

A Comparative Study of Filial Piety and Endowment Patterns Between China and the West

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Abstract. China and the western countries hold different opinions about filial piety and there are two totally different endowment patterns of providing for the aged. This thesis focuses on a systematic and complete comparative study of Chinese and western filial piety and endowment pattern. The aim of the study is to deepen our understanding of the differences between Chinese and western filial piety and endowment pattern so as to actively explore an endowment pattern that is suitable for China.

Introduction

As the world's population ageing rapidly, care of the aged has become a common question in the world. As we all know, China's care of ageing population is a family-based model, while western countries' depends mainly on the government, the society, and even the individuals. But the increasing ageing population has placed a much heavier burden on the glorious social welfare system. The family-based model is the most popular way of caring for the aged, especially in the rural area in China, while in urban China the occupation-based social system is becoming the main stream because of the market transition.

With the aging population being one of the most difficult issues in the whole world, it is necessary to take the corresponding measures to solve this problem. The formation of different models of the aged care is the result of different geographic conditions, history, cultural traditions, economy, and political policies. All these elements together contribute to the total different old-age care models. By studying the differences of filial piety and the patterns of providing for the elderly, not only can we compare the merits and shortcomings of the western pension system with that of China, but also find the guidance and references for China's current pension system. When pension system has been further improved and perfected, it will provide some protection for the stability and development of the society. It will be more conducive to building a socialist harmonious society.

Different Filial Piety and Endowment Patterns between China and the West

In China filial piety is a kind of moral phenomenon, which is based on the blood ties in families. Although the ages and the social mode of production have changed, the Chinese nation's good tradition of taking good care of the elderly will be lasting. That is a kind of help for the old in order to unite the entire human beings. At the same time, the value basis of respecting and taking good care of the elderly is respecting them for the things they did and the social experience of living and production they accumulated. However in the western countries, people believe that friendly love and equality are the most important. Therefore, parents and children have the equal right at home and providing for the elderly is never a responsibility for a family.

There are also two different patterns of providing for the aged. As we all know contemporary Chinese mode of elderly support inherited the mantle of the traditional regurgitation-feeding pattern. While the West take the mode of relay as the main feature. Here regurgitation-feeding means that parents raise their children up and in return the children have to take care of their old parents, which is a kind of bidirectional circulating mode of elderly support and which shows the bidirectional responsibilities essence between the parents and the children. Relay here means that the parents raise the children up and the children will raise their own children up, which is a kind of unidirectional mode of elderly support where the aged will be left to the society and which shows

the unidirectional responsibilities essence between the parents and the children. As the definition of any concept of theory has its limitation, the definition of the mode of the elderly support between the West and the East also has its own limitation. For instance, the regurgitation-feeding pattern may exist in some western families in some cases. Meanwhile, the mode of relay is not rejected by all the Chinese families.

Differences in filial piety and endowment patterns between China and the west can be mainly manifested in the following aspects: differences in cultural orientation, differences in raising ideas, differences in different caregivers and differences in social security values. This chapter will expound the differences in filial piety and endowment patterns between China and the west.

Different Cultural Orientation

The Western culture has been a culture that is based on children-oriented for a long time. The Western society is a children-centered society, known as “the children’s paradise”. The Westerners think that, the future belongs to young people who represent the vigor, vitality and competition, the children represent future, and the care for children is the concern for the future. Therefore, the care for children is much greater than that of old people. The discrimination of the old is very evident in western society. However, in contrast, for china, this ancient eastern country, it is a society of old-oriented, which is “the paradise of the old”. In Chinese cultural concept, the older a person is, the greater influence he will exert on other people’s life, the death of old people means a great loss of the society, because the old people owns wisdom brought by the growth of age, they are social treasure,. Therefore, there has been widely spread a saying in folk that “an old people in family is as much as a treasure in house”, this vividly expresses the old people’s position in one’s family. From this we can see that, respecting the old and loving the young has long been a fine tradition in China’s society historically.

Different Raising Ideas

Chinese mode of elderly support inherited the mantle of the traditional regurgitation-feeding pattern. While the West take the mode of relay as the main feature. Here regurgitation-feeding means that parents raise their children up and in return the children have to take care of their old parents, which is a kind of bidirectional circulating mode of elderly support and which shows the bidirectional responsibilities essence between the parents and the children. Relay here means that the parents raise the children up and the children will raise their own children up, which is a kind of unidirectional mode of elderly support where the aged will be left to the society and which shows the unidirectional responsibilities essence between the parents and the children. As the definition of any concept of theory has its limitation, the definition of the mode of the elderly support between the West and the East also has its own limitation. For instance, the regurgitation-feeding pattern may exist in some western families in some cases. Meanwhile, the mode of relay is not rejected by all the Chinese families.

The relay pattern of providing for the elderly in the West maintains the free and equal relation between parents and children better and inherit their cultural values. The westerners respect the choices of the younger generation and the free development of their personalities. But the downside is the lack of affection between the parents and the children. The old people’s need for spiritual support is more urgent than the need for material support.

Different Social Security Values

The Western old-age security policy that is represented by UK is to provide the old people with basic living conditions on the spirit of humanitarianism, in order to insure the old people’s life reach a deserved treatment as an ordinary person, as for the spiritual life of the old people, it is not the question to be considered by welfare policy. Therefore, the inter-generational sustentation relation in western country is mainly economic relation, the sustentation of the old pay special emphasis on material sustentation rather spiritual sustentation. However, under the cultural concept of the sustentation of the old people in Chinese family, we lay more emphasis on the spiritual comfort of “children and grandchildren are together in family with the old people, it makes a

harmonious family atmosphere” as a result, the Chinese family’s sustenance culture for the old has satisfied the old people’s spiritual requirements invisibly, and the loneliness caused by this cannot go so far to become the primary problem of the old people’s life. Under China’s cultural background, the sustenance relation is not just economic relation, in the meantime of material and economic support, we should especially pay attention to the spiritual comfort in daily life, and the old people are particularly concern about the satisfaction and pleasure of their psychology and emotion.

Different Political Entities

The East and the West have different political entities. Compared with the ancient city-state political entities of the West, the basic social organization of the east is the kinship and clan system under the legal system. The kinship and clan system makes the family kinship in line with the national politics and clan organization in line with the state’s political organization, and then the social organization principle which combines the family and the state comes into being. The state is the extension and enlargement of the family politically and geographically and the family is the society’s basic cells. They are two sides of an issue which means serving the elderly at home is in accordance with serving the monarch in the country and providing for the aged at home is in accordance with being loyal to the monarch in the country. Therefore, the Chinese pattern of providing for the elderly is continuous with its political entity.

The western pattern of providing for the aged is also inseparable from its political entity, of course. Western civilization originated in the Aegean Sea region, the citizens here had devoted themselves to develop handicraft industry and commerce a long time ago because of the restriction of the living circumstances. People gathered in the city-state to live and they often migrate and move, which makes the western society separate from the impact of the clan society completely. Because the patriarchal clan systems did not form in western countries like that in China, people’s mind were not affected by formalism. The basic principle of achieving democratic politics is served as law of the highest form of contract in civil society, and to affirm individual’s political rights and equal positions. And that means that it is equal between the parents and the children politically in the western countries. At the same time, the national identities of the westerners and the Chinese people are totally different. The different national identities have exerted a profound influence on the relations between father and children in a family and the pattern of providing for the aged. Chinese people’s concept of “family and country work as an entirety” intensify the bidirectional obligation essence between father and children and make the regurgitation-feeding pattern of providing for the elderly more necessary and more prominent. In the same way, the westerners’ national identities also intensify the unidirectional obligation essence between father and children and make the relay pattern of providing for the aged as a natural thing.

Different Ethical Values

Western countries have a higher level of productivity, and they emphasize individuals’ independence from the perspective of values. The western countries are individual-based while the eastern countries are family-based. In the modern western countries, the individual-based thought has become the chief principle in the western culture. This principle advocates individual’s freedom and equality which have been showed in various interpersonal relations and the relation between parents and children is no exception. The relay relation between parents and children in the west also reflects the spirit of freedom and equality. To them, regurgitation-feeding pattern goes against the thought of individual’s independence or individual’s own willingness or that pattern is adopted without choices. But this kind of idea must be under the prerequisite that the elderly have their own good economic foundation and that they can maintain their independence. The elderly in the western countries are often loners and they will drive to the shopping hall even though they may be in their seventies or eighties, which is very different from that of China. While in China, during the development of the long history the individual tended to live in the groups. It is more important that the individuals depend on each other in the groups. Although the aged people also want to make their own living and stand on their own, they are too old to support themselves. They can only get

support and help from the families and especially from their children when they are old enough and they have lost their working ability. At the same time, under the traditional Chinese family cultural standard, the standard of Confucianism and the code of the ethics, the concept of filial piety has enjoyed immense popular support. Therefore, it provides fertile soil for the paternity system and makes the relation between father and children tighter.

Revelation for China in Filial Piety and Endowment Pattern

Revelation for us in filial piety and endowment pattern will be learned from the west , which mainly includes establishing correct attitudes to the differences, improving pension schemes, adopting home care system, strengthening community care service and encouraging self pension plan.

Establishing Correct Attitudes to the Cultural Differences

Facing the differences, we cannot simply judge which kind of pattern of providing for the elderly is good and which one is bad. The formation of any culture has its rationality and irrationality. The future world will be an age that is multicultural and people communicate with each other all the time. Seeking common ground while reserving differences, learning from other's strong points to offset one's weakness, promoting each other and common development should be the basic principle for the cultural exchange between the East and the West in today's society.

Chinese regurgitation-feeding pattern of providing for the elderly can provide stable circumstance and material prerequisites for the elderly deal with the inter-generational relationship better and make sure that the elderly in China can achieve ultimate value in spirit. This is the positive side. However, it also has its inequality and conservatism, which to some extent hinder the development of the society. And this is the negative side. The relay pattern of providing for the elderly in the West maintains the free and equal relation between parents and children better and inherit their cultural values. The westerners respect the choices of the younger generation and the free development of their personalities. But the downside is the lack of affection between the parents and the children. The old people's need for spiritual support is more urgent than the need for material support.

At present, the western developed countries lay stress on taking care of the elderly and their emotional issues. It seems that they have rediscovered the value of family security. They start to praise the Chinese pattern of providing for the elderly. In the process of modernization, they are also building a value realization mode for the elderly in a relatively high economic level. However, the realistic China seems to have lost its characteristic when solving the economic problems. Value losing and moral crisis have appeared.

Improving Pension Schemes

At this moment, the productive forces in China are still underdeveloped, the economic foundation is still weak and there is a big gap compared with developed countries. The aging population stays ahead of the social economy development. During the stage of an aging population in some countries and regions that are advanced into the aging of population, the per capital income is 10,000 dollars. While the per capital income in China is only 1000 dollars. Our country cannot provide more of the remaining products to meet the various needs of the increasingly large elderly population. Therefore, only by vigorously developing the productive forces, improving labor productivity and creating a solid material foundation, there will be a chance that under the circumstances that the proportion of bring up is raised continuously our country can make overall plans and take all factors into consideration about the national construction, people's life and the life of the elderly.

Adopting Home Care System

Home care for the elderly is the major manner for most of the elderly to enjoy the rest of their lives and the common choice for the elderly both in the East and West. According to different places of the endowment, the way of endowment can be put into two aspects: family endowment and

institution endowment. Home care for the elderly is different from the traditional home care where the elderly live at home and get help and support mainly from their children. The various inconveniences of life for the elderly need to be solved not only by the elderly themselves their spouses or their children, but also by community and social services staff together. This is the main mode of the future pension that is the combination of family pension and social pension. And it bases on individuals, families, communities and the country with home care as the main form community care service network as the foundation and management of national policies and laws as the guarantee. We can see that home care for the elderly will meet most of the old people's requirement and willingness to enjoy the rest of their lives at home. And it has very high social benefits. It is conducive to achieving sustainable development and it is especially suitable for the resource –scarce China's national conditions. Facing the sizable elderly population, it is unwise to develop nursing homes vigorously leaving the houses and facilities at home unused. Therefore, when designing the pension system, both social and economic condition and the willingness and the needs of the elderly should be taken into consideration. And they should be seen as important parameter of old-age security system. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to build a scientific and rational old-age security system that can not only adapt to social and economic development conditions but also meet the basic needs of the older age group.

Strengthening Community Care Service

One important condition to realize home care for the elderly is to improve social support system. Home care in the developed countries is realized under the strong support of relatively perfect old-age medical insurance system welfare and security systems and the community service system. With the increase of China's elderly population the only child nuclear families and families only consisting of old people, and the weakening of the traditional old-age support function that is mainly the children provide life care for the elderly, it is not rational and realistic to simply induce the elderly to leave their homes into the nursing home or daycare center or push them to the society. This requires a social care service to support home care for the elderly and home care for the elderly must be socialized. At the moment, China's level of social services is still very low therefore we must help to expand the social channels of home care for the elderly and get support and help of the whole society. Moreover, social services should be based on the community and older people living in the community have a geopolitical sense of belonging, a sense of participation and psychological identity. Therefore, the community care service network must be established and developed. Practice has proved that the community has the unique advantages for providing home care services.

Encouraging Self Pension Plan

The self pension and active pension will become an important part of the culture of the 21st century pension. Because the function of the traditional home care for the elderly is weakening, if the elderly can support themselves and help themselves, they can reduce the dependence on the family and the problem of the weakening of family support function will be cracked. In the western pension culture, the old people's "self-help and raise" is already a firm based cultural value. We should learn the self-help spirit from the westerners. The old people must first learn to help themselves and support themselves, and then they can get the necessary help from the external support network. In the traditional culture of respecting the old, because the elderly population is simply positioned as a "receiver" role, so to some extent, the basic force of the elderly has been ignored. However, their own responsibilities of the elderly can also not be ignored. They must also assume part of the responsibility of the pension. They must realize it and the government should use the important power through the appropriate mechanism.

Conclusion

Aging population is one of the most difficult issues remaining to be settled by the whole world. Though there are differences between the two aged- care patterns, both patterns work well in their

own context. Some of these reasons that caused the differences are unavoidable. But thanks to these complex reasons, the world is diversified. However, even in either one context there is diversity. When it comes to the parent-child relationship, it is impossible that all Chinese are the Feedback Model while all the people in the western countries are the Relay Model. As the globalization took place around the world, the situations in different countries and regions are becoming more and more assimilated, so is the pattern of old-age care. China is taking effort to build a well-around social insurance system and a developed welfare system to conclude more citizens under these beneficial systems. Surely, it will take quite a long time to achieve this goal. In the meantime, the western countries can barely shoulder the burden of the pension expense, since the aging population is increasing rapidly.

Compared with western countries, our country's traditional pattern of providing for the elderly has a very long history and it is the main way of providing for the elderly in the contemporary China. But it does not mean Chinese home care for the elderly is eternal. This kind of parent-child relationship lacks of equality, which to some extent goes to the opposite to the development of the society. We appreciate the free will in the western values to replace the absolute obedience to parents. But it is necessary to care for the aged parents unconditionally, just as our ancestors did. Combining the new filial piety with the rapid developing social insurance system and the welfare system, it is hopeful to solve the ageing population problem. Or at least, China will inspire the western world to a new aged care model. When the conditions for the existence of home care for the elderly change, home care for the elderly will face the historical challenge. However, challenges and opportunities co-exist. When home care for the elderly faces challenge, it also receives opportunity. Only from the perspective of challenges and opportunities co-existing, can we understand the situation faced by home care for the elderly.

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