

**CRITICAL EVALUATION ON JOHN STUART MILL'S
FEMINISM**

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated firstly to God Almighty, the source of my strength who has kept me and directed my path throughout my time in the University. Also, I am dedicating this work to my parents; Mr. and Mrs. Nosa Okoro and to my siblings Okoro-Nosa Daniel and Okoro-Nosa Anita. For what is worth thank you for everything.

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is a large area of political movements, ideologies and social movements that share a common goal to define; establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes. The main aim of feminism is to seek women's equality of sexes. It is to seek women's equality and justice in every sphere of life and create opportunities for women to have the same access to the resources that are otherwise freely available to men. The main aim of this work is to outline some basic assumptions and tenants of feminism and trace in the theoretical origin. Feminism is indeed a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify because psychological and cultural constructs of feminism. It is a movement for women struggling for gender equality in every sector, such as education, politics and many others. Feminists aim for women's liberation in making various decisions for them such as expressing both characteristics of masculine and feminism confidently. In general feminism can be seen as a movement to put an end to sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression and to achieve full gender equality in law and in practice.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Feminism is one of the fascinating issues to discuss because it affects everyone, whether we admit it or not. Thus, it is of utmost importance to understand the meaning of the word itself. So, what is feminism? What kind of attitude does feminism encourage? “Feminism is a struggle to correct laws and practices that prevent woman from achieving full equality with men in all aspects of domestic and public life”¹. But the deeper struggle is against attitudes that sustain such discriminatory practices. Feminism have become a general topic in the world at large and it has been argued upon that the word feminism has been taken out of context and used in a derogatory manner.

Recognizing that women are concentrated in the lowest level of economic and social spectrum and are sometimes treated as second class, feminism begins with premise that women and men’s position in society is the result of social factors and natural ones. Actually the feminism existence was forced by the oppression caused by the patriarchy system, a system that places men as the ones who rule women in every aspect of their life. John Stuart Mill concept of Feminism among other things to bring equality among the both sexes, say no to subjection of liberty and to grant

women franchise.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The problem with feminism is the modern day misunderstanding of what feminism is, the lack of feminists identifying as being such and the semantics of the word conjuring up visions of burning bars and breaking free from supposed societal shackles. This issue may lay in our perception of the word feminist, for many women the belief that to obtain feminist status means reaching the high set bar of complete emancipation. Feminism should be regarding as wanting total social inclusion and equality regarded of your appearance, gender or sexual identity.

Hence it bothers on concerned critical minds to ask: What is feminism? What is the essence of feminism? What is the concept of feminism? What is John Stuart Mill critical thought on Feminism? How does his concept on feminism affect /contribute to our “everyday” life and how is it different from other variants of feminism? All these are the issues to be discussed in this work and John Stuart Mill work on feminism serve as an instrument to this research.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to challenge the systematic in equalities women face on a daily basis. Contrary to popular belief feminism has nothing to do with belittling men; in fact feminism does not support sexism against

either gender and also shows how feminism works towards equality not female superiority.

1.4 Significance of Study

Why is Feminism Important?

Feminism allows equal opportunities for both sexes. Gender roles (a set of conforming rules that say how a person should behave based on their gender) can be harmful to both men and women.

Feminism is about allowing both boy and “girls” the freedom to do what they want and making sure that people are not held back by gender roles and expectations whether it at home at school, in the workplace or in parliament.

1.5 Scope of Study

The major scope of this work is John Stuart Mill. Different philosophers will only come in to the extent that they bear relevance to our work.

1.6 Definition of Terms

To do justice to the topic “Feminism” it is important to understand some other concepts that have some intimate relationship with our key concept. Such concepts include liberty, equality, and subjection to mention a few.

Liberty: It is the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on the one's way of life, behavior, or political views. It is also the power or scope to act as pleases. Liberty is also known as freedom and privilege.

Feminism: It is the advocacy of women's rights on the equality of the sexes. At its core, feminism is a belief in full social-economic and political equality for women. Feminism is about changing the way that people see male and female rights (mainly female) and campaigning for equal ones. A person who follows feminism is called a feminist. Feminism began in the 18th century with the enlightenment.

Equality: It means "the state of being equal". It's one of the ideas a democratic society and so the fights to attain different kind of equality like racial equality, gender equality or equality of opportunity between rich and poor is often associated with progress toward that ideal of everyone being truly equal. Equality recognizes that historically certain groups of people with the protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.

Subjection: It is when a person, group, or government forces another person or group of people to submit or be controlled.

It is the act of controlling and limiting a person's right, lifestyle and actions. Subjection is to submit and experience total control.

Methodology: This research study adopts the method of analysis. This work is subdivided into four chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction, Chapter two focuses on the historical perspective, Chapter three is centered on John Stuart Mill; Concept of Feminism which the Chapter four is the evaluation and conclusion.

Literature Reviews

Here are the books to be used subsequently:

The first book to be reviewed is “*The Subjection of Women*”¹ It is held that there should be no restraint not required by the general good and that the law should be no respecter of persons, but should treat all alike, save where dissimilarity of treatment is required by positive reasons, either of justice or of policy.

The second book to be reviewed is “*A Brief History of Feminism*”². According to Patu/Anjie’s Schrupp’s, the wall between sexes can be traced to the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis Adam was created first is the source of patriarchy and the beginning of a great debate.

The third book to be reviewed is “*A Very Short Introduction*”³. A chapter in the work titled secular feminism, an anonymous work entitled *The Woman’s Sharpe Revenge* argued provocatively, that women’s exclusion from learning was devised by men to secure their own continued

domination.

The fourth book to be reviewed is “*Financial Feminism*”⁴. the Arthur argues that women are held back when it comes to money, thus the financial position of men as a against that of women shows a large gender pay gap which means men are earning more, thus the woman without money must look for a man to call honey.

The fifth book to be reviewed is the “*Limitation of Social Feminism*”⁵. According to the book liberal feminism attempts to harness the liberal values of justice, equality and fairness to fight for women’s rights within the patriarchal state of system.

The sixth book to be reviewed is “*Liberty*”⁶. According to him a person should be free to do as he likes in his own concerns, but he ought not to be free to do as he likes in acting for another under the pretext that the affairs of others are of his own affairs.

The seventh book to be reviewed is “*They Used to Call Us Witches*”⁷. According to the book for some feminists, this assumed and imposed division of labour gives men a categorical advantage over women and is the primary explanation for men and women’s power differential in any given situation or society.

The eight books to be reviewed is “*Touching Liberty*”⁸. According to the book the feminist writings the metaphoric linking of women and slaves

prove ubiquitous. Marriage and property laws, the conventional adoption of a husband's name, or even the length of fashionable skirts are explained and decried by reference to women's slavery.

The ninth book to be reviewed is "*No Turning Back*"⁹. According to the book feminism must recognize the integral relationship of gender to other forms of social hierarchy, especially those based on class, race, sexuality and culture.

The tenth book to be reviewed is "*Liberty Is No War Women*"¹⁰. According to the book the mantra is inherently sexist and belittling of women. It presumes that women are less capable than men of standing on their own and caring for themselves and their families.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

JOHN STUART MILL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Life and Works

John Stuart Mill was born at 13 Rodney street in Pease Lane, Middlesex. The elder son of Harriet Barrow and the Scottish philosopher, historian and economist James Mill. John Stuart Mill was educated by his father with the advice and assistance by Jeremy Bentham and Francis Place. He was given an extremely vigorous upbringing and was deliberately shielded from association with children his own age other than his siblings. Mill was a notably precocious child. "He described his education in his autobiography. At the age of three he was taught Greek. By the age of eight, he had read Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis and the whole of Herodotus. He had also read a great deal of history in English he had been taught arithmetic, physics and astronomy".¹

On 21 April 1851, Mill married Harriet Taylor after 21 years of intimate friendship. Taylor was married when they met and their relationship was close but generally believed to be chaste during the years before her first husband died in 1849. The couple waited two years before marrying in 1851. Brilliant in her own right, Taylor was a significant influence on Mill's work and ideas during both friendship and marriage. His relationship with Taylor reinforced Mill's advocacy of women's rights.

Taylor died in 1858 after developing severe lung congestion after only seven years of marriage to Mill. Mill died in 1873, thirteen days before his 67th birthday of erysipelas in Avignon, France, where his body was buried alongside his wife's.

John Stuart Mill on political economy raises at least one story higher. His inestimable "system of logic" was a revolution. It hardly needs, of course, to be said that he owed much to his predecessors.

Induction and their interpretation make up the whole logic, for the first time induction was treated as the opus magnum of logic. Mill theory on liberty, his idea is that "only if a democratic society follows the principle of liberty can its political and social institutions fulfill their role in shaping rational characters so that its citizens can realize the permanent interests of the people as progressive beings".²

Mill believed that the struggle between liberty and authority is the most striking feature in the portion of history. For him, liberty in antiquity was a "contest between subjects, or some classes of subjects and the government".³ Mill involves wholeheartedly in defense of free speech. He argues that free discourse is a necessary condition for intellectual and social progress. His book on "The subjection of women".⁴ He attempts to make a case of perfect inequality. He believed in the philosophy of utilitarianism, which he would describe as the principle that holds "those

actions are right in the proportion as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness”.⁵ by happiness he means intended pleasure and the absence of pain. John Stuart Mill notable works included; Principle of political economy, on liberty, system of logic, the subjection of women and Utilitarianism.

2.2 Mill's Influence

He was a person of extreme simplicity in his mode of life. The influence that his works exercised upon contemporary English thought can scarcely be exaggerated, nor can there be any doubt about the value of the liberal and inquiring spirit with which he handled substantial questions of his time. Mill remained quintessentially political being even during the late 1820s and 1830s.

He was influenced by some notable philosophers. James Mill who was John Stuart Mill father was also a great influence to his philosophy and his works. Jeremy Bentham who was the other formative influence in Mill's life and also became Mill's guardian. David Ricardo “The principle of political economy and taxation”.⁶ He was a friend to Mill's father. Mill was the most influential English language philosopher of the nineteenth century. He influenced other philosophers like John Rawls, John Maynard Keynes, Peter Singer, Bertrand Russell, William James E.t.c. He was educated exclusively by his father, who was a strict disciplinarian. He

was introduced to political economy and studied the work of the Scottish political economist and philosopher Adam Smith and that of English economist David Ricardo. He was also influenced by Aristotle, John Locke, Plato. Harriet Taylor the wife of Mill was also a great influence to his philosophy.

2.3 The Bases and Influence of John Stuart Mill Philosophy

Mill was prominent as a publicist in the reforming age of the 19th century, and remains of lasting interest as a logician and an ethical theoretical. He was a person of extreme simplicity in his mode of life. The influence that his works exercised upon contemporary English thought can scarcely be overestimated, nor there do any doubt about his value of liberal and inquiring with which he handled the great questions of his time. Mill combined economics with philosophy, he believed in a moral theory called utilitarianism. “He was an advocate of individual rights, progressive social policies and utilitarianism (which promotes actions that do the greatest good for the greatest number)”.⁷ His upbringing gave him a foundation to his philosophy, through his self-reflection he began to makes changes to Bentham Utilitarian ideology to make it more positive, adopting the revised theory of his own system of belief. He used his numerous articles, essays and books to compare the legal status of slaves, to promote radical empiricism as a function of mathematics. While a

passionate believer of freedom and individual rights, his later writings suggest a shift away from classic economics belief in the free marketplace and capitalism towards socialism, or at least a mixed economy.

2.4 John Stuart Mill Utilitarianism

Mill defines it as “the creed which accepts as the foundation of morals”⁸. Utility or the greatest happiness principle holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. To give a clear view set up by the theory, much more requires to be said, in particular what things it includes in the ideas of pain and pleasure. He also called it the foundation of morals. Mill aim to show that happiness is the one and only thing desirable in itself; to do this he argues that happiness is desirable in itself. To Mill “the moral feelings are not innate but acquired they are not for that reason less natural”⁹. It is natural for man to speak, to reason, to build cities, to cultivate the ground, though these are acquired faculties. The moral feelings are not indeed a part of our nature, but there is basis of powerful natural sentiment, and that it is which, when, once the general happiness is recognized as the ethical standard, will constitute the strength of the utilitarian morality.

This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind, the desire

to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilization. Society between human beings, except in the relation of master and slave, is manifestly impossible on any other footing than that the interests of all are to be consulted. "Society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally".¹⁰ And since in all states of civilization, every person, except an absolute monarch, has equals, everyone is obliged to live in terms with somebody and in every age some advance is made towards a state which it will be impossible to live permanently on other terms with anybody. "The good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to, like any physical condition of our existence".¹¹

2.5 John Stuart Mill Political Beliefs

The study of society emerged as a discipline within moral philosophy, particularly in the work of eighteenth-century. Scottish philosophers and society was grounded on the study of human nature. Social structure was the major concern of Mill, for Mill, to inquire into a state of any remote and primitive society, which was in contrast with their own society, was nothing but to study nature. Mill recognized that the dominance of society

over political forms was a distinguishing characteristic of 19th century political thought. Mill notion of civilization pay attention to the fact that he referred with disapproval to the social condition and national character of England and the United States (particularly their commercial spirit). Yet he thought that England and America were less civilized than such nations as France and Germany. Rather, “he found more of the characteristics of civilization in the anglophone countries. Mill projected science of society pays special attention to his interest in the science project f history and that of the formation of character”.¹² His insisted that “the new commercial society should be studied by a new science of society different from traditional politics, and that the recently established science of political economy explained the strength of commercial society”.¹³

Mill view on America, which have vital significance for the understanding of his notion of civilization. The publication of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* in 1835 led Mill to pay attention to American society. Hence, Mills’s view on America should be interpreted in the context of this intellectual climate, as well as in terms of his relationship with Tocqueville, whose argument was crucial to the formation of views of America. Mill notion of civilization in the late 1830’s his view that contemporary society was a commercial civilization led by the commercial middle class and attained a perspective from which

he understood various phenomena in contemporary society.

Importantly, Mill was not so much interested in the particular events of history as in theoretical views about history what history what he was concerned with were the principles of explanation, the laws of historical development not historical events themselves. The reason why Mill was interested in history was not because of an interest in the past in itself, but because he hoped that a historical perspective would increase his understanding of the present and the future.

2.6. John Stuart Mill Principle of Liberty

As one of the fathers of liberalism Mill wanted a maximum degree of non-interference compatible with the minimum demands of social life. There is, then, broad agreement that Mill sought an expensive liberty and minimal restraint. The vast majority of commendation holds that, while he places some limits on individual liberty and that for Mill, interference, denial of choice, coercion, and encroachments on individuality are abhorrent.

Mill emerges by common consent as the most eminent advocate of individual freedom. Mill sought to maximize individual liberty and sought to reduce the power and authority of governments, society and public opinion to restrict it. Mill identifies an oppressive society as the society as the greatest threat to individual liberty. Protection was

necessary, Mill concluded, not only against the magistrate but against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling. Mill describes “the appropriate region of human liberty”.¹⁴ It consisted of liberty of conscience, including liberty of opinion and sentiment and publication, liberty of tastes and pursuits, including the framing of a plan of life to suit one’s own character.

To Mill, the individual is absolutely independent and sovereign. Mill’s focus on values and motivations are sometimes expressed as a concern about character. It comprises the inward domain of consciousness demanding liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense, liberty of thought and feeling, absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment. The principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits.

Mill is very clear that the real danger to liberty comes from social tyranny, which is greater than any kind of political oppression because “it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating more deeply into the details of life and enslaving the soul itself”.¹⁵ The liberty he values includes liberty of thought and discussion, and liberty of conduct. Both are required for the flourishing of individuality. According to Mill; “There needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinions and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by means other civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them”¹⁶

Mill identifies three areas which constitute the appropriate region of individual liberty, it comprises, first the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience in most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling, absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people, but being almost as much importance as the liberty of thought itself. The principle requires liberty of tastes of pursuits, of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character, of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow: without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long we do not harm them. Liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits of combination among individuals, freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others. Liberty is valuable because it promotes individual and social progress.

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CHAPTER THREE

JOHN STUART MILL CONCEPT OF FEMINISM

3.1 What is Feminism?

The word feminism is shrouded by great doubt; therefore, it calls for an attempt to give clarity to what the concept of feminism is about.

“Feminism is a serious effort to understand human experience”¹.

According to the new encyclopedia: “Feminism comprises a number of social, cultural and political movements concerned with gender inequalities and social rights for women”²

The concept of feminism was not introduced until the 15th century by an Italian humanist writer by name Christian de Pizan an author, who spent most of her life in France. She was arguably the first to rebut the misogynists present at that time through literature. This is thoroughly evident in her works “The Book of The City of Ladies” and “Epite au Dieu d’Amour” (epistle of the city of God) which was regarded as the first major tract of her day. In her Epistle of the City oh God, she cited the women as examples to encourage the women of her lifetime of their own capabilities and worthiness. De pizan, using history denounced the misogynist that spoke about women as being the weaker sex and inherently bad. She gives this exhortation to all women in the closing remarks of her book, “My ladies, see who these men accuse you of so

many vices in everything. Make liars of them all by showing forth your virtue and prove their attack false by attacking well”.³

The origin of the term “Feminism” and “Feminist” can be traced to France. It was coined by a Utopian Socialist and French philosopher by name Charles Fourier. The French word “feminine” was coined in the year 1870. Although studies by Karren in her journal “Defining Feminism: A comparative Historical Approach”⁴. She claimed that based on her own research on the early history of the word feminism, that the word derivation originated quite recently in France and also claims that origins are still uncertain and shouldn’t be attributed to Charles Fourier. It should be noted that during this time the words were used polemically rather than analytically. Also, that feminism here referred more to the “Right of Women” than to “Rights equal to those of men”.

3.2 The Development of Feminism

3.2.1 First Wave Feminism

The development of feminism in the west has been a long and tedious one. France was considered the pioneer of women rights. The political origin of feminism came from the French Revolution (1789). This event raised legal equality, freedom and political rights as its central objectives but soon came the great contradictions that marked the struggle of early feminism: freedom, rights and legal equality that had been the great

conquests of the liberal revolutions that affect women differently. In order to achieve the sequential narrative of movements and ideologies aimed at the equal rights for women, we have to talk about Jean-Jacques Rousseau (a francophone and Genevian philosopher, writer composer of the 18th century. It was his political “the illustration” which greatly influenced the age of enlightenment often referred to as the father of illustrations he illustrated an ideal democratic society that was based on the equality of men when women were excluded from having rights or owning property and because of this, the voices of women began to be expressed collectively in France and he argued against the injustice suffered by women in the hands of the male dominated society. This prompted one of the foremost feminist by name Mary Wollstonecraft to publish one of the first feminist treatises

“A Vindication of the Rights of Women” (1792) it was solely based on the work of Rousseau, here she argued for the injustice suffered by women. She is often regarded as “the grandmother of British feminism and her ideas shaped the thinking of the suffragettes who campaigned for the women’s right to vote”⁵

The term “first wave” feminism was coined in March 1989 by a woman by name Martha Lear in her article in the New York Times Magazine, who also as at that time “Second wave feminism” simultaneously.

The first wave feminist were majorly concerned with women's rights to participate in the politics of that time, which was dominated by males.

First wavers were predominantly white, middle-class women who directed the pace of the movement. The first wave movement was said to have concluded in the year 1920 when the suffrage bill was passed. As a result of first wave movement; different ideology, objectives and aims emerged "In a struggle and legitimate itself, certain forms of feminism appeared to be purely negative, reactive and oppositional. Subsequently I shall discuss the numerous strands of feminism.

3.2.2. Second Wave Feminism

The second wave feminism on the other hand began in the early 1960s on the United States. It eventually spread throughout the western world and beyond. Second wave feminism rose as a result of the civil rights and anti-wars movements, in which women were disillusioned with their second-class status in the society. It was a moment of epiphany where "women could see that even in social activist work they were accorded only secondary status"⁶. When the first wave became dominant, the second wave drew from it: "whereas, the first wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and over turning legal obstacle to gender equality (e.g voting, rights, property rights), second wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family the work place,

reproductive rights, de facto inequalities and official legal inequalities”.⁷

Earlier to the second wave movement, Simone de Beauvoir a French writer had published a book that laid the groundwork for the second wave of the feminist movement in the year 1949. The book titled “The Second Sex”, in this book she talked about the portrayal of women in primarily patriarchal society as the “Other”. It detailed an analysis of women’s oppression and the foundation of contemporary feminism. De Beauvoir’s analysis as such focused on the social construction of woman as the “Other”, she accepted Jean Paul Sartre’s perception “existence precedes essence”. Going further, she challenged the preexisting notion that the fact women being capable of getting pregnant, lactating and menstruating was not a good reason for them to be regarded as second class. The second wave of feminism emerged after the Second World War; it was a time of political, economic transformation. These economic and political changes drastically altered women’s situation and also the way in which women perceived their situation.

During the Second World War, women had been enticed into wage labour but at the end of the war they were encouraged to go back into the home to make way for men returning from the front. The post-war era was one in which domesticity was emphasized, the importance of the

mother-infant relationship, the socialization of the image of women as consumers commodities like soap powder ⁸.

Furthermore, the late 1940s post war boom which was an era characterized by an unmatched economic growth, a baby boom, a move to family-oriented suburbs and the ideal companion marriages.

It is against the backdrop that the second wave feminist movement emerged, it was to raise the consciousness of women. Betty Friedan influenced by *The Second Sex* wrote the bestselling book “*The Feminine Mystique*” in the year 1963. It is widely speculated that the movement began in 1963 when she published this book. She was often regarded as the mother of this movement. Some of the major contributions and initial victories that emerged from the publishing of the book by Betty Friedan and the politics in the 1960s include the establishment of the National Organization for Women (NOW) where Friedan was named the organization first president. The NOW organization brought about the first great legislative victory which was the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

“This made it law for woman to have an equal right to Equal Pay Act of 1963. “This made it law for woman to have an equal right to equal pay for the same jobs that men did. It made it possible for women to now not be prevented from joining the labour force due to depressed wages”. ⁹.

Despite the success of this wave, the failure of the ERA was followed by a gradual demise of feminist activity. More also, there was a divide on the stance of sexuality and abortion, which alienated many women such as the Feminist for Life who believed fervently in the women's right movement but were not in support of mainstream movement on abortion. Because of issues relating to this, in the 60s and 70s second wave feminism was divided into separate ideological movements. Liberal feminism and radical feminism. The liberal feminists were led by Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem whilst the radical feminism were led by Sandra C. Hayden and Mary King. They stood for different things, within the liberal feminism, the objective sought equality with men in political and social spheres, where legislation and laws such as legislation of abortion and efforts to make women more established on the workforce equal to men were their primary goals. Radical feminism on the other hand, wanted a more radical change to society that is fundamentally patriarchal and needed to be altered if women were to escape its oppression.

3.2.3. Third Wave Feminism

The third feminist movement began in the 1990s after the end of second wave feminism and it continues even to this present time. This wave began as a result of the perceived failure of the previous waves, although,

this second wave feminist had accomplished both fundamental and human rights. Which included the creation of women and child facilities, the acknowledgment of abuse and rape, access to contraceptives and other reproductive services (including the legalization of abortion), the creation and enforcement of sexual programs and much more? They recognized second wave as being fundamental to the movement but were largely unsatisfied with the space created by the post-feminist. As a result, they sought to strengthen the feminist movement and promote inter-sectionality (a concept introduced in 1989).

Amongst other things, the goal is to change the stereotypes, media portrayals and language used to define women. They also sought to remove the idea that women were victims and men villains enforced by the second wave feminist but instead facilitate the next evolutionary cycle of feminism. Most importantly, third wavers championed “choice feminism”, that is, “the idea that feminism should simply give women choices and not pass judgement on what they choose”. It has been said that third wave feminism sparked the reality that multiple definitions of feminism exist simultaneously owing to the various identities for the third wave feminists whom were grounded in the second wave include Gloria Anzolda, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandoval, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston and many others such as Rebecca Walker who called for a “new subjectivity” in feminist voice.

The label “Third Wave” was given by Rebecca walker who believed that a new was he was needed because the young women viewed second wave feminism as rigid, judgmental and divisive and highlighted focus on non-white women. These young women believed she argues that:

In order to be a feminist one must live in poverty, always critique, never marry, and want to censor pornography and/or worship the Goddess. A feminist must never compromise herself, must never make concession for money or for love, must always be devoted to the uplift of her gender, must only make an admirable and selfless livelihood preferably working for women’s organizations. ¹⁰

A series of event propelled for the emergence of the third wave in the 1980s such as the publishing of the anthology of “My Bridge Called My Back” edited by Cherne Moraga and Glory E. Anzaldua (first published in 1981) and “All the women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But some of Us are Brave: Black Women’s studies” edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith. They are said to be authors of undeniable influence on the 80s/90s young feminists.

These books challenged mainstream second wave feminism that made claims to solidarity based on sisterhood and focused on arising awareness/ consciousness to the experiences of women of colour as well

as an inter-sectionalism of women within the multiple identities. It was in response to this Rebecca Walker published an article entitled “Becoming the third wave” in which she stated “*I am not a post-feminist, I am the third wave*”¹¹. Walker book was a notable expansion of feminist space for women. Some of the major success of the third wave feminism was the inclusion of four women to join with the two already in United States senate in the year 1992, which is referred to as “the year of the women”. Subsequently, women were able to contest for positions and wins. Most significantly, the third wave feminist utilizes the internet, media and technology to boost the movement. This wavers are described as “media-savvy, culture-driven generation of young women”¹². Also, in the intersection between race and feminism, women of colour certainly have had a more audible voice in constructing feminism in the third wave compared to the first and second wave. Although, women of colour still struggle to have race related subjectivities and occupy prominent feminist space, despite the success attained in this present era. Nonetheless, third wave feminism regards race, social, transgender race and sexual liberation, Gender violence as central issue.

3.3. The Strands of Feminism

Over the years a variety of strands of the feminist movement have developed their aim, goals and ideologies as well as strategies have

continually evolved. Since, a background of feminism has been given I shall proceed to discuss the various forms of feminism. The emergence of the different strands of feminism is as a result of the existence of different women such as white, women of colour, working class or home makers, middle class, poor women, heterosexual etc. have struggle to be included in the feminist space which would allow them to express their distinct experience. This led to numerous strands of feminism which exist such as anarchy- feminism, essential feminism etc. they are not limited to those listed above however for the sake of this work, there are some categories of feminism that would be discussed. They are: liberal feminism, radical feminism, ecological feminism. It should be noted that this shift from feminism arose because of the intense debate within feminism as to the agenda of feminism.

3.3.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism can be traced from the emergence of capitalism in different times and different countries. In America for instance, their roots can be traced to the beginning of the 18th and 19th century wherein the social contract theory of government instituted by the America in Revolution has developed the idea of individual. This is the basis of the liberal feminism, “throughout its history the liberal feminist movement has been and continues to be focused on eliminating female subordination

rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints blocking women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world"¹³. Though human beings have biological differences, however, all human beings are essentially rational agents.

The advocacy for liberal feminism by women can be traced to Mary Wollstonecraft who represented the beginning of the movement in the 18th century. In her book "*A Vindication of The Rights of Women*" she write "Women need to be educated just as well as men do that they can grow up to be moral and autonomous human beings"¹⁴ other writers who believed that women potentialities are being suppressed by the society include John Stuart Mill in his book "On the Subjection of Women", he believes that both sexes should have equal rights under the law and that until conditions of equality exist, no one can possibly access the natural difference between women and men, discrete as they have been. What is natural in two sexes can only be found out by allowing both developing and using their faculties freely. Second wave feminists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinan, Rebecca walker, Elizabeth C. Stanton etc. the main contributions of liberal feminism especially in the United States is showing how much society discriminates against women. They were able to prove that even if women were different from men, they are not inferior.

3.3.2 Radical Feminism

This strand of feminism in the United States and the other parts of Europe began in the 1960's within the second wave feminism. Radical feminism sought to look into the root cause of women oppression and would argue that oppression of women is the root of all other forms of oppression "Radical feminism theoretical watchword is patriarchy or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found where the women and men are in contact with each other in private as well as in public"¹⁵. Patriarchy is linked to oppression faced in the society, because of the fact that women are different and seen as inferior which is a deeply seated belief in the minds of men as at that time. This patriarchal beliefs system for the radical feminist is attributed to all other forms of oppression in the world such as wars, poverty, rape, child abuse, incest, racism and economic exploitation and blames them for it. They challenged the patriarchal culture at prevalent in the society and argues for women only spaces wherein women would begin to take control of their own lives, free from the sexist put downs, sexual harassment and threat of rape/ violence.

One of its most important innovations is the slogan "the personal is political" which refers particularly to the way women and men relate to each other in their emotional and sexual relationships. They argue that if

many women were experiencing certain kinds of domination in their personal relationship, it would simply be their own individual problems but rather that it has a broader social and political issue. This strand of feminism is often regarded as an extreme as an extreme form and has been criticized for putting women against men and neglecting ethics and social class difference among women as well as alienating women of colour.

3.3.3 Ecological Feminism

It is the confluence of feminist and environmentalist strains of thought. Eco feminists argue that it is the oppression of women in human society that extends to human exploitation of nature. Both social ecology and eco feminism argue that there is similarity between domination in human society and the natural environment. For the ecological feminists, “it is elimination of patriarchy in human affairs that would have provide for elimination of human subjugation of nature”¹⁶.

3.4 John Stuart Mill the Subjection of Women

John Stuart mill principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes. To Mill:

It should be held that there should not be no restraint not required by the general good, and that the law should be no respecter of persons, but should treat all

*alike, save where dis similarity of treatment is required
by positive reasons, either of justice or of policy*¹⁷.

If the authority of men over women, when first established, had been the result of a conscientious comparison between different modes of constituting the government of society; if, after trying various other modes of social organization the government over women men, equality between the two and such mixed and divided modes of government as might be invented it had been decided, on the testimony of experience, that the mode in which women are wholly under the rule of men, having no share at all in public concerns, and each in private being under the legal obligation of obedience to the man with whom she has associated her destiny.

Women subjected to men in political sector, social sector etc. which entirely subordinate the weaker sex to rest upon the stronger. In the adoption of this system of inequality never was the result of deliberation or any social ideas or any notion whatever of what oversees to the benefit of humanity or the good order of the society. It emerge simply to the fact that from the earliest gloom of human society, every woman owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength was found in a state of bondage to some men. Slavery, from being a mere affair to force between the master and the slave, became

regularized and a matter of compact among the masters, who binding themselves to one another agreed for common protection guaranteed by their collective strength the private possessions of each, including his slaves. In early times, the great majority of the male sex was slaves, as well as the whole of the female. And many ages elapsed, some of them ages of high cultivation, before any thinker was bold enough to question the rightfulness, and the absolute social necessity, either of one slavery or of the other. By degrees such thinkers did arise: and (the general progress of society assisting) the slavery of the male sex has, in all the countries of Christian Europe at least (though, in one of them, only within the last few years) been at length abolished, and that of the female sex has been gradually changed into a milder form of dependence.

That this statement should have the effect of a paradox, is in some respects creditable to the progress of civilization, and the improvement of the moral sentiments of mankind. At present, in the more improved countries, the disabilities of women are the only case, in which laws and institutions take persons at their birth and ordain that they should never in their lives be allowed to compete for certain things, the throne, only hereditary successor attain it. All other dignities and social advantages are open to the whole male sex; many indeed are attainable by wealth. Royalty as I have said is excepted, But in this exceptional case, in which a high social function is, for important reasons, bestowed on birth instead

of being put up to competition, all free nations contrive to adhere in substance to the principle from which they nominally derogate; for they restrict this high function by conditions intended to prevent the person to whom it apparently belongs from really performing it; while the person by whom it is performed, the responsible minister, does obtain the post by a competition from which no full-grown citizen of the male sex is legally excluded. The disabilities, therefore, to which women are subject from the mere fact of their birth, are the solitary examples of the kind in modern legislation *“The social subordination of women thus stands out an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest”*¹⁸.

It is necessary that women should not be compelled to the general belief that they are supposed to follow or go through some certain things to be who they are, women should be given the chance to show forth what they are worth and what they can do without the invasion of men or the society having to put limitations to it.

3.5 John Stuart Mill on Equality

Mill believed everybody (regardless of gender) should be in position to determine how they can contribute to society if we don't we prevent

ourselves from accessing the best ideas and contributions. Kai Nielsen and Ronald Dworkin for instance, go as far as to argue that the foremost public priority, coming even before liberty, should establish a condition of equality among human beings with respect of the distribution of benefits and harms. They hold that the duty of public authorities is not to protect the rights of the individual to liberty but to establish a condition of more or less strict equality. Despite the claim that *“equal concern does not mean that government must ensure that everyone has the same wealth, no matter what”*¹⁹.

The picture Rawls paints of our moral equality, if true does suggest that there is something very wrong with the wide discrepancies of advantages of people’s lives. If it just happen, through no one’s faultiest credit at all, that a great many people are struggling while a select few like Bill Gates are inordinately well off, that would be certainly be morally problematic. If, in addition we are all on same team, belonging together, all equally responsible for each other, this moral duty, combined with the first condition might justify mandatory sharing of the team’s benefits and burdens. Mill is not only claiming that each person should be allowed to form his or her own opinions, rather than have them imposed by others. He also wants to depict the basis on which we should or should not make our own judgment, or form our own opinions.

Mill believes that individuality could not prosper without a “liberal culture” consisting of individual liberties, equality of women, toleration of different lifestyle, a free market economy and limited government. John Rawls argues that “we need equal distribution of wealth, except when unequal distribution is to everyone’s benefit”²⁰

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CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Evaluation

This project work started with an attempt to understand the concept of feminism which is essentially the crux of this study. A varied definition of feminism was given, in order to grasp a good understanding of what feminism entails. Therefore, I dived into a historical background and development of feminism. According to research, the concept “feminism” could be traced way back to 15th century although; it became most popular during the 18th and 19th century. France was considered the pioneer of “women’s rights” but the United State championed their movement that is, feminism. The movement began as a reaction from women to the patriarchal system that was prevalent in their society. The feminist movement is characterized by three specific eras (the first wave, the second wave and third wave) starting from the year 1848 and it continues even to the present time. The first and second wavers claymores mainly for inclusion in suffrage, they were controversial and headstrong in a bid to legitimate the new movement unlike the third wavers who came in order to correct the perceived failures of the previous eras. Moving further, I delineated the various strands that emerged from the movement, they consist of the radical, liberal and

Ecological feminist. Each of these strands evolved from the experiences of different women and their perceived understanding of what feminism should stand for.

To bring the existence of feminism I had to use John Stuart Mill as a case study. The study showed that women should be given equal rights and not be treated like lesser beings he decided to elaborate more on through his works e.g. his work on liberty, subjection of women, equality etc.

He was a prominent philosopher who saw feminism as a stepping stone to human development in the society. As a result of this, it encouraged the movement of feminism in the contemporary era. Mill argues in the favour of legal and social equality between men and women. He writes that the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of chief hinderances of human improvement.

There has been much debate surrounding the movement called feminism and it is a prolonged and still on-going debate. In my opinion, feminism has its extremes as well as varying objectives, aims and causes, just as it is, so are its numerous feminists that is of different race and colors. Alongside this feminist are the anti-feminists who consider the movement unnecessarily, irrelevant, hate inciting and vain. Some of them are vocal and others we never really hear them talk about it, but it is obvious in their ideas about the dynamics between the male and female sex.

Nonetheless, the importance of feminism cannot be downplayed by its many critiques. Feminism in my opinion should not only be seen as a clamor for equality but also the state of expressing and understanding feminism. As such feminism should be seen as movement and theory that not only seeks the inclusion of women in the economical, spiritual, political and social that participate in the society but also the movement that encourages the discovery and celebration of the essence of womanhood and feminism. Africa having one of the oldest civilizations in the world has also the oldest patriarchies, and therefore the oldest resistance to patriarchy. “African women have crossed their arms and accepted being battered and depersonalized by patriarchy”¹. Feminism like a lot of other movements does not have a consensus on what its aims, ideologies and causes should stand for. This is not a “woman thing” like most anti-feminists like to say, but rather it is a result of situational, regional and global differences in the experiences women face all over the world. However, we have seen at different times women from all over the world have come together from time to time in form of conferences or seminars to at least agreed on certain objectives agendas.

Feminism is a concept that thrives to give recognition to women’s capability and right to determine and change a new society. It demands that women should not be judged by their sex. It is geared towards correcting the situation in the society in which a women cannot hold

certain positions and jobs or have a say in the affairs of the state because of her gender. According to Judith Burdick, feminism is an outright and explicit rejection of the style created by strong coercive norms. Feminism indeed advocates that women has the right and freedom from male domination and therefore can decide her own destiny.

The agenda of feminism in my understanding is tightly put by Kirkpatrick thus; *“Feminism as an advocacy of women’s right or a movement for the advancement and emancipation of women ought to be pursued within the ambience of the wisdom and meta-politics of women existence ²”*.

Women have invincible powers these powers are widely only by the brave, wise and cleaver woman. John Stuart Mill philosophy embraces the feminism of the female sex. We have come into the knowledge that they were never powerless in the society and in particular against men.

4.2. Conclusion

This project work has tried to show clearly the relevance of feminism in John Stuart Mill philosophy. Feminists are truly committed to equality, which liberate all women from different part of the world. Feminism is a way for women in less industrial countries to express their own opinions, experiences as well as struggle against patriarchy. By the way, it should be understood that culture is not static, it is defined by the people inherent in the society and even cultures have changed. Some people

pre-conceived conception of which the woman should be her role and position. So any deviation from what they conceive as the ideal women raises contempt; “Feminists may seek to enact this transformation primarily on focusing women’s situation and by advocating on their behalf but this does not mean it is only about women, or indeed, only about women and men. Rather, it is concerned with radically reimagining and reshaping all power relations, in which case it concerns human in general”³.

In this spirit, I want to conclude this discourse of John Stuart Mill Feminism by stating that the feminism I imagine is one that is informed by our various realities as it is committed to their improvement. It is in this sense that we can speak meaningfully of feminism. It is radical as it seeks to transform society in its totality, for the betterment of all, not just women or even a certain type or group of women.

In a sense this has been my ultimate purpose in this essay: ziti offer a characterization of feminism on its own merits and its own terms, rather than continue to focus on where it came from. Let us no longer seek to legitimize or delegitimize feminism in terms of its origins. Instead, a more worthwhile and productive focus for our energies would be critical discussion on what feminism is, can and should be for us, women and men in today.

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