

**A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MARXIST HUMANISM AND FEMINISM**

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THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

Signed.......... 12/04/07


Okello Charles Ignatius

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

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Signed..........

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Signed..........
23/4/07

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Last but not least, I thank my wife Beatrice and my daughter Eugenia for bearing with me during this demanding period.

Dedication

To my loving wife Beatrice and our lovely daughter Eugenia (UG)

Abstract

Feminist movement has been viewed as the instrument used to challenge the traditional position of men in society with the hope of realising gender equality. This is in response to what has been portrayed as exploitation of women by their male counterparts. It goes without saying that such a theory must enjoy some connections with several other theories of liberation.

Our study was triggered by the claim of gender imbalance in society, and the curiosity to understand how feminists have gone about tackling the problem. In so doing, we utilised our knowledge of the nature of Marxist theory and tried to relate it with feminism in order to understand whether a connection exists between them. Our selection of Marxist theory was deliberate taking into consideration the fact that it has historically proved to be popular with groups of people struggling to liberate themselves from various forms of discrimination. We then looked for the most appropriate branch of Marxism for our purposes and settled on humanism, which we discussed alongside various forms of feminism.

The main objective of this study was to find out how far feminism can go without the solid foundation provided by Marxist humanism in its endeavour to challenge the position of women in the capitalist society.

Data was collected mainly from secondary sources exploiting both the historical and contemporary literature and also the current topical issues that revolve around the same topic. This data was studied using the philosophical method of analysis,

which is both deductive and inductive, and also employing the methods of dialectics to arrive at the most objective results.

Going by the above, we managed to shed some light on the two subjects (feminism and Marxist humanism) by investigating what feminism and Marxist humanism separately stand for. We started off by discussing Marxist theory in general then narrowed down to Marxist humanism which is part of the larger Marxist theory. We then proceeded to discuss what feminism stands for and discussed most of the feminist forms. By so doing we managed to discover that Marxist humanism has a lot in common with feminism and that feminism itself has borrowed a lot in terms of strategy and content from Marxist humanism.

We therefore concluded that feminism is but a beneficiary of Marxist and other forms of humanism though Marxist humanism provides a better understanding of it by utilizing the character of the capitalist society in its analysis. Our thesis was therefore approved in the light of pursuit of equality, fairness, justice and freedom for all in society.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

The larger area of discrimination has attracted a large number of scholars, philanthropists, and human rights activists among other interested parties, all pooling their efforts to understand the nature and trend if not to find a way of eradicating the practise all together.

Feminists' main targets are the challenges that face women in society. They undertake to grapple with problems that face women as women. In so doing, they have borrowed heavily from other theories one of which is Marxism. Traditionally, definitions of feminism try to portray it as a movement that takes care of and challenges the position traditionally assigned to women by various societies.

As a social theory, feminism forages on the assumption that our society is skewed in favour of men, who are sexist and are determined on dismissing any efforts made by women to change their situation. This orientation evokes the anger of women and their sympathisers who feel that their destiny as women lie with them and not with men. Any revolutionary activity that seeks to change the position of women in society therefore calls for both the concerted efforts of women and the goodwill of men. This takes into account the consideration that our society is made up of both men and women as complements of each other and not as rivals in the business of life.

In revolutionary terms, women in their endeavour to succeed in getting their rightful

position in society emphasise that they require space to develop positive relations among themselves and learn to develop their own abilities. In developing their own organization and decision-making skills in the struggle against sexism, women hope to achieve equality in labour systems and institutional set-ups that have relegated them to the underdog position for eternity. They hope to direct these efforts right from the home front (the family) to the highest institutional authority in existence.

Key to women's struggle against oppression is their reproductive rights, which is addressed quite comprehensively by some of the feminist schools. The other is their place in labour system especially in capitalism. Their place in labour systems find a strong niche in socialist and Marxist schools as does the exploitation of natural resources in green feminism for example. The Greens equate their position to that of nature's provisions, which are vulnerable to the dominant character of man.

If confused with the hierarchical system of our society, then feminism runs into a major problem of class-society helping to confuse the struggle further for the benefit of men since men also fall into all structures and hierarchies in society. No particular hierarchy in human society can claim to be a preserve for women since even among women themselves inequality abounds.

However, in the capitalist setting, the exploitation or objectification of women can be a major launching pad as women often and constantly find their sexuality exploited as symbols of pleasure, luxury and convenience by the marketing fraternity.

Feminism is understood to focus its attention at the sexual determination for all people allowing them to evaluate human sexuality and all human relationships. The understanding of this movement is to determine how our relationships and expectations of relationships are shaped by the society we live in and how history moulds these relationships to cope with emerging situations.

Looking at this explanation, the history of women's oppression seems to emerge from two sources. According to Riddiough, "*the apparent lesser strength of women and the reproductive role of women...*,"¹ explains why they (women) seem to occupy lesser positions in society and its institutions.

He argues that while the former may be socially determined; the latter "Women's reproductive role" is biologically determined. The explanation put forward is that human beings evolved as a hunting group. This economic activity was not possible for women when they were pregnant. They therefore needed the protection of men and assistance in their subsistence needs. This probably gave men the leeway to become more dominant in the social setting as time evolved. This also resulted into the division of labour as seen in traditional society. It is this evolution that led to the problem of discrimination by sex and the need to have a movement to take care of it with a view to changing the position of women in society.

The advent of feminism has been located, first, in the growth of consciousness, which was triggered by what Ana Doyle Wheeler² terms as the activities of 'the Exceptional women feminists'. The Exceptional woman feminist came from a group of women who

had the benefit of association with educated men in the process gaining the opportunity to learn how to read and write. They then took advantage of the disintegration of socio-economic structures and the absence of the oppressed (women) in positions of power. Coupled with the universal ideas of post revolutionary societies (like post revolution France and America), they found a rich ground on which to propagate feminist ideals. Their efforts began to bear fruits when more women began to access education thereby gaining skills in writing, and public speaking.

Most feminist groups recognise the liberation of women as a revolutionary exercise and propose that it be centred on such vulnerable social institutions particularly upon family forms, which is seen to affect women more negatively than it does men. The gross impact economic factors have had on the condition of women has made the Marxist critique of Political economy particularly appealing.

In order to develop strong systems, feminism had to rely on other liberation theories more so those that focussed their attention on equality, freedom and fairness. The best example of this kind of theory is Marxist humanism. Our investigation reveals that Marxist humanism provided the bedrock of this struggle that was just coming up to challenge the situation of imbalance in society.

In his presentation, Marx treats freedom as man's historical goal and considers this freedom as only possible when certain humanist conditions are adhered to. He gives impetus to this by providing an understanding that evokes the concept of justice, freedom and equality that is found in humanist philosophies. In order to achieve

this, Marx proposes a form of humanism that calls for eradication of classes within society and the introduction of communal way of doing things. In his understanding, this kind of society necessarily deals discrimination a final blow. The goal of humanism can be summarised thus *"In simplest terms, the belief in the unity of the human race and man's potential to perfect himself by his own efforts"*³

Humanist philosophy deals with the problems of men, which can be understood to seek enjoyment, and development of possibilities that are open to all in an equal manner. The purpose is to rid society of biases that impede development of some members of society while presenting others with lots of opportunities to advance. This definition represents the broadest understanding of humanism.

But it must be understood that for the concept to be applicable, one has to put into perspective, the environment under which human beings operate, which may from time to time affect their relationships. Rules of nature, for example, may have a great impact on the way human beings handle their tasks and may even dictate the outcome of those activities. Metaphysical questions such as the existence of God, the beginning of the universe and the end of it, and many other questions that concern human existence and destiny may all impact on our way of life on earth hence our relationship with the rest of the occupants of the universe. This also evokes the question of how in reality our universe is structured and whether there is a supreme being that willed and sanctioned that structure. The important thing among humanists is the priority of human beings to actualise themselves in an environment where they operate freely without any hindrance from any other force.

We can in effect say that humanism stands for the autonomy of human beings and rationality as a value oriented philosophy that seeks to offer them as much freedom and fulfilment as possible. This kind of understanding is what Marx presents when he seeks freedom of individuals from fellow human beings and also from the products of their labour.

Feminism on the other hand can be considered as an outgrowth of, closely allied to, and supportive of humanism. It can be considered as an application of humanism, especially, to women as a class of people. At closer look, feminism may differ with humanism in that it gives priority to women rather than to the entire human race. A good number of founders of feminist movement were humanists. Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Margaret Mead were all either humanists, Marxists or socialists.

In a nutshell, feminism is the belief that women should have equal rights with men in all things. It goes ahead to fathom the belief that natural differences do not exist either in authority or in sexual roles of men and women – a belief, which form the humanists manifesto II.

Feminism is basically enjoying partnership with humanistic philosophy from which it derives those tenets like equal rights, authority, and sexual roles of both women and men. Again from humanism, one derives the concepts of social, political, moral, ethical, religious and economic issues which are important to individuals, families and other institutions.

Marxist principles of humanism can be best presented in the precept that Oruka puts forward as freedom, which he sees as the goal of history.

In the words of Oruka, *"Freedom as a goal of history would ensure the fullest function and need of each individual in relation to every other; from each according to his ability to each according to his need"*.⁴

Looking at Marxism from this point of view, we notice the input, which is capable of transforming society into an egalitarian creature that takes care of each individual's needs.

Women, as a group alienated and dominated simply because they are women, have tried to use some of the Marxist principles in their quest to change their status in society. It is understood that apart from race, sexual differences have formed one of the most problematic issues in human history giving rise to discrimination based on sex. This kind of discrimination has been furthered by some of the most prominent philosophers and scholars whose works have tried to make the equation even more difficult to solve. Females have generally been perceived as inferior, or falling below the standards of their male counterparts.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to see how Marxist philosophy of humanism blends with feminist philosophy and how the two can help achieve a difference in the lives of women.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Feminism emerged as a movement that sought to challenge the position of women in society. During its formative years, feminism looked like a jumble of competing interests that lacked unity of purpose, which was necessary to accord it proper understanding of the situation it sought to tackle. Modern feminism emerged in many forms calling themselves by different names presentation competing interests and sometimes antagonising each other. There has been an argument over whether Marxism has formed the basis on which feminism derives its lifeline. Marxism had been dismissed as a positivist theory that attempted to use scientific methods to solve social problems, but new knowledge made it appear like this could just be the theory to co-opt in liberation struggles. The problem we seek to solve is whether Marxist humanism has been useful to feminism in giving it structure and form and whether the various forms of feminism may enjoy similar characteristics that stem from that branch of Marxism.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate whether Marxist humanism has helped feminism fulfil its objectives.
- To find out whether Marxist Humanism has helped feminists to understand and explain the role of societal structures in discrimination.
- To enquire whether feminism has benefited from other theories developed before it especially the theory of Marxist humanism.
- To find out whether feminism can fulfil its objectives without using Marxist

humanism as its foundation.

1.4 Justifications and Significance of the Study

1.4.1 Justification

The need for this study stems from the fact that scholars are divided on the issue of whether Marxism humanism bequeaths anything to feminism. We are trying to find out how much of Marxist humanism we can locate within feminism.

Many scholars present feminism as though it were an independent theory that does not rely on any other theory in order to achieve its goals. Taking into consideration the fact that many in society have undergone one form of discrimination or another, not only because of gender but also because of other diverse reasons, it is imperative to find out how such groups have dealt with those kinds of situations and whether feminism has taken a similar route.

While appreciating the broad nature of Marxist theory, one needs to understand which theme in Marxism has formed the basis of any one of these revolutions, which has called it to use. We intend to carry out the same investigation on feminism in order to find out whether it enjoys a relationship with the Humanist component of Marxism.

1.4.2 Significance

We consider that this topic is important because it seeks to highlight the plight of women in society and how various structures and institutions collude to undermine

women in society and also to clarify that Marxist humanism enjoys relationship with feminism. This study will also seek to give clear guidance on the way forward for women in society which has appeared to be biased against them. Our study also seeks to highlight the various steps feminists have taken to fight for gender equality and also to show that feminism has some theoretical foundation.

This study will also seek to inform budding democracies on the appropriate legal framework and political ideology that is sensitive to the situation of women in society and also provoke other scholars to look at particular gaps that may exist and that may also be necessary for the achievement of gender equality.

1.5 Literature Review

The relationship between human beings has been the subject matter of many disciplines dating as far back as history itself. It has been the subject matter of speculative disciplines like Philosophy and Religion, resulting in much recorded historical journals bearing works aimed at comparing capacities of different sex groups.

The comparative study of races, age groups, and what has been termed gender relations or gender politics have not been left out in such studies. Perceptions both real and imagined have also been professed, giving rise to the segregation of individuals based on the above factors. Part of this could be blamed for the rise of this kind of discrimination that is directed towards one particular group in society.

In the human society, social structures and institutions have justified a perceived inferiority of females. The premises leading to this have been drawn not only from the Social but also from the Physical and Psychological Sciences.

Starting right off from the medieval times, we find Plato arguing that women are inferior to men. Plato, who seems to be torn between his intellectual prowess and the norms of his society, is however, reconciliatory in his thesis. While he wants to show that women are inferior to men, he still owns up to his strong intellectual capability by trying to show that women can still be like men. He writes that *...though women are inferior to men in most respects, they have the same capacities and should be graded for the service of the city on the same terms as men.* ⁶

It is from this kind of background that we begin to appreciate the magnitude of the problem of gender imbalances and the attempts that have been made by various contenders in the clamour to change the situation for women. A reasonable starting premise is that a social system cannot provide for the happiness of the greatest number if one half of that number is removed from consideration. This starting point is heavily loaded with much socialist intonation as can be seen. Much of it carries the gist of the intentions that is harboured by both the humanist and the feminist.

The practical implications that feminism evokes are that as a social theory, feminism should have some coherence, consistency, simplicity and explanatory power. It should be able to draw a clear scope of its activities and its understanding of the social paradigms that evoke the underlying reality that it seeks to change and also to

understand and provide an explanation to that same reality. It is on these characteristics that feminism is to be subjected to some form of judgment.

Feminists were generally viewed as women whose activities were focused on women's liberation. Honderich sees in feminism *"the tendency to emphasise woman and her status, importance, powers, achievements, interests and authority"*.⁶ His understanding of feminism therefore, evokes the feeling of concern about the current position of inequality as compared to men. One of the definitions of feminism related to Honderich's position is that it refers mainly to those ideas and movements, which sought to challenge and transform the roles traditionally ascribed to women by society.

Writing in 1996 Michele Barrett states that *"it is relatively easy to demonstrate that women are oppressed...in other contemporary capitalist societies, but more contentious to speak of a Marxist feminist analysis of their oppression"*⁷

An attempt to put together a theoretical perspective that might identify the epithets of Marxist feminist project has proved to be difficult. We however want to appreciate that it may be contentious to develop a Marxist feminist approach but relatively easier and reasonable to appreciate that feminism as a relatively new approach to solving women's problems has benefited greatly from theories formulated before it, one of which is Marxist theory. The problem faced in trying to coin what could be termed Marxist feminist lies in their different approaches. We want to believe that same ingredients may be used to develop deferent approaches and that one does not

necessarily need to take *in toto* what the other has developed in order to seem to conform to the rules and objectives of that 'other'. It also beats logic to purport that one must call itself with the beneficiary's name to be seen to benefit from it. Our argument is that though some feminist forms do not have the acronym Marxist they appear to borrow heavily from Marxist humanism.

Barrett (1980)⁸ states that Marxism is constituted around relations of appropriation and exploitation and goes further to argue that this does not directly address the plight of women. Yet we note that women's plight also revolves around appropriation and exploitation. Marx was directing his efforts on economic systems, which occur in society. We have to acknowledge then that Marx was dealing with society and its problems and women form part of society. We can therefore rightly say that in order to address problems of discrimination in society, some ingredients of Marxism may be necessary.

Heidi Hartman (1993)⁹ on her part sees Marxist theory as sex blind. Feminist theory is sex biased. This does not mean that feminism cannot borrow in methodology, strategy and content from a 'sex blind' or better put, 'gender neutral theory'. More importantly, feminism does not need to copy from itself in order to gain legitimacy or to succeed. It needs to look from outside itself to build strong structures that benefit it in form and how easy than to avoid the jungle and use the beaten path?

Michele Barrett¹⁰ continues to identify the object of Marx feminism as identification of gender relations as and where they are connected the process of production and

reproduction as understood by historical materialism.

Our view is that Marxism is larger than just production and reproduction. In fact humanist aspects of it, which is our focal point, deals with justice, fairness and equality and does not just place parochial interests that the scholar is trying to confine it to. Feminism itself has a lot to deal with in the same area. We have to however appreciate that in production and reproduction women are more oppressed by capitalism than by most other economic systems a point well articulated by many feminist scholars.

Antonio Gramsci (Barrett 1980) identifies "*...the reduction of all political and ideological phenomena to their supposed economic determinants as...the most vulgar error of Marxism...when autonomous women's liberation movement sprang up in the nineteen sixties...it was seized on as a walking falsification of economism*"¹¹

This in itself implies that feminism was in a way triggered by Marxism but the writer overlooks the fact that Marxism is not restricted to economism and that even in economism itself, issues like justice, fairness and equality reside not to mention distribution and ownership of property. The writer fails to see any humanist ingredients in economist reducing it only to production and appropriation of property through exploitation of both human and natural resources.

There is also the need to realise that women's oppression is not simply the effect of male domination but a result of a complexity of factors like societal structures and

experiences of different societies, history and social classes.

There has been an attempt by some scholars to dismiss Marxist theory in the field of feminism and one such scholar is Derida who while trying to reduce Marxism to a spirit or 'messianic' affirmation still contends that *"Marxism is not a utopian hope but a revolutionary theory and praxis devoted to the very real historical struggle to emancipate all people from exploitative relations of production...unequal division of labour, property, power and privilege these produce"*¹²

And how else does one quantify the quality of a liberated person and free man than to use the above paradigms which in all fairness talk of equality, justice and fairness which form the core of feminist quest for women's rights in society. The attempt to dismiss Marxism while glorifying these characteristics is a clear testimony of a scholar attempting to reinvent the wheel by copying from but dismissing the wheel itself.

Heidi Hartmann (1993) writes *"...The marriage of Marxism and feminism is like the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law; Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism... To continue the metaphor further, either we need a healthier marriage or we need a divorce."*¹³

In this statement, Hartmann suggests, in part, that Marxism does not equally address the question of inequality among the sexes; hence the lopsidedness of the marriage as is in the English law. It also in essence implies that, Feminism is

subsumed in Marxism; that feminism does not have any distinct object apart from those already existent in Marxism. The quotation evaluates the efficacy of Marxism in solving the 'woman question.' If Marxism does not provide an equal partner of feminism, then probably something else needs to be introduced into the marriage to make it work, but if Marxism and feminism are one, then there is no need for feminism. If, on the other hand, Marxism does not adequately address problems of women, then for feminism to solve this inequality, it has to either delink from Marxism and set its own objectives, or use only those objectives that are relevant to it in addition to those of its own. The greatest question Marxist feminists have asked themselves is whether they can achieve equality in a society organised around Marxist theory and practice.

Marxist theory became attractive to women when they started fighting for their liberation, probably because it had been in use in fighting such crimes as imperialism, slavery and neo-colonialism. This discontent with Marxist theory helps to reveal that it may not be adequate in sorting out the problems of women.

Women have over the years defined their problem as the male supremacy over females. By this they meant the institutional, all-encompassing power that men as a group have over women, the systematic exclusion of women from power in society, and the systematic devaluation of all roles and traits which society has assigned to women. This was the kind of system women had to confront and seek to change.

Probably one reason why feminists invoked Marxism was to enable them to give a

theoretical underpinning of women's practice and understanding of sexism as a legitimate issue in the larger struggle against capital. The complex question still was how women could understand their particular oppression in a way that could confront the narrowness of Marxist terminology which focuses on work and economic relations as the primary area of importance and how they could develop a new theory which understands the importance of reproduction, family and sexuality.

The key issue of importance to Marxist feminists was the struggle against capital as 'workers' but not as women, defining women's role in reproduction (domestic labour) in terms that gave women an importance in Marxist analysis and which extended Marxist categories.

There were a number of questions to be answered, as feminist theory became clearer day-by-day. One of these questions was whether Marxist and feminist analyses could be used together with equal weight. This provides an answer as to whether economic categories are sufficient enough for the understanding of women's oppression or whether women's oppression is only imagined in the socialisation process but lacked reality. This approach calls for the examination of the socialisation process and the causes of sexist attitudes in society regardless of the economic systems that prevail in society.

In our earlier quotation, "*the impossible marriage*" Heidi Hartman tries to show that while Marxist analysis provides an insight into the laws governing history and economy, it fails to understand the dynamics of sexism- Marxism is sex blind. Only

specific feminist analysis is adequate in revealing the systematic character of relations between men and women. Yet she notes that feminist analysis alone is inadequate because it is blind to history and insufficiently materialistic. She concludes that feminism needs Marxism for the latter's strength in understanding the laws of motion and feminist analysis for its understanding of the predicaments of women. She in effect argues for a more progressive union between Marxism and feminism noting that feminism is crippled without Marxist analysis.

This is to say that inequalities have been identified in this marriage of Marxism and Feminism bordering on Marxist's argument that feminism is at best less important than class conflict and at worst divisive of the working class. Yet the common question has never been the feminist question. The feminist question is directed at the cases of inequality between women and men and male dominance over women. Most Marxist analyses take as their assumption the fact that the relationship between women to the economic system explains the relationship between men and women. Marxism has tried to explain the women question in three main ways: one way is by relating women's oppression or lack of it to production. This kind of orientation puts women within the larger spectrum of the working class, systematically subsuming women's relations to men under workers relations to capital. Early Marxists (Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Kautsky among others) saw capitalism as drawing all women to wage labour.

The second way, by which Marxists have treated women question is by incorporating them into the analysis of every day life in capitalism, analysing all aspects of people's

lives as aimed at reproduction of capitalist system in which all are workers. Thirdly, the focus on the household and the relation of housework to capital in which Marxist feminists argue that housework produces surplus value and also aids capitalism in other ways.

In general terms Marxist feminism has been seen to identify the oppression of gender in their relations with the process of production as understood by historical materialism. The oppression falls within the purview of production, reproduction, organization and systems of appropriation and exploitation. Marxist feminists are seen to try to locate the plight of women within Marxist analysis of labour systems, production and appropriation of resources. It therefore delves in the general field in which it tries to create specificity to the plight of women. Marxist feminists try to understand the problem of women by looking at the nature of patriarchy, and how it creates an equilibrium in society; reproduction and how society or the capitalist fails to reward it; and; ideology and how it has been used to demean the subordinate class.

Humanism as it stands does not seem to condone any of the above epithets and appears to advocate for fairness, justice and equality at all levels. Marxist humanism, though specific to the nature of production, appropriation and exploitation tackles these problems with a view to understanding and condemning the structures that create inequality in the capitalist society.

Marxist humanism according to a Soviet philosopher Vladislav Kelle is a type of humanism that links humanistic ideals with revolutionary class struggle. Marxism

looks at an individual as part of his society and acknowledges that the social environment in which an individual lives has an impact on the life of that individual. A type of humanism that only looks at individuals as divorced from their environments is therefore not adequate enough to understand and prescribe measures to solve day-to-day problems of humans in society. By trying to eradicate class structures that lead to discrimination in society, Marxism not only advocates equality, in society, but a type of humanism that would go farther in solving the problems of labour relations. Marx notes that, *"Communism's demand for abolishing private ownership means demand for life worthy of human beings. It is the triumph of practical humanism"* ¹⁴

The struggle for socialism can therefore be equated with the struggle for humane society that is free from exploitation of man by man. In Marxist understanding, practical humanism must be achieved through practical struggle in everyday life not through theorising on how to make capitalism more adaptable. Marx does not see humane society as possible in capitalism but as an aftermath of conscious efforts to eradicate capitalism and achieving socialism to replace it. In Marxist understanding all other forms of humanism are vague since they talk in very general terms. Marxist humanism on the other hand has a specific goal of achieving equality in a society where private ownership and class society is eradicated to achieve individual rights. They see in capitalism a concerted effort to maintain the status quo and hinder revolutionary social movement.

It is with this background that we try to find out whether feminism is a beneficiary of

Marxist humanism.

1.6 Theoretical Framework.

In evaluating the contribution of Marxist humanism to feminism, we are in effect investigating the efficacy of feminism as a beneficiary of Marxist humanism. Our quest is aimed at establishing whether feminism can achieve its objectives without the input of Marxist humanism and whether feminism can legitimately claim independence from Marxist humanism.

To achieve this feat, it is imperative to use a theory or theories that provide structure and guidance to the study. In this regard, we feel that Marxist humanism and totalitarianism are the most suitable theories to guide our study. Marxist humanism as a beneficiary of both Marxist and humanist principles will be suitable since it helps in identifying the benefits accruing from Marxist humanism to feminism.

Totalitarian theory, on the other hand, will be useful in explaining how coercion and authority that is based on sex is the most fundamental and one of the most oppressive of all forms of discrimination. The liberation of women requires the ending forms of oppression based on sex and must strike at the root of male oppression or patriarchy which is both form of exploitation in its own right and also pervades most other coercive and authority relationships. Common to all definitions of totalitarianism is the attempt to mobilise the entire populations in support of the existing authority through ideology, and the intolerance of activities

which are not directed towards the goals of that authority.

Totalitarianism as a tool in sexual discrimination maintains itself through propaganda dissemination, male controlled mass media, personality cult, regulation, restriction of free discussion and criticism, the use of mass surveillance and widespread use of terror tactics. In modern society, totalitarianism in sexism perpetuates itself in cultural settings dominated by men. This is also manifest in states and religious orders/institutions where legislation is passed and presided over by men who also form the majority in the civil service of most states. Adherence to religious beliefs and cultural practices that reward subordination of the female is the indication for totalitarian machinery that subjugates women. Totalitarianism operates from the pedestal of the control of ideological mechanisms.

Sexual correctness is a dogma that permits no dissent. Each individual must demand reconstruction of the foundations of objective education and liberty. Freedom of speech is essential to maintain the ability to search for the truth. Each individual's mind must be trained to challenge dogmas if equality is to be achieved and maintained. The time is long overdue for societies to eradicate sexism and return to reason and objectivity.

While it may be amusing to think of the Catholic Church hierarchy wading through feminist theory, its attempts to demonize feminism by associating it with communism should not be taken lightly. The fact that the debate over gender has surfaced simultaneously in recent years in many different settings suggests that this concern for semantics masks a covert campaign against women's rights.

The philosophy of totalitarianism is based on a top-down view of society, which sees an absolute and perfect political truth to which all reasonable individuals are driven. It is contended that not only is it beyond the individual to arrive at this truth independently, but it is his duty and responsibility to aid his compatriots in realising it. Moreover, any public or private activities do not forward this. Thus, economic and social endeavours, which tend to strengthen the collective, or seen as valuable, whereas education and religion which, tend to strengthen the individual are seen as counterproductive.

Other scholars posit that totalitarianism is founded on the idea that it is possible and necessary that the complete rights and freedoms of people ought not to be held hostage to traditions and social arrangements. This is with the understanding that totalitarianism has a connotation attached to it, coined as it was that liberal holds a negative attitude to the word and believing that force is not an appropriate way to achieve a goal no matter how valuable that goal is.

Totalitarianism accepts exclusive territorial sovereignty as its right, retaining full power of expropriation and imposition; the right to control full power of expropriation and full power of imposition; the right of control over everything and everyone. Maintenance of such power, in the absence of full support of the citizenry, requires the forceful suppression of any dissenting element except that which the government purposely permits or organizes. Liberal democrats, who see political strength as growing from the bottom up (grass roots), reject in principle the idea of coercion in shaping political will, but the totalitarian democratic state holds it as an

ongoing imperative.

A totalitarian is said to maximise its control over the lives of individuals using the dual rationale of the general will (public good) and majority rule. An argument can be made that in some circumstances it is actually political, economic and military elite who interpret the general will to suit their own interests. Again, it is the imperative of achieving the overarching goal of political good that shapes the vision of the process, and the individual is expected to contribute to the best of his abilities.

Individuals under this kind of authority are even aware of their powerlessness and may support the system that treats them in this manner.

Humanism on the other hand, is a broad category of active ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, regardless of gender, based on the ability to determine right and wrong through universal human qualities, which are rationality, experience, and common beliefs. It is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems, which is also incorporated into some religious schools of thought. It embraces a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. In focusing on the capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects transcendental justifications, such as dependence on faith, the supernatural or divinity. It places emphasis on the universal morality based on the commonality of human nature, suggesting that solutions to our social and cultural problems cannot be parochial. It also seeks to affirm a set of common principles relevant to the prevailing human condition. Humanism traces its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, through

the Renaissance and the Enlightenment periods, to the scientific revolution of the modern world.

Various forms of humanism have been identified. They include, but may not be limited to, secular humanism, religious humanism, cultural humanism, literary humanism, and of course, Marxist humanism. Although they share in many fundamental principles, there is a great deal of variety among them which include their more philosophic attitude and outlook.

Modern Humanism, also called Naturalistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Democratic Humanism can be defined as a naturalistic philosophy that relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion. Modern Humanism stems from both secular and religious origins, which also constitute its sub-categories. The value and dignity of the individual person is the central theme of humanism that values knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith. Many Humanists believe that much historical progress has arisen from the conflict between organized religion and secular society in which the former beliefs and practices have been gradually replaced with secular beliefs.

They accept democracy and reject both theocracy and secular dictatorships as political systems that are dangerous to individual freedoms and also value freedom of inquiry, expression and action. Humanism has a history of combating bigotry, hatred, discrimination, intolerance and censorship. It emphasises that humans are

an integral part of nature resulting from unguided evolutionary change and enjoy ethical values derived from their (human) needs and interest as tested by experience. The other strength of humanism is the belief that life's fulfilment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals that serve their social nature and find meaning in relationships.

As a theory that prides itself in setting ethical standards for human values and the future of mankind, in a way that hopes to give direction and satisfaction for survival, humanism believes that man is part of nature that has emerged as a result of a continuous evolutionary process. Man's culture and civilisation is a product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely moulded by that culture.

Just as Marxism considers freedom as the goal of history, humanism views the complete realisation of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks development and fulfilment in the here and now. Humanism is highly passionate about social life viewing man's knowledge as highly important when it comes to facing the crises of life in the possibilities that are available in sorting out existing problems. It also believes in the intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions that exist to fulfil human life. It believes in the heightened sense of the personal life in a cooperative effort to promote social well being in order to ensure complete realisation of human personality.

Humanism wants to achieve the intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to enhancing human life. The humanists are convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. Thus, a socialised and cooperative economic order must be established to enable equitable distribution of the means that make life possible. The goal of humanism is, therefore, the achievement of a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for their common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world also seeking to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them but endeavour to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. It is through this positive morale and intentions that humanism will be guided.

Our study seeks to utilise humanism as totalitarianism its theoretical underpinning because of the values inherent in them, which we have also identified in our subject matter. The types of humanism cited above have some glaring commonalities which form the bedrock of, and also act as a guide to our study. While totalitarianism will help us understand how the existing institutions, cultures and states have upheld the view of totally controlling the lives and destiny of women, humanism tries to argue for an ethical set of standards that value all humans as equal as Desmond Tutu rightly puts is that no one is a step child of God.

The quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is continually

becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realisation of the world of his dreams, and that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must utilise intelligence and will to the task.

The pursuit of fair, free and a just society, therefore, hinges upon the commitment of every member of society. Success in this undertaking amounts to the success of the entire society. In its endeavour to transform the position of women in society, feminism hopes to change the position of all in society for the better.¹⁵

1.7 Hypothesis

Marxist humanism is the foundation on which feminism rests.

1.8 Methodology

This research was a philosophical inquiry into the place of Marxist humanism in feminism as a women's liberation movement. It sought to expose the relationship between feminism and Marxist humanism by investigating whether feminism can stand on its own without Marxist humanism. Qualitative research method based on library research was adopted.

The scope of our study hinges on the contribution of Marxist humanism to feminism. It seeks to affirm that though not all feminisms bear the tag Marxist, they in one way or the other, they enjoy some direction from Marxist humanism. We direct our attention towards finding out how much of feminism is Marxist humanism.

The main sources of data were secondary, utilizing both the historical and contemporary literature, and occurrences in the relevant area of study. This meant that data collection had to be conducted in such a way as to receive as much detail as possible on each theory. Balanced discussions were conducted for the two theories to make our study as objective as possible.

Data analysis was conducted using philosophical method that prides itself in both logical induction and deduction, and dialectical method guided by utilitarian theory to arrive at objective results. The key question that needed to be answered was how intertwined the two theories are. Being able to answer that question amounted to the scale of measure for the success of our study.

The results obtained from the study showed that our thesis could be affirmed. However, such study presented its difficulties in terms of data collection as some valid components of either theory could be easily left out. This is because feminism as a growing theory can easily assume different forms at different times even during the study period.

Notes

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- 4 H.O. Oruka, The Philosophy of Liberty. Standard Textbooks graphics and Publishing, Nairobi (1991) p. 3
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- 6 T. Honderich, How Free Are You? Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1993) p. 54
- 7 M. Barrett. Women's Oppression Today. Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis. Verso editions, London. (1980) p. 9
- 8 Ibid p.10 ff
- 9 L. Clark, L. Lange. ed. The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche. University of Toronto press, Toronto. (1993) p. 26 ff
- 10 See M. Barrett op sit p.19
- 11 L. Ebert. ed, Ludic Feminism and After. University of Michigan Press, Michigan. (1996) p. 3
- 12 Ibid p. xi
- 13 L. Sargent ed, Women and Revolution. South end Press, Boston, (1981) p.2
- 14 V. Kelle & M. Kovalson, Historical Materialism: An outline of Marxist theory of Society. Moscow Progress publishers, (1973) p.112
- 15 A. Golsalves, Right and Reason; Ethics in Theory and Practice. 9th Edition. Meril Publishing Co. Colombus Ohio. (1985). p. 84ff

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 THE CONCEPT OF MARXISM

2.1 General introduction to Marxism

As a way of examining Feminist Philosophy using Marxist theory, we will make an attempt to find out the affinity that exists between feminism and Marxist humanism and how the two interact in a liberation process. The challenge will be to illustrate how Marxist humanism proposes the realisation of equality for humankind. Among other values that Marxism advocates are, equality, justice and courage. In an attempt to achieve gender equality, these values have to be expressly put to the test. It is, therefore, on the thread of these values that our study will run.

Marxism can be loosely described as dialectical materialism; each of two terms having distinct places in Marxist Philosophy. Dialectics serve as the method by which materialism is arrived at. The method is scientific in nature, given its formulation, which revolves around the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Stalin described this method as the study of contradictions in the very essence of every object. Materialism on the other hand can be defined as primacy of existence over consciousness, being over thinking or matter over mind.

In his essays on historical materialism, Marx tries to develop an orientation towards society and history, which he believed would open the way to a new social science capable of abstracting social wholes and their parts. This science would allow for the formulation of lawful relations while at the same time demystifying

such phenomena like alienation and domination. These two phenomena affect the relationships between humans by fellow humans and all humans by the products they produce. The science would also help in illuminating the role of political and legal forms, and what Marx termed forms of consciousness. He argued that the general characteristics of the social political and spiritual processes of life are dependent upon the mode of production. In this approach, he divides social systems according to material bases or mode of production. From this formulation Marx tries to develop the causal laws that govern changes in social systems, which is derived from the relationship between the dependent and independent variables within social systems. This theory is based upon the primacy of material conditions, which alone enables historical materialism to claim to provide a general framework for social and historical explanation.

Material base can be taken to mean material mode of production, which is understood to comprise what Marx, termed the social forces of production and the social relations of production. These relations of production include relations of power and control over the various forces of production. By forces, he means the aspects of organization of the work process; factors concerning division of labour, directly related to the social productivity of labour. Social relations also include relations of domination, subordination and control of humans in the work process and the relations between human and non-human production forces. Social relations in the work process, though sometimes coinciding with legal rights, are to a large extent distinct from them. Materialism views legal systems as codes grounded in relations of social power in the process of production, which guide their

development. The mode of production determines the general character of forms of social consciousness. Forms are part of the superstructure, which refer to ideologies, codes of conduct and promulgated doctrines. These come about with the development of production system and are used as guides in the production relations. It can therefore be argued that relations in production give rise to the superstructure, which in turn acts to regulate it. A great many of these superstructures are however accidental though sometimes vital to the operations in production. There is a great degree of interdependence in any materialist theory due to the complexity of the systems of which they are part. Any factor affecting one of the parts therefore affects the whole. This implies that just as the material base affects the superstructure, the superstructure also affects the material base.

The Marxist historical materialism can be seen as a system that transforms its raw materials (social relations), into determinate product (new social relations); ideological practice (religious, political, moral, legal or artistic forms, which also transforms its object; men's consciousness); and finally, theoretical practice. Lenin remarked that, without Marxist theory, there could be no social formations (historical materialism). Marx in effect develops a theoretical framework, which he sees as vital to the existence of any kind of relations.

In this theoretical framework, he argues that theory as a specific practice acts on its own object and ends in its own product. Any theoretical work therefore presupposes a given raw material and some means of production. This raw material may be ideological or empirical. Theoretical practice therefore leads to some general

process of transformation or the development of things. Theory can also come about as an effect of already existing structures. In this case, theory acts to explain the relationship that is already in existence. It is in this sense that the Marxist theory of dialectic exists, having been developed within a developing theory of capital and used to explain the structures that already exist in capital. In this process, several offshoots arose. These include the theory of class struggle in which Marx develops the dialectics of social relations that produces social transformations in class relations. The interplay within the social system is seen to lead to social transformation through the contradictions that occur within the existing social system. These relations, therefore, act as the raw material, which is transformed by the method of dialectics (contradictions giving rise to a new product - the new social order). The process of transformation comes about as a result of a need. The need, in our case, is the realization that the prevailing social system has come of age and therefore should be replaced. The new system on the other hand comes about through the creation of relevant forms and structures to sustain it. Once again the dialectic of social transformation uses the raw material at its disposal to produce a new system that makes survival of society relevant and possible. Marx wanted to formulate the dialectic in such a way that it becomes a revolutionary method rather than a theory that depended on mere facts.

The Marxist dialectics therefore exist in the practical rather than in the theoretical state. According to Marx, dialectics were the empirical complexes that constituted history. The Marxist method is therefore constituted in using the knowledge of the object to attain practical solution of the problem.

The same theory is re-invigorated by the works of Mao Tse-tung who tries to see dialectics in terms of an interplay within the structured whole. In his view, a simple process contains only a single pair of opposites while a complex one contains more than two. He argues that the reason for this is because there are many contradictions in the course of development of any major thing. Society, for example, has a plurality of contradictions in which structures with multiple and uneven determinations intervene primitively. Marx on the same note argues that a simple universal like production always exist at a determinant level in social development of the production by individuals living in society, that is, in a social whole. He tries to show that every 'simple category' pre-supposes a social whole of society and also that simplicity is merely a product of the complex process.

Human relations, just as any other form of structure, does not develop evenly over time just as Mao puts it, "*...nothing in this world develops absolutely evenly.*"¹

At any one moment in time, one contradiction dominates the others. This presupposes the dialectic relations that make motion or progress a possibility. This also means that there would be a dominant principle and a subordinate one in complexities. Domination in this relationship is not just indifferent fact but a fact essential to the complexity itself. The modes of organisation and articulation of complexity is precisely what constitutes its unity. This means that the unity of the whole has the unity of a structure articulated in dominance. The unity of a simple essence manifests itself in its alienation producing such results as concrete totality including civil society, religion, the state and philosophy. The contradictions

inherent in the structured whole, be they secondary or primary, form the conditions for the existence of such a structure. Society, which is a complete structured whole, is made possible by relations in production, which in turn ensure its survival. This is derived from the implication that production is not possible without society. The manifestation of the structure of dominance unifies the whole.

Marxism, in a way of explaining situations, conceives the conditions as the real, concrete existence of contradictions that constitute the whole historical process. It provides an analysis of the very existence of a complex whole. Over-determination designates the reflection in contradiction itself of its conditions of existence; of its situations in the nature in dominance of the complex whole. A contradiction reflects in itself and cannot have fixed roles in themselves. If the structure of dominance remains constant, the disposition of roles also change with the principal contradiction becoming the secondary one and the secondary one taking its place. This contradiction brings about a displacement that may result in a fusion or an explosion of the two. Sometimes a revolutionary mutation occurs from this fusion point because of a reciprocal interaction of the inside and outside structures.

The motor principle also helps to explain the Marxian principle of contradiction making sense of the revolution within a structured whole. That class struggle is the motor of history sustains the theoretical basis that it is through political struggle that it becomes possible to dissolve the existing unity that is determined by economic factors. To say that contradiction is the motive force is to imply that it results in real struggle (real confrontation), precisely located within the structure of

the complex whole. The locus of this contradiction may vary according to the existing relations of the contradictions in the structure of dominance in any given situation. This may result in the restructuring of the complex whole.

We can sum up by saying that contradiction is the motor of all development, and that dialectics is the conception of contradiction in the very essence of things.

In feminist circles, historical materialism can be understood to explain the three determinisms in feminism: labour, class and relations in production. This is explained in the polarisation of wealth, and feminisation of labour, which are seen to affect the lives of women in one way or another. Social contradictions are brought about by the social relations of production, founded upon the priority of private property, which causes social inequalities. These social inequalities, for Marxism, can only be remedied through revolution. Materialism also explains the place of patriarchal capitalism in gender inequalities. Materialism in this sense is praxis of labour through which humans act upon the 'external world' to change it while at the same time changing themselves. It is historical as praxis, and is conflictually structured as labour providing the structured relationships between the owners of the means of production and those who can only provide their labour for material gain. In this kind of relationship, it is worth noting that the re-formation of the set up needs to be done to fulfil the conditions that help ensure that free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

A revolutionary socialist feminism is based on historical materialism and seeks to

ensure that production fulfils needs instead of making profits and that material is fundamentally tied to the economic sphere and relation to production, which have an interconnection with all other social and cultural relations. Engels contends that materialism is indicative of the level of development in a society. This does not only mean economic development but, all other forms sustaining it which encompass the laws governing relations in society like ideology, religion and so on. To achieve the highest standards for human freedom, equality and understanding is, therefore, to collectively achieve the highest standards of material growth. Materialism is, therefore, determinant of the very essence of a society and the level of its existence. In order to provide for the equality of each person this material growth must not be individualised or privatised but must be collective and public.

From historical materialism we also derive the idea that the relations in society as constituting the social whole guided by the superstructure, which is itself developed from the independent variable (society), affects the parts and therefore the whole. We also get the idea that in the transformation of society, the subordinate (secondary) class will realise that the present social system is irrelevant and outdated and act to change it. This, in the historical materialist sense can be seen as the actualisation of contradictions, which give rise to the negation of the negation. In this way, a social system that seeks to provide for all renders the one that fails to cater for the benefit of the greater majority irrelevant. This contradiction that brings about a negation, in feminist circles, can be said to come about as a result of affirmative action of the parts (or part) of the social whole (women) that affects the whole (society). In this way, forms that render the

existence of society meaningful like, those that are relevant to the survival of society at its new stage of development replace economic systems and legal systems. that have become irrelevant. The same will also help to elevate the status of the secondary factor to be at par with that of the primary.

The other factor that can be derived from historical materialism that can benefit feminism is that of ideology. Ideology is seen to provide a basis for the co-ordination of 'forms' that make existence of a social system possible. Ideology results from the formulation of the dominant class within the social system. The ruling ideology is therefore the ideology of the ruling class. Subordinate class therefore suffers under the rule of the dominant class, which in feminism is the dialectics of patriarchy. Ideology can be best seen as the means by which social differences are signified and maintained. They correspond to the contradictory social reality that is the outcome of division of labour, which restricts access to social and economic practices of capitalism like unequal economic access. The ruling ideology works to actualise these systems in a way that favours the ruling class. Ideology also works to actualise imaginary social differences. Marx saw ideology as the discourse of cultural imaginary practices through which people become "conscious" of the material contradictions of social life and act to change it. According to Ebert, ² ideology can at the same time be used to mystify the social conditions of women's exploitation in patriarchy. It can also be used by feminists to fight male violence against women and their (women's) growing poverty that result from capitalist practices. This can be actualised in the construction of narratives of female empowerment and highlighting female capacities in the same. In this way, ideology

is used to distort the power patriarchy has historically ascribed to men helping woman to secure her place as an equal 'other' and acquire the same privileges as her male counterpart.

2.2 The focus of Marxist humanism

The term "Marxist humanism" has its foundation on Marx's conception of the "alienation of the labourer" as advanced in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In this manuscript, Marx argues that alienation is a product of the capitalist system where the worker does not function as a free human being but becomes less human having been disenfranchised by his own labour and becomes objectified. As a single capitalist employs a large number of labourers, and pays them just enough for their subsistence, they become slaves to the capitalist. The worker has to simply produce to meet his most basic needs.

The worker's condition is made even more precarious by the fact that even when they force the capitalist to award more pay, such pay will only serve to denigrate the workers' status and integrity. It is here that Marx as a humanist is well evinced.

In essence, this means that the twelve-hour work-day alone enslaves the worker, forcing him to give his entire productive natural skills, and what constitutes his essence as a person over to another person. This is the condition behind the capitalist structure that enslaves man. Because of this, capitalism is not conducive to democracy in Marx's conception. In this conception, capitalism inherently gives

rise to an elite bourgeoisie for whom the rest of society (the proletariat) must work. Insofar as this is the case, the proletarian himself will never be able to dictate the conditions of his work, which will always be determined by the capitalist himself. This means that even if the capitalist pays the worker higher wages than he himself incurs (from his profits made off the labourer's efforts), he still controls the terms of the worker's production.

Marx held that as far as man only has his liberty to produce, and produce according to his own conceived ideas, capitalism, as a system, will be an eternal hindrance to man's natural freedom. Marxist Humanism is the political, or philosophic, association that assumes this as its premise.

Other forms of humanism that have been identified include: Christian, Secular, Cultural and literary, Modern, Religious, Renaissance and Philosophic humanism among others.

Cultural humanism has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome. It purports that knowledge is attainable through rational thought and experimentation and is sometimes considered as the foundation of science. The literary component of it emphasises the pursuit of humanities (languages, literature, philosophy, history).

Religious humanism on the other hand has a very strong and influential religious tradition. During the Renaissance period Humanist tradition was primarily Christian in nature though it has become much more diverse in nature. Religious

humanism is sometimes viewed as a contradiction in terms by those who argue that all humanism is religious - even secular humanism in its own way, the only difference being in practise. Religious humanism practices its humanism in a religious setting with fellowship and rituals. Christian humanism can be viewed as part of the larger and more general Religious humanism enjoying more or less the same tenets with the latter.

Secular humanism shares with other forms of humanism the basic principles of an overriding concern with humanity, the needs and desires of human beings, and the importance of human experiences. For secular humanists, it is the human and the humane which must be the focus of our ethical attention. Secular Humanism claim to be non-religious based philosophy promoting humanity as the measure of all things. It had its roots in the rationalism of the 18th Century and the free thought movement of the 19th Century. A common critic of secular humanism is that secular humanism is actually a religion.

Renaissance Humanism is a movement that sprung up at the end of the Middle Ages. It brought with it an interest in classical studies and promoted the concept that truth could be discovered by human effort. Philosophic Humanism can be distinguished form other forms of humanism precisely by the fact that it constitutes some sort of philosophy, whether minimalist or far-reaching. It helps define how a person lives and interacts with other persons. As a philosophy, it is centred upon the needs and interests of people.

Modern Humanism as a philosophy today can be as little as a perspective on life or as much as an entire way of life; the common feature is that it is always focused primarily on human needs and interests. Modern humanism is also called Naturalistic, Scientific, Ethical or Democratic Humanism and can be defined as a philosophy that relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion. It stems from both secular and religious origins, which also constitute its sub-categories. The value and dignity of the individual person is the central theme of this type of humanism that values knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith. Many Humanists believe that much historical progress has arisen from the conflict between organised religion and secular society in which the former's beliefs and practices have been gradually replaced with secular beliefs.

They accept democracy and reject both theocracy and secular dictatorships as political systems that are dangerous to individual freedoms and also value freedom of inquiry, expression and action. Humanism has a history of combating bigotry, hatred, discrimination, intolerance and censorship. They argue that humans are an integral part of nature resulting from unguided evolutionary change and enjoy ethical values derived from their (human) needs and interest as tested by experience. The other strength of humanism is the belief that life's fulfilment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals that serve their social nature and find meaning in relationships.

Marxist humanity rests on the freedom of the individual, respect for legality and

the dignity of the person. This has been referred to as socialist humanism, which contains the idea of 'to each according to his labour, to each according to his needs.' Marx saw this formula as an answer to the conflict between communists and socialist democrats and argued that it would help in the eradication of war and poverty. The result, he contends, would be socialism.

To reach this goal, there would be a revolutionary struggle between classes, which will lead to liberation of man from all forms of exploitation. This will come as a result of a revolutionary humanism, which will spiral into 'class humanism', or 'proletariat humanism'.

... The exploitation of man meant the end of class exploitation. The liberation of man meant the liberation of the working class and above all, liberation by the dictatorship of the proletariat.³

The result of this revolution would be socialism of class, which would give way to the socialist humanism in which individual persons are treated equally with every other having shed off the shells of class from among themselves. Two stages of humanism are set out here. The first is referred to as personal humanism while the second is class humanism. Personal humanism is a result of awakening of each individual to appreciate the value of freedom, justice, respect for each other, fairness in society and elimination of discrimination and intolerance.

When this is played out into class, or whole section of society, like among the working class, it becomes class humanism. Class may reach a point where the main

belief of the occupants is in supporting their fellow and handicapped so as to capture so as to be capable of helping themselves. In class humanism, the entire class strives to move as a single unit, which transcends divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, nationality, class or gender. This kind of orientation nurtures the idea of respect for each other and the development of each other and the development of each individual's capabilities and capacities for the benefit of each other. This goes ahead to produce results that in turn benefit the entire group or class. Socialist humanism, a result of a reaction to the dictatorship of the proletariat can be seen as a contradiction of the bourgeois liberal humanism. The latter will at least find realisation in man and between men, giving rise to the beginning of the reign of man over his affairs.

The concept 'humanism-socialism' is a combination of scientific and ideological terms. Humanism designates a set of existing relations but does not provide the essence of these relations. The first stage of Marxist humanism was dominated by liberal-rationalist tones. Its object was a political struggle and the theory of history sustaining it was based on a philosophy of man. The belief was that only the essence of man makes history and this essence is freedom and reason. Man's destination is freedom, which is his very being.

...so much is freedom the essence of Man that even its adversaries are realising it when they fight against its reality...so freedom has always existed in one way or another sometimes only as a particular privilege, sometimes as a general right.⁴

The second stage of Marx's philosophy marked a redefinition of humanism. The state had remained adamant to the call for reform. Marx himself drew a conclusion that since the demands of reason had not been met; a decisive step had to be taken. Marx here follows the radicalism of Feurbarch, which tried to show just how unreason rests in alienation and how this could be negated by reason. Marx tries to show how radicalism would help grasp things by the roots, the roots being man himself. Man, to him is only freedom/reason because he is first and foremost 'communal being' "*...a being that is consummated theoretically (science) and practically (politics) in universal human relations with man and with his objects (external nature humanised' by labour).*"⁵

Marx tries to show that humanism can be reached through negotiations on confrontations depending on the circumstances. History is the alienation of unreason in reason and the alienation or production of true man in the alienated man. The production of the true essence of man is realised through the products of man's labour. This man must re-capture himself from the alienation of his products; commodities, the state and religion, to become a true man. To regain himself in this sense, man must go through 'human' revolution to restore his nature alienated in the frantic forms of money, power and gods. The practical form of this must be in philosophy and of the proletariat because in philosophy, man is theoretically affirmed while in the proletariat, he is practically negated. Philosophy has therefore to penetrate through the proletariat to negate its own negation and take possession of itself in communism.

In the later years Marx developed a new conception of humanism in which he defined humanism as an ideology rather than an essence; a category belonging to the new theory of society and history. In his new formulation, Marx explained that there is a universal essence in the attribute of 'each single individual' who is its real subject. These systems are complementary and dissociable, but their unity presupposes a whole empirical-idealist world outlook. The essence of man is to be a universal attribute existing absolutely and implying empiricism of him as the subject. The empiricism of the subject implies idealism of the essence and vice-versa (empiricism of the concept/idealism of the subject). Marx in a turn around replaced these with relations in production, which became his historical materialism (historic-dialectical) practice; by the theory of the different specific levels of human practice (economic, political, ideological and scientific practice) based on the specific articulations of the unity of human society. Marx in effect substitutes for the ideological and universal concept of Feurbachian "practice" a concrete conception of specific differences of the social structure.

To understand the turn around, we must become aware of the novelty of the concepts of historical materialism and the depth of theoretical revolution they imply and introduce. In this new condition, it becomes possible to redefine humanism by rejecting its theoretical pretensions while recognising its practical functions as an ideology. An ideology is a system of representation (linkages, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society. It is distinguishable from science in as far as its practico-social function is more important than in the theoretical function.

To understand this function we must revert to Marx who sees human societies as the subjects of history. Human societies, according to Engels partake in the economy, politics and ideology. So, in every society we can posit in forms, the existence of an economic activity as the base, a political organization and 'ideological' forms (religion, ethics, philosophy etc) as the rails on which these economic systems run. Ideology is therefore an organic part of every social totality. It is as if society cannot do without ideology. Ideology is therefore an essential structure for the existence of any society. It is distinct from other social instances, but men live their actions usually referred to as freedom and 'consciousness' by the classical tradition. In short, the 'lived' relation between men and the world, including history passes through ideology, or is ideology itself. It is therefore in ideology that men become conscious of their place in the world and in history. So ideology is a matter of lived relation between men and their world, in which men express the lived relations between themselves and their conditions of existence. The ruling ideology is therefore the ideology of the ruling class. This is why when in the 18th century the rising class, the bourgeois, developed a humanist ideology of equality, freedom and reason; it gave its own demands, which sought to free the poor from being held ransom by the rich. The poor were asking for economic liberalism, which would allow them to live in the ideology of freedom, the relations between it and its conditions of existence.

In a society that has gained equality, ideology still acts to provide for the adequacy/inadequacy of the relation between it and the other societies that they interact with. It is ideology that transforms men's 'consciousness', their attitudes

and behaviour thereby raising the level of their tasks and conditions of their existence. In class society ideology is the relay through which, the relation between men and their conditions of existence are settled to the benefit of the ruling class. In classless society, however, ideology is the element in which the relation between men and their conditions of existence is lived to the benefit of all men.

It is now clear that personal humanism presents itself precisely as an ideology in the play of words that authorises human actions. It is an exercise of a lived ambiguity and an expression of the desire to overcome it. Personal humanism is a display or demonstration of will or an indication of a movement that trusts to future history the task of providing the old words with a new content. These systems are based on the new conditions that are aimed at the eradication of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the tradition of communism. Marx sees the 'inhuman' and the 'human' as a product of the present conditions of life. The socialist humanism on the other hand is a rejection and a denunciation of all human discrimination be it racial, political exploitation or political slavery but also a rejection of war. Socialist humanism, in itself, deals with the historical reality of suppression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the 'abusive' forms of political, economic and cultural organization, corresponding to transition on the one hand and historical conditions in which this transition must be put to effect, on the other.

'Human' in whatever form is a promoter like a signpost to the direction that should be taken by society to gain or regain their freedom. It is a slogan that awakens the

organizational aspects, be they political, economic or individual life posing to solve human problems. This slogan is meant to defeat the theoretical function to replace it with practical action seeking to identify every organizational problem and providing solutions to them.

Marxist humanism has as its own object the exercise of the dignity of each individual and the equality of each individual before the law. This is achieved by using the structure/ideologies developed by man to guide him towards achieving his goals and not letting these ideologies dictate upon him.

The way of achieving this is through joint action aimed at arriving at classless society through the eradication of alienation of one human being by the other and/or all human beings by other beings like capital and means of production. These two latter factors should only act as ways through which man makes his existence possible and should not be given room to alienate man. Man has, therefore, to take charge of his affairs by controlling the external factors that infringe upon his existence.

The freedom of man was negated by the materialist nature of man in the advent of capitalism. The capitalist system has to be eradicated (negated) so that man can once again regain control over his affairs. To regain this freedom man must proceed not theoretically but practically through affirmative action. The theoretical or ideological aspect as it acts as a guide in humanism helps to draw attention to the dignity of each individual as enshrined in the law calling also for the law to

recognise the dignity of each individual in society. In this way, it helps to set the pace for the quest for the liberation of the subordinate class in society. This, in Marxist circles, is only possible through a revolution, which overruns the existing irrelevant social system, replacing it with the relevant one. When this is done, man can face his tasks jointly with every other in society help to tap the resources of nature directly and manage these resources in a way that does not let nature dictate upon him or alienate him. Freedom for man is therefore achieved through the negation of the materialist nature of man by a socialist regime. This freedom ensures the eradication of alienation of man by fellow man and all men by other beings like capital and ideological forms. When this is done, eradication of classes within society comes spontaneously, leading to a society of equal partners. These efforts of man to regain his freedom must be practical and not theoretical. The theoretical (ideological) aspect must only come in to guide the process through its path of re-definition. In this way, it is important that the structures that make man's existence possible are not given room to dominate the affairs of man by alienating man himself. Such factors like means of production and capital should at all times be under the control of man and not vice versa.

Marxists see the Communist social order as the only factor that would negate the capitalist order. This, it will achieve through the eradication of class differences by re-definition of the means of production in a way that gives each individual equal rights of ownership. Humanism also denounces all forms of human discrimination, be they racial, cultural, religious or sexual.

Going by the above and having seen the object of feminism as the emancipation of women by granting them equal rights, we find that Marxist humanism comes in handy in ensuring the achievement of this goal. It has been observed that almost all cultures and history that women's position in society has been enshrined by the ruling ideology; thus the ideology of the dominant class- men. It has also been observed in many cultures and history that ownership of property has been set in patriarchal order leaving women as providers within the system in which they lack control of the means. This system that has been seen to give men control over women can be said to border capitalism, which alienates many to the benefit of the few-owners of the means of production. In this set up, women lack class whether they are married to bourgeois or labourers. This is because the ideological structure is set up in such a way that the woman is only recognised in marriage. Once the marriage is dissolved, the woman can fall again to any lower class, the means of production remaining firmly in the custody of man. To ensure the eradication of such a set up, the socialist system if it acts on and lends ownership of means of production can help ensure that women regain their status as equal players in the game of existence.

We have only highlighted the key factors that serve as rendezvous between Marxism and feminism in this chapter. A thorough examination of the aspects such as patriarchy, reproduction and production will be treated in the latter chapters to help deal further with the subject of our inquiry.

Notes

- 1 L. Althusse, For Marx, Allen Lane Press, London (1965) p.201
- 2 L. Ebert, Ludic Feminism and after. University of Michigan Press, Michigan (1986) p.57
- 3 L. Althusser, op cit p. 221
- 4 Ibid p. 226
- 5 Ibid p. 226

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM

Feminism refers mainly to those ideas and movements, which seek to challenge and transform the roles traditionally, ascribed to women in various societies. Various specific feminist positions have arisen over the years going by different names like liberal, radical, separation, conservationist, conservative, lesbian and socialist feminism to name but a few. These different brands of feminism direct their efforts towards the achievement of diverse courses and do not understand the position of women in the same way. We are going to attempt the definition of each of them and also try to show their objectives. We are also out to try to show that all of them are committed to the achievement of women's liberation and equality. We also hope to achieve an understanding that all of them take their roots from Marxist humanism. They therefore present a diversification in their approaches towards the achievement of women's liberation and equality.

It is imperative to try to understand why women are oppressed in many societies. Historians report that man evolved as a hunting society where as a hunter man was not only hunted by other animals but also faced hostility from fellow man. In this state, women being physically weaker than men and especially vulnerable when pregnant relied heavily on the protection of men. Even after the child was born the woman's time would be taken by attending to the child rather than going hunting. It is the man who would fend for the family at such times so that women more so developed in the care of the home rather than in out door work. As economic activities changed with the evolution of human beings, labour relations also changed and the

woman remained in the home to grow in the wider area of reproductive labour. Being marooned in the home without exposure to developments outside the home, woman was left behind in any major developments in most societies and also in the participation in matters of policy making and government. Their life and destiny remained in the hands of men whose opinions shaped societies and their institutions.

Another possible cause of discrimination against women is the ideological framework that pervades society and the material inequalities that creates economic imbalances that at the same time deny women access to equal opportunities with men. This results in alienation that may contribute to the creation of class structures within society giving part of it ownership of the means of production while others remain with nothing but their ability to comply with the dominant class. Men as the beneficiaries of this system emerged to assume the role of policy makers formulating ideologies that affect both themselves and the subordinate class. The same ideological forms allow men to remain in the dominant category.

The foregoing tries to put forward how the dehumanising and inhumane conditions were arrived at by the human race. Feminism then emerged to redeem the human race by applying humanism.

Having considered what might be termed the advent of humanism, we will proceed to examine the history of women liberation movements from where we will derive some of the possible causes of discontent among women that led to the formulation of a theory for their liberation.

3.1 Origins and development of feminism

The origins and growth of feminism is as multifaceted as the movement itself. Its roots can be located in the very humble contributions of a few women to various 19th century liberation movements in both Europe and the Americas, more particularly in France, the United States and England. Some of the issues that came up during these struggles and which became part of the objectives of the movement were: the desire to deal with issues of abusive marriages; pay scales that devalued the work of women; lack of funding for social services; government bureaucracy that took no account of human needs; education systems that did not take care of women's needs and sexual ethics that set different standards for women and men. Apart from these issues cropping up, other issues that were at the centre of women's agenda for change were: property law, homophobia and racism. Women saw injustice everywhere they looked and had no alternative but to use theories already invented by men to rationalise and justify men's activities to challenge men.

In this breath some of the very first women to raise the above issues, which were later to be termed feminist issues, were Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Taylor who were influenced by utilitarian theory alongside John Locke's and J. J. Rousseau's thinking to challenge the positions of women in society. The two contract theorists (John Locke and Rousseau) talked about the equality of all men and assumed that women did not need the same equality. This awakening, combined with the works of Jeremy Bentham ignited the first sparks of feminist movement. The bourgeois revolutions of France and the USA challenging the

prevailing economic and political systems and the successful replacement of the French leadership and acquisition of voting rights by black Americans gave clear impetus to women that they could also benefit from these successes thereby overcoming the prevailing systems if they incessantly fought for change. The realisation that suffrage was the way forward since elections of leaders depended on numbers and not on physical might was a great discovery for women. They went out of their way to prove that the absolute power of the king and the rule of men as espoused in the Bible could be challenged and used as strength and not a weakness for women. Some of these movements, which focussed their attention towards American liberation, were Federal Rides, the Congress for radical equality, Students for a democratic society, and New York Radical Women.¹

The experience of organising themselves in these cohesive groups prepared women reformists with political knowledge, organisational skills, increased independence and radical understanding of society among other things.

In many cases, both men and women revolutionaries shared in the organisation of these civil rights movements but women still received discriminatory treatment from their male counterparts. They reacted to this by forming their own organisations to challenge what they believed to be happening in the larger society. They also sought to share their aspirations and knowledge with their "innocent sisters" who were not privy to the same experiences. The pioneer women employed tactics like organizing conferences for women to champion their course.²

After a series of such meetings, women's liberation was identified as an organization with the sole objective of challenging the position of women in society. By 1970, there was a plethora of movements whose aims were to fight for women's liberation. They came up with the slogan "personal is political" to capture the needs of every woman in society. These strategies helped to put into perspective diverse political interests of each group as opposed to what a monolith organisation would do.

Due to the prevailing cultural practices women had to work alongside existing men organisation to make themselves heard. This was somewhat a frustrating experience as they sometimes found it difficult to fit within the organizations dominated by men and be comfortable with the way they were run. In reaction to this, they formed their own organisations to challenge what they believed to be happening in the larger society. Women's virtues, which had hitherto been portrayed as useless in public life, began to gain recognition with David Hume arguing that women belonged to their own world in which they were expected to exude chastity, and morality. Madame de Stael, writing in 1796 went further to acknowledge that women had their own weaknesses but these should not be construed to mean that they were ineffectual in society. She cautioned women against being their own enemies in as far as gaining their rightful place in society was concerned. Hers was seen as a sombre voice that would later awaken the spirits of Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Taylor who showed much ambition in challenging what society had in store for women. The seed of feminism was being planted.

During the struggles in both England and France women played key roles with the hope that they would also benefit from the resulting freedom. Still, some theorists like Auguste Comte theorised that women had smaller brains that automatically placed them in subordinate positions. J S. Mill, on his part argued that when men vote, women are taken care of in that vote. This view was shared by St. Simons who though an advocate for women still held women with some suspicion.

St. Simon was a member of the Unitarian group, which sprung up in England during the enlightenment period. Unitarians believed in the power of reason and shared the concept of rights, freedom and tolerance. They rejected the doctrine of original sin, which laid blame for the fall of mankind on woman. They also advocated for the political reform that would give woman concession in politics thereby promoting their participation in social activities. The activities of the Unitarians gave rise to the increase in the number of enlightened women in society since the Unitarians laid emphasis on education for girls and encouraged girls to go to school. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the very first feminist writers, was herself a Unitarian.³

In 1839, another Unitarian, Harriet Martineau had published a journal on female education advocating for education of girls if they were to fulfil their obligations as mothers and wives. The Unitarians worked closely with some of the enlightenment philosophers like John Stuart Mill who was closely associated with Harriet Taylor.

In an effort to achieve equality for women around immediately after the French revolution, Olympe de Gouges presented 17 resolutions for women's equality in France. The resolutions addressed issues in social life economy and politics. In a nutshell, she wanted women to have the same rights as men and all the reciprocal responsibilities that go with that. These included responsibilities for crimes committed.⁴

Though not benefiting fully from the French revolution, progress had been made since autocratic authority had been eradicated. The next stage for women was to attain their rights in property ownership, contractual rights education and competitive markets. To the budding feminism, this meant that even men could lay down their rights.

Mary Wollstonecraft writing her *"Vindication of the rights of women"* demanded that women share in education to enable them to participate in duties within society. She acknowledged that women are weak but this weakness could easily be corrected by education.

Even after all these flurry of activities, women faced conscious exclusion from key sectors of society and attracted sympathy from John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor both of whom were well educated. This intervention gathered more heat between the 1790 and 1850. At this point utilitarianism was developing along the thinking of Bentham. Mill teamed up with Harriet Taylor to seek changes in the position of women in England at this time. They were later to enjoy the support of Unitarians.

Mill tried to synthesise utilitarian and libertarian beliefs developed in the thinking of Rousseau to seek a balanced democratic society- a society in which individual rights were honoured and protected. Bentham had argued that society was coined around pleasure seeking pain avoiding human beings. These provided the agenda for liberal feminism, which made it its duty to achieve suffrage for women. The liberal feminists centred their arguments around the same belief that any law that caused more pain than pleasure was bad law. It was upon each member of society to arrive at the amount of pleasure that was suited for them. To feminists, this meant that women had a right to choose what was good for them.

Mill and Taylor went ahead to shape feminism and provide it with strong roots. In this regard, Mill published "*The subjugation of women*" while Taylor published "*The enfranchised women*". The two articles had as their main aim, the obligation to push forward women's agenda. Using the slogan all men are created equal, they fought to gain equality for everyone in society. Taylor at this time had her eyes set beyond suffrage to participation in free market for women. She wanted women to be accorded the same education as men and be included in the labour market. She echoed Rousseau, who advocated for the freedom of all men. According to Rousseau, a social contract does not mean that one gives up their rights.

An American feminist scholar, Higgingson brings an interesting angle to the defence of women's rights. In a book "*The common sense about women*", written 20 years after Mill's publication, "*The subjugation of women*", Higgingson argues that women should have the vote not because they are the same as men but because

they are different which makes them difficult to represent by people who do not have the experience of women. Suffrage, in Harrington's mind does not change the roles played by women and men in society, but only gives both the ability for self-determination. While taking this direction, Higgingson still believed that married women should take care of the home while their husbands work in the factory. These sentiments were echoed by Madame Romieu in France who says "*the vocation of women was to give hope and encouragement, to be the centre of family life; the vocation of a man was reflection, energy, analysis*".⁵

The interesting point emerging at this time is that most scholars agreed that women's undisputable domain was in the home even if they got more freedom and rights and nothing should upset that equilibrium. Mill and Taylor had earlier doubted the ability of women to compete in the capitalist situation even if given a chance to do so. Contributing to this debate, Rousseau argued that men had the natural right to all they wanted while Bentham argued that men were motivated only to increase their pleasure and possessions.

The pitfall these theorists fall into is that they want women to gain extra space by achieving education, ownership of property and suffrage but retain their position in the home. They did not believe that women could combine productive functions with reproductive activities but had to make a choice of one of those activities. The bottom line is that though legality ensures freedom and equality for women, it does not succeed in keeping stigma and discrimination at bay and so, as women escape from patriarchy at home they end up in a worse situation out there. This means

that as feminism continues its growth, women's problems continue to change shape,

Again in the 1840s the growth of feminism was boosted by loosening of ties in religious circles occasioned by the increase in the number of religious doctrines, which allowed people to make free choices about which doctrine subscribed to. This occurrence was mostly important to the development of feminism both in the United States of America and the United Kingdom where religion had attained a new meaning and significance in people's lives. Religion found its way into the fabric of society by addressing itself to the various social issues like slavery, moral reform and later moral superiority of the woman, which later found its modern translation in radical feminism. The change in the tune of religious practices and beliefs paved way for the campaign for equal rights and later the use of socialist tradition in feminism. On the same note, humanist ideas like being mindful of each other and sharing of both material and non-material provisions became a major pointer to the socialist tradition and later to feminism.

The evangelical project also laid much emphasis on moral character and the desire to save souls with a more immediate purpose of stamping out sin. This turned so many evangelicals towards social and moral reform. Among the vices considered most immediate to deal with were drunkenness and slavery, which somewhat found association with feminist ingredients so much so that many women opted to form groups whose aims were to evangelise. The effect of evangelical movement on feminism was however considered conservative and not radical because it only tried

to bring domestic virtues into public domain but had little desire to change the nature of domestic life.

As a contribution of industrial revolution, the 1920s saw an increase in leisure time for middle-class women resulting from the decline in house work which gave women an ample opportunity to form women's organisations in the United States. Women increasingly gained access to instruments of communication such as journals, some of which were exclusively produced by women themselves and carried articles campaigning for their own rights. Among the popular subjects in the journals were campaigns for moral reform, the promotion of women's sensibility and their right to individual conscience. They also challenged double standards on sexual morality, which meted out selective punishment on women for the sins committed by both men and women. Furthermore, they refuted the idea that a woman's happiness only came through marriage, and attributed the causes of prostitution to low wages for women and the monopoly of men in professional fields.

The Quaker movement, an offshoot of the anti slavery movement was another important step in feminism because of the fact that it was one of the very first organisations to allow and encourage women to rise to positions of leadership and to speak in public. The women who rose to positions of leadership in the anti-slavery movement became conscious of the dignity of the person and translated this to the situation of the woman thereby giving some impetus to feminism.

The socialist tradition came to the scene, emerging from the works of the followers of

Saint-Simon who not only emphasised the equality of the sexes but also the position of women in society. The socialist tradition gained momentum between 1870 and 1920. These years came with the demand for the abolition of the double standards on sexual morality and the clamour for equality in the treatment of individuals regardless of their sex. This helped reinforce the emphasis on domestic virtues and the importance of family life particularly within the middle-classes.⁶

Finally, the civil right movement of the post-war era, which brought along with it the first stage of post war feminism (in the late 1960s). At this stage, women turned to all possible legal means to secure their freedom and identity. The period manifested itself in the advocacy for an androgynous society, which would give rise to a sexually egalitarian society in which both men and women performed social roles without discrimination.

Modern feminism emerged as a result of interaction between various social complexes whose interplay has placed women where they are today. The fall in birth rate freed women considerably from reproductive labour to join the work force. Sharing in the productive labour helped demystify the belief that men were superior to women.

Juliet Mitchell echoes the understanding that modern feminism was a consequence of the contradictions between the ideology on woman's role, and their actual position in society. She cites the example of the contradiction between the domestic ideology and women's productive role, the contradiction between their role in the family and in the work force and the contradiction between the ideology of sexual freedom and women's

actual sexual exploitation.⁷

The foregoing notwithstanding, no claim can be made to the fact that there is an absolute historical point in the development of feminism. This is an area or rather theory that grows continually changing shape to adapt to the conditions of the changing society. It might be reasonable to say that as long as humans live, feminism may continue to grow.

3.2 Goals of feminism

In discussing the affinity between feminism and Marxist humanism we need to consider the objectives of Marxist humanism and how feminism draws from them. Understanding the scope and strategy of feminism will help gauge its relationship with Marxist humanism.

The point of discussion here is the position of women in society in relation to that of men. Some people may argue that women are lowly paid, for example, because they lack the drive and the go-getter attitude that propels people to the top. This would imply that women are oppressed because they keep themselves down. This view postulates that the status quo remains and that the only thing women need is encouragement to think positively.

This notwithstanding, certain groups have been struggling for women's liberation for centuries although this liberation meant different things to them at different points in time. Some of them wanted the opportunity to vote, others wanted, equal

opportunity in the work place; equal pay; rights to maternity leave; equal access to education; provision of contraceptive and reproductive health care facilities; legal protection of women and their organizations; property rights; and rights to representation. This list in itself sounds like prospects of humanism. The list may be long and unending as various issues kept on cropping by the day making the liberation of women an ongoing endeavour.

Various approaches were employed to deal with these problems. Carroll Aileen presents two of these approaches viz. the Socialist approach and the feminist approach, both of which try to first explore the mechanisms through which women are oppressed then prescribe ways of dealing with them. While it is appreciated that each of these approaches point out to different directions both of them agree that women are oppressed for one reason or the other.⁸

The feminist analysis tries to explore the ways through which patriarchy contributes to women's oppression, and blames it on what Kate Millet defines as a government or institution in which half of the populace which is women are controlled by the other half – men.⁹ The socialist position, on the other hand, is that women are not oppressed by a class of men but by the existence of class society, whether in feudalism or capitalism. Class system ensures that women are kept at the subordinate levels of society regardless of who leads that society. They argue that getting rid of women's oppression by class is a pipe dream, as there exists nothing like sex class of women united against patriarchy. In this thinking, it is only the working class that holds the key to changing the system to one that treats

both men and women equally. The strategy is to have women who are committed to challenging the position of their fellow women in society to unite with the working class to fight for socialism. These issues will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters.

This brings us to the point where we try to identify the flaws in the feminist understanding of the predicaments of women. It emerges that feminists treat men as the problem in women's oppression. The success of feminism, however, depends on blending the efforts of all in society, and looking beyond men into class interventions in society to locate the problem. It would be fallacious to allude to the idea that men have more power over all women.

Most of the available feminist literature was bent on flowering the nature of women as being closer to nature, nurturing, and caring therefore naturally nurturers. The same literature vilifies the qualities of men while at the same time encouraging women to compete with men in wage labour. This approach fell short of liberating women as it led them into the cage of working double shift. It emerges that the answer to woman's problems does not lie with their joining wage labour but in equal integration in society in which tasks are viewed as equal.

The other area in which feminists have an involvement is the change in understanding of the ways of women. Betty Friedman, a bourgeois woman writing in the 1960s presents the view that women arrive at their decisions intuitively rather than rationally¹⁰. These kinds of beliefs only help to relegate women's

thoughts to the mythical domain, a domain that was not considered worthwhile by science. Even today there are feminists who want to present some of the most valuable aspects of womanhood as lying in myth, closeness with nature and sensitivity while dismissing science and technology as representing the male nature of aggression and oppression.

The propensity by feminists to advocate for affirmative action may be viewed as another trap in which feminism falls as it may lead to installation of women into positions that they have not competed for and may therefore not be qualified for. Psychologically, this shows that women may not be as competent as men and therefore cannot compete equally with men. When this happens, society is left with the feeling women are not good enough while the belief that men are superior is reinforced. The women who are lucky to be installed suffer from various things. First, they may not have the guts to join sisterhood and help their fellow women get out of their predicaments. After all they are beneficiaries of the system that oppresses their counterparts.

The whole idea that runs through this argument is that having a few women at the top does not necessarily change the rules on which society runs.

The scope of feminism lies in the achievement of freedom of women and equality among all mankind, though the strategies and understanding towards this direction may be varied.

Notes

- 1 B. Olive, Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement, Basil Blackwell Ltd. Cambridge center, Massachusetts. (1990) p.81ff
- 2 Ibid p.83
- 3 M. Wolstonecraft in J. P. Sterba, Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Boston, 1985. p. 232
- 4 A. Nye. Feminist theory and the Philosophies of Man, Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc., 29 West 35 Steet New York (1989) p.13ff
- 5 Ibid p.19
- 6 See O. Banks op sit, p.90ff
- 7 J. Mitchell in M. Barrett, Women's Oppression Today, Verso Editions 15 Greek Street London w1 (1980) p.81
- 8 C. Aileen, "A Woman's Right to Self-Defence: St. Johns University Law Review, Dublin Fall-Winter (1993). P. 76 ff
- 9 K. Millett, Sexual Politics. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (1970). P. 96
- 10 J. Mitchell, in M. Barrett, Women's oppression today, Verso Editions 15 Greek Street London w1 (1980) p.84

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 MAJOR FORMS OF FEMINISM:

In this section, we want to discuss some of the major forms of feminism with the view to elucidating how they interact with one another, and also how they contribute to the quest for equality of both men and women. Our other intention is to show that most if not all forms of feminism have benefited from Marxist humanism. We are interested in major forms because we realise that feminism is such an amorphous and growing movement whose members cannot of certain be enumerated with accuracy at any one given time. The membership is defined by geography, culture, class and both historical and contemporary characteristics making it very difficult to come up with a definite number.

4.1.1 Conservative feminism

Conservative feminism is a type of feminism that adopts the position which is geared towards the conservation of the institution of the family. It puts forward a position that if women join the labour market with the same model of careerism that men pursue and practice then, there is a great danger to the growth and maintenance of the family. They believe in the preservation through encouragement of reproductive labour, which is contingent upon clear division of work between men and women. This is possible if both men and women value each other as complements to their kind. Conservative feminists often reject the popular feminist epigram of "personal is political" which they consider to be more provocative than conciliatory. They also see the success in bringing all sexes together as reliant upon inclusive policies that brings forth the best in all. The

survival of human race depends on both men and women, hence the need to work together as cogs in one wheel. Their humanism lies in the realisation that society depends on the complementary efforts of all and the need to sustain society both by production and reproduction.

4.1.2 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminists subscribe to the view that, woman's oppression results from legal inequality and unequal opportunities accorded women by society. Vilifying sexism, they consider all people as equal and deserving equal treatment from all. Liberal feminists view sexism as a dysfunctional belief that deprives society of one part of its work force. They also argue that sexism is only a product of socialisation process and not a biological characteristic, which can be eradicated to achieve equality in society.

Judith Butler,⁷ one of the liberal feminists, for example, argues that, gender differentiation is just but a by-product of ideology culture and tradition. She further states that the notion of gender has been synthetically sustained and misrepresented to find meaning in anatomical elements, biological functions, behavioural models, concrete sensations and pleasures so that anyone could use this artificial combination as the fundamental cause, and reference for classification of individual behaviour. These kinds of representations have made it almost impossible to think of individuals outside gender. Butler notes that sexual categories have been shaped to define and mould personality in society. Society has been developed to think of individuals in terms of race, sex, age group and social class among other categories.

This led to society developing discourse on humans in bio-political and bio-historical scale and using these categories to analyse societal systems by assigning values, meanings and interpretations in what western feminism summarised as gender-discourse-power. Liberal feminists adopt a socio-gender approach to the study of women's issues and advocate for access to equal opportunities for all members of society.

The foregoing argument shows how significantly culture affects and shapes society. It, for example produces gender ideology, which determines in part how images of women are portrayed in cultural practice.

Barret⁸ gives such examples like advertising where women are placed in roles they traditionally perform in the home. Another important example is the presentation in children's books; the mother is normally portrayed as doing housework so that children grow up knowing that their mother is a house worker. This tendency starts quite early in childhood when the girl child is treated as weak, tender, and therefore taught to play with toys. These traits are however seen as negative when performed by boys, who early in life are taught to play with such toys as cars and guns, and are expected to be 'man' in fairly early years. Gender differences are therefore instilled in children quite early in life becoming part of their growth process.

Women are again compensated by presentation of imagery and ideas that tend to elevate the moral value of femininity. There are several practices that appear

sympathetic to or deny opportunities to women. The dichotomous view of the Catholic Church is seen to do exactly that when it casts an oppressive and contemptuous attitude towards women. Another process, which may be termed Collusion, is responsible for manipulating and parading women's consent to their subordination and objectification. Collusion also manifests itself by making women give willing consent and internalise their oppression. This ideology presents women as always innocent, always passive victims of patriarchal power. This has been termed as general inclination towards 'bad faith'.

Ideology cannot be divorced from its material conditions in a given historical epoch since ideology is culturally produced and used to internalise women's inferiority. Oppression and inequality in cultural practice is an essential site to begin the struggle for the emancipation of women by raising consciousness and transforming subjectivity.

In this regard, feminists have seen ideology as one of the pivotal points of gender discrimination. The ideology of gender oppression has been mostly grounded on biology taking procreation and its different consequences for men and women as the root cause. Cora Kaplan has suggested that ideology is the energy source of patriarchal domination. The ideology of women's inferiority is the manipulation of reality to serve men's interests explaining women's own collusion in oppression as a variety of false consciousness.

In disputing the adequacy of these theories, to explain the role of ideology in

women's oppression, feminism has tried to challenge the validity of these conceptions that see ideology as playing out economic contradictions at the mental level. However there is a strong claim that *"as long as feminist theories of ideology work with the theory of representation within which representation is always a representation of reality, however attenuated a relation that may be, the analysis of sexual difference cannot be advanced because reality is always already apparently structured by sexual division by an already antagonistic relation between two social groups."*¹

Sexual differences are always produced through different systems of representation. Another way of looking at the effects of ideological practice is by considering the argument that being may determine consciousness so that the revolutionary transformation of being may raise the level of class-consciousness. Division of labour, for example, cannot be wholly grounded on skill without taking into consideration the material effects of gender ideology.

Cultural forms such as modes of communication, conventions and so on determine the kind of representation that results into a situation. Representation therefore, in most cases reveal or portray the real situation. This is to deny the existence of ideology before the real (material). Representation is normally rooted on historically constituted real relations. Stereotypes are tied to historical social relations. An example is the use of female models in advertising consumer products, which have taken root in the fact females have over time been associated with commodities (in prostitution for example) hence this deep-rooted association

with consumer products.

The liberals lay their focus on societal forms and superstructures that control society.

4.1.3 Radical feminism

Radical feminists, who are also called cultural feminists, are a group that focus their attention on three major components in society. These are patriarchy, Biologism and material structure of society.

The term patriarchy was first coined and used by Marx Weber, to refer to *"...a particular form of household organization in which the father dominated other members of an extended kinship network and controlled the economic production of the household."*² In Weber's understanding, patriarchy refers to rule by the father/husband.

Radicals understand patriarchy as the structure of society that places men at an advantaged position over women in almost all aspects of life. In the larger feminist circles patriarchy has shifted its meaning from the "the rule of the father" to a more general form of male domination. The main project of radical feminism is to try to give guidance on issues like sexuality, personal relations, and the persistence of male domination over females.

The object of feminism is inequality between women and men, and more specifically

the question of male domination over women. There is a lingering assumption that patriarchal system dictates the economic interplays within society and contributes to male economic power. This kind of analysis is based on the assumption that men as patriarchal heads of families own the means of production, which in turn affect women's position in a number of ways. Patriarchy is seen to have adopted the systems of capitalism that enable it to exist along side and benefit from it. This is one of the reasons why radical feminists maintain that patriarchy provides the theoretical basis for any study of the oppression of women.

This relationship is seen to enable men regardless of their class in society to dominate women. A good manifestation of patriarchy is the enabling environment that makes men heads of their families, therefore, masters of both members of these families and the property they own. Men are seen in this hierarchical relationship to be dependent upon one another to maintain this control over women. It also enables them to enjoy control over women's labour power, which is utilized as free labour in almost all known instances in as far as reproductive labour is concerned. This control is ensured and maintained by setting up institutions that hinder women from getting access to productive resources that enable production to take place. Thus, hierarchical relations are perpetuated by the patriarchal system aided by institutions like churches, schools, workers unions, and the media, all of which work towards enforcing the inferior position of women. Material base of patriarchy rests on child bearing in the family and on all social structures that enable men to control women's labour power and sexuality.

Kate Millet³ argues that patriarchy are groups who rule by birthright providing fundamental divisions in society. Millet goes further to say that in capitalist societies, the domination of women by men is mediated by class differences between women and that women lack permanent class regardless of whatever class they are born in. This is because economic dependency renders her applications with any class tangential, vicarious and temporary. Firestone,⁴ however goes a step further to locate the cause of economic dependency of women on Biologism arguing that the reproductive capacity of the female makes her a slave and that until artificial reproduction methods are introduced, the female will always remain in servitude and bondage. She reads Engels' account of class struggle as meaning that the warring classes within society are always the product of modes of organisation of the family unit for the reproduction of the species as well as the strict economic modes of production and the exchange of goods and services. Firestone, therefore, sees the oppression of women as biologically determined and cites the remedy in technological advancement that will take care of reproduction and set women free for equal competition with men in production.

Christine Delphy⁵ has however tried to depart from this view by arguing that patriarchy is based on social factors. She gives a materialist analysis of women's oppression maintaining that ownership of production by men is the root cause of female woes.

In her understanding, the material basis of women's problems leads to a vicious circle of production and reproduction of ideologies that pin women's position in society to

Biologism and psychologism, which ensures that women are retained at the status quo in society. Reproductive biology has been interpreted to mean the employment of women in the house and household related activities. This results from what has been termed biological reductionism. Biological reductionism is generally an ideology of the dominant class that seeks to brainwash members of society including women to believe that they belong in the home. Disputing this kind of belief, certain women feminists have tried to provide alternatives that would make women realise their rightful position in society. These groups advocate for the freedom of women from what the Radicals term "the law of blood" which purported to free women from maternity.

The law of blood was aimed at introducing artificial child bearing and rearing mechanisms, which would set women free from reproductive labour thereby rendering them free for productive activities, to equally compete with men in public life. This would also be made possible by reducing the power of the family. Women's 'otherness' and difference would therefore be used as an art to challenge the social systems, which for a long time had been perceived as subjugating and enslaving them in society. A collective movement would emerge from the consolidation of women's powers against those of men. Biological reductionism tries to put women in a position that since they are the reproductive force in society, their work lies with reproductive labour such as keeping the household and caring for the children. Men on the other hand are perceived to be suitable in productive labour in which they still utilise the efforts of women and claim credit for it. The complementary nature of the sexes is downplayed in this kind of reductionist argument. The

socially ascribed qualities that result in the cultural weakening of one sex group by the social institutions of the day has also been seen as one of the real causes of gender biases. The arising social stigma provides a healthy ground for growth of inequality and hatred that leads to the 'choking' of one group and portraying them as the weaker of the sexes.

Radical feminists believe that women have been treated unfairly by societal systems that favour men. This is perpetuated by the role of women in reproductive labour hence the assumption that when women are freed from reproductive labour, they in effect free themselves from subordination by men. In a nutshell radical feminism has as its main objective the liberation of women from insubordination by men. It therefore contributes in the liberation of women.

Patriarchy breeds hierarchy intertwined in materialism and biologism.

4.1.4 Separatist feminism

Separatists argue that women will only be free when they establish their own institutions and communities separate from those of men.

Separatism appealed to women albeit wrongly because they were made to believe that the first step towards their liberation was to fight the aspects that depict them as people who are conditioned to believe that they did not have a right to an opinion, to be politically active and even to speak out. They felt that when they organised together with men, their ideas and efforts were often subsumed in those

of their male counterparts; moreover, they were not even given a chance to speak. Even when they got this chance, they were often booed, vilified, and made fun of. When separatism is taken further, to assume the state of campaign against men, then it only means that women have identified men as the cause of their problem. This strategy isolates them from men and their clamour for liberation boils down to a competition for supremacy between men and women. This makes it rather difficult to cover any ground because in an effort to change any aspect of society, all members of society should work together as partners. When women form a committee that deals only with women's issues like abortion, or rape, and society decides that whenever such issues arise, they are referred to that committee, men would be set free from partaking in such issues and will never get to care about what will be labelled 'women's issues'. This would be a wrong approach as these issues affect the whole society and men are part of that society.

The Separatists clarion call is that men are the problem and should not be trusted. They therefore encourage women to organise themselves outside the institutions of men and exclude men from all their organisations.

4.1.5 Marxist feminism

Marxist, Materialist and Socialist feminism will be used interchangeably in this discussion since their tenets are similar across the board. Socialist feminists analyse women's oppression with the understanding that this form of oppression is part of the larger scheme emanating from segregation through economic inequalities and class system of capitalist society. Marxists understand this

domination as resting on materialism, which as a selfish, excessive dependence upon status symbols, consumer goods and amassing of wealth undermines humanity. In order therefore to achieve equality of the sexes, Marxism prescribes humane socialism that eradicates all forms of alienation by treating all as belonging in the bracket of humans.

Many people may dispute the fact that Marxism and feminism have some commonalities. Marxism is treated as a theory whose development depends on all who subscribe to Marxist school of thought. In his writings on the origins of the family, private property and the state, Friedrich Engels addresses a new topic in Marxist circles; the relationships between material conditions of people and how it affects the organization of the family.

Engels tries to show that patriarchal system, in which the husband is the chief custodian of family property, helps in the promotion of the subordinate position of women as a woman is rendered classless in a society where class and property go together. Engels goes further to argue that emancipation of women will be contingent upon their joining the work force, which will empower them economically and boost their position in society. This needs to include the absorption of women in every aspect of life in society. In Engels' understanding, only through this process will women gain equality with their men counterparts in a society, which for a long time relegated women to reproductive labour and treated men as first class citizens.

The socialist or Marxist theory came in handy as a theory that would help understand social problems and the oppression of women was considered to be one such problem. Feminism tried to address the problem of interconnectivity between patriarchy and capitalism, with the intention of dealing with sexism, class conflict and racism. In this study patriarchy is understood to be a class system that discriminates one section of society in favour of another.

The general characteristics of socialist feminism lie in the strategies it adopted as a way of fighting discrimination. Its efforts were directed at educating women to be conscious of their own oppression as a group and showing them that this would determine their success in the revolutionary struggle. They maintained the position that all forms of oppression, be they sexual, class, or racial are interrelated, and that the struggle against them must be co-ordinated. They wanted to maintain the identity of feminism by keeping it as an independent movement of women from all sectors of society throughout the revolutionary process. In this way, the socialist commitment to women's liberation would be maintained particularly in the ideological and interpersonal spheres. Socialist feminists believed in the essence and strength of sisterhood and coined the slogan 'sisterhood is powerful and personal is political'. This meant that all aspects of a woman's life were political and called for political action to change the prevailing state. Socialist feminists looked up to the socialist tradition to get this new lease on life because for a long time the socialists had been worried about women's subordination and had generally conceptualised the problem of women's oppression as the "women question". The basis of their argument was that women are oppressed in capitalist societies and occupy subordinate places in

every other known society. Women's oppression, according to the socialist feminists disregarded class and time. Division of labour according to sex, for example, exists in every known society and women are generally relegated to reproductive labour, while men find a niche in productive labour. Still, in many other societies, women combined both reproductive labour with productive labour. This occurrence presents a barrier to women's participation and progress in society.

One way by which Marxists have analysed women's oppression or lack of it is by considering how the mode and means of production impacts on their lives. This is done by defining women as part of the workers in a capitalist situation. The second way is by analysing women's issues as part of everyday life in capitalism by seeing every aspect of people's lives as related to capitalism and as reproducing capitalist systems, in which all are workers. The third way is by focussing on housework and its relation to capital arguing that housework produces surplus value in which case, house workers contribute to the success of capitalism. All the three ways are so intertwined that one cannot deal with any of them without dealing with the other either directly or otherwise. The three ways have one common factor; they all relate to capitalism in one way or the other. It would therefore be in order to start by looking at the parameters of both capitalism and patriarchy and comparing the two against these parameters.

The epithets of capitalism rest on ownership of private property and accumulation of the same based on surplus value or profits accrued from the exploitation of labour, resources, and market. Patriarchy is a system in which the father or man is the head

of the family, therefore, holding title to family property. It relates to capitalism in the sense that the male head of the family is the owner of the family's private property, controlling both servants and resources. In this case, women fall below the privileged class by not holding any titles to the said property thereby lacking any say where that property is concerned.

Engels¹⁶ recognises the inferior position of women in this kind of set up and notes a difference among the proletariats where, due to the absence of private property, women were not oppressed. From his observations, Engels predicts that the kind of economic set up that oppresses women would be destroyed by the entry of women and children in wage labour. This will help them to undermine the authority of men in patriarchy, which is sustained by the capitalist economic order. According to him, emancipation of women would come in stages. The first stage would be the coming of the proletarian revolution, which would destroy feudalism thereby introducing capitalism. In capitalism women will enter wage labour in large numbers thereby becoming economically independent. This independence will help them undermine patriarchal authority, but will still leave them vulnerable to the capitalist who will still exploit them by assigning them jobs related to the ones they do at home. The jobs will be assigned low pay and few if any opportunities for advancement. It will also lend them to working double shifts, one shift in wage labour while the other in the house. This will still leave them at the mercy of men who can work longer hours with more pay and more chances for advancement. The solution, according to Engels would come with socialism, which will collectivise reproductive labour rendering both men and women equal opportunities. This will also be reinforced by the fact that the

motivation to accumulate wealth will have been destroyed.

Marxists generally see ownership of private property as one major cause of women's oppression. In so doing, however, they failed to pinpoint how and why women were oppressed as women and the vested interest men had in the continued subordination of women. Men have since benefited from having women serve them in capitalism just as in the periods before capitalism. In this sense capitalism has not provided an answer to women's oppression by men. It is also worth noting that capital and private property do not cause the oppression of women as women, making the abolition of it not a condition for the end of women's oppression. Capitalism has also failed to put all women in wage labour on equal terms with men. On the contrary, it has created a separation between the home, family and personal life on the one hand and the work place on the other. While men are oppressed by having to do wage work in the capitalist situation, women are oppressed by either not being allowed to do wage work or by being forced into a double shift. Capitalism creates the conditions, which make women work in the home under no pay to reproduce wageworkers for the capitalist system. They (women), in effect, reproduce the labour force, provide the psychological nurturance for workers (men) and also provide an island of intimacy in a sea of alienation for the same men.

From this point of view, women work for the capitalist system, and not for men; they work at home mostly under no pay but still work for capital. Still, this argument does not hold without patriarchy. It does not provide answers as to why women have to work at home while men in the labour force. The systematic domination of men over

women in the family, the economy, and the society is not simply a division of labour between men and women but a division of places in society where men are held in superior position while women occupy subordinate ones. Engels romanticises the pre-industrial family where men, women and children laboured together in family centred enterprises. The whole family participated in community life equally. According to Engels, the answer lies in Humane Socialism, which will re-unite the family and recreate the happy workshop which, would help re-conceptualise production and provide a formula for the kind of society that is equally beneficial to all.

Heidi Hartmann argues that Engels' analysis of labour process within the family is inadequate⁴. She states that while the capitalist benefits from women's cheap labour, men, as husbands and fathers, receive personalised service at home and enjoy higher living standards than women in terms of luxury and leisure. This materialist approach, according to Hartmann, entices men to continued vested interest in women's oppression.

The meeting point between Marxism and Feminism could be difficult to locate but it is important to note that since Marxist analysis has been that of class relations, the understanding of the laws of motion of capitalist society can best be done through the use of Marxism. A Marxist methodology can therefore be useful in formulating feminist strategy since Marxism has identified the form of women's oppression as existing in patriarchy while the orthodox Marxist theory supplies the content, specificity, differentiation and detail. It at best provides the strategy through which

the motor of sexism can be deciphered.

Juliet Mitchell and Shulamith Firestone⁵ suggest that for feminism to benefit from Marxism, the use of scientific socialism could help analyse the nature of oppression and hence the revolutionary role of feminism. They see the need to utilise the two-fold character of the determining factors in history, which Engels identified as production of the means of existence and the reproduction of human beings.

Shulamith Firestone goes further to suggest that one can use materialist analysis to bridge the gap between Marxism and feminism. She argues that the dialectics of sex is the fundamental historical dialectic while the material base of patriarchy is the work women do in reproducing the species. Her analysis has been accused of biological reductionism because she bases most of her arguments on the reproductive nature of women.

Considering that Marxism is constituted around relations of appropriation and exploitation, Feminism can only benefit from it if its pivotal point is built around gender relations and the primacy of contradictions in social organisations. One particular factor that could shed some light to the Marxist feminist rendezvous is the Marxist analysis of the contradiction between labour and capital, which is basically an analysis of capitalism.

Marxist feminism in the most general terms, must seek to identify the operations of gender and their relation to the process of production and reproduction as understood

by historical materialism. This will fall within the purview of the organisation of sexuality, domestic production and reproduction, the historical changes in the mode of production, and the system of appropriation and exploitation.

Friedrich Engels further argues that the propagation of people in society is socially determined noting that people are born female and male, but society creates them woman and man. The sexual division of labour, which follows from this creation, is another social factor that perpetuates gender. The strict sexual division of labour is responsible for the propagation of different personalities as the social system dictates. In most societies, sexual division of labour arrogates lower status to women, as they are condemned to performing many unpleasant tasks, which men do not want to perform. This social creation provides conditions that lead men and women to experience life differently in this sub-culture. The differing experience is a product of the material base of male power that is exercised psychologically as well.

In the understanding of Engels, there is no relationship between patriarchy and capitalism because a society can undergo change from capitalism to socialism and still remain patriarchal. Sexual hierarchies are therefore aspects of our social organisation, thus, the way people are produced and reproduced. Patriarchy is experienced in heterosexual marriage and women's economic dependence on men, which is enforced by the arrangements in the labour market, the state, and numerous other institutions.

Division of labour by sex would be understood as a factor that perpetuates gender

imbalance in capitalism and since it has been argued elsewhere that capitalism is an advanced form of patriarchy, such division would be seen to give credence to patriarchy. Women's oppression, according to Barret, is inexplicable without an understanding of the contradictions between division of labour at the factory and within the home. Female wage labour is not only characterised by low pay, but is also the most exploited labour because of their domestic and reproductive responsibilities. Women also occupy jobs, which are mainly insecure, unskilled and unpleasant resulting from the discrimination they suffer in the education system. Some of the factors that might account for the position of women in labour are family structure and ideology of their domestic responsibility. It is somehow clear that the categories of work undertaken by women have clearly been a direct consequence of gender ideology, which presents servicing, nurturing and caring work as pre-eminently 'feminine'. It can be argued that family responsibilities play a direct role in the structure of women's wage labour participation.

Education and training systems are also tailored in a way that systematically reproduces division of labour between women and men. Instruments of state policy also reinforce the same system in which division of labour is perpetuated. This system maintains itself so much so that women are only called upon to do certain duties considered to be men's when there is shortage of labour in that respect. Marxist feminists, like Veronica Beechy in her article, analysed married women's labour in terms of Marx's concept of 'industrial reserve army' and argues that there is an advantage accruing to capital from a reserve army of women which, in her opinion rests on the structure of the family and its ideology. She argues that, when

unemployed, the cost of women's labour in reproduction is met within the family and not the state. The domestic labour that women perform generally reduces the cost of reproduction of the working class, and such work is seen to offset the effects of unemployment and recession.⁶ This argument is however disputed by some scholars who purport that the cost of upbringing these women and providing them with education is met by the state. An objection of this nature does not, however, hold for pre-industrial societies, which did not have state, controlled education systems.

Division of labour on gender lines is not only oppressive to women but also divisive of the labour force as a whole and weakens the working class so that it cannot adequately bargain with the capitalist. The economic requirements of capital accumulation, takes an ideological form that makes division of labour to assume a division between men and women. This kind of division, fails to help place the question of women's oppression today, but when incorporated with the Marxist labour theory of value, it can help shed some light in this area. Labour theory of value tries to explain the relations of exploitation underlying the capitalist wage system as a source of division of labour. Capitalism finds its base in the accumulation of capital, which is extracted from the surplus value accruing from wage labourers. By selling their ability to labour for a certain amount of time, workers get wages in return. These wages are set according to the cost of reproducing the worker (in terms of food, clothing and shelter), and not according to the quantity of the goods produced. The costs are used to determine the value of labour, which also vary historically. Surplus value is the difference between the value of labour power and the value of goods produced and constitutes the profit when the goods are sold. In an attempt to increase

the accumulated value, the capitalist increases the number of working hours and keeps the wages low by de-skilling the work force. The exercise of de-skilling the labour force helps the capitalist to increase the accumulated value by having many workers produce more at a lower cost. In this process of de-skilling the labour force, the capitalist benefits from gender division of labour which has crucial implications in that, women are more vulnerable than men because of their lack of training. Women also suffer from severe loss of control over the labour process in terms of mental/manual distinction. The logic of the capitalist division of labour is grounded on the separation of home, and the work place, which arises from the development of large-scale production under wage labour system. The creation of a labour force divided along the lines in which the labour process itself is broken down this way, satisfies the capitalist drive to increase productivity of labour.

Michelle Barret however maintains that this argument inflates the general tendency with its particular historical form, arguing that capitalism separates home and workplace, relegating women to the home thereby excluding them from wage labour. Her view is that this leads to a biologicistic assumption that the outcome was inevitable. She suggests that this situation should better be viewed from the historical perspective. According to her, such a process was characterised by the struggle between male and female workers, giving rise to the better-organised male craft unions, which succeeded in over riding the interest of female workers, many of whom became dependants. She concludes that the question of the capitalist project of separating home and workplace cannot adequately be tackled without a consideration of family organisation.

In conclusion, we may say that capitalism and patriarchy form a partnership in which women remain marginalised and oppressed. This is done through the maintenance of women in their traditional assignments, even in the capitalist's workshops, awarding them low pay for these jobs and offering them few if any chances of advancement. The so-called sex division of labour perpetuates this oppression where men like capitalists succeed to remain at the top and advantaged positions since the relatively higher wages and the chances of advancement accorded to them make them to still cater for most of the expenses at home leaving women with no choice but to continue depending on them. The factory work for women, far from freeing them from servitude of men, only succeeds in wearing them down further both socially and psychologically as they have to contend with low pay at the factory and another working shift at home servicing their masters (husbands) and children. The only solution in sight, according to Marxists, for the freedom of women is through humane socialism that not only exterminates the oppressive capitalist but also neutralises the power of the husband by collectivising reproductive labour that has been squarely charged onto women.

From this argument, we find that Marxist feminism forms part of women's liberation process as it puts forward the position of women in society and also tries to work out ways of solving them. It puts forward very strong humanistic underpinnings that can change the orientation of society in remarkable ways

4.1.6 Psychoanalytic feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism approaches gender inequality from a psychological point of view. Using several approaches towards the differences as understood by the sexes, they begin by trying to locate the birth of this discrimination in early childhood experiences, which leads to men being viewed masculine while women are viewed as feminine. Children are nurtured from very early in life to behave in certain ways depending on their sex. Some of the popular views include the belief that masculinity is better than femininity. In a nutshell psychoanalytic feminism sees the oppression of women as resulting from mental creation that grows with individuals in society right from childhood and going ahead to shape the way people live in society and conduct societal activities.

Erich Fromm¹⁰, a feminist of the Frankfurt School and one of the more outstanding of the first theorists to synthesise Psychoanalysis and feminism focuses on the theory of psychological mediations between psyche and society which is by traditional feminists. Proceeding from the fact that the family is the medium through which society or social class stamps its specific structure on the child, he discovers that the family and socialization process can indicate how society reproduces class structures that impose its ideologies and practices on individuals. From these premises we can infer that social formations, institutions and practices are responsible for shaping psychoanalysis thereby informing on some social problems by unveiling the nature of man himself. Psychoanalysis helps explain how the socio-economic interests and structures are transformed into ideologies as well as how ideologies shape and influence human thoughts and behaviour. Psyche and society interact and

reciprocally shape each other. Further to this, psychoanalysis explains that every society has its own structure that creates and recreates authority in human thought hence psychology must be empirical enough to explain how domination and submission take place in specific societies in order to provide an understanding of how each social and psychological change is possible. Development of a child under monopolistic capitalism for example, creates dominant character within the male child. The woman's personality on the other hand develops from social practices to produce a nurturing, maternal character. This argument is also advanced by Chodorow who tries to prove the existence of the relationship between matriarchy and socialism. The ideals of matriarchal societies are also seen to be the same as those of socialism.

It becomes clear therefore that the position and condition of women in society is not only maintained and rooted on material considerations but also deeply rooted in cultural practices, which produce ideological forms that play on the human psyche to position individuals in society. Women are therefore victims of this material-ideological interplay that places them in their subordinate positions. Efforts to change women's position would be invalid without concerted efforts to, first and foremost, change ideological practices.¹¹

4.1.7 Post-modern feminism

Post modernism can be defined as a theory, a cultural climate, as well as an intellectual position, a political reality and academic fusion. It is the intervention of new knowledge on old ways of conceptualising and doing things. It is a way of

looking at the world in more improved forms. Post modernism can also be viewed as a condition of knowledge in most highly developed societies. Post-modern societies are those that roam the metropolis of the world and increasingly eat into the traditional cultures the world over. They are societies whose lives are influenced and controlled by modern technological advances, the structures, and superstructures on which societal forms run and the thinking that propel these systems.

Post modern systems benefit from the improved education, medical services, production systems, improved information technology and such superstructures like improved legal systems. All these aspects have a high impact in the lives of members of societies that live them and women are not left out in this.

Post-modern feminism therefore takes a leap from the traditional feminist thinking to be influenced by the positivism of the present so that information technology, legal and production systems pervade every aspect of society influencing the lives of women who gain access and protection from the same. Organizations like Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Federation of Women Educationists (FAWE) in Kenya are examples of women's formations that have benefited from the structures of post modernism.

Post-modern societies also emerge as a breeding ground for such aspects of life as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnicity but still share in the privileges and rights of post-modern structures. This system, we can argue,

deviates from the traditional hierarchical forms of domination to a new system of power at the top of which can be seen the nuclear form of power, star travel technology and information of domination.

Post modernism brings to the fore a new form of division of labour by education standards and professionalism in which gender may not be an issue. The resultant class division by the same emerges from earnings based on categories of work and professions. Institutions of education, and wage labour afford women a place in society that relieves them from dependence and the burden of tradition and servitude. In this kind of society, women acquire protection by the institutions of state such as legal systems that are oblivious of class and gender; and also benefit from the advances in medical science, which brings forth new ways of reproduction. As a result, there is more deviation from religion, which results into emergence of new values that defy sexual boundaries and breed the thinking towards individualism and self-interest over and above every thing else. In this event we find development of such sexual orientations like lesbianism, homosexuality and various other brands of separatism.

Post-modern feminism finds strong impetus on modern technology and cultural growth in ways never imagined before. It is a culture, a tradition, and a way of life that defeats patriarchy and leads to the growth of feminist way of thinking that is geared towards equality of individuals based on various aspects of life. As technology evolves, the mind supersedes the body in many ways since intellectual capacity governs the physical attributes that direct human action.

The question of woman being the weaker sex then becomes a redundant undertaking since all people can compete intellectually and are protected by the legal systems on the same plain. Again, everyone benefits from the developed institutions of state in much the same way. Post modernism can therefore be said to be one of those aspects of life that have contributed quite greatly to equality of persons the world over.

4.1.8 Lesbian feminism

Lesbians have attempted to formulate certain types of social and political analyses that enable them to understand their place in society and also advocate for acceptance in the larger social spectrum. They seek to fight discrimination through what may be termed identity politics through which they want to be understood as a group similar to any other in society. Lesbians want to present sex and gender as two separate entities, which should not affect the standing of individuals in society. They want to be viewed as a minority group that deserve protection from discrimination and not as an anti-normative group.

Early lesbian feminism developed in an attempt to counter the belief that lesbianism was a biological defect, which should be pitied and not oppressed because of their conditions. The rise of lesbian feminism in the 1970s helped change matters to portray lesbians as a distinct group in society. By the beginning of the 1980s the vigour with which lesbian feminism began started fading away as identity crisis rocked the movement. It was losing its political spirit and in trying to

give an ideal definition of lesbianism, feminists drifted back to the biological model thereby putting the movement in an identity crisis. It however opened up a possibility for more specific lesbian varieties of political analysis.

As the late 1980s approached, Stein observes that lesbian and lesbian politics had assumed distinctly separate identities often with contradictory assumptions and political aims. Lesbian feminists insisted that "homophobia is a weapon of sexism". There emerged a difference with other groups who also claimed to be lesbians who relied on a belief in relative autonomy of gender and sexuality, sexism and heterosexism"¹² had to be appreciated. The key objective of lesbian theory is to dismantle heterosexuality by promoting lesbianism as a choice for women.

4.1.9 Green feminism

A single definition of Green or Ecofeminism that is acceptable across the board is hard to come by, so the best way to deal with Ecofeminism or Green feminism is to consider the key principles on which they rest.

One of the popular principles of Ecofeminism is the submission that domination of both women and nature are fundamentally connected and that to overcome this domination of the environment is to overcome the oppression of women. The aim of Ecofeminism does not lie in the achievement of equality with men as such, but on the liberation of women as women. Ecofeminists differ, for example, with their radical counterparts in their treatment of activities that are traditionally and biologically ascribed to women such as childbirth, nurturing and the whole process

of reproductive labour.

Many societies have treated nature as feminine portraying women as part of 'nature' therefore different from man who has put himself over and above nature. Man in his quest for self-actualisation and survival has treated nature as a resource exploitable towards this end. Some of the natural aspects of women that put them closer to nature are the psychological connection with the ability to reproduce and nurture, the menstrual cycle, which is linked with the lunar cycles all of which portray women as responding to the rhythm of nature of which they are part. Cultural images which portray 'premenstrual women' as irrational and overemotional typify the association between women, the body, nature and the irrational.

It is in these connections that Ecofeminists find the basis on which oppression of 'women' and 'nature' rests. The stereotypes accruing are blamed on patriarchal structures that run our society. This patriarchal system relies on sexism, racism, class exploitation and environmental destruction. Ecofeminists see all oppressed classes in society as being victims of their perceived closeness to nature. They therefore theorise gender, race and nature together and believe that the liberation of any part of this triangle must be coordinated with those of the other parts to achieve the desired results. In their view, the liberation of any of these parts will have a spiral effect on the liberation of the other parts.

For this liberation to succeed, they emphasise on the eradication of all forms of

hierarchy that may exist in class, race and gender. One such hierarchical system that Ecofeminists target is patriarchy which they argue is based on western ideology of dualism. Dualism divides the world into two opposing concepts like body and mind; matter and spirit; male and female; culture and nature. In this ideological set up, one concept is viewed as superior to the other. This "other" is always deemed as inferior, demonised and always discriminated against. There is a paradigm of values that this system creates which portrays those aspects associated with the body as irrational and inferior while those associated with the mind are rational and superior.

Many aspects of racism, classism, and imperialism are seen to operate through a hierarchy in which God comes at the apex followed by Man, then woman then children then animals with other members of the natural world at the bottom. As a result of this hierarchical system, women have been portrayed as passive, weak and irrational therefore inferior while men have been valorised as rational and analytic, therefore superior.

The degrading of the 'other' has been perceived to be driven by the fear of the unknown about nature and the mystery about mortality and life on the part of men because the biological connection with birth makes women to be a constant reminder of death. Rosemary Redford Reuther suggests that the invention of the concept of 'nature' and 'culture' allowed man to degrade the former (nature). She wants to say that nature understood to be *"a reality below and separated from 'man' rather than one nexus in which reality itself is inseparably embedded"*¹³

Ecofeminism demands radical critique if the categories of nature and culture together with an affirmation of the qualities of the degraded partner in all the patriarchal dualities. Cooperative, nurturing, supportive, non-violent and sensual, which have been portrayed as qualities of woman can be used for creating an environmentally aware society.

The male qualities like competitiveness, individuality, assertiveness, leadership and intellectuality, are valuable in appropriate contexts and if integrated with female qualities create a balanced person. Ecofeminists also view the separation of the self and the "other" as one of the fundamental cause of discrimination in society. They argue that man view the world in terms of a "self contained self" and a "separate other". The world is analysed as discreet units with 'the self in here' and everything else 'out there'. By viewing the world as a separate 'other' to be exploited also they view woman as part of that 'other' open to manipulation and control. Ecofeminists hold the view that life is interdependent and humanity plays a role in the earth's ecosystem, which should be non-hierarchical. They vilify a life, which is dominated by values of control and oppression.

Another issue that occupies a key position in Ecofeminism is essentialism. They disagree about whether 'male' and 'female' qualities are innate to the sexes or are simply traits common to us all. Most feminist schools believe that 'female' qualities are socially imposed as a scheme in the patriarchal strategy to oppress women but Ecofeminists seek a positive re-evaluation of them.

Judith Plant (women and nature) writes that "women's values centred, around life giving, must be valued... *we need to know how to feel for others because we have been socialized that way.*"¹⁴

Katherine Davies another ecofeminist argues that the deep connection between woman and nature are socially created. She recommends the revision of these social stereotypes to change the direction of the relationship between nature hence man and woman.¹⁵

Cultural feminists disagree with the view that men have as much potential as women in the latter's inclusion to nature. They argue that women are in essence more nurturing, peaceful, cooperative and closer to nature than their men counterparts who are aggressive, domineering and cruel.

Many Ecofeminists believe that before the patriarchal societies came into being, there was more cooperation than competition in society. Female duties were respected and worshiped and societies were more women centred. The shift to patriarchal system probably came as a result of the shift in economic system from hunter-gatherer to domesticating of animals and plants. Another group see the shift as a product of ideological change in the eighteenth century Europe during the enlightenment period. This was followed by scientific and technological advancement and the birth of capitalism. From this development, nature began to be perceived as a resource that was there for human exploitation by humans.

3.4 Feminism and women's liberation

From years of struggle and hard work, feminist groups solidified in different fashions to consolidate efforts towards the liberation of women. It became an institutionalised theory for the liberation of women. It is important at this stage to look at the epithets of liberty, which occupies the centre stage of feminist movement. In many cases liberty is identified with the question arising from social and political issues. The pursuit of liberty can be identified with the quest by one to *"...free himself from the constraints or obscurities that either nature or institutions impose upon him"*¹⁶.

According to Hegel, History is a history of liberty. Man is always perceived to be fighting to defeat either social or natural forces, thereby advancing towards a greater degree of freedom. The fight against hunger, disease, racial and class discrimination are all advances towards liberty in the Hegelian sense.

Going by the above, man has had as his major project the quest for freedom and independence, which he has perceived, would ensure him greater happiness in life if achieved. Women's liberation movement or feminism, like any other human endeavour has come out of the purpose of seeking to free women from what has been perceived as an unfair and enslaving social and economic system. It is in this regard that we examine feminist philosophy as a philosophy for the liberation of women.

Feminism as a struggle for the emancipation of women has been employed to front for the individuality of women and their freedom as human beings of equal worth with their male counterparts. As a struggle for liberation, there is a suggestion that women

have not been enjoying equal rights and opportunities with their male counterparts, and as 'women', there is a deep-seated meaning that gender has been used as a discriminatory factor. This discrimination has therefore made women be branded 'class' regardless of their social standing simply because they are women.

3.5 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter we find that the theme of liberation, fairness and equality runs through all the forms of feminism. These are the same themes that run through Marxist humanism a fact that helps prove our thesis that feminism rests on Marxist humanism save for few who advocate sectarian forms of equality like separatists and lesbians. The interesting point is that even the two (separatists and Lesbians) still have as the core of their clamour, freedom, and fairness. They only differ from other forms of feminism in terms of their strategy towards achieving equality.

We may then say that the need for feminism arose from the enlightenment of women, becoming conscious of their humanity and their need to gain an equal position with their male counterparts. This consciousness was sparked off by various social problems like immorality, slavery and racial discrimination. Institutions and groups like religious groups, communitarians, the enlightenment philosophers, and such social upheavals like the French, American and the Industrial revolutions became key factors in this awakening process. Groups of women and feminists, realising the need for gender equality, consciously or unconsciously applied the same theories, which were being used in the explication

of other social problems like racism, imperialism and slavery to seek their freedom and equality. Among those theories, which became relevant to the feminist project was Marxism, which had used Economism to explain social problems. Economism became relevant to feminism because sexual discrimination was strongly rooted if not catalysed by materialism and ownership of private property. It is in this vein that our thesis runs seeking to find the relevance of Marxist humanism to Feminism and the solutions it provide to the later.

Notes

- 1 *ibid* p.84
- 2 J. Mitchel in M. Barrett, Women's oppression today, Schocken Books 2000, New York (1980) p.10 ff.
- 3 *Ibid* p. 7 ff
- 4 S. Firestone, in L. Sargent, Women and Revolution, South end press, Boston (1981) p. 3 ff
- 5 *ibid* p. 7 ff
- 6 H. Hartman in J. P. Sterba, Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Boston, 1985. p. 364 ff
- 7 M. Barret, Women's Oppression Today. Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis, Verso editions, London (1980) pg 90
- 8 *ibid* p. 26ff
- 9 *ibid* p. 96
- 10 E. Fromm, The Chains of illusion: My encounter with Marx and Freud, New York: Pocket Books. (1962) p. 62
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- 13 R. Rosemary and S. Keller, In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writings. Harper SanFrancisco (1995) p. 115
- 14 P. Judith, Women and Nature, *extract is taken from 'Green Line' magazine (Oxford). 1984. Printed in 'The Green Reader'*.
- 15 D. Katherine, A Place in the Sun? Women Writers in Twentieth-Century Cuba. St. Martins Press, (1998). P. 38
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CHAPTER FIVE

4.0 Comparative analysis of Marxist Humanism and feminism

As has been seen in the on going debate, the position of Marxist humanism in feminism is almost clear.

In this jungle of ideas about what feminism is and is not, we want to try to show that humanism forms a great component of Marxism and that feminism benefits a great deal from the humanist component of Marxist theory. We will, therefore, try to identify some of the major components of Marxist humanism and attempt an analysis of the linkages between it (Marxist humanism) and feminism.

Marxism is a philosophy of dialectical materialism based on the writings of Karl Marx. In fact Marxism can be termed a philosophy of economics because Marx's major project was an analysis of economics as it relates to certain political positions. These political dispensations occur not in a vacuum but in society so that Marxist analysis involves an explanation of the nature of relationships between the rulers and the ruled, and that between the owners of the means of production and the workers. In relationships, certain principles apply so as to ensure a smooth operation of society. Marx envisaged a smooth operating society hence the rules to govern them. It is in this ideal situation that humanistic principles are hoped to be applicable. Marxist humanism therefore developed within this theory of Economism to instil some values that would enable human beings to escape from the rule by fellow human beings and that by the products of their labour. It proceeds from the point of view that humans are equal in all respects and should therefore be

accorded equal treatment. This can be interpreted to mean that nature has destiny for each individual and parts to play there in so that no one individual is lesser in their participation than the other. In gender relations, for example, men are just but complements of the rest of humanity.

Marxist humanism arose in the years after World War II with new interpretations of Marxist philosophy following the failure of Lenin's application of Marxism in the Soviet Union. The new proponents who gave this new meaning to Marxism included Ernst Bloch in Germany, Adam Shaff in Poland, Roger Garaudy in France, Rodolfo Mondolfo in Italy, and Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse in the United States of America. These proponents held the view that Marxism had a human face, which had not been unveiled by earlier scholars. Before this period, Marxism was generally interpreted as "historical materialism" which was understood to be a scientific doctrine of human societies. It was widely held to be based on economic facts and was framed in the light of Darwin's theory of evolution of nature. The dominant perception was that Marxism was trying to apply positivism and scientific method to sociology, economics and history, which were treated as liberal disciplines not requiring this method. The intervention of Marxism in this new format was seen as a violation of the rules of study in a field that had been dominated by metaphysical method that was defined as irrational and arbitrary method.¹

Broadly speaking, humanism can be defined as an ethical philosophy, which takes consideration in human interests, values and dignity among others. It places its

focus on people as capable of developing moral standards that govern them and not relying on some supernatural forces to watch over them. This does not by any standards mean that humanism is a preserve of atheists. In fact, very strong theistic foundations are built on humanism. Marxist humanism stems from these broad principles with its main focus on the society in which these human beings operate. It differs from the orthodox humanism, which pays more attention to individuals as opposed to the environment in which these individuals operate. Marxist humanism believes in the idea that both philosophical theorizing and social activism are important in any conscious effort to achieve changes in society and should therefore go hand in hand.

In his characteristic revolutionary and pragmatic style, Marx says that for change to be achieved, the agent of that change has to consciously plan (philosophical theorizing), then execute the plan through some form of activity. The main thrust in Marxist efforts to achieve change is through class struggle that eventually eradicates private ownership of property so that each individual member of society works for and receives his fair share of the proceeds. This, he refers to as socialism or economic democracy; a society in which the means of production is owned and controlled by the people. In this same society, commodities are produced and distributed on the basis of need. One important step towards achieving humanism is by having commodities produced "from each according to his ability and distributed to each according to his need". This method ensures that individuals are rewarded not according to the energy they expend but according to what they need to survive. An arrangement of this nature discourages selfishness contributing

much to the common good of the entire society.

According to Marxism, the method of achieving this resides in a socialist ideal, which has several stages. The first stage after the proletarian revolution brings forth what Marx calls lower phase of communism, a phase in which each individual is paid as per the amount of labour he expends. It is predicted that this period will come with reorganization of the means of production, the aim of which will be to make production less alienating and more pleasurable with commensurate growth and automation. Once this is achieved, scarcity will be a thing of the past and society will advance to the higher phase of communism. In this higher phase, distribution on the basis of labour will be replaced with that on the basis of need. Marxist humanists believe that this trend will eventually lead to a completely new type of human relations in which people will work only on jobs that please them. The rest of the jobs will be automated and those jobs that are not necessary for survival will be abolished. The climax comes with commodities being produced from each according to his ability and distributed to each according to his need.

The foregoing bears witness to the fact that humanist idea runs through the entire Marxist philosophy like wild fire accompanied by the idea of freedom as its major component. Marx and Hegel his compatriot see history as the history of freedom- freedom of humans from other humans and also from the goods they produce. The idea that this freedom must be achieved at all costs is the thread that keeps the entire Marxist philosophy together. In Marxist understanding, if reason cannot help achieve freedom then unreason should. Hegel puts it thus, the great idea

whose time has come is the *"idea of freedom itself the self-bringing-forth of liberty, the irrepressible aspiration to be free by the social subjects of history, also drenched and swept up in absolute movement of becoming"*²

Hegel also portends that *"humans would resist, in the insurmountably large numbers and could not fail to affirm the very freedom that explodes the power of the negative"*³ He goes ahead to emphasise that the negation of the negation is only complete when freedom is finally achieved and in Marxist philosophy this situation is unstoppable.

Just to emphasize that Marxism is freedom, another philosopher, Dunayevskaya posits the absolute idea of freedom thus *"the human being whose being is truly human only as free"*⁴

Marxist humanism holds the view that change is not held in the future but will be within the present grasp. One Iraqi feminist Yanar Mohammed sets the tone of Marxist· humanist· Feminist confluence when she asserts that *"women want to be free and responsible authors of their lives, determining their future and not to be determined by capital"*.⁵

In order to understand this affinity between Marxist humanism and feminism, one needs to look at two areas of the two subjects, viz. the methodology applied by each and also the content and intentions of each of them. Marxism, for one, stands for the revolutionary change in society in a way that accords each individual member

of that society equal opportunities, rights and a chance to contribute to the running of the society in which they live. Feminism on the same note stands for a change in society that recognizes the rights of women as equal partners of men in society. Feminists' main clarion call is that of challenging the position accorded to women in society and the superstructures on which society runs. Just like in Marxist humanism, most forms of feminism appreciate that individuals in any human societies are first individuals then members of those societies in which they belong. This means that each individual is nurtured to suit the conditions of the society in which they live. The nurture is in intellectual and ethical ways of survival. Trying to change the condition of individual members of any society therefore calls for efforts to change the structures of that society. This implies that as most of our societies place women in subordinate position, changing that understanding calls for a change of the entire understanding of the society. This will go a long way in changing the perception of each individual member of that society thereby giving way to a new dispensation.

The dialectic theory of Marx introduces a scientific method to the study of society. This makes Marx a pioneer thinker in positivist approach to social dynamics. This system was traditionally employed in the study of physical aspects of nature and not in any social study. By introducing this method to liberal sciences, Marxism draws into the understanding of ethical ways that sustain society and utilizes this to understand freedom as one of the bases that breed a fair society. Feminism in its approach to seek freedom utilises the same method to clamour for a society in which women enjoy the same freedom as their male counterparts. The other key

point to note is that Marxism deplors the over reliance of society on supernatural powers in the quest for freedom and direction in life. Most feminists share in this and draw heavily on the understanding that humans beings are capable of regulating their lives through the institutions that they build. Marxist humanism stems from these broad principles with its main focus on society as an abode of human beings. It pays more, if not almost equal attention to society and the individual. Society receives more attention here than is given by orthodox humanism because Marxist humanism understands society as having a major influence on individuals' way of life and disposition. Marxist humanism believes that psychological theorizing precedes social activism in any conscious effort to achieve change.

In his revolutionary character, Marxism advocates radical activities to change aspects of society like private ownership in society. It also calls for equitable sharing of the proceeds meted out by society in order to achieve equality, which it refers to as economic democracy (socialism), which ensures that production is placed in the hands of the people or their elected government. This view is shared by radical feminists and to some extent the separatists which also includes lesbian feminists.

The root map to this change begins with proletarian revolution in which people are paid as per the energy they expend in their contributions to the welfare of society. This is followed by automation, which is coupled by distribution on the basis of need. At this stage, society is at its peak of freedom and individual members of

society only partake in the jobs that interest them. This implies that each member enjoys the propensity to choose what contribution he/she wants to make to the larger society. The rest of the jobs are automated or abolished according to the need for them by society.

One of other connections between feminism and humanism is the fact that without the humanist movement, feminism would not have been possible. In order then to be a feminist, one must first hold the idea that people are equal, and that this equality is inalienable. It is therefore not so strange that there is a close tie between feminism and humanism, although today the respective positions may be extremely divergent. Marxist humanism is specific about certain aspects of society that breed inequality as our discussion shows.

Marxist humanism, broadly conceived, can be described as the tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority. Similarly, one could insert the word woman in that definition, and have a very general idea of what a feminist theory or philosophy might look like. Of course, in the sense above, man is not meant to signify simply the male species, but is intended to be a gender-neutral noun that signifies all of the species *Homo Sapiens*. This is a tendency that some feminists criticize.⁶

The origin of Marxism dates back at least as long as Darwinian thought, and is still very much alive and influential today. Marx conceived of history as a human history, and one that comprises a series of class struggles. The ultimate outcome of

this struggle is the overcoming of all class distinction, and the formulation of a society wherein all human beings may live a life that is truly free and truly fulfilling. Although Marx's original ideas have been modified somewhat today, the gist of it remains the same. Like other forms of humanism, part of the basic claim being made in Marxism is that people have not fully actualised themselves. That is, they have a long way to go before they achieve their full potential. This is what is meant by the claim that revolution is a process. Humanism is an optimistic, rather than pessimistic way of looking at the world. It is concerned with egalitarianism, education, tolerance, and a strong desire to have all thought guided by reason.

The history of feminism is more difficult to trace. The term itself is of fairly recent invention. However, there have been many women throughout history who today might be considered feminists. As mentioned earlier, one may define feminism as the tendency to emphasize women and her status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority. Feminism can be seen as any philosophy, political position, and/or worldview that is concerned about women specifically, and especially concerned about their current position of inequality as compared to men.⁷

Contemporary feminists are difficult to classify as a group. One may say that for nearly every conceivable controversial gender issue, there is at least one person who has concocted a feminist version of it. However, it is possible to illustrate how the general ideas are being played out today by making use of a few examples as in the following discussion.

Seperationist feminists for example, start their clamour from the point of view that is strewn with humanism in its approach. They proceed from the display of distrust of men and the need to go it alone in their struggle for women's liberation. This belief is triggered by the fact that men are the beneficiaries in women's oppression. As beneficiaries in this oppression, Seperationists believe that men cannot genuinely fight for women's freedom. They can therefore not be trusted with the fight for the liberation of women. They further explain that in the slave master philosophy, the master cannot wilfully and knowingly let go of his slave, let alone fight for the freedom of the slave since the vested interest of keeping the slave are more than those of letting go. Separatists therefore believe in the absolute sisterhood that makes sure that they get freedom for women from men and obtain it as the main contenders for their deserved freedom.

They differ from other feminists in that in their humanism, they direct their efforts at achieving equality in an exclusionist fashion by deleting men from their activities. Separatists can be treated in the lines of Marxist humanist in as far as they condemn inequality in society and seek to achieve fairness equality and justice for one half of humanity.

Lesbians take the battle a little bit further though sharing in the tenets of Seperationists. They go a step further arguing that the exploitation of their sexuality by men gives men the continued authority over them. They, therefore, take to lesbianism as a way of defiance and rebellion against the men folk believing that denying men sex also serves as a punishment to the domineering group.

In an essay entitled *Intercourse*, Dworkin describes the sexual act as a kind of war of man against woman, in which men are the occupying (and thus successful) parties. This war is, for men, an easy one to win, as it is in fact the woman herself who does most of the work. Because of her need to be needed or wanted (something created in the first place by society) she will go a long way to subjugate herself in order to fulfil that supposed need. The way out of this scenario, if there is one, is to deny men that thing which they desire, namely the body of the woman. It is not possible for men and woman to be equal, not in the sense of standing on the same ground. One side must give.

Their feminism can be termed as an inward looking feminism geared only towards their own success as women. They have less regard for men and want to punish them for their purported wrong doing towards women. One popular criticism that one would have against lesbians is that they tend to disregard natural law. They fail to realise that if society were to practise lesbianism for an extended period of time, there would be no society and therefore no lesbians. They need to realise that sexual rebellion is self-defeating.

Radical feminists on their part view the oppression of women as a structured exercise resident in patriarchy. Patriarchy places men at an advantageous position over women's. They want to shun the belief that women are by default oppressed by the structures of society. They practise humanism based on the rights of women their sexuality and personal relationships. In their fight they target male

domination over females economically, biologically and psychologically. Their method of acquiring freedom and equality for women is through reduction of the power of the family by strengthening other institutions like health care, empowering women economically restructuring production and abolishing unnecessary labour while artificiating hard and unpleasant labour. Like separatists, they emphasise on utilising women's "otherness" to have them fighting as a group with a crystallised position to defeat the consolidated power of men. One of their weaknesses lie in the fact they want to change socialisation process which may be counter productive to society.

From the discussions above, one can easily draw the conclusion that both Marxist humanism and feminism do fit into the same category. By this we mean that neither of them can be reduced simply to a philosophy, political agenda, or perspective. They both encompass a wide range of ideas, which to most extents appear to overlap between many of their respective tenets. Of course, not all feminisms are humanism but most of the feminist schools have at least some characteristics of humanism.

As mentioned earlier that Marxist humanism and feminism fits in the same category, we mean that they could both be counted as a political position, a philosophy, or usually both. They are both systems of thought that seem to transcend traditional categories of thought. A great deal of overlap between the two can also be identified. A comparison between Marxist humanism and feminism would fall into three categories: 1. views that are Marxist humanist but not

feminist; 2. perspectives that are feminist but not Marxist humanist; and finally, 3. positions that are both humanist and feminist. It is possible for a worldview to be neither humanist nor feminist.

In order for a perspective to be Marxist humanist but not feminist, it must do basically one thing, and that is to completely ignore issues that are particular to women. This ignorance may be a product of wilful acts on the part of men, or it may simply be the result of an oversight on the part of those who are formulating the particular doctrine. Depending upon how one wishes to read this early thought, the lack of acknowledgment of women's issues can be a result of either an active ignorance or passive one. For instance, many early Christians, while acknowledging that all humans had a particular nature, would restrict their definition of human to include only the male sex. It may also have been limited further to particular members of the male sex. These humanists considered women to be naturally inferior, and as such, were not worth considering. Whether they meant to denigrate women (active ignorance) or not (passive ignorance), the result was the same. The goal was equality *for those people who were actually human*. This kind of humanism is obviously not feminist in nature.⁸

Of course, this criticism can go both ways. There are many types of feminism, which would not also conform to Marxist principles. For example, there are those feminists who feel that as men have dominated women for so long, it would only be fair if women got the opportunity to dominate men for a period of time. They, therefore, reject the humanist ideal of egalitarianism in favour of a radical reversal of roles.

There are some problems with this, however. It is, first of all, not a very realistic one. Overcoming millennia of indoctrination is difficult enough as it is, and is likely impossible if one expects half of the population to voluntarily submit to oppression. One may argue that is exactly what leads to the denigration of women in the first place, but it is possible to account for this in other ways, such as biology or psychology. Certainly, though, it would be difficult to argue that this position could be a humanist one, as those who espouse it openly claim that they wish to subjugate a particular section of the population. This position can also be disputed on grounds that they all start off from the pursuit of justice and fairness having the realization that they are a disadvantaged group in society.

The discussion above notwithstanding, the goal of Marxist humanism and feminism still remain the same: equality/liberation/actualisation for all people, regardless of sex. Whether one takes it from the feminist or Marxist humanist perspective, the Marxist view points out where people are being oppressed, and suggests a means by which this oppression may be eliminated. In the case of Marxist humanism, capitalism is the oppressive structure or mechanism, whereas in feminist thought oppression is a product of male-dominated culture. In either case, this oppression would be overcome by a communist revolution. Many contemporary Marxists, whether they be feminist or not, may believe that an actual revolution is impossible, at least in this day and age. This doesn't change the fact that they still recognize oppression as inherent in certain systems, nor does it change the fact that they still call for changes to be made in order to overcome that oppression.

What are some of the problems with these three types of perspectives? Some of them are obvious. Non-feminist humanists fail to recognize a great many problems, many of which have to do with women in particular. For example, men and woman *are* raised differently, and this results in a difference of consciousness. This difference may not be necessary in the sense that it could not be otherwise, but it is the case today, and so must be taken into account if one wishes to espouse a truly universal Marxist humanism. Men and women also differ biologically, which may result in differences in perspective. If these differences are ignored, Marxist humanists will ultimately be unable to achieve their goals of equality for all humans. Ignoring women-specific issues in favour of a male-dominated doctrine is tantamount to denying that women are indeed human. This is something that no person could do today and be taken seriously.

Non-humanist feminists fall prey to similar problems, but ones that arise from an opposite extreme assuming that the ultimate goal of a people should be equality for all these types of views completely miss the point. Female-supremacists would substitute one form of oppression for another. This doesn't solve any problems, and may create new ones in the process. The idea that one can be paid back for a lifetime of oppression by allowing the oppressed class to become the oppressors is one that may not solve the problems at hand. The problems are the same; only the names of the victims have changed, in a manner of speaking. An assertion that these types of feminism not only fail to qualify as humanist, but also fall short of the title feminist, should be made at this point.

To point out some of the weaknesses of the two theories, Marxist humanism and feminism, both of these schools have problems in common, as well as problems separately. They may both be overly idealistic and overly optimistic. The implication here is that their ultimate goals may be beyond reach, at least at this point in time. However, humanity may never be in a position where these idealistic goals are attainable. Of course one must choose a goal that is currently not something that one has, in this case, equality. But choosing an ideal that is too unrealistic sets the bar too high. One might argue that seeking such goals may be a waste of time and energy. One of the problems with this objection, though, is that one may never know what is and is not attainable, especially in the future.

Incorporating feminist criticisms into Marxist humanism gives feminism access to a broader range of possible solutions to problems that may be identified as pertinent. Two, this incorporation can prevent Marxist humanists from becoming a male-dominated endeavour. In other words, bringing feminist ideas into a Marxist humanist perspective can both prevent Marxist humanists from creating or perpetuating some of the very problems they would like to solve, while at the same time giving them a greater number of tools with which to solve those problems they have identified as important.

This integration can lead to problems as well. For instance, it is possible for Marxist humanists to pay lip service to feminist concerns, yet not truly recognize them as being valuable. In some cases, they may be right. We have already outlined how it may be possible to reject certain types of feminism as not really viable.

Unfortunately, these militant, anti-male feminists are often the most vocal, which can lead many people, including Marxist humanists, to reject all feminist ideas as unworthy. This is not necessarily a problem pertaining directly to integration, but it leads to one. It is possible for Marxist humanists to recognize feminist concerns, to assure feminists that they have taken these issues into account, but then to not actually do anything about it. This may be a result either of maliciousness or simply an inability to know how to implement or integrate certain ideas. However, in the quest for equality, which is a goal shared by both Marxist humanists and feminist, what is needed is honesty and integrity, not cover-up and ignorance.

One may argue that any Marxist humanism that gives only a superficial treatment of feminist issues cannot really be called a feminist. However, we would offer in response that these Marxist humanists might really truly think they are addressing feminist concerns. We do not mean to say at all that this is simply another male enterprise wherein they fail to recognize the problems of women, rather, the male-dominated perspective has been a part of western culture for so long that it is difficult to set aside long enough to be able to make particular criticisms of it, especially some of those offered by feminists.

Feminism suffers from some pitfalls of their own. One could say that they take the best parts of Marxist humanism, broaden them, and then apply them to feminist concerns and issues. This can be both good and bad. For example, feminism may take a Marxist humanist concept such as equality and refine it. Equality could then come to mean more than simply economic or social opportunity, but could also

entail feminist views, those deriving particularly from a female perspective. An example could be an increased emphasis on caring and concern as a source for solutions for social problems, rather than simply rationally based social programs such as welfare.

Taken too far, though, this can become a problem in itself. If too great an emphasis is put on the feminist aspects of this kind of doctrine, one may lose sight of more general Marxist humanist ideals. While this may not be a bad thing by itself, it can easily lead to the kind of female supremacist brand of feminism that have been discussed earlier. This kind of feminism can in no way be called Marxist humanist.

To again generalise both feminist and Marxist humanism, both of these doctrines seem to fall prey to a similar problem: extremism. Too much emphasis on either side (Marxist humanism or feminism), can lead to a perspective that is exclusive, and one that is more liable to fall prey to problems that could be avoided were one to hold the two in greater balance.

The doctrines discussed above emphasize equality, individual and community both as key. They recognize the power of rationality, but at the same time value emotion and feeling. Both singularity and plurality are welcomed, and the idea that there may be multiple answers is acknowledged. In fact, the best answer may often be something that is multi-faceted and complex, rather than simple and universal.

One may argue that this perspective is overly relativistic and that as such it lacks a

kind of certainty and structure. In some cases, this may be true. But we seek to argue rather than being uncertain; feminism recognizes that it may not be possible to be entirely certain about something. This does not prevent one from formulating and implementing solutions. In fact, it actually enables it. What one may call lack of structure, feminism may call fluidity and flexibility. These can be seen as the ability to adapt more quickly, the ability to better implement change.

So although a perfect balance of Marxist humanism and feminism may seem to be the best position, it would now appear that in fact putting an emphasis on feminism is more likely going to allow one to achieve the goals held by both Marxist humanists and feminists, whether these goals are held in common or individually.

From the above discussion, it is realised that the theme of Marxist humanism runs through feminism and advocates for fundamental changes in society that would improve the lives of women. It tries also to make the world realise that both sexes are complements that have to work together for the success of everyone and contribute towards a better world.

Notes

1. McAlister L. L., (1989). Hvratia: Special Issue. The History of Women in Philosophy: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy. Indiana University Press, Illinois. 86. ff
2. News and Letters- Jan-Feb, 2004, 36 S. Wabash, Rm1440, Chicago IL USA, Publ-News and Letters Committee).
3. *ibid* p.105
4. D. Raya, Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre. & Marx to Mao. NY: Delta, (1973).
5. See McAlister op cit p. 109ff
6. Ted Honderich, Philosophy--Analysis, Feminism--Analysis...wholeheartedly, is both insupportable and ultimately harmful to women. Notes 1. The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1995,
7. Trevas et al, Philosophy of Sex and Love, Mandal publishing, California, USA. (1997) p. 203
8. *ibid* p. 210

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Summary and Recommendations

6.1 Summary

The individual is an expression of a social life into which he enters and cannot be separated from it morally, intellectually or otherwise. Morality in practice means the habit of identifying personal interests with social interests; *"the perennial need of human beings to find significance in their lives, to integrate their personalities around some clear, consistent and compelling view of existence, and to seek a definite and reliable method in the solution of their problems."*¹

This *"in simplest terms...means... the belief in the unity of the human race and man's potential to perfect himself by his own efforts"*²

It goes without saying that feminism is coiled around this kind of conviction with the belief that all humans are the same and should therefore be treated in the same way. The approaches that are employed by the various feministic groups may be different but the goals boil down to the same thing- the attainment of equal rights for women as deserving members of the human race. And this is the goal of Marxist humanism.

In order to chart a way forward for Marxist Feminist analysis, we have to; first and foremost, insist that feminism has gained from Marxist Humanism analysis in at least two ways.

One, Marxist humanism has been very instrumental in the analysis of social problems especially when its scientific historical materialism is put to application. In this sense, therefore, Marxist humanism helps feminism with the necessary tools, which can aid the former in the development of strategy.

Two, Feminism gains from Marxist humanism when viewed from the latter's analysis of patriarchy and its co-habitation with capitalism. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, Marxist humanism helps to reveal the merits and demerits of capitalism. Its social analysis also helps to unveil the theoretical existence of patriarchy in almost every known society. Looking at capitalist societies, from the Marxist humanist point of view one finds that capitalism is an advanced form of patriarchy. The application of Marxist humanism, therefore, helps in identifying the form of women's oppression. It also helps a feminist contender to diagnose the problem of discrimination of women and prescribe a cure for it. The economic analysis of Marxist humanism is, therefore, not a wasted effort for feminist analysis since in most cases, women are oppressed by economic factors, which cannot in any way be divorced from any form of social analysis.

In view of Marxist humanist belief that the existent social structures give rise to the superstructures that support and enhance their existence, it would be fallacious if one argued that Marxist humanist analysis does not address the problem of psychological reproduction of gender. In any case, the dominant class (in our case male) formulates the superstructures (ideological systems), which sits at the center stage of the psychic interplay which keeps men at an advantaged position by

instilling into them the courage to keep afloat. At the same time, they impart fear and the belief in women, that they are weaker, therefore, deserving of their subordinate positions. In this sense, women, also induce the same fears in their minors thereby helping in keeping the vicious cycle.

In trying to come up with better methods of studying the dynamics of sex, we must take a look at the humanist principles that analyse society and its needs. We must for example try to identify who benefits from women's labour power, uncover the material base of patriarchy and investigate the mechanisms of hierarchy and the solidarity among men. These questions if given a Marxist humanist analysis, provides answers to inequality in society, which Marxist humanism has tried to address. Class struggle has provided answers within Marxist humanism circles to such questions as imperialism, and racism. Most feminists have also tried to see this phenomenon as important to their struggle.

In this reassessment, Marxism comes in handy because of its capability to explain social dynamics. The only caution to be taken is to ensure that we do not exceed the limits of feminism in this Marxist humanism. This reassessment should be done in a way that helps provide answers to women's situation in society. Many Marxist humanists are comfortable with the analysis that puts women within the framework of "class". This should only happen when women are understood as part of the working class. This argument provides that the working class' struggle against capital should take precedence over any conflict between women and men.

Women in their feminism must stick to the objectives of feminism while at the same time borrowing heavily from Marxist humanism. The useful strategies in achieving this must follow the principles that define the establishment of a struggle for socialism as a struggle in which groups with different interests form alliance. Women should take charge of this since men may not understand how it feels to be woman and know how to fight for the liberation of women. Men as a privileged group may not see the necessity for liberating women. Women must, therefore, build their own organisations and power bases. The other way is to consider sexual division of labour within capitalism as a tool for human interdependence, which is important for fulfilling the needs of society. It goes with the understanding that, just as a woman needs fellow woman, so do women need men and vice-versa, for the sustenance of society.

This results into a society where individuals, be they of the same or different gender, recognise interdependence as the motor and liberator of society. In this kind of practice, nurturance is a universal tenet that brings an end to oppression and alienation replacing it with support for one another thereby providing freedom for both men and women- freedom from alienation by fellow human and from alienation by other beings.

In a nutshell, our research set out with an assertion that feminism cannot stand on its own without utilising the richness of Marxist humanism. Our objectives were also geared at proving this assertion. We discussed various forms of feminism alongside Marxist humanism and alluded to the fact that even those feminisms that do not hold

the tag Marxist, have one thing or the other to share with Marxist humanism. This aided our quest to prove our objectives as set out in chapter one.

6.2 Recommendations

Our recommendations for the Marxist feminist analysis will be based on at least four factors bordering on Marxist analysis. The first factor will be that of developing feminism in the lines of Marxist humanism and not introducing a problem by solving one. This will help feminists in the development of a historical and theoretical framework upon which feminist analysis must rest. It is only when this is done that feminism will be able to find the root cause of women's oppression and develop ways of dealing with it. It goes without saying that in any kind of problem, a proper diagnosis has to be done before curative measures can be administered. This, therefore, is what feminists have to do in order to succeed in their project.

Two, Marxist theory is that of economic relations in capitalist society. It presents a system that analyses society from the economic point of view. Marx identifies the biases created by capitalist system and presents a view that only humane socialism can change the system to the better. This economic theory of Marx, as he argues, is maintained by the ideology of dominant class. In this set-up, the dominant class formulates ideologies, which ensure that individuals are rewarded differently in society. In this same vein, we argue that individuals in society, both men and women have to, first and foremost, agree to eradicate these ideological forms that enable some members of society to dominate others. It must, therefore, be agreed that, chores are shared equally. This contention must not be seen to indicate that division of

labour is bad, but that as long as this division of labour is not seen to indicate one's gender, then it is right to assign duties according to skills and capabilities. The psychological reproduction of gender perpetuated by sexual division of labour must, therefore, be discouraged. This can be done through education and to some extent collectivisation of labour.

Three, provide same infrastructures for both men and women that allow them equitable development. Women must, in this sense, not see themselves as a disadvantages group, but as individuals capable of competing equally with their male counterparts. They should also not see themselves as competing with a united force of men but with individuals, male and female in society. This would go a long way in eradicating the prevailing gender-based beliefs. (

Four, eradicate further, those cultural structures, equally put in place to treat women as 'commodities' and a lesser group in society. Practices like payment of bride prize, skewed property inheritance and marital decisions made by parents must be discouraged. This will help both men and women to develop into independent thinkers capable of charting out their future competitively as individuals.

In all these ways, the state has to come in to provide the necessary machinery in terms of structures (institutions) and superstructures (laws and regulations) that encourage the belief of individualism in each person so that people do not look at themselves in terms of gender.

In a nutshell, a force so strong can only be defeated by a concerted psychological effort. It cannot be fought from one unified front because when that is done, the enemy will have time to study your strategies and plan a counter attack. In order to win this kind of war, inclusion and not exclusion is the strategy. Men must be included in the process and not vilified. Individual psychological attack like guerrilla warfare is the only way of defeating a strong army- its strengths lie in continual ambush and plunder of the opponent's strengths.

Notes

- 10 C. Lamont, Freedom is as freedom does, London: John Calder, (1965). P. 7-8
11 Ibid p.9

Notes

- 10 C. Lamont, Freedom is as freedom does. London: John Calder, (1965). P. 7-8
- 11 Ibid p.9

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