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The Ideological Emancipation of Chinese Women and Its Idealistic Pursuit in the May 4th Movement

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Abstract: The May 4th Movement of 1919 is a significant period of ideological change in Chinese modern history, and in it is during this time that the ideological enlightenment of modern Chinese women made its debut. Led by modern intellectuals, they, from all angles, criticized the traditional social structure, traditional etiquette and feudal family system hindering the liberation and development of women, and further discussed the emancipation of women in terms of ideological education, economic independence, family status, freedom of marriage, ethics, social communication, as well as other relevant social issues. The intense exchange of ideas influenced public opinion, provoking enormous responses from all sections of society, particularly from women. Based on real educational and economic issues concerning women, combined with theories, real thoughts and practices, and carried out with a series of practical social reform activities, the ideological emancipation of women in the May 4th Movement of 1919 laid a solid foundation for the transition of traditional women to modern women, thus becoming the source of ideological emancipation of modern women in China.

Key Words: the May 4th Period; Chinese women; ideological emancipation

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Introduction

At present,research into issues related to Chinese women is far from sufficient. Although in the 1980s and 1990s there was a boom in small-scale discussions focused on women in China,as of today discussions of women's issues from an academic perspective in Chinese academia were still a drop in the bucket.〔1〕 Researches into issues concerning Chinese women were and still are to a large part related to or attached to larger research schemes in literature,sociology and history;specialized books are too few while collections are too fragmentary (the majority of research findings on women both in China and abroad were published between the late 1980s and the early 1990s). The insights within the existing literature are more or less restricted to this short period of time and the existing materials are often too general and unreliable. In addition,there are relatively few academics in the field of Women's Studies,further compounding the issue.〔2〕 It seems to be necessary to reevaluate and reconstruct the method of judging the transition of female ideology more objectively.

Consequently the emerging discipline of Women's Studies and the research into female issues has a long way to go before it can be considered comprehensive. The status of women has undergone great changes from feudal society to modern society and gives the impression that the image of women todayis more diversified. Thus there is a broad and deep range of Chinese women's issues worth researching. The origin of its theoretical study can be traced to the May 4th Period,a turbulent time of transformation from the old to the new in the beginning of the twentieth century when numerous ideologies were generated.

1. The Imprints of the May 4th Movement on Issues Concerning Chinese Women

To accurately understand the ideological movement that aided in liberating Chinese women during the May 4th Movement,we must gain a general understanding of the period and the time. Chinese modern history is marked by domestic trouble and foreign invasion,and the entire lives of the intellectuals during this time were dedicated to two words—"national salvation,"〔3〕 which was the greater mission of the era.

Starting from the late Qing Dynasty, numerous attempts were made to achieve national salvation:the Hundred Days' Reform,a reform trying to improve the traditional system from top to bottom;the Self-Strengthening Movement, an attempt made by government officials and private entrepreneurs to save the nation by engaging in industry;the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement,

〔1〕 The origin of the study of Chinese women's issues can be traced back to the women's liberation movement driven by the democratic revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. Until the period of reform and opening-up in the 1970s,the issues of women's living conditions and development prospects were raised by scholars and were identified as an academic event. A meaningful shift occurred when women's studies and gender studies were finally established as recognized specialties in 2004. See Wang,Jinlin, "Female research in the perspective of Sociology:the construction and development of fifteen years",Sociological Study,2000,No. 1.

〔2〕 References to women and women's issues are often relegated to the footnotes of academic papers,and research is drawn from literary fiction and other unreliable historical information. Materials are often very complicated,inaccurate,and overly broad.

〔3〕 "National Salvation":Afraid of becoming permanently controlled and colonized by foreign powers,Chinese people worked fervently to keep China an independent country. The slogan of National Salvation was raised by intellectuals in the early 1900s,with the intention to galvanize people to save the nation from colonization and strive for its autonomy.

a movement started and organized by peasants; the Yihetuan Movement, an attempt to collectively defend the imperial city; and the most westernized revolution, the Revolution of 1911 which overthrew the monarchy. Despite the fact that they occurred one after another and all achieved short-term results, they failed to achieve the ultimate goal, to resist foreign enemies and save the nation from subjugation. Even though the Revolution of 1911 overthrew the monarchy and established the Republic of China, its "democracy" was only in name and not in practice, which dashed the aspirations of people of vision who had adopted western ideologies and deeply believed in democratic systems. It was this very failure to institute an actual democracy that made intellectuals reach out and shift their attention from political reforms to ideological ones. Thus, the May 4th Period occurred so as to save China and establish a true republic.

The May 4th Period does not refer exclusively to the activities on May 4, 1919, rather, it refers to the time span of about ten years before and after it. Currently, it is commonly acknowledged that this period's starting point was marked by publishing of Youth Magazine, established by Chen Duxiu, on September 15, 1915. The magazine, which was renamed New Youth later, served as a platform for intellectuals to air their own views. It ignited a new social ideological trend by attacking feudalistic ideology. The May 4th Period is a time that has had a lasting impact on Chinese modern history.

This shows that the special nature of issues concerning Chinese women in the May 4th Period was determined on the one hand, by the fact that it was simply the first time Chinese women were regarded as independent individuals by intellectuals (mainly males), which promoted the development of feminism and was the beginning of research into women; on the other hand, by the fact that this initial exploration into women's issues occurred due to the May 4th Movement and thus is bound to the movement and its ideology. Therefore, women's issues, in this article refer to the specific women's issues raised in the May 4th Period.

The May 4th Period was a critical stage of ideological reform and an essential element in China's struggle for national salvation. During this time the common view as to how to achieve national salvation evolved into a complete campaign of "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism". The New Culture Movement and its subsequent reforms and the enactment of these reforms were thus naturally characterized by "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism". It is not difficult to find the appeal for Chinese intellectuals in exploring women's status. Women had long suffered from feudal ideology and their daily lives were living examples and proof of its existence, thus it is only logical that women's issues became a part of the framework to support the greater campaign.

The discussion of issues regarding women in the May 4th Period was in itself a significant breakthrough considering that China had long been a feudal and male-dominated society. However, this was only a small topic within the New Culture Movement. The real meaning of the ideological emancipation movement in the May 4th Period was not restricted to women and the women's movement. People who raised the question entirely for the sake of women accounted for just a small fraction of the whole, and many who raised the issue were less concerned with the actual status of women and more with their end goal, that is, to promote ideological reform and combat imperialism and feudalism.

2. Destruction before Construction, Women's Reform Measures in the May 4th Period

Although the May 4th Period was marked by "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism", and was used like a tool, it didn't affect women. However, in the long run, the most important and direct influence of the movement was that it started to erode the conventional system and conventional thinking employed in the consideration of women issues.

The status of women in ancient China was not entirely unimportant. In the Han and Tang Dynasties, there was a culture ofrespecting the honor of women, and even in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, a period in which women were more restricted and low-positioned, there were still notions of the ideal of gender equality. Yu Zhengxie, a scholar of the Qing Dynasty wrote in his On Virtuous Widows: "as a widow shall not marry a second time, so shall a widower"[4], demonstrating that he attached equal importance to the virtues of widows and widowers. In terms of the chastity of marriage, this perception was still in line with the traditional notion of chastity[5], but he gave men and women equal status and wrote that "to demand too much of a woman is partial justice", which made him advanced in comparison to his contemporaries. This statement also served to contradict the notion embedded in the well-known line "a man shall marry a second time while a woman shall not", from Stories about Famous Women—a book commonly regarded as a model listing the codes of conduct for traditional Chinese women[6]. He openly opposed the feudal orthodox ethics regardless of the fact that his thoughts were considered heretical.

Though these progressive assertions were popularized they were still considered heretical and were rarely referenced in the books written by Yu Zhengxie, Cao Xueqin, Li Ruzhen, and other writers of the time. They were somewhat preserved on an ideological level and may have inspired the ideological reforms that occurred generations later, but to say they pervaded, were a part of institutional reforms, or were the catalyst for related activities would be an overstatement. Kang Youwei (one of the two leaders of the Hundred Days' Reform), who made many attempts to improve the social system of China, drew a blueprint for a "world of universal harmony", and preached emperor-subject equality and gender equality in his one of his essays, saying "even the emperor and his subjects are treated on equal terms, let alone males and females", but his plan had flaw. His blueprint failed to achieve the goal of a "world of universal harmony", and his blueprint's aim to construct a "world of universal harmony"—which is similar to the idea of all living creatures are equal and communism—does not focus at all on issues related to gender.

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〔4〕 Yu, Zhengxie, Manuscripts of Gui Si (Shenyang: Liaoning Education Press, 2003). You Xilin and Paulos Huang," The Contemporary Transformation of Educational Mechanism for Knowledge Innovation", International Journal of Sino-Western Studies (www. SinoWesternStudies. com), 1-20.

〔5〕 The traditional notion of preserving one's chastity is an integral value in traditional Chinese culture, and one that should never be violated. Women should be virgins before marriage, couple only with their spouse, and maintain chaste thoughts. If I a woman lost her virginity before marriage it was considered a great shame on her family, and many recommended suicide as a way to abnegate the shame.

〔6〕 This sentence is from "Biography of Women" (Chapter 74) in "Hou Han Shu" (Vol. 84). It was said that a man could remarry others while a woman may not, since the husband was the wife's "Ti'an", the ruler she must follow once married. A woman had no right to leave her husband even if he died, according to the traditional feudal moral codes.

New intellectual groups (not individuals) whose members had learned about different kinds of western ideologies paid attention to the issue of women's liberation and decided to do something to improve the situation of all women in China, as they had been long deprived of their individual and intellectual rights. However, these groups had many obstacles in their way. To completely reverse the gender inequality typical of feudal society they had to directly confront the traditional system and modes of thinking, namely, women themselves lacked self-awareness. Changing this took a three step process: firstly, women's self-awareness needed to be aroused on an ideological level; second, women had to break into male-dominated society; and thirdly, women had to obtain basic survival skills, not just fancy ideologies.

Ideologies, systems, and societal networks were all inter-connected, so to solve these issues the new intellectual groups had to face all kinds of obstacles. The intellectuals freelyexpressed every idea they thought of that called for change, and the resulting discussions covered a wide and unconstrained range. In a few short years, assumptions in terms of women's education and liberation, views of chastity, socializing of men and women, women's participation in politics, marriage and family, the education of children, the occupations of women, and population issues like birth control, bans on prostitution, and maidservant liberation, etc., popped up like mushrooms after rain.

As a result, new ideologies in the May 4th Period were considered advanced and trendy while at the same time radical. To establish a new model in line with western democracy and transition into it, intellectual groups, on a large scale, attacked the "old ways" (feudalism and imperialism) and made various attempts to establish a new cultural system. This was a period highly praising "the new" (a new society operating in a modern way and a new world order), which directly resulted in overthrowing "the old". To establish "the new" (a new society operating in a modern way, a new world order, a new kind of literature), was the goal while breaking the old was a necessary path, so during that period, breaking from tradition and outdated values (hereafter called "to break"), was what intellectuals advocated. In terms of women's liberation, "to break" accounted for a major part of the ideological transformation of the times. Because women suffered under the rule of a male-dominated society for over two thousand years, they held a sword that was sharp and powerful enough to cut through the ingrained gender roles and change society at large.

3. Ideology and Bread, Two Cores in the May 4th Women's Liberation Movement

The May 4th ideological reform researched broad and various aspects relating to women, with the core being ideological and material concerns, specifically the issues of education and economic autonomy. Addressing these two elements was necessary for all measures seeking to forward the women's liberation movement in the May 4th Period.

First, on the ideological level, a vital concern was women's education and broadening women's sense of autonomy and self-awareness. The main efforts made were to lobby for equal education opportunities so that women be allowed to attend university, thus equalizing men and women. In May of 1919 Deng Chunlan wrote to Cai Yuanpei, president of Beijing University at the time, asking for the cancellation of the ban on women's education. In her short essay published in The Journal of

Youth China Deng proposed the following order of "school — vocation — regime — and beyond". According to this order, women's education must be addressed before solving problems related to their vocation. At the very least, this would equip women with basic survival skills. The "regime" according to Deng, refers to political institution's and society's recognition of women. Deng argued "once the ground is set, maidservant liberation, the banning of prostitution and reforms of the marriage system will be a cinch"[7]. The priority given to education was not just her personal view, it was acknowledged by all to be of utmost importance. Chen Duxiu pointed out in 1916 that "the final awakening of consciousness"[8] should be the awakening of ethics[9], which was a most distinct feature of new culture in the May 4th Period. The intellectuals dominated the May 4th Period, and they endowed it with significant values on the ideological level. Hence the education industry was considered a key way to reform and liberate women. When Zhou Binglin talked about the issue of women's liberation, he pointed out that women's liberation lies in education[10]. It is not only a means to have restrictions against women released so they can receive a contemporary western education, more importantly, it is for equal educational rights for females and males and open education for females. Education is a tool to change society. Advocating for education for the education of women would create access to the contemporary Western education system, and more importantly, create equality in education for men and women.

Deng Chunlan's letter—Chunlan's Letter to President Cai—in which she displayed her admiration for gender equality and appealed the Affiliated High School of Beijing University to add classes for women, and advocated the implementation of men and women in the same class from primary school to university, was the start of an important dialogue. [11] She wrote another letter—Call on Journalistic Circles to Send This Message to Women Graduated from Middle and Primary Schools For Girls—which aimed to unite female intellectuals nationwide, caused widespread social repercussions. In response to these letters and their social repercussions, in October of the same year, Hu Shi, an influential shcolar in academic circles, wrote On Issues Concerning the Abolishment of the Ban on Women's Education, where he proposed a program which allowed women to audit classes in the college without formal student status and helped schools to officially recruit female students. In the following spring, Deng Chunlan, Wang Lan and seven other women successfully applied to be the first batch of women to audit classes at Beijing University. In autumn of the same year they became regular students through an entrance examination and thus became the first female students at national university in China.

This served as the beginning of the women's education movement, which started in Beijing University and spread to universities nationwide. According to a survey conducted by the Chinese Education Improvement Association, within two years, six hundred and fifty five women had made it into the advanced education system. Although the proportion of men and women was still greatly

〔7〕 See Deng, Chunlan, "My personal approach to women's liberation", The Journal of Young China, Vol. 1, 1919, No. 4.

〔8〕 Chen, Duxiu, The Academic Research of Du Xiu (Hefei: Anhui People's Publishing House, 1987).

〔9〕 Luo, Jianqiu, "Family ethics and the May 4th women's liberation movement", Collection of Women's Studies, 1997, No. 1.

〔10〕 Zhou, Binglin, "The education with the women's liberation", The Journal of Young China, Vol. 1, 1919, No. 4.

〔11〕 See Zhu, Youhuan, The Historical Records of Chinese Educational System in the Modern Period (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 1992).

imbalanced, it was still a significant achievement. The reform of the education sector enabled women to gain equal access to higher education, which, to Chinese women, was undoubtedly a valuable opportunity to expand their knowledge, understand their own independent personality, and obtain independent survival skills. At the very least, it offered them an opportunity to explore new possibilities and a much wider world. Although education reforms started late and had a weak foundation, the establishment of Chinese modern education and the transition to educational equality between men and women underwent a process of implementation. In just a few years, it swept across the country, removing barriers to higher education for Chinese women. This special phenomenon may correlate to the radical spirit of the intellectuals in the May 4th Period.

Although the abolishment of the ban on women's education was implemented swiftly and effectively, and achieved satisfactory results, it took a great deal of time before mixed-sex education was popularized. Early in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties schools for girls began to emerge. In 1907, women acquired the same education rights as men did alongside the release of Women's Elementary School Constitution and Women's Normal School Constitution. But it was separated according to gender: after the implementation of the abolishment of the ban on women's education, men and women could be in the same school, but the teaching methods and the contents taught were still different. The fact was that real gender equality in education faced more tough problems once put into practice.

A historical problem regarding discrimination against women's education has to be mentioned when clearing up the causes why this attempt to promote women's education developed quickly but imperfectly during that time. Women's education was highly restricted by feudal governments for centuries, as many literally believed the statement "a woman without talent is virtuous."[12] This statement is false as there were women who were to some extent educated, but the content of their education was limited by many factors. While in male-dominated societies, men demanded women be dutiful rather than develop her own talents, illustrating that women's educational status was in many ways decided by men. Books advocating family needlework, for example Commandments on Women and Stories about Famous Women are examples of educational restrictions imposed by male-dominated society. At the same time, women lacked an arena outside of the home to display their abilities, thus determining that the content of women's education could only be very narrow since according to popular opinion they need only about things related to the family and management of the home, not about subjects in fields only open to males. The differences in the depth and breadth of men's and women's level of education were huge. Coupled with the fact that male-dominated society has in itself a tradition of discriminating against women, discrimination against women became increasingly prevalent over time. In 1915 minister of education Tang Hualong, still proposed in his essay "On Reforms of Educational Programs" that the aim of women's education is to train understanding wives and loving mothers.[13] Thus Normal Schools for Women established according to this rule could in no way educate women about democracy and equality, and equal access to

[12] Chen Jiru said: "Women who are educated to know clearly what is right and proper are virtuous but rare. If they are just interested in songs, operas and novels which do no good for their virtue, it would be better that they don't received education at the beginning and only need to know their position. It is a truth that ignorance is a woman's virtue."

[13] Liang, Hualan, "On women's education", La Jeunesse, 1917, No. 3.

education could not be achieved. The ideology had to be changed in the minds of both men and women before people could consider a woman able to go outside the area of "home". This is why the abolishment of the ban on women's education took a much longer time before it was openly discussed even though it had bypassed the conventional perception of "it is improper for men and wowen to touch each other's hand in passing objects" according to Confucian rules of etiquette, and it was proposed, debated over, experimented and implemented only after the May 4th Movement.

The abolishment of the ban on women's access to higher education became an important breakthrough in the process of China and Chinese women's ideological liberation. As The May 4th Period directly enabled women to obtain a new self-awareness and ideologies, women began to develop the ability to think independently and freely express their opinions. Owing to the ideological liberation, much progress was made within various aspects of society at large. For example, women began to have their own perceptions of marriage and love, social relationships between men and women were made public, and there were more appeals for political and economic rights. For a time in the first half of the 20th century, ideological liberation was fashionable and widely acknowledged: almost every field of society followed the trend of ideological liberation, which in turn led to practical reforms.

Second, on the economic or material level, women paid attention to the financial skills needed for a woman to live independently. They started to lobby for women's inheritance rights, and sought employment equality for women.

Driven by the movement for equal education rights, women found a new ways to learn about western ideologies, and this to some extent made some women less ignorant and more outspoken. Influenced by this, younger women instinctively began to pursue their freedom and independence, particularly around the issues of free love (freedom to choice whom to love and marry) and arranged marriage. But it was these most practical obstacles that made women faced with economic threats when trying to liberate themselves.

If ideological liberation was the foremost concern of intellectuals during the May 4th Period, then in the aspect of economy, their assessment of the situation depended on specific practicing methods resulting from ideologies. Li Da pointed out in his On Women's Liberation that the real emancipation of women must rely on the material form of human freedom: "Only when women's desire for the material form of freedom becomes their top priority can their prudent desire for freedom automatically develop. Then and only then can women acquire real freedom."[14] Women have long been subordinates in China's society: they have to obey their fathers before marriage, obey their husbands after marriage, and obey their sons after their husbands die. This is called the "three obeys" of Chinese women[15], thus their existence was entirely dependent on men. Therefore, to shake off the absolute control of male-dominated society, and to promote new ideologies, they proposed "economic independence" based on the fact that in traditional families women are absolutely dependent on their husbands. The slogan of the movement encouraged women to "lead an

〔14〕 Li, Da, "On women's liberation", Liberation and Reconstruction, Vol. 1, 1919, No. 3.

〔15〕 Women in ancient China had the rule of 'Three Obediences'. A woman should obey her father before marriage, her husband when married, and her sons in her widowhood. See Confucianism, "The biography of Zi Xia", Mourning Apparel in Ceremonial Etiquette.

independent life instead of a dependent one, lead a self-sufficient life instead of a parasitic one"[16]. The slogan's intention was to awaken women's individual consciousness through becoming economically independent, making them able to support themselves and have survival skills necessary for the new era.

There soon emerged self-organized Women's Unions, organized by young women. Examples include the Guangdong Women's Federation established in 1919, and the Changsha Women's Federation of Hunan Province, established in 1921[17]. Both organization's regulations or manifestos highlighted their determination to "enable women to gain economic independence", "improve women's employment situations", "reduce their dependability on men", and other similar assertions pushing for women's economic liberation.

After the May 4th Period, women began to actively pursue employment rights and appeal for equal employment opportunities; the courage to do this was in itself a substantial leap forward. In terms of equal employment rights, feminists of the May 4th Period divided their campaign into two aspects: equal employment rights and equal treatment by employers. The initial focus on the most basic equal employment opportunities created more jobs for womenduring this process they discovered concurrent issues such as equal pay for equal work, excess physical labor, and equal treatment of, for example, labor insurance (including items such as insurance, rewards, well-beings, awards, etc). A lot of time was focused on working on issues related to the treatment of women at their place of employment. We could say that. These efforts worked together to gain equal employment rights for women throughout China.

In 1921, Guangsan Railway recruited about 40 women as its ticket collectors and sellers, salesclerks, buyers, court clerks, inspectors, and for other various positions. Then other enterprises such as banks and department stores in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai began to recruit female employees. Among these enterprises, the banking industry was the most prominent: the Savings Bank of Shanghai National Bank, the American-Oriental Banking Corporation, and Bank of Shanghai successively appointed female employees as accountants and court clerks. The 151 Department Store in Beijing even adjusted the gender allocation of service personnel: they hired over 20 women as accountants, cashiers and salesclerks, which, in the long run had a significant influence on the gender allocation of service personnel in all Chinese department stores. By the mid-twentieth century it was no longer strange that women worked in studios, translation bureaus, offices, post offices and other professional fields, in fact, it was quite prevalent. This development marked the beginning of the equal employment opportunities and it symbolized that the basic foundation of equal employment opportunities had been established.

Almost simultaneously there were movements demanding women receive be treated the same as men in the workplace. Organized by female workers, strikes about wage increases, reduced working hours, the changing rules regarding women in the workplace and other regulations frequently broke

[16] Chen, Wentao, "Advocate the independence of female employment", The Woman, Vol. 7, 1921, No. 8.

[17] On January 27th, 1921, the "Declaration of the establishment of the Changsha Women's Federation" was published in Republic Daily. In August of that same year, the Shanghai Women's Federation also issued the "Declaration and the transformation of Shanghai Chinese Female Federation Constitution". See Women's Studies Institute of China, Historical Materials on Chinese Women's Movement (Beijing: People Publishing House, 1986).

out. They demanded labor protection laws and an eight-hour workday. In 1924 the Kuomintang Ministry for Women, in the name of the national government, paid close attention to the movement fighting for women's vocational equality, and in February 1931, the Ministry promulgated a new "Factory Act" and "Civil Law of the Republic of China ", officially confirming the eight-hour workday for female workers and equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex, thus establishing the basic framework of equal treatment for Chinese professional females. These new laws acted as a tipping point, and once they were passed much greater numbers of Chinese women began to enter the workforce.

Nevertheless, the road to equal employment has not been an easy one, and it continues still. In hindsight we often view it as a simple transition, but in actuality the transition of women into the workplace has been affected by generations of ingrained beliefs about women, and the reforms took place simply because women had no other choice.

The inspiring effects of the slogan "economic independence" became increasingly prominent, which meant that to achieve ultimate economic independence, the whole private ownership of the whole society should be broken. [18] And here—in the concrete context—all they could do was to own a certain amount of personal disposable asset. To achieve this, women had to acquire their own disposable income. Women with a certain amount of personal disposable assets means their confidence, sense of safety, personal dignity, other people's recognition as well as family status which gives them a say in family matters. This demonstrates that economy plays a significant role in women's lives, and sometimes, economy can be a measurement of the value of their existence. This straightforward outlook on material things or money by Chinese modern women or "new women" can in some situations create female gold-diggers. Thus to some extent it reflects the fact that women have long been dependent on material resources since the feudal society. Despite financial independence, women still use material things to measure their worth, thus often relying on men to provide this material wealth. So, despite advancements on women's employments rights, in some ways women are still caught in a modern feudal system.

When in the translations of Henrik Johan Ibsen'sA Doll's House came to China in 1918 the image of runaway Nora caused a big stir among teenagers. Hereupon Hu Shi adapted it into Once in a Lifetime in which rebellious young lovers resisted an arranged marriage and preserved their free will to choose whom they loved. Ibsen's Nahla and Hu Shi's rebellious, individualistic Nahla jointed hands to set off a heated discussion concerning the freedom to love and divorce from 1922 to 1923. At this time, Lu Xun put forward a proposition in Beijing Female Higher Normal College during a lecture: "how is Nahla after she left home", and seeing her fight, he raised the cruel question: besides an awakened heart, what had she brought with her? As a play, a story, Nahla's climax is the sound of slamming doors when she left home—the sound shocked Europe and awakened the Chinese intellectuals of the May 4th Period. However, once the curtains close, how is Nahla make a living? Lu Xun saw the miserable ending awaiting her after the expensive and awakening sound of slamming doors— "she has to be more rich, to have more material things, and to be more straightforward, she has to have enough money". Money is a vulgar item, and books written by young intellectuals

[18] Li, Hanjun, "How can women achieve economic independence", Republic Daily, Vol. 8, 1921, No. 17.

despising money abound, but money is a practical actuality and necessity of the material world. "You can't buy freedom with money, but you may sell it for money"[19], and without enough money, Nahla has only two options: to degenerate from grace or return to the traditional family model[20]. By and large, Nahla is still an image created by poets to eulogize lofty but impractical ideals.

Lu Xun's Grieve over the Deceased is a drama written influenced by A Doll's House, but is both serious and ironic. In Grieve over the Deceased, Zi Jun and Juan Sheng freely choose to love one another, and this is in line with the beautiful ideals of young people of the times who believe in "free love." But the relationship does not go well, it ends up in a seemingly absurd tragedy: Zi Jun is eventually disliked and abandoned by her husband Juan Sheng. The images of both Zi Jun and Juan Sheng are typical of the "enlightened" young people of the May 4th Period, as they've both received the "new education"[21], both acted of their own free will, pursued love and fought for it undauntedly, formed a family, and for some time lived a happy life. This situation is just like the sound of the slamming doors behind Nahla—an ideology and belief is stood for, but at the same time it still results in tragedy. The tragedy may be accounted for in that after all the lofty ideals are spoken and enacted, the mundane actualities of life still remain and must be lived. Affected by the chauvinistic and feudal ideologies and culture of China's male-dominated society, Juan Sheng gradually grows bored of his marriage while Zi Jun is satisfied with it. She had to leave her family she once depended on-her father and brother-only to again depend on another family, another man. The blind pursuit of love and freedom, and the willingness to "go out" or break from ones family and traditional ideals often ended with these ideals being torn to pieces. Ideals like love and freedom are nothing but empty beliefs if there is no greater culture or acceptance of them from society at large. Without a foundation and, support system they are just empty dreams that cannot be realized.

Fictional dramas aside, there are many modern women in the world who are stuck in real-life dilemmas just because of money. One famous case that was widely discussed was the story of Li Chao. Her parents died when she was young and a cousin inherited the family estate. The young Li Chao devoted herself to learning, but her family refused to finance her and even cut her of from all sources of money while trying to persuade her to abandon learning and get married. Against all odds, Li Chao left home and studied on her own. Embittered by her situation, she questioned the ideology running her family and society: "The estate is from our parents, all my brothers can use it freely, why can't I? And they call it unnecessary, judging from common sense, what kind of equal thing is it?" Her inquiries reflected the questions of many Chinese women, who were helpless in the face of the traditional property inheritance system that only allowed men to inherit. Eventually physical and mental exhaustion led to her death, a death far from home, and her own brother not only refused to

[19] Lu, Xun, The Complete Works of Lu Xun (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1956).

[20] Yang, Lianfen, "Individualism, power and gender", Journal of Sun Yat-Sen University (Social Science Edition), Vol. 4, 2009, No. 49.

[21] "New education" general speaking is a term referring to a modern type of education influenced deeply by western education in the 1900s. Intellectuals in that era tried to accept western education spread into China and at the same time tried to combine the new western knowledge with traditional Chinese culture. They judged western knowledge after Industrial Revolution, including the topics of education, the arts, technology, the cash economy and so on, as "new" modern knowledge and wished that they could strengthen the motherland with this new information. The phrases like "new culture", "new arts", and "new education" blossomed during the "the new culture activity" in the 1900s.

make arrangements for a funeral, he even mocked her. After Hu Shi learned this, he lamented over Li Chao's short life: "her life is a portrait of the life of countless women, and can be used to research further into the Chinese family system"[22]. He wrote her biography to commemorate her life and the many others like her. Li Chao's leaving home, to some extent, is similar to that of Nahla's in that they all demonstrated their self-awareness, autonomy, and courage to shake off the chains of family bonds. Li Chao's ending is just a realistic portrait of Nahla's leaving home without any substantial support: she neither "degenerate from grace" nor "returned to the traditional model", but instead died suddenly, much to the lament of the people. Li Chao's death and her ordinary and short life became a symbol of young Chinese females' struggle against the traditional economic system and family system, and the bitterness, embitterment and helplessness in it awakened women's consciousness of and desire for economic independence. It was not until 1962, in the 'Resolution Bill of the Women's Movement', that the first-ever law allowing women to inherit property was passed.[23]

The deaths of each of these well-known women, be it Nahla, Zi Jun or Li Chao, were passionate, marked by a fighting spirit, and served to attack the system that imprisoned youth in the May 4th Period. These stories drew people back from their false illusions and made them realize that all wonderful beliefs and ideals should be based on practical realities. Ideological leaps and breakthroughs are the prerequisites of progress, essential to our very existence as humans.

The women's liberation movement is broader than the topics discussed here, and there is a wide field of issues worth researching. However, the majority of the research conducted in China thus far has focused on two things: ideological liberation and economic liberation. As education rights shook off the ideological bonds and chains of the past and paved the way for the popularization of new ideologies, and employment rights gave women a means to secure their basic needs, the largest and most influential movement for women's rights was given full play and made its debut in an explosive way. Marriage autonomy, social liberation, women's political enlightenment, and women's ability to studying abroad gradually actualized one after another. They were considered incredible at first, accepted by a handful of people later, and then became normalized.

4. Conclusion and Comments on Women's Enlightenment in the May 4th Period from a Contemporary Perspective

The women's ideological liberation movementduring the May 4th Period achieved a lot of historical breakthroughs, and initiated the transformation of traditional women to modern women.

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[22] Hu, Shi, "The biography of Li Chao", The Renaissance, Vol. 2, 1919, No. 2.

[23] On January 16th, 1921, the resolution on the Women's Movement was approved by a committee within the Chinese Nationalist Party's Second National Congress. The committee consisted of Song Qingling, He Xiangning and Deng Yingchao. "The National Government should confirm the principle of equality between the two genders regarding the aspects of law, economy, education and society as soon as possible, as based on article 12 in domestic policy, so as to promote the development of feminism". The regulations contained the law on equality between two genders, the women's inheritance law, the women's labor law based on the principle of equal pay for equal work, and the women and child labor protection law, etc. See Women's Studies Institute of China, Historical Materials on Chinese Women's Movement (Beijing: People Publishing House, 1986).

The movement itself has three attributes: it was radical in its approach, it was male-dominated, and it though initially just a means to achieve national salvation it has had a lasting impact.

The anti-feudalism focus of the movement within this period utilized women's issues as a way to achieve its greater goal, so that women's liberations issues were all addressed with the distinct aim to break or overturn all feudal etiquette. Women's issues were never just a matter of gender, but rather they were used as a kind of social resource for the greater goal to construct a modern national state. [24] Moreover, the new theories championing women's liberation finally led to the realization of other political objectives like democratic revolution or a communist society, not just feminist aims. In this sense, the "women" who are under discussion in the May 4th Period may be best interpreted as "the women in the eyes of enlightened intellectuals". One could also consider the "woman" or "women" under discussion were an idealized or imaginary version of reality created by enlightenment thinkers, or even the merging of the image of Chinese women of the time and that of the troubled and subjugated country China as a whole (China is a small weak "woman" struggling to free herself). China's women's liberation movement was not an outcome of purely feminist movement, but rather the "direct outcome of the victories of the new-democratic revolution and socialist revolution"[25]. In other words, the women's liberation movement was in itself a result of China's modern national-democratic revolution.

Ergo, the intelligentsia contrasted the western ideological trend with Chinese traditional culture and decided which side was favored, which new cultural and ideological system was better or worse, and which system could promote the development of new things. They did that to use the new against the old and abolish the old while establishing the new, so the ideologies in the May 4th Period were radical in comparison to those of the past. This kind of contrasting was simple and abrupt, but on the other hand, in a time of national peril and dire need for change, this was effective——they were able to establish a completely different system very quickly. In this way, it's easy to understand the aggressive nature of the movement within its historical context. However the greater context must also be evaluated.

The aggressiveness of various attempts to break from the old was the main driving force of new culture, which injected new vitality into Chinese ideology, but "to break" was not fully supported by all, and thus they were unable to establish "the new". Intellectuals who raised these arguments did not fully support breaking from the old ways. Neither did people later. They just "break old" but were not able to "create new". In the arena of women's issues, there were numerous opinions targeting women's issues in the May 4th Period from different perspectives. However, these opinions simply raised without the actual intention to change anything. They raised one point or another in order as a practical method to oppose the old ways, however once efforts were made to affect actual change, the topic fell silent. So, though research into women's ideologies began in the May 4th Period, which injected vitality and inspiration into this research, the subsequent development of the movement was no longer as vigorous as in the May 4th Period. Research began in the May 4th period,

[24] See Zhang, Wencan, "Enlightenment predicament in the perspective of social gender: a case study of May 4th new women in the New Culture Movement", Journal of National Women's University of China, Vol. 4, 2013, No. 2.

[25] Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family, The Contemporary Thinking of Women's Issues (Xian: Shanxi People's Publishing House, 1988).

but was not pursued afterwards as there was no deeper intent to create lasting change or something along these lines.

At the same time, this radical mainstream of thinking way caused a lasting effect. In modern times, the high efficiency shown in the process of abolishing the ban on women's education and the swiftness of women's transformation has been astonishing. The women's liberation movement was a bi-product of the anti-feudalism movement, and this stemmed from the May 4th Movement. In society today there are many things which reflect the psychological states of modern women, for example, the happiness index, the balance between the responsibilities of occupation (income) and family (housework), as well as the social phenomenon of "Regard women as men labor when working", and the statement by many women that "I prefer to be a man in my afterlife". Opposite of the industrious and educated woman, the idea of female gold-diggers and material girls has triggered conversations on whether women are too dependent on material things. Because of this it is important to rethink the radical elements that were a part of the women's liberation movement in the May 4th Period. With the passage of time, the goals of equal employment rights and women's economic independence have been achieved, but the problems above raise another question: was the ideological liberation movement in the May 4th Period too radical? For instance, with regards to the attitude towards women's employment, it's no longer necessary to add "women shall seek jobs independently" to the existing principles. As women now have equal rights as men, the way we treat women should be slightly changed since the way of treating women back to the May 4th Period was just a measure. The most significant thing for today's women may be their free will to choose their social roles on their own.

In addition, the women's liberation movement was initially male-dominated, as only men were in academic or other positions of power where this conversation could be initiated. There is much evidence that despite many advances, one could argue that society at large is still controlled by men, and thus so is the issue of women's liberation. The women's liberation movement was initially male-dominated, as only men were in academic or political positions of power. There is much evidence that despite many advances, one could argue that society at large is still controlled by men, and thus is the issue of women's liberation. Male voices to some extent still dominate the researches into women's issues, for example, in thinking about the problem of women's liberation and family, Zhang Weichi proposed that women should "regard family as society"[26] and take a single skill as professional, a concept of family similar to that of the communist society. Although it was a positive mode of constructing new families, it still defined women as a vulnerable group, which indicated that men's set perception of women had not really changed. This kind of thinking in the May 4th Period was preliminary and naive, and was mainly promoted by westernized men while modern women gradually began to adjust and change their perceptions and behaviors. After this, the most important part of the women's liberation and women's rights is that they have to rely on themselves——they should fight for everything on their own. Amidst this debate Xu Yanzhi raised an important question: Is it men who don't liberate women or women don't liberate themselves?[27] Women should keep in mind that

[26] Zhang, Weici, "Women's liberation and family reorganization", Weekly Review, 1919, No. 34.

[27] Xu, Yanzhi, "Men and women at Peking University", The Journal of Young World, Vol. 1, 1919, No. 7.

it is their own duties to fight for basic social rights in space, politics, education, economy and the like. If we say that the women's issues in the May 4th Period, although dominated by men, enabled women to realize that women are also mankind. The next step is to make women aware of "women being women", and that they have to rely on themselves.

The significance of the research into women's issues in the May 4th Period and the heated discussions in this field are unique throughout the history of China. Almost all contemporary studies of the ideologies of Chinese women can be found in the ideological emancipation movement of the May 4th Period. This movement, which can be defined as a Chinese feminist movement bearing the characteristics of enlightenment and modern culture[28], culminated the self-awakening of the personality of Chinese women, and to be more accurate, the awakening of the consciousness of Chinese women's personality, a new stage of "obscurity to reason" and "spontaneity to consciousness"[29].

The women's ideological liberation movement of the May 4th Period built a sound theoretical basis for women's emancipation while taking into account practical problems of survival, thus paving the way for social revolutions in the real world. Based on the economic independence movement and ideological education activities, the feminist movement in the May 4th Period had a way to develop itself, and finally showed us a vigorous state of development and reform. The Chinese female image from the beginning of the era of change, at the same time, also for the further liberation of Chinese women's thinking, laid a solid foundation. From then on, the historic transformation of the image of Chinese women began, and at the same time, it paved a smooth way for further ideological emancipation of Chinese women. However, the real influence this movement exerted on the women group, on the other hand, is still complex and difficult to be judged on one-side. It is do be a great movement in the modern history of China, changing the lifestyle and thinking pattern of Chinese people, liberating the Chinese—not only women but also men, and even promoting to a huge extent the cultivation of modern Chinese politics and cultures, while it also seems to put up another obstacle for women themselves who should have played the lead. It leaves scholars later plenty of issues to be researched as there are still many bumps in the road and things that have not been accomplished, and at the meanwhile, it requires to keep a clear head while being aware of the issues on women as the arguments in the May 4th Period were too powerful to pursue the others although they might be extreme.

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[28] The essence of the movement of thought during the May 4th period is a cultural Enlightenment which emphasizes the new ideas, new ethics, new literature and new art that gained large amount of nutrients from modern western society to improve the Chinese culture and to merge into the modern society of capitalism. So, the characteristic of modernity was very conspicuous in the intellectuals' artistic temperament in this period. They showed a radical way of thinking against tradition and distinct behavior preference characterized by a disdain for authority to pursue personality, truth and freedom. While this feature became less important and gradually faded with the growing popularity of collectivism under the national revolution. To a certain extent, discussions on women also presented the focus of the theory and trend in this period.

[29] Huang, Aiying, "Awakening of female's consciousness of personality in the New Culture Movement", Studies in Ethics, Vol. 4, 2015, No. 3.

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中文题目：

五四运动与中国妇女的思想解放

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摘　要：五四运动是中国近代史上一个思想变革的重要时期，正是在这个时候，中国近代女性的思想启蒙运动首次亮相。在现代知识分子的引导下，他们从各个角度批判了阻碍妇女解放和发展的传统社会结构、传统礼仪和封建家庭制度，在思想教育、经济独立、家庭地位、婚姻自由、女性伦理、社会交往以及其他相关的社会问题等方面探讨了妇女的解放问题。妇女解放思想影响了公众舆论，引起了社会各阶层的强烈反应。五四运动中的妇女思想解放以妇女的教育和经济问题为基础，结合思想、理论和社会实践，开展了一系列有助于女性解放的社会改革活动，为传统妇女向现代妇女过渡奠定了坚实的基础。

关键词：女性主义；五四运动；中国妇女；女性解放