from University of Sydney, was the sixth scholar to present her paper, titled “Women in Academic Leadership – the Changing Landscape in Australia”. She started by highlighting the extent to which women are underrepresented in the work place. Then she introduced that gender inequality is further complicated by factors such as ethnic background, sexuality, disability and geographic locations. The enrolment of women in Australian universities

has grown significantly in recent several decades. However, women have been poorly represented at senior levels in higher education. She said that it is important to be valued as a leader who deserve to be in the leadership position as their male counterparts. Universities need to take a “systemic approach” to address this issue. Further, it is invaluable for women academics to have female, as well as male, role models and mentors.

CEO Qian Zhuang from Know Yourself was the seventh speaker to present her topic, titled “Leading a Confrontation with ‘Dehumanization’ with the Ethics of ‘Female’”. Qian brought to the meeting her experience on her journey to becoming a CEO. She reviewed and introduced the gains and experiences in the company's business process, citing the gender research theories of Gilligan and other scholars and the theory of alienation of capitalism to interpret the problems existing in women's work. She then suggested corporate governance as the ethical path to confront the dehumanization trend.

Professor Ye Delan from Taiwan University was the last scholar to present her paper, titled “Women: Makers of Sustainable Social Changes”. She pointed out that the advance of women’s rights and gender equality has been shaped and pushed by many women who relentlessly made demands and took actions. She shared several initiatives that her institution is engaged in, such as electrification of alleys to make the life of women and girls safer and compulsory education curriculum to change the stereotypes inherent in the system. She summarized three trends in the dynamics and roles of women in social development: from the focus on women's rights to the broad-based kinetic energy, from the integration of gender perspectives to the deepening momentum of changing social systems, from the construction of physical life to the type of the digital world. She concluded that these trends are related to the important process of the progress and progress of civilization, and the new challenges that arise are also important issues concerning the future of mankind.