

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND FAMILY(DOMESTIC) VIOLENCE

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### ABSTRACT

In a male-dominated society, feminism refers to movements aimed at safeguarding and promoting equal political, economic, and social rights and opportunities for women. Feminism is defined as the belief in and advocacy for women's equality. Feminism is an ideology that encourages women to be valued for their contributions. It is founded on women's social, political, and economic equality. Feminism may also be defined as a movement or revolution that strives for an equal and limitless world. Pearl Syden Stricker Buck, a Nobel Laureate, was instrumental in the quick growth of feminism in both America and China. More efficiently and positively than other feminists and missionaries, Pearl Buck was able to change American attitudes toward China. She aims to portray the pitiful state of women in her works, particularly through the people who appear in them. In the two novels "The Good Earth" and "The Mother," the present study intends to show the situation of intersectionality and family violence of women in patriarchal Chinese culture, as well as the socioeconomic causes that contribute to it.

**Keywords:** *Intersectionality, Family Violence, Feminism*

### INTRODUCTION

Multiple aspects of advantage and disadvantage are identified by intersectionality. Gender, caste, sex, color, class, sexuality, religion, handicap, physical appearance, and height are examples of these elements. These overlapping and crossing social identities have the potential to be both liberating and oppressive. Intersectional feminism seeks to distinguish itself from white feminism by recognizing the diversity of women's experiences and identities[1]. Intersectionality is a late-twentieth-century qualitative analytic approach that identifies how interconnecting structures of power influence society's most disenfranchised members.

Sexual, psychological, emotional, economic, spiritual, or legal abuse are all examples of family violence (also known as domestic violence). Family violence can hurt one's physical and emotional health, as well as cause social and communal problems, such as homelessness. Domestic abuse victims are primarily women over the world, and women are more likely to be subjected to more severe kinds of violence. Intimate partner violence is also more likely to be used in self-defense by women than by men. Domestic violence may be justifiable or legally permissible in some nations, especially in circumstances of actual or suspected adultery on the part of the woman. According to research, there is a direct and significant link between gender equality and domestic violence rates in a country, with countries with less gender equality experiencing greater rates of domestic violence. For both men and women, domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes in the world. Men who are victims of domestic abuse are also more likely to be disregarded by healthcare providers due to social stigmas associated with male victimhood.

Pearl Comfort Syden Stricker was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, on June 26, 1892. Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, her parents, were Southern Presbyterian missionaries in China. Pearl was the fourth child in a family of seven. She was born in the United States when her parents were nearing the end of a furlough, and she was returned to China when she was three months old, where she spent the first forty years of her life. There are far too many works by Pearl Buck after 1938 to name. Her writings have continued to deal with the conflict between East and West, with her focus extending to India and Korea. Her novelist's interest in the interaction between East and West has led to some political reportage. The intersectionality and family violence in Pearl S Buck's two novels "The Good Earth" and "The Mother" is the focus of this research.

The novel *The Good Earth*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1931, is a Pulitzer Prize winner. Through the female characters O-Lan, Lotus, Pear blossom, Wang Lung's aunt, and Cuckoo, Pearl S. Buck shows the intersectionality and family violence of women in patriarchal Chinese culture during the twentieth century[2]. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the status of intersectionality and domestic violence among Chinese women in a patriarchal culture and the current socio-economic situation in China. The story has been told by Pearl S. Buck, a woman full of genuine empathy who knows the human spirit as well as she knows China's exciting peasant life. Patriarchy is a social order in which men rule over all aspects of life. The family is ruled by man. In Chinese patriarchal society, women had an extremely low social rank. Under patriarchal culture, women had to suffer and face mistreatment. Women couldn't talk, therefore they had to remain mute and follow orders.

In other early books, Buck also discusses the condition of intersectionality and domestic violence among Chinese women. In *The Mother* (1934), a less commercially successful piece, the diligent and long-suffering peasant lady reappears in an even more pitiful form, as the nameless protagonist attempts to maintain her reputation after her husband abandons her. She takes on his farm responsibilities in addition to her own, but she continues to be a victim of China's arranged marriage system. *The Mother* was termed "the most frightful indictment of China's traditional family system" and "essentially a demand for Christian truth and modern enlightenment" by a critic in the *Christian Century*. Ms. Buck creates a portrayal of a poor woman living in a distant village with few joys and many struggles in this novel[3]. As the ancient traditions on which she bases her views clash with the new ideals of the communist period, this peasant woman must strike a balance and deal with the ramifications.

### **THE GOOD EARTH**

*The Good Earth*, an award-winning novel by Pearl S. Buck, was released in March 1931, and she became famous around the world for the stirring narrative of Wang Lung and his family, a Chinese peasant family in the twentieth century. The novel was the first time the world saw a Chinese peasant as a protagonist. The novel went on to become a best seller in the United States, and it was shortly translated into a variety of languages. In 1938, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for her masterwork novel *The Good Earth*. *The Good Earth*, an award-winning novel about Chinese peasant life, is a powerful story. The novel is set in pre-Communist China in a traditional Confucian culture where fidelity to the patriarchal system is a basic value. The novel is set in the Anhwei area and follows the lives of Chinese farmer Wang Lung. It starts on the day of his wedding to O-lan and ends in his golden years. The story has been told by Pearl S. Buck, a woman full of genuine empathy who knows the human spirit as well as she knows China's exciting peasant life. Patriarchy is a social order in which men rule over all aspects of

life. The family is ruled by man. In Chinese patriarchal society, women had an extremely low social rank.

Under patriarchal culture, women had to suffer and face mistreatment. Women couldn't talk, therefore they had to remain mute and follow orders. The Good Earth begins on the day of Wang Lung's marriage to O-lan, a kitchen slave. She is a slave in the House of Hwang, the region's ruling dynasty. Wang Lung becomes enraged the first time he meets her and sees her unbound feet. The tied feet were seen as beautiful and valuable in Chinese society[4].

In her works, Pearl S. Buck established the barbarous practice of foot binding. Foot binding was an immoral practice that began in the 10th century and endured until the 1940s when it was officially abolished in 1911. Girls' feet were bound so firmly when they were 3 to 4 years old that they should be 3 inches long from heel to toe. This was done to gratify her husband. In Chinese society, it was extremely difficult for a girl whose feet were not shackled to marry a man.

Because of her unfettered feet, Wang Lung despises O-Lan. As a result, O-Lan has been a slave since the moment he was born. In patriarchal Chinese society, daughters were regarded as little more than a commodity. They were sold by poor farmer families to help their families survive natural disasters. The girls were purchased by wealthy individuals and kept as slaves. In the novel The Good Earth, O-Lan is purchased and employed as a kitchen slave at Hwang House. On the first day of her wedding, O-Lan prepares delectable delicacies and serves them to Wang Lung's guests who have been invited to attend his wedding ceremony.

Wang Lung's relatives, acquaintances, and even Wang Lung himself praise her for her delectable cooking. Wang Lung is ecstatic about her.

***"I've been a Kitchen slave since I went into the House of Hwang," O-Lan responds to Wang Lung's praise. Similarly, on New Year's Day,"***

O-Lan demonstrates her worth as a kitchen slave by baking a delectable cake that only the wealthy consume during the feast.. Wang Lung is ecstatic since no other woman in the village is capable of doing so. When Wang Lung goes there to take O-lan, the Great Lady says to him, "Take her and utilize her wisely." She is a good slave, if a little slow and foolish, and she follows orders well. She also has a good temper.

Under Chinese patriarchal society, women's roles were limited to home tasks and field labor. The work of women is to turn wealth into wealth for their husbands and families. They are economically reliant on their spouses; they lack property and inheritance rights. They were properly disposed of and were required to follow their parents' orders. They were enslaved by a system of polygamy and prostitution that prevented them from remarrying if their spouse died. When a husband dies, it is customary for his wife to commit suicide as a statement of perfect faithfulness and conviction that it is better for a wife to go to paradise with her husband than to remain alone on earth.

Women's lives were fashioned in a patriarchal culture, which ignores violence against women, by such harsh conventions. Women had very limited roles to play, such as wife, concubine, prostitute, and slave, all of which are confined to the home. Women were taught to be submissive, meek, yielding, shy, polite, reticent, and unselfish, according to works like "Percepts for Women" and "Classics for Girls." Many women characters from Pearl S. Buck's work The Good Earth have been shown from a patriarchal perspective[5]. Some female characters in the story aren't even identified; this reflects the status of women in society. They don't have a place in society. There's also his Uncle's wife, whose name isn't stated in the novel but who makes O-lan's extremely

difficult when Wang Lung gets wealthy.

She assists Wang Lung in bringing Lotus, a concubine from the Tea House. She is a very lazy woman who does not care about the house or domestic matters, even though she is required to perform her duties. She is portrayed as a gloomy woman who believes that if she fails, she will be doomed. In Chinese culture, having a girl kid is seen as a bad sign. She continually blames her daughter for her family's hardships.

As she remarks *"Ah, it is something you do not know--to have an evil destiny! Where the fields of others bear good rice and wheat, ours bear weeds; where the houses of others stand for a hundred years, the earth itself shakes under ours so that the walls crack; where others bear men, I, although I conceive a son, will yet give birth to a girl--ah, evil destiny!"*.

Her portrayal is unquestionably bad. It's because the slave carries that as a portent of poor fortune in the future. She believes the girl is ruining the land and the house. This is the internalized level of the culture of silence that women are constantly confronted with. The thing that sets her apart is her ability to speak about the inequitable treatment that women face in society, which she attributes to all of them. She believes that no one in the world notices her efforts to avert the dreadful fate that she has always imagined. But there is one thing that society sees about her state, which is that she is the cause of the family's horrible situation[6]. Some of the indoctrination she receives includes portraying herself as someone who will be blamed if she has an only child and omitting the fact that she can change the situation if she so desires.

Keeping concubines was a common practice among feudal China's rich. Wang Lung is enamored with the Lotus Flower of the Tea House. Because of her shackled feet and light skin, he adores her. In feudal China, such attributes were regarded as attractive. Having a concubine is a status symbol for the wealthy and powerful. Wang Lung is ecstatic to have purchased Lotus Flower as a concubine. And it was a source of pride for Wang Lung in the hamlet when men spoke enviously of the woman in his inner court. Lotus Flower is a flower that Wang Lung keeps at his home.

Even though Lotus was a common concubine, Wang Lung was enamored with her and used this to her advantage. She lives like a mistress, but O-Lan, his sons' mother, lives like a concubine. It's because of her unattractive feet and face, which Wang Lung has never been able to get enough of in his entire life. As a result, Wang Lung is always drawn to Lotus and her attractiveness. For the Lotus concubine, beauty becomes strength.

Unbound feet are a weakness for O-Lan, yet she is a blessing in Wang Lung's life. O-Lan is the one who toils away in the field and at home for Wang Lung and his family. Lotus could not have worked in both the field and the house if she had been. Despite this, Wang Lung has a strong preference for Lotus Flower throughout his life. Pearl Blossom is one of Wang Lung's great house's lovely child-slaves[7]. Wang Lung buys her as a child slave in the final days of his life. Her parents sold her due to a severe famine and drought in the village. She merely throws herself down in front of Lotus, hits her head on the tiles, and moans.

*"Oh, my mistress, not I--not I—I am afraid of him for my life"*

The life of Pear Blossom in Wang Lung's house is depicted in the quotation above. She is still a ten-year-old child who is terrified of any unusual events that occur in Wang Lung's home. When she sees Wang Lung's cousin, who has returned from the war as an army officer, she is immediately terrified. Pearl Blossom's dread is understandable, as she is still a child, and children have a natural predisposition to be terrified of unusual things. Furthermore, the stranger is

requesting something she has yet to accomplish. She is still a newcomer to the house and has never had such an experience before. She has no idea how to act in the master's home. She is still studying at home. As Wang Lung's daughter, she is a very innocent young lady who expresses her feelings about males who can do anything to women who may be her future. She can cry whenever she wants if she senses something is wrong with her that could damage her.

The young maid then clasped her hands together piteously and wailed as if she would die of fright and sobbing, her little body shaking with terror, and she glanced from one face to another, beseeching with her tears. She has never seen him before and is terrified of him. Wang Lung's relative wants to demonstrate his dominance over her. She loses control of herself. The slave is powerless to resist his master's command[8]. Pear Blossom, on the other hand, is still an innocent child who has no fear of disobeying orders. She can't deny what the Lord commands since she is a slave, but because she is still a child, she is still learning how to be a nice woman in the future. Cuckoo is another concubine and the novel *The Good Earth's* final female character. She was originally a kitchen slave in the renowned House of Hwang, where O-Lan was a concubine. Every work was separated in the Great House of Hwang, and she was working in the Great House for bedtime enjoyment. In the same house, O-lan worked as a kitchen slave. Gambling, opium, and the desire for sexual pleasure cause Hwang's family to become impoverished. He needs a new girl every day to satisfy his lust.

The Tea House buys Cuckoo after that. A tea house is a place where individuals go to have fun and satisfy their sexual cravings. The Lotus flower was also with the cuckoo in the Tea House when Wang Lung met her and bought her with the help of her aunty. As a concubine, he takes her to his home. Lotus is a servant to Wang Lung's home, while Cuckoo is also a servant to Wang Lung's home.

The major works by Pearl S. Buck set in China exhibit her sharp observation of Chinese life in the early twentieth century. In all of her big works, she is adept at bringing forth rigorous customs[9]. Through her female characters like as O-Lan, Wang Lung's aunt, Lotus Flower, and Cuckoo, Pearl S. Buck succeeds in bringing forth the various images of women such as "Kitchen slave," "sex object," "submissive housewife," "bold and hardworking," "selfish and pleasure-seeking," and so on. As a result, it best elucidates the prevalent patriarchal social practices and their impact on women and Chinese society as a whole.

### **THE MOTHER**

Buck's work *The Mother* tells the narrative of a nameless peasant woman known only as "the mother" throughout the novel; it's a story of loss and pain, but also survival and courage. Due to the protagonist's anonymity, commentators interpret her as "a universal portrayal of the eternal mother" stuck in the cyclical flow of time and the tragedies and sorrows of life. The character's anonymity, on the other hand, is insufficient justification for branding the mother as a type of abstract representative of all moms. In truth, in old China, a woman's lack of a name was relatively uncommon, especially among the ignorant and rural classes[10]. A woman's identity is limited to one of two options: she is either the man's wife/concubine/sexual object, or she is the mother of his children. Both the major protagonists, "the mother" and her female companion, "the Cousin's wife," are recognized throughout the work by their positions as spouses and mothers, rather than by their names. As a result, their social identity is formed solely "through their relationships with men."

The mother is depicted as a typical Chinese woman at the start of the story, one who blindly

follows her culture's standards and expectations. She is the type of woman who may be perfectly pleased with her husband and children and not think about anything else. Knowing the fullness of the man's frequent desire, conceiving by him and knowing life growing within her own body, feeling this new flesh take shape and grow, giving birth, and feeling a child's lips drink at her breast were enough for her. It was enough for her to get up early in the morning and feed her house and the cattle, to sow the land and reap its fruit, and to get water from the well for drinking. The novel's crisis is precipitated when the mother is unexpectedly abandoned by her husband and left to care for three young children as well as her elderly mother-in-law. She is besieged with additional misfortunes as she works herself to death to keep the family afloat. The mother becomes pregnant after being enticed into a sexual relationship with the landlord's agent and is compelled to terminate the child when the man abandons her, resulting in failing health, trauma, and a huge guilt syndrome that haunts her. Her only daughter subsequently goes blind and is married off to a poor family in another village, where she suffers abuse and eventually dies. The government then executes the younger son, who has turned communist[11]. When the mother receives word that she now has a grandchild, she is on the verge of giving up on life.

This occurrence, which brings the story to a close, rekindles her passion for life. In this novel, the husband's abandonment is a pivotal event. It is a pivotal moment in the character's journey, propelling her into a realm of crises and conflict that tests her to her limits. Simultaneously, though, the mother begins to awaken to her female nature within this battle zone.

The mother is suddenly aware of the limitations and fragility of the familial/domestic world on which she has built her entire life and happiness when it crumbles. As a result, her husband's abandonment shakes her out of her complacency and propels her on a new adventure, one that will entail mistakes and bad decisions along the way but will reconnect her to her latent potential, allowing her to explore her inner resources. Apart from the physical and mental difficulties that the mother faces as a result of her husband's departure, the first thing she must deal with is attempting to protect herself and her family from the social shame that comes with being an abandoned woman.

***"A woman abandoned was the most ashamed, the most humiliated, and the most degraded" in patriarchal China. As a result, she would lose all dignity, honor, and respect, and would be hurled to the bottom of society."***

The mother concocts an elaborate deception to explain her husband's disappearance to preserve her dignity and reputation. She travels to the city and has a letter forged in her husband's name stating that he has a good job in town and is unable to return home, as well as money reportedly given by him, stuffed inside the envelope. This continues year after year, effectively putting an end to rumors of abandonment and maintaining her and her family's honor. When she finds out she's pregnant, her affair with the agent needs yet another deception. In her naivete, she forges a letter claiming that the husband died in a fire, believing that the agent will marry her. Her expectations are dashed as the agent dismisses her, oblivious to her circumstances. The mother's ostensibly nefarious machinations have been interpreted by critics as evidence of a "deceptive and manipulative" personality. Given the societal context in which she lives, however, the mother's behaviors should be interpreted as a survival strategy, a manifestation of the human urge for survival and self-preservation.

As a result, the mother's complex ruses can be interpreted as "tactics" and "maneuvers" to get her out of the circumstance she is in. It is, after all, a way of exerting agency and wresting power

from an otherwise impotent position. It's odd, though, that in a patriarchal society, women who exert power or strive to take control of their life are labeled "deviants, manipulators, or, at best, exceptions." When a guy displays authority, society praises him for his leadership abilities, yet when a woman tries to do the same, she is labeled deviant and manipulating. This is an excellent example of the phallogocentric set-double up's standards[12]. It also becomes a potent patriarchal tool to stifle women's self-confidence and ingenuity. Apart from her ingenuity, another distinguishing quality of the mother is her willingness to explore her sexuality as a woman.

In this character, there are two opposing strains. She, like most of her female counterparts, is dominated and conditioned by her culture's mindset. At the same time, the mother exhibits a strong sense of individualism and independence that is uncharacteristic of a woman of her era and rank. Her relationship with the agent is a good example. Despite being constrained and bound by her society's norms, she is acutely aware of her female needs and aspirations, and she strives to fulfill them.

In the narrative, her sexuality is described extremely openly. "And the fact was there was something in her, too, that tugged at her to let him be," she says of her encounter with the agent, "and the reality was there was something in her, too, that pulled at her to let him be." Though the act may cause guilt as a result of society's conditioning, it could also be viewed as a first step toward reclaiming agency and control over her own life and body. Buck criticizes society's, particularly Chinese society's, identification of the female as primarily maternal by ascribing sexuality to her role, "the mother." Even though the mother is perceived as striving to explain her sexuality, the act also instills in her a deep sense of guilt. Following that, she interprets every mistake and disaster in her life as a punishment for her "sin," which she defines as her affair and the subsequent termination of the child conceived.

***"Since troubles follow me and everything goes wrong with me," she tells her friend, the Cousin's wife, "I think sometimes it is that old sin of mine that the gods know about."***

As a result, she believes herself responsible for her daughter's blindness and death, her youngest son's death, and even her daughter-in-inability laws conceive in her mind. She believes "somewhat faintly that her misdeeds might be the source" of all of her life's and family's woes. The deep sense of conflict and the intra-psychical gap that is produced in women when there is a confrontation between their particular needs and goals and what society has ingrained in them is dramatized in this story. In its perspective and expectation of women, traditional Chinese culture exhibits a striking ambiguity and ambivalence. Abortion of her unborn kid is another key issue that contributes to the mother's shame. In feudal China, human sexuality is considered a tool of race perpetuation rather than a means of self-expression and personal fulfillment, especially for women. This influences the mother's reactions to her actions:

***"... the man was never enough. In himself, he was never enough. She must conceive by him and feel a child take life and shape within her. Then was the act complete and while the child moved and grew she went in a daze of happiness, being fulfilled".***

Buck goes to great lengths to emphasize this particular feature of her personality: She enjoyed every aspect of her life: giving birth, laboring on the land, eating, drinking, and sleeping, sweeping and putting her house in order, and hearing the women in the hamlet compliment her on her work and sewing skills; even quarreling with the man was enjoyable and added to their

passion for each other. As a result, she greeted each day with zeal. Buck succeeds in subverting the Chinese patriarchal narrative in this novel by reversing the gender equation, which is biased against women. Simultaneously, it highlights the Chinese woman's character, which Buck admires but which is neglected by her own culture.

Buck shows a protagonist in *The Mother* who has relationships with both the human community and the more-than-human environment that surrounds her. Buck emphasizes the mother's rootedness to the land and the natural world, in contrast to her husband, who "hates the earth" and eventually alienates himself from it. This familial tie not only moulds the character's daily well-being but also gives healing and strength during her journey's numerous crises. When her husband abandons her, it is her children who bring her back to life. Following the agent's rejection and the child's abortion, the mother's salvation and healing are largely provided by her family, notably her blind daughter:

*"...this small young hand feeling for her, called her back from some despair where she had lived these many months . . ."*

The mother's relationship with other women is another key agency. Female bonding is seen as a critical component in women's journey toward self-awareness and self-discovery by female writers. In *The Mother*, the main protagonist receives support from a group of women in her immediate social circle. The backbone of women's lives in the small, rural village where "women assisted each other when the need came" is depicted as a reciprocal and interdependent relationship.

The mother's friendship with the "cousin's wife" is an important source of support for her and helps to shape her journey to adulthood. The two ladies attend to one other throughout childbirth and "felt themselves to be the more genuinely friends because of this hour common to them both and that must come again and again." Again, it is the cousin's wife who stands by the mother in all of her life's difficulties. These shared experiences provide "a sensation of warmth and closeness, which makes even the most arduous solitudes bearable, and which provides the heart a small break from loneliness[13]."

The novel's conclusion confirms that the mother does, in the end, achieve a sense of internal liberation. She accomplishes this by learning to forgive herself and come to grips with and embrace her own life for what it is. Finally, the mother is freed from the cycle of guilt and self-recrimination via self-forgiveness and self-acceptance, which also allows her to look forward to the future, symbolized by the birth of her grandson.

*"See cousin!" she says to the cousin's wife, confirming her sense of liberation from the past's shackles. Cousin, you see my grandson, I wonder I was as full of sin as I always believed."*

Ms. Buck creates a portrayal of a poor woman living in a distant village with few joys and many struggles in this story. As the ancient traditions on which she bases her views clash with the new ideals of the communist period, this peasant woman must strike a balance and deal with the ramifications[14]. The Mother's fundamental problem is that the mother appears too remote, too self-contained for the reader to sympathize with her, to embrace her as the universal mother that Buck wants. The mother's narrative is intriguing, but it does not elicit the same feelings of shame or suffering as O-LAN's, nor does it elicit the same feelings of happiness or pride as Wang Lung's. Buck's opinions about Communism are also clear in the oversimplified and often-repeated remark that Communists are a "new breed of the robber."



## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the intersectionality and family violence that women in Chinese society face, as depicted by the characters in "The Good Earth" and "The Mother by Pearl S Buck." Buck has realistically illustrated the intersectionality and familial violence that impoverished Chinese families face. The study is significant because it provides insight into patriarchal Chinese society and societal problems such as selling daughters, female infanticide, foot binding, domestic abuse, and women as sex symbols[15].It can also be used to how cultures arrange gender roles, relationships, and identities, as well as how they intersect with other power hierarchies such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and age. Women's and Gender Studies equip students with critical thinking abilities as well as an awareness of women's various contributions to society, which are useful in several occupations. Women's and Gender Studies is dedicated to achieving gender equality in all aspects of life so that our personal and social relationships are marked by the freedom and mutuality that can only occur among equals.Sociologists may find the study beneficial in researching social situations, cultural studies, and even cross-cultural studies of other countries.

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