

**Chinese-american WOMEN'S EXISTENTIAL conscience as  
reflected in the woman warrior written by maxine hong kingston**



Thesis

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**I dedicate this thesis to:**

My beloved Father and Mother  
My little Brothers and Sister,  
and for the one I love.

**MOTTO**

Independence is equal  
Interdependence is mutual  
Obligation is reciprocal

**Acknowledgment**

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Nurmeilawati

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis, entitled Chinese-American Woman Existential Conscience as Reflected in the Novel The Woman Warrior Written by Maxine Hong Kingston, is written in purpose of analyzing the facts of women subordination within the novel. And most importantly is to find out the special concept of Chinese-American woman existential conscience which is constructed by the narrator in a high complexity of sexual and racial discriminations.

The theoretical approach will be historical approach, sociological approach and feminist literary approach especially of the liberal mainstream. These approaches are relevant to the study, that is to analyze women existential conscience in the historical and cultural context of the Chinese-American society.

The main data of the analysis is every data in the novel, which is related to the study, and supported by the information from many other sources, such as books, articles, journals, Internet and also the result of some discussions.

Narrator, as the center character of the novel, is the second generation of Chinese immigrant parents in America. In the novel she performs the experiences of her women relatives, including her mother, her two aunts and finally herself. Her rejection to the oppressive patriarchal system has strongly inspired her to reveal the facts of those women relatives' experiences of women subordination. And the facts are varied; since the sexual harassment, physical raid of women with out of marriage pregnancy, psychological terror, women's boundaries to play the role of only the domestic affairs, and deeper to the destruction of women's firm consciousness of their equal existence with men in their society. Those women's experiences proved that patriarchal system has become a subjugation mechanism of women's freedom to explore their own individualized identity as human being with the large capacity of everything, which is equal to men.

Moreover the fact of racial discrimination has also burdened those women with the more suffering of subordination. Together with Chinese immigrant men, they have to face the economic, social, cultural and political problems in the effort of mingling with the new society. And their incapability of mastering the English language has sent them to the domestic fields or to the low paid jobs, which make them cheaper than the Native Americans and the immigrant men.

Challenging the sexual and racial discriminations, the narrator proposes the possibility of women and men's sameness and equality. She refuses every pattern of discrimination conducted upon her, and at the same time constructs the idealization of being a woman. Through the Chinese legend of Fa Mu Lan she performs that women own the same and equal capability of rational thought and public achievements.

Women exist as the same and equal human being to men. And narrator's dialectical thought on women existence also sets high appreciation on femininity as the means of women's struggle to construct women and men equality. Finally, narrator's concept of women existential conscience lies on her desire of women's realization of their free, active, autonomous and subjective individuality, while the feminine or masculine aspects are both the legitimate modes of being human.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of Choosing the Subject

Realizing the subordinate position posted for women, feminists struggle to break the bonds of patriarchal culture in order to gain the acknowledgement of women as fully human being to be freely exercising their personal existence in every sphere. Feminists attain to overcome the conventional stereotypes and gender biases deeply penetrated in the unconscious mind of women and men and at the same time, seeking freedom for self-definition, self affirmation and self determination. All the effort is to establish women's consciousness of their existence, to commit them politically aware of their position in the patriarchal society, and moreover is to re-thinking and re-construct the present pattern of women and men's relationship for the more just and equal relation for both sexes.

America along with some European countries draws a hard long struggle of feminism movement. The issues have also developed parallel to women problems in each epoch. Many feminists born to strike women's rights which have been neglected and bring consequences to women repression in the whole history of human life. Women have been omitted from the recorded history written with central focus on men. Therefore some contemporary feminist argue that the apparent exclusion or marginality of women in the textual history has also become the concern of feminist to trespass against the malestream theory and

historical report. The efforts take the form of the development of theoretical approach and great contribution were also given by women writers who wrote in feminist consciousness. They brought back women to become the subjects of their own political, social and economic role in the human history.

One of the extraordinary women acknowledged as feminist for her thought presented in a novel is Maxine Hong Kingston. She is recognized as one of the most outspoken contemporary feminist in America whose concern is to report women's names and deeds in a text. And that she comes from a minor Chinese subculture living in the United States makes her special on her specific women experience.

She was born to Chinese immigrant parents, in Stockton, on 27 October 1940. She wrote her first two books, The Woman Warrior and China Man, in Hawaii, a time and place provided her with the necessary distance and perspective to sort out her identity problems. Her primary questions on sexism that lies in her consciousness has motivated her to write down her women relatives story to present women real condition living in the injustice patriarchal system.

Many interesting aspects of the novel, primarily dealt with women experiences, have attracted the researcher to examine certain understanding of feminism under influence of certain racial and national identity. Thus, "...Kingston's main project in The Woman Warrior is to avenge oppression by reporting stories about the women in her family..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002) would become an unexhausted source for such feminism analysis. The misogyny of Chinese Culture

which had forced her aunt into suicide and the regarded non-existent position in her family encountered by Maxine through the ideology of liberal feminism, "... a critical concern with the value of individual autonomy and freedom from supposedly unwarranted restriction by others..." (Beasley 1999: 51). By retelling the story of her family she put an individual autonomy on those the oppressed women and established her own feminism thought to build up her womanly existential consciousness.

And in this research, the researcher is interested to analyze novel The Woman Warrior, since it depicts a landscape of the consciousness and experience of especially the contemporary American born daughter of Chinese immigrant parents to seek her gender, racial and national identity.

The researcher finds that Maxine's understanding of the misogynist tendency in her Chinese culture has encouraged her to oppose it by using the developed western feminist point of view. She reads the experiences of the marginalized and subordinated women in her origin culture through women perspective. By using liberal feminist thought, Maxine demands the equal rights and opportunities for women and the acknowledgement of their subjective existence in the history of social, economic, and political life. This women perspective enables her to regain women subjectivity for the Chinese women who have been silenced and muted by the patriarchal tradition. Thus, her womanly consciousness then arises through series of contradictory women portraits presenting some real conditions and ideal potentialities to be "not-the second sex".

While her racial and national identity is what makes her reconcile the two cultures into a newly syncretism identity. Therefore, it is certainly unavoidable that her book is written under the subconscious of those mix and syncretism of the Chinese and American cultures. "... She ties the American way of life in with the Chinese way of life..."(<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/canam/kingston.htm> 2002).

On the one hand, Stockton, Maxine's residential relatively small Chinese population becomes a literary microcosm for her to familiarize herself with the Chinese culture and tradition. Her mother played great role in this occasion, by retelling stories about No Named Woman, her aunt who become the victim of sexual harassment, and the legendary swordswoman, Fa Mu Lan, she shaped Maxine's gender identity in the context of Chinese culture. The mother penetrated the myth of Chinese women destined her future adult life into the role of "wife and slave", while in the mean time, she fired Maxine's imagination to become a revolutionary woman with the story of The Woman Warrior.

On the other hand, Maxine is also the product of American conscience, with the dominant history of feminism. She lives in the time when the feminist movement flared up on its insistence on equality between women and men. The extent of rationalistic feminist theories, supplied by many western feminist thinkers, vigorously impact most women's conscience to demand their rights in all life aspects as human being.

Under such syncretism conscience, Maxine is a feminist, who realizes and struggles to break the oppressive patriarchal system by awakening women's

self-consciousness through her novel. "... Mitchel dan Oakley mengatakan bahwa seseorang dapat dikategorikan sebagai feminis jika ia mempertanyakan hubungan kekuasaan laki-laki-perempuan, namun ia juga harus secara sadar menyatakan dirinya sebagai feminis..."(Mughtar 1999:6). Finally, Maxine's woman consciousness is formed through the experiences of Chinese womanhood and the influences of the western feminist thinkers.

Her identity as a Chinese American woman is also unique for the researcher in which it gives her the capability of understanding the double oppression of the Chinese immigrant women in America. Being immigrants itself has often meant meeting the hostility of the native-born population and the discriminatory treatment of the destined States government. And culturally, the United States common metaphor of the melting pot tends to be assimilationist which vanish ethnic differences by regarding immigrants' original cultures as the less important to the host culture. Moreover, being Chinese immigrant women living in America always means confrontation with the double jeopardy of racism and sexism. As they fight side by side with Chinese men against racial injustice in America, they have to resist an equally pernicious oppression -- the oppression of sexism, which, though rooted in their Chinese patriarchal culture, is nurtured in America, especially in the Chinese community.

As the second generation of Chinese immigrants, Maxine is witnessing the incapability of many Chinese immigrant women to adapt to the American culture. Language often becomes the problem of the Chinese immigrant women, since most of them were unfamiliar to English. In addition, the lack of education

and skill has also been one factor to limit their access to the opportunities associated with the public life which then kept them in the private and less challenging role in the immigrant communities. It excludes women from the history of Chinese immigrant sacrifices and grievances to gain their firm existence in the new culture and society. Therefore, the emergence of Chinese women in the history of traditional China as well as in the Chinese American society has become the purpose of Maxine writing activities.

Since her first glance of reading its title, the researcher found the phrase The Woman Warrior to be strongly rises and challenges women's consciousness on their existence toward the patriarchal system. The Woman Warrior presents women existential conscience on women self awareness of their dehumanized and oppressed existence against the patriarchal culture which then leads them to construct their consciousness of their equal existence toward men. It opposes the masculine paradigm, as only men believed of having the power to become fully human being while women are the weak and dependent. By performing contradictory characters, Maxine seems to passionately want to prove that gender differentiation does not equivalent to sex differentiation.

For Maxine, being woman does not spontaneously deal with weakness, dependency, irrationality, passivity, or emotion. On the contrary, she believes that when women were given a chance and were taught to be strong, independent, rational, active, etc, they can also bear what is being characterized as masculine.

Gender differentiation into men and women is arbitrary characters that may attach to both sexes, male and female. This point once again confirms



Maxine's choice to be much influenced by the liberal feminist conception of "... fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature - that is, as women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Further reading will guide the readers, page by page, enjoying much more complex understanding of women and their realization of their regarded secondary sex which lead them into either deteriorated body and soul or into a tough and firm self construction.

The book itself was first published in 1975, the first of the four novels written by Maxine Hong Kingston. Unsurprisingly, The Woman Warrior won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction in 1976 and was rated as one of the top ten nonfiction books of the decades. The American audiences warmly welcome the book either as a regarded novel or as a kind of autobiography. It is recognized to be a nonfiction work of art as it talks about her own self and her relatives' dramatic way of life, but since it is a kind of rewriting a storytelling of her mother, it is undeniable that she adds many fictional elements into the book. Therefore "... the book is not really an autobiography as a specific genre but an "autobiographical form" that combines fiction and nonfiction..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002 ).

The good appreciation of the book employs it together with China Man, to be widely taught as source book in literature, women's studies, sociology, ethnic studies, and history classes. Many objections derive from many Asian American critics on its generic status, rejecting the perception which view the book as a representative of most Chinese Americans' experiences, Maxine

regarded as presenting her own personal experiences in the book. However, many other critics and especially the researcher, acknowledge the book as highly valued worth of becoming the resource book for studying a specific aspect of American life.

## **B. Problem Statement**

Dealing with the feminism thoughts and issues in relation to the establishment of one's self identity relying on this novel, the writer will analyze the subject as follows:

1. How is the representation of women subordination within patriarchal culture as reflected in The Woman Warrior?
2. How is the narrator's concept of Chinese American women's existential conscience as reflected in The Woman Warrior?

## **C. Scope And Limitation**

The researcher limits her analysis into an understanding of the process of conceptualizing Chinese American Women existential conscience as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior. By firstly giving much attention on women experiences of discrimination as the principal concern of feminism, the researcher would then move into an analysis of narrator's concept of Chinese American women existential conscience by using an approach of liberal feminism.

#### **D. Benefit Of The Research**

This research is held in purpose of getting some benefits:

1. To give a clear and broad understanding of the presentations of women subordination in the novel The Woman Warrior.
2. To give a clear understanding of certain construction of Women Existential Conscience especially of those the Chinese American Women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior.

#### **E. Methodology**

Literary works written by some of the best American authors can be used as artifacts and mental evidence of American history. Literary works in the form of novel, story, poetry, drama, biography, treatise, document, etc are the illustrations, experiences portrait, and reflections of particular society in a certain era. "...Literature is the expression, through the art and language, of total culture of a people drawn together at a time and place. History provides the facts; art and philosophy provide the cultural pattern and meaning (Spiller 1981: 3). Since literature is essentially a part of culture, an "interdisciplinary approach" is appropriately relevant to the analysis. This is relied on the idea of culture itself, which is complex, constructed from many aspects of human experiences.

American Study as an interdisciplinary study effectively grapples the problem of human and the environment with the assistance of some other disciplines by demonstrating the interconnections of the ideas. To have such a

comprehensive view the American Study students must also employ the interdisciplinary connections between the past, present and future. It is actually a newly emerging discipline draws on and waves together theories and research from numerous fields throughout the humanities, history, and social science. Thus American Studies is an interdisciplinary discipline includes social science, literary, history, politics and economic structures so forth.

This thesis is going to analyze an autobiographical novel, The Woman Warrior, written by Maxine Hong Kingston. The novel will become the micro phenomenon to be interdisciplinary analyzed using the feminist literary criticism, sociological approach and historical approach, pass through time past, present and future in order to understand comprehensively the macro phenomenon around the novel.

1. Feminist literary approach focused in the concept of liberal feminism will be useful to understand the novel through women perspective in behalf of revealing women oppressive problems in the patriarchal culture and their struggle to overcome it.
2. Sociological approach enables the researcher to analyze the novel without missing its social context, in account of its plural time, place and cultural backgrounds.
3. Historical approach is used in purpose of understanding the development of feminism thought and issues which inspires the whole body of the novel and gives much influence to the writer.

## **F. Method Of The Reaserch**

This research will be a literary research, means that the researcher will use every relevant data, classified into primary data and supportive data:

- a. The primary data will be every data of the novel The Women Warrior written by Maxine Hong Kingston, which is related to the study.
- b. The supportive data will be from all possible referential data. It can be from books, magazines, reviews from Internet, encyclopedia, journals, or discussion, etc.

### **G. Thesis Representation**

#### **CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION**

- H. Background of Choosing The Subject
- I. Problem Statement
- J. Scope and Limitation
- K. Benefits of the Research
- L. Methodology
- M. Method of Research
- N. Thesis Representation

#### **CHAPTER II : LITERATURE REVIEW**

- A. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought
  1. Women Existence Based on Confucianism
  2. Women Existence Based on Taoism
  3. Women Based on Buddhism
- B. Feminism Thought On Women Existence

1. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society
2. Liberal Feminism Concept of Women Existence
  - a. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities
  - b. Women's Rights for Education
  - c. Women's Rights for Public Participation
- E. Critique on the Hegemony of Masculinity
- F. Chinese American Women Double Oppression in the Patriarchal American Society
  1. The History Of Chinese Immigrant Women in America
  2. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

### **CHAPTER III : ANALYSIS**

- A. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.
- B. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.

### **CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought**

1. Women Existence Based on Confucianism

Confucianism has sometimes been called a religion, although Confucius was not a founder of religion in the usual sense. He was the first and greatest Chinese philosopher and the founder of Chinese literature. His teaching was found in the early part of the Analects, a collection of his sayings assembled by his disciples. In the course of China's long history, Confucius stands out as the most prominent figure. Without any claim to divinity or reference to the supernatural, the teaching of Confucius have exercised such a molding influence that if the Chinese way of life were to be characterized in one word, it would be Confucian.

Although Confucius established a wise and morally based philosophy, still unavoidably the whole context of his thought was the condition and the cultural background of the society –his early philosophical thought had no real commitment to subordination of women, but over time Confucian teachings were expanded upon. Thus, in a society in which patriarchal tradition has deeply penetrated into the subconscious mind of its people, Confucius was not in the exceptional, his teaching proved to have strongly maintained and even strengthen the subordinate view and treatment toward women.

He used a lot of masculine symbolism in his teaching. His full development of the Confucius virtues is exemplified by the Chun-tzu, or the superior men, performance of an ideal gentleman and a state official. The highest existence of an individual would be gained on his achievement and contribution in the collective and state life. A person is morally evaluated according to his or her adherence to social roles prescribed by ancient rituals that were designed for collective achievement. Such an idealistic humanism teaching, reach its peak

manifestation on the social and political achievement as the highly appreciated by the society, but has become only the men's right. On the other hand, women were restricted from their potentialities of their highest achievement contribution to the collective life. "...The goodness of a man is determined by how well he plays his set of social roles as son, husband, father and/or public official, while, a woman is judged by her performance as daughter, wife, and mother ..."(Li 1995: 412)

Confucian interpretations further reinforced male authority and patrilineal customs. According to the Confucian structure of society, women at every level were to occupy a position lower than men. Most Confucians accepted the subservience of women to men as natural and proper. Chinese culture destined women to be led and to follow others. As Confucius "...held that a son must shield his father's crime and care for his own relatives more than for those of others..." (Collier's encyclopedia 1990: 150), he had given the higher responsibilities, and at the same time, the sufficient fulfillment of one's humanity into the hand of men. While, women were given the less challenging role considering their regarded weak and dependent persons, thus, collective contribution as the highest existential achievement was made impossible for them. By the condition, women were uncertain of their own selves; they were hardly capable of determining their self-esteem and self-determination as fully human being.

There has been a sharp distinction between men and women gender roles, public sphere is exclusively men's space and domestic sphere is specifically for women. "...The roles assigned to women, however, were inferior since they



involved only domestic and thus less important activities..”. (Li 1995: 412-413). Being born as men means endowed by the privilege of getting education, growing up on a worth self esteem, and the great opportunity of collective achievement. While women were restricted from the opportunity of social involvement relevance to the traditional value that women's duty is not to control or take charge since they were believed as naturally passive. Women sphere was limited into only the domestic and procreation function.

In the filial life, women were conditioned to be more under pressured by the patriarchal power of defining women’s greatest duty as giving birth a son. The greatest failure of being women was the failure to produce a son with the consequences of loosing their status in the society and the feeling of worthless. This would lead women to keep getting pregnant until she had a boy. And on the case the girl baby was born, the baby might be treated badly, and would be raised under the feeling of worthless either. Girl baby had always been condemned as only burdensome for the family. Therefore, while boy’s birth would be happily celebrated and announced to the whole society, girl’s birth would be regarded shameful, quietly and compulsorily accepted by the family. Thus, feeding girls was regarded as only wasting stuff for nothing, family would prefer to feed the cattle with the regarded more valuable and benefited purpose than feeding baby girls.

Women were departed from the opportunity of establishing a firm independent existence and status unless attached to their husband. They were not given the equal opportunity to the men as an individual to achieve their full

potential. "...Women's greatness stands behind their husbands' achievements, fame, and success; each successful man has a virtuous woman supporting him.." (Li 1995: 413). Such an illusionary image of virtuous women to satisfy the gender as receiving a great appreciation behind the men's status, but proves to have become a deceitful mechanism of patriarchy to confine women space of self actualization. The measurement of women existence did not lie on their individual achievement, but on the husband's fame and success in the social life –women excellence was defined in term of men success.

This myth proved to have absolutely subjugated women deeply sank into the unconscious mind and made women incapable of realizing the injustice treatment conducted upon them, on the contrary women considered it as common and natural. Confucius has taught a specific moral guidance that seems to calm down women to feel comfortable in the secondary sex position. The moral code of the "three obedience and four virtues"; has conquered women to be

...Obedience to the father before marriage, to the husband after marriage, and to the son after the husband's death; and the virtues of loyalty, proper speech, modest demeanor, and diligent work. Central to this tradition were the ideas that "men should be respectable and women humble", and that the lack of learning in woman is a virtue....( Li 1995: 413)

"Obedience" has certainly become a total subjugation to women, softness and modesty revealing only the false consciousness into women's mind, when it is presented in the virtuous value measuring the respectable women. Along their life time women were always under men's authority, having no freedom to exist as

her own self. This norm was actually risky for women – since men, to whom the absolute authority was praised – would have the controlling power competent to demand women’s total obedience to do whatever they expected from women. Women were thrown away into the existence of only men’s slave. Instead of this horrible situation, women were still expected to have and perform higher aesthetic behavior to carefully guard the family respectable name in the society. A kind of another limitation to women’s self actualization, since behavioral restriction often means a closure to women’s creativity and courage to sharpen their personality in the sense of free and individual virtue. The Confucian virtue of collectivism prevent the embodying of the concept of individual worth of women social members, women were respected only on her performance of the traditionally predetermined social roles.

Knowledge is then the key role of patriarchal system; it is always a powerful instrument into self-realization of the existential consciousness for every individual. Thus as patriarchy has maintained women from the access of education, women were made lost of their opportunity of fulfilling their humanity through knowledge. Son would always be the first choice on education matter, while daughter would be needed for the household matter. Either men or women would then strengthen patriarchal system.

In the Chinese filial hierarchy women were absolutely weak and unequipped with the right of property possession. By marriage, women would soon be brought to the husband’s house, and therefore lose their membership on

their own family. Thus, Chinese tradition gave the inheritance rights only to the male members of the family.

...In the traditional family, a woman had no inheritance rights as a result of being perceived as not fully human; she was merely an instrument for housework and reproduction; she remained at home and was subjected to restrictive and humiliating rituals, enslaved by the father, brother(s), and husband... (Li 1995: 414).

Women have been made satisfy on their secondary position by the virtue. And it was continuously strengthened by the societies on their acceptance and perpetuation of the patriarchal system, despite of the many disadvantages for women themselves. Women would remain inferior as long as they were still subjected to the restrictive and humiliating treatment from every-men of their life. And most importantly is that the oppressive ideology must be deconstructed for the equal and just pattern of women and men relationship.

## 2. Women Existence Based on Taoism

Taoism is two radically Chinese movement –on the one hand, a philosophy, on the other hand a positive religion. Taoism is named after its central idea, Tao, or “the way”, the basic principle of the universe. Philosophic Taoism has exalted mysticism, naturalness, and simplicity, the securing of solace

in misfortune by cultivation of inward calm, laissez faire, optimism, and skepticism of doctrinaire program (Collier's Encyclopedia 1990: 65). It has provided spiritual inspiration and moral standards for the Chinese, while imbuing Chinese poetry, landscape of painting and other art forms with its love of nature and sense of serenity. As both a philosophy and religion Taoism has supplied strength and refuge to the old, the poor, the oppressed, and also to rebels and secret societies.

Taoism may have been the only major Chinese philosophical school that worships femininity.

...In the Taoist bible, Dao De Jing, Lao Tzu, the founder, built his cosmology (the natural order) and ethics –the philosophy of Yin and Yang –on female virtues and characteristic traditionally attributed to women, such as gentleness, softness, humbleness, tolerance, obedience, and women function to give birth and take 'lower position', etc... (Li 1995: 414)

However, Lao Tzu's Taoism hardly embodies a fair conception of femininity. As a philosophical thought, Taoism was inseparable from the social, political or cultural condition of his time, as did his teaching represented the patriarchal system that lied women in the real subjugated position. Although, it proved to give an appraisal toward women on its highly valued feminine characteristics, some of the regarded natural female images, such as obedience, humbleness, lower positioning were actually the products of certain divisions of

labor which then perpetuated by the social prejudices as the virtuous stereotypes of women.

These regarded 'natural' women characteristics were actually the sources of women subordination. The virtue of 'obedience', not different from the Confucian virtue, depressed women to be bearable and quietly accepted the injustice execution directed toward them. They were made silence by the belief that valuable women ought to be committed under men's control. There would be no rebellion from the oppressed women when their consciousness have been calmed down into the point of the incapability of analyzing such an injustice condition as the injustice one. What makes the patriarchal system strongly authorized the relation pattern of women and men, is that it has deeply rooted into women's consciousness to make them cooperate with the system.

Moreover, the virtues of 'humbleness and lower positioning' have firmly defined women second position, as "the other" for the men. Men were acknowledged as fully human being, and women were to occupy the additional position for the completeness of being gentlemen. Women existence as the equal human being to the men was definitely ignored under the patriarchal and patrilineal tradition, which have been adopted by the Taoist. "...Women are valued by him, but only because of their usefulness for other ends. This instrumentalist evaluation of women's status.....failed to generate a real respect for women for their own worth as equal human beings..." (Li 1995: 415).

Unsurprisingly that in China until the coming of modern thought, there had been many cases of women and children selling by the husband and father.

Women possession had to mean the benefit for the men rather than for the romantic and respectful relationship. The cultural recognition of women for the place of only slaves have legitimized the practice of women trading, thus although legally their position was wife, but their function was slave. This confirmed women's status as inferior from the men. When the existence of women as fully human being ended up in the instrumentalist functions for the demand of the opposite's sex, women have been made worthless human. It becomes an ultimate degradation of an individual humanity.

...Lao Tzu takes for granted the dominant social perspective of his time and views women from the conventional position of a dominant male. Unfortunately, the legacy of Lao Tzu, perhaps contrary to his intention, serves to reaffirm socially constructed gender difference as the 'natural order', providing a philosophical justification for the unjust practice....  
(Li 1995: 415)

Philosophical thought and religion are the two strongest beliefs and ideology to define human life. When both of them have determined such an injustice paradigm toward a certain group of the society, hardly ever this certain community wins the struggle against the paradigm, unless the change is ultimately to the paradigm itself. Taoism as a philosophical thought ignores women's perspective, and fails to see the injustice thought and practice in the society. This even prepares the legitimization –through the disadvantageous images of women as natural and valuable- for the instrument of measuring women as virtuous, blind to catch the fact that women have been deteriorated by such a repressive practice.

### 3. Women Existence Based on Buddhism

Buddhism is the great oriental tradition founded by Buddha Gautama, flourished in India since about A.D 500, and widely spread into Northern China on the first century A.D. Buddhism encountered indigenous system of thought, the most important of which were Confucianism and Taoism. Confucian essential practice is primarily concerned with ethical, social, and political principles involved in the conduct of affairs in family, community, and state. Taoism, more speculative, reflects concern with cosmic, metaphysical, and mystical matters, often expressed in poetical, metaphorical, or paradoxical language. It expressed the altitude of searching beyond the Confucius of associated life to realize harmony with the ultimate nature of way (Tao) of the universe. Buddhism had to adjust to both ways of thinking.

The matter of fact here is that Buddhism has also become the other main source of the view of women as inferior. "...The traditional contempt for women in China is linked to the Buddhist ascetic teaching that women are the source of all evils on earth because female sexuality causes men to commit crimes..." (Li 1995: 414). This images is found in almost every religion, Christian condemned Eve as the temptation to drive Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, it then created negative image for women in the whole history of Christianity. Islam has also regarded women as sexually destroying men's purity, therefore women have to cover their whole body. Buddhism is not in an exception, it also believes that



women must be avoided, as they would just prevent men from reaching their highest level of meditation.

## **B. Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

### 1. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society

This subchapter of Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society is written by mainly refers to several source books. Those books are, Beyond Feminism written by Cornelius F Murphy Jr, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman written by Mary Wollstonecraft, The Feminine Mystique written by Betty Friedan, The Second Sex written by Simon De Beauvoir, and Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial written by Mansour Fakih.

Women existence has become the main concern of feminism movement in the history of women struggle for about the last three centuries. Feminist moves on the purpose of criticizing the weak positioning of women in front of patriarchal society, in which women are subjugated in the whole aspect of human life, where their existence is ruined culturally, socially, economically and politically. The main effort is then to rethinking and reconstruct the present injustice pattern of women and men relationship, to gain the just and equal existence of men and women, by liberating women from their deprived world. Feminists ought to implement their concept of equal rights of women to the men in a real organized

movement for the realization of transformed society in which women are guaranteed to the same and equal rights to the men. While,

...The liberation which contemporary feminists seek, is not merely freedom from marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence but freedom for self definition, self affirmation, and self determination; in other words, the effective recognition of their full humanity as persons and the freedom to exercise that person-hood in every sphere... (Murphy 1995: 45).

Women existence becomes a troublesome issue throughout human history as women have been subjected to the indignities of patriarchal culture that have pervaded every aspect of their lives since the very beginning of human live. Since the ancient world, the rule of fathers has confirmed the supremacy of men within the home as well as their dominance through the whole of the social, economic and political world.

The biblical story of human creation has become the first and strong standpoint of the subordinate view upon women. Man was created first and in the solution of his loneliness, woman was then created from one of the man's ribs to be the helpmeet for him. Such a story was then being interpreted in the sense that men were expected to be the superior human to whom the covenant was centered. While, women were created only for the function of companionship for the main human, men, although both of the sexes were acknowledged to be blessed by God. Moreover when woman, Eve, as a temptress was the one to urge Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she was then considered to the source of evil. For such

consideration women were then strongly marked to have the demonic characterization, so that except for the reason of their regarded less rational human being, women were kept distance away from the public sphere for the reason of their regarded deceive, and deceit dangerous temperament.

Three Semitic religions, Judaism, Christian and Islam had born under the progressive development of Hebrew patriarchal culture, which is critically analyzed as the oppressive and marginalizing toward women. Those Semitic religions were in capacity of giving new explanations of the world and human destiny, but its universal symbols were much presented in a male degree and the abstract ideals were to be interpreted exclusively by men in the course of their own fulfillment of a divine plan. Therefore, feminist proves, through the analysis of the Holy Scriptures of some religions, that the teaching of the religious believes have become the most fundamental instrument of the on going discriminative view toward women. Women were expected to serve men, as the representation of God, in subordinate roles. And while displaying virtues of obedience, modesty, and fidelity they should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust. This discriminative view was then seen as natural and women were presented on the image of the obedience, weak, dependent, irrational, emotional, deceitful, and many other negative and disadvantaging stereotypes culturally attached to women.

As it does the religions hold the patriarchal system, the philosophical thought also becomes the agent of subordinate view on women. "...For Augustine the distinction that arose from physical differences were directed, by analogy, to

the inward subjection of the passions to the power of deliberative action...”(Murphy 1995: 6), therefore in the medieval theology, male was given the higher rights for domination. Most philosophers were unable to see women subjugation as a certain and urgent problem needs to have a philosophical base for the grounded solution of the existential matter. Even “...Aristotle’s world was hierarchical and divided. He drew distinctions within, and between, the varieties of existence. The polis, the central human reality –a domain of excellence– was sharply distinguished from the darker world of domesticity ...” (Murphy 1995: 4).

Men were endowed with privilege of finding their moral fulfillment through their participation in the political life of the community. The polis was a place for men to display the excellence of their character and to have a life experience higher than that, which is possible within the world of domesticity. While, women were excluded from the higher realm of politics, social, economics, or cultural participation. This subordination was coupled with the more pervasive discrimination firmly linked to their procreative function, a function described as passive in nature. This different characterization and male-female functional statues fulfill the plan and design of the male, to be raised to a position of supremacy, while the female are to be raised to the position of inferiority.

Women were also close to images of dependent and subservient to the men. Her existence lies on the men statues, for her humanity was not fully acknowledged in the patriarchal society. Women existed only to fulfil the additional and servitude function for the men. Even

...Rousseau declares that a woman should never for a moment feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself... (Wollstonecraft 1992: 28).

Women position as only the companion for men is actually a clear statement that women are not recognized as fully human equal to men. Rousseau whose theory was to establish the conscience and recognition of equality among men, has excluded women from his frame of thought. Moreover, his guideline to see women as only the objects of desire has brought about an oppressive view and attitude toward women.

Such misogynist view has increased the possibility of women to become the victims of sexual harassment, which exist whenever the personal destiny of any individual is subject to the power or purposes of someone of the opposite sex. Sexual harassment has become one of the crucial issue struggled by feminist to overcome many cases caused by subconscious hatred toward women. The patriarchal society has itself subconsciously brought the sexual objectification toward women that permissively led men to use women for their sexual satisfaction. Therefore, many cases of sexual harassment occur to degrade women to lose their comfort and self-esteem. It takes the varied forms, from the offensive vulgar jokes, the unwanted touching, sexual attitude for compensation, till many cases of raping, done by men. Such cases would not reveal if firstly

women were not being viewed as the object of sexual pleasure, but the equal human being to the men.

In educational matter, women are given less opportunity either for exercising her rational thought, critical reflection, or arguing their argumentative reasoning. Knowledge as a powerful instrument of self-realization has been made inaccessible for women as mechanism of controlling women understanding to maintain men's control over women. In the past, women were kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence. Instead of hardening women's minds by the several principles of reason and philosophy, they breed to useless education, which terminate in vanity and sensuality. Mary Wollstonecraft protested

... the education given to the women of her time, that from their infancy women were taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of men; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives... (Wollstonecraft 1992:21).

Women's virtues degraded into only the artificial qualities such as; fondness for dresses and physical beauty which are considered as something natural, and purity of the heart regarded as innocence which tend to be an ignorance of women. Women were made comfortable by the less challenging roles, for actually they were kept away from establishing their independent individuality. Neither family nor the society give them critical atmosphere to

exercise their individual personae, to strengthen them in reasoning and arguing arguments, and enable them to stand firmly on their own thought. The authority of men strongly restricted women from freedom of having their own will, as women were actually treated as men's possessions.

The discriminative treatment on women also relies on the political participatory. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women were absolutely weak and even excluded from the political life. The practice of politics was perceived as a combative struggle of conquest and power, thought of as a field of endeavor more suitable for the actions of men than for the influence of women. In the public participation, women were excluded from the hierarchical structure, which have the formal power in the society. In the nation state life, women lost their rights of ruling their own political life for they were not given the rights of voting. It became tremendous issue awaken women to realize their marginalized position.

Then, women enfranchisement had ever become a great issue needed a difficult and long time struggle to claim that women were heirs to the same rights in society as men and having endowed some forms of political participation through the rights of voting. Women suffrage needs long time journey to be finally succeeded in gaining the rights of the vote for women. The right of political participation did not automatically mean an open and free access to the same and equal power in the hierarchical structure of the society. Leadership was still the excellence for men, and women appearance were restricted to the less challenging roles, as their existence were still in the domain of companionship for men. Women, seeking to express their insights and develop their talents within

professional and intellectual communities, often find that their access were limited by the regarded more legitimate roles of men.

Thus, feminist found through their contextual analysis, that women subordination has conquered women deeply to their subconscious. And most women accept such discriminative view as something natural and common, which leads them to cooperate to the patriarchal culture. Hatred toward women appears not only from men, but women themselves have also played participation on the misogynist view on other women. So that, either men or women become the agents of transferring the patriarchal view of keeping women's inferior position.

## **2. Liberal Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

Feminism movement occurred firstly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the long history of women deprivation. Women revolution began in response to rising expectations after women became aware of their being treated as “the other” from the men. There were some important preconditions for the resurgence of women's movement. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century were the eras of the enlightenment thought with its liberal concepts of the social contract, individualism, independence, democracy and equality of opportunity theorized by some writers such as John Lock and JJ Rousseau. Therefore, the first standpoint of feminist movement took their theoretical ground on the liberal thought. Although those Lock and Rousseau still maintained the patriarchal foundations of society as they challenged feudal and absolutist authority, other writers quickly applied to women their arguments for the “rights of man”. The work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady



Stanton, Margaret Mead, Harriet Taylor Mill, John Stuart Mill and Betty Friedan were some representatives of this perspective. Their writings as well as their strategic political movements articulated women's protest on the subordination.

The subsequent development of feminism born four prominent mainstreams of feminism based on the theoretical approach and the issues as concern of women movements. These mainstreams of feminism are liberal, radical, marxist and socialist feminism. Each theorizes differently the historical motives and mechanism of social and cultural perpetuation of women subordination, concluded by the strategic platform of women's movements.

But in purpose of seeking a specific concept of "existential conscience" of Chinese American women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior, the researcher defines that the most appropriate feminist literary approach would be based on the concept of liberal feminism.

This first mainstream of feminism grounded their theory to the liberal thought, on the new discourse of freedom, equality, autonomy and individualism, as the natural rights possessed by all men and women. "...In liberal feminism there is also a critical concern with the value of individual 'autonomy' and 'freedom' from supposedly unwarranted restrictions by others..."(Beasley 1999: 51). Liberal feminists convince that freedom from the cultural restriction and prejudices will make women possible to realize their firm individuality and freely develop their self-autonomy.

a. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities

Gender inequalities have become the first concern of liberal feminism. The understanding of gender differentiation as natural and God given destiny has proved to drive inequalities primarily toward women. Differ to the concept of sex, as genetic and biological classification of person into male and female, gender is the result of social, cultural and psychological construction. "...Gender is a social construction that varies across culture, over time within a given culture, and in relation to the other gender..." (Wood 1997: 22). Misunderstanding of gender as attached to sex, man must be masculine and woman must be feminine, has destined women on the subordinate position with the regarded inferior stereotypes of femininity. Women, from infancy, are encouraged to conform to certain feminine stereotypes prescribed by the society to be the "...attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationship (Wood 1997: 22). And these stereotypes unfavourably restrict women in the ignorant and domestic boundaries unsatisfiedly desire what men have got.

Liberal feminists encounter gender inequalities by presuming the sameness between men and women. "...Liberal feminist political strategies reflect a conception of a fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature-that is, since women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Thus, the list of women stereotypes as the ignorant, irrational, emotional, weak, and dependent, etc was failed to get the confirmation against the liberal feminist thought. Liberal feminist thoughtfully realize that such

gender stereotypes are socially and culturally created, and that women under the same and equal opportunity to the men will convincingly obtain men's quality.

Margaret Mead through an anthropological research proved that such gender stereotypes were extremely social and cultural prejudices upon women. Masculine and feminine are the quality interchangeably attached to either men or women. She reported that certain society may prescribe women to be more dominating and sexually aggressive than men, and the other society may conform men to be more delicate and nurturing than women. There is no evidence yet to confirm if both sexes were to be raised in the exactly the same condition and treatment, they would grow on the present characters stereotypes of the masculine and feminine.

...Margaret Mead, in her observations of life in the South Sea Islands found that qualities such as aggressiveness, independence, gentleness and passivity were not sex-linked at all but rather resulted from social conditioning. "There is no evidence that suggests women are naturally better at carrying for children (than men)," she said in 1946; "With the fact of childbearing out of the center of attention, there is even more reason for treating girls first as human beings, than as women... (Chafe 1972:210).

Mead's observation deconstructs gender inequalities on the patriarchal society, and furthermore promises the reconstruction of relation pattern of women and men into the just and equal relationship.

b. Women's Right for Education

Liberal feminists' strategy for women transformation into equality is concerning with the rights of education and public participation. Rationality, which belongs to women as to men, has become the basic undeniable argument for women to claim the right of education and public participation.

Marry Wollstonecraft was the first feminist to write down her thought, whose work was the first serious political and social manifesto which seriously concerned with the condition of women asserting that women were heirs to the same rights to the men in society. She challenged the patriarchal prejudices toward women by declaring women as also rational agents like those of men, whose inferiority was systematically caused by the lack of education. "...Wollstonecraft's message... asserted that women who were given equal rights and equal opportunities could change, develop, and grow to become people whose contribution to society was as great and as varied as the contribution of men." (Hymowitz and Weissman 1978: 78).

If women are generally feeble both in body and mind, natural reasons give no evidence to become the accusation rather than the education reason with the argument that women are, like men, rational individuals and that they should have equal rights to the access of education. The fact presented that women were imprisoned to the narrow understanding of everything, and they were left to the ignorant when the renaissance has said to bring the enlightenment for human being. But this was not women's destiny, this rather the result of the hindrance of

women from the opportunity to explore their talent or to exercise their intellectual ability through the education.

Therefore, according to liberal feminists, the first strategic solution for women marginalization is the equal access to education. “But I still insist that not only the virtue but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creature (Wollstonecraft 1992:42). Knowledge would transform women from the ignorant and irrational human beings into the ones with the realization or consciousness of their deprived humanity, to finally encourage them into the struggle of human completeness. Later contemporary liberal feminist agrees Wollstonecraft’s conclusion that women subordination rooted in the unavailability of the equal civil rights and equal opportunity for education to men.

c. Women’s Opportunity for Public Participation

The dichotomy between the public and private sphere has become the other important concern of liberal feminism. Gender differentiation born gender roles that constituted women to deal only with domesticity and men actively contribute the public affair. “...marriage has also been an economic partnership in which a woman gives priority to homemaking and childcare while a man gives priority to his career...” (Thorne, Kramarae and Henley 1983: 217).

Women’s biased gender stereotypes determine them to fulfil the expectation of the less appreciated role as housewives. The society is used to the

myth that the highest profession a woman can engage in is that of charming wife and wise mother, in spite of the fact of the intelligent, educated women might be capable of good leadership. "...The identity which society bestowed on women was that of wife and mother, not business competitor with men. Marriage and child bearing constituted the goal of female existence, just as material success in the outside world represented the goal of men..." (Chafe 1972: 97).

The dominant patriarchal ideology was that men would govern society and that women would rule the private sphere. Active participation in the society covers the power to control and regulate the social, cultural, economical, and political continuous transformation. And women whose rights of contribution was muted by the social and cultural prejudices would be dehumanized into only the passive objects of most of the regulation and transformation. By then women loose their individualized subjectivity to become the agents of changes, and even suffer the social, cultural, economical, and political marginalization, while psychologically they become tender and fragile. Public policies are frequently resolute on gender insensitivity with consequence that women's interests are ignored.

Liberal feminists, relevant to the liberal theory that every individual should be equal, claim the equality of the sexes in the public and private sphere. The approach is that of women "going public", which means an individual approach to fight for power and influence on equal terms with men without changing the rules of the game. "...Thus in liberal feminist thought there is a focus on the public sphere, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the

rights of individuals to compete in the public marketplace...”(Beasley 1999: 51). They believe women are the same as men, therefore women have to work her way up to a male-dominated society to achieve a true equality. The result is that public citizenship and the equal attainment with men in the public arena would also become women’s rights, on the other hand, men have to share equally in childbearing and handling the domestic tasks.

The new pattern of male-female relationship needs the mutual interdependence of both sexes to realize the equal opportunity and the responsibility sharing of domestic and public life between men and women. In the type of family, where independence is equal, interdependence is mutual and obligation is reciprocal, women might be able to combine public participation with the life in the home. Since political equality between men and women must include a major change in the private sphere, for example, the equalization of the working hours; a shift in the responsibilities; breaking the patterns that divide men and women of inequality between work in the home and work outside.

By emphasizing women equal opportunity in the public life, liberal feminist has also placed great emphasis on self-development, with goal of “wholeness, realization of one’s own full potential”. Feminist assumes that freedom and equality would only exist on women’s opportunity for gaining rational thought and participation on the public sphere. Liberal feminist’s platform of their struggle for the just society is constructed in the concept of equal opportunity and rights for each individual, moreover within it is the equal opportunity and rights for women. The main assumption is that woman is also

“rational” human being opposing the ancient attached stereotype which present women as the irrational and ignorant half human beings inappropriate of interfering the public business. Therefore, the feminist movement is the struggle of the equal opportunity for women to the access of knowledge and self-actualization and active participation in the public life.

### **C. Critique on Hegemony of Masculinity**

Liberal concept of feminism, as previously explained, offers the theory of sameness between the sexes. This solution perfectly fulfils the objective of equality, which implicates on the acceptance of women on the formal education system and opportunity to interfere public affairs. It offers the comprehension of women as fully human being with the potential and capacity to absorb knowledge and understand the world rationally and holistically. This movement greatly affects both women and men’s view on women’s fundamental existence as also fully human being who desire the fulfillment of their humanity. But as it historically moves on along with the issues which invites responds, liberal feminist’s ways of ending the patriarchy’s oppression and insisting women’s rights tend to absorb and internalize their opponent’s values; masculine values. This is clearly explained by Mansour Fakih in his book Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial.

As mentioned before that “rationality” has convinced women into the new image of womanhood, but at the same time some feminists concerned it as



having vanished women's excellence feminine aspects. The adoration on the masculine values has consequently disregard feminine values. "...They want what men have got, rather than questioning its value in any thorough sense..."(Beasley 1999: 52). The problem is then many high qualified aspects of femininity was being dishonored by women themselves on result of the insensitivity toward other women who stay manage themselves on the feminine values. ". "The specificities of maternal love were considered admirable but inferior..."(Murphy 1995:49). Thus many feminists on their movements dispose to do what Mansour Fakih states as "hosting the oppressor's ideology" (Fakih 1996: 102). Liberal feminists' optimism suggests women to compete in the public arena by using men's standard, supporting a notion of assimilationist tendency, rather than giving an influence of their feminine aspects into the arenas of activities associated with both men and women. The option of achieving true equality by active participation in the male-dominated society without changing the masculine rule of the game has motivated women to internalize and perpetuate the masculine values as to become their new and more admired values. Women would then be more confidants when they could think, speak and behave like men

Several masculine stereotypes such as the aggressiveness, competitiveness, rational superiority, etc are then dichotomized face to face with the feminine values, such as compassion, nurturing, holistic view, moral superiority, which then fall into the underestimation toward feminine values. Dichotomization has frequently delimited feminists' perspective on the positive and negative distinction of the masculine and feminine values.

Thus, instead of promoting women's equal position to the men by assuring the higher appreciation of womenlines, as previously stated, some feminists tend to urge women to prove themselves as having the sameness with men in all life aspects. While the evaluation of femininity failed to seek its noble values and applied it within the patriarchal society. This strategy frequently burdens women with the more suffering of subordination, especially for those who challenge the public male-dominated area, as the system become very exclusive to easily compel women from the competition. Despite the fact that feminine qualities – such as compassion, cooperation and moral superiority rather than aggressiveness and competition– are proved to be very effective for success leadership and more supportive for human life. After all, the aim of feminism is not a revenge to men, but freedom for both sexes to establish their firm existence as human being with an understanding that either a masculine or a feminine person is a legitimate mode of human existence.

#### **D. Women In The Chinese American Society**

##### **1. Brief History of Chinese Immigrant Women**

The first Chinese immigrant woman, Afong Moy, was brought to New York in 1834 as a showpiece to satisfy the curiosity of the American public. From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, because of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and much discriminative legislation, Chinese women could only emigrate as wives or daughters of merchants and U.S. citizens. Thus, very few

Chinese women came to the United States. During the entire period of unrestricted immigration thousands of Chinese women journeyed across the Pacific. Many women could not withstand the rigors of life in America and died or returned to China. During the same period numbers of Chinese men emigrating from China to America was much higher. Due to the imbalance in sex and the prohibition of intermarriage, many Chinese women were lured to America as prostitutes. Because of the sex imbalance and laws that forbade interracial marriage, the majority of Chinese women in 19th century America were prostitutes who had been kidnapped, lured, or purchased from poor parents in China and sold to America for high profits. In 1943, the U.S. Congress passed an act to repeal the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Later came the War Bride Act of 1945, and then Congress passed a bill enabling wives and children of Chinese American citizens to apply as non-quota immigrants. Decades later, the numbers of Chinese women in the United States noticeably increased to the balance number to men.

Their moves to America still carried out the Chinese custom that women were supposed to stay home to care for their husbands and children, and because of their language handicap, immigrant wives seldom worked outside of their homes. To subsidize their husbands' low income, they did menial work at home: sewing, washing, shelling shrimp, rolling cigars, etc. Women living in remote rural areas had even more difficult lives. Therefore Chinese immigrant women in America have to meet the pressure of the racial and sexual discriminations, both in the private and the public or social life.

## 2. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

Chinese women entering America would become a minority to face the double oppression by the racial and gender distinctions. America with its slogan of melting pot still segregated the minor races in the country either by the law or by the injustice social, economic and political subjugation. The Chinese women themselves arrived to the new island with the fundamental weakness, which was the illiteracy of the English language; they could not entirely read, write nor speak the language. The weak condition instantly made them economically weak and dependent to the husband, as they could have just stayed as housewives or take only the low paid jobs, like sewing, laundry, or working in the garment factory.

...I found myself entirely illiterate in English. I could not read, write or speak the language. I was instantly housebound and penniless. I had witnessed my parents working from dawn to dusk with limited income, my mother working at sewing factory in a basement in Chinatown. Her working conditions were unbearable...

(<http://www.chineseculture.about.com/cs/americanwomen/htm> August 23th 2002).

Moving to America does not make changes for them, Chinese women still have to play the subservient role from their traditional custom. In a woman's lifetime, she was supposed to obey her father when she was a girl, obey her husband when she got married, and obey her son when her husband died. She had no right to inherit the family property and was not even allowed to keep her own

name after marriage; she was addressed as her husband's wife or her child's mother. In addition, women were deprived of the right of education, even it was a virtue for a woman to be uneducated.

But the next majority of Chinese women who joined their husbands in America were well educated and employed in respectable professions in China. Instead, these female immigrants are usually unable to find a job to resume their professions in this new country due mainly language and cultural barriers. Therefore, they may encounter more difficulties in acculturation than those women who originally were in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. The shift from a professional to a housewife becomes the most prominent and miserable change that these Chinese immigrant women experienced in this new land. Meeting the challenge of adjusting to a new culture and social life from a professional to a housewife places a great deal of pressure on these educated Chinese women. They have strong desires and motivation to continue their professions, but have not obtained the support necessary accomplish their goals. As housewives, their social circle is very limited, which leads to isolation in the host culture.

But the social status of women changed dramatically over the past few decades. Chinese American women were then definitely affected and influenced by the 1960s civil rights and women's rights movements. They were encouraged to walk out of their houses and become active participants in society. Although many critical issues still exist in women's status in China, Chinese women, especially those who live in urban areas, have witnessed fundamental changes in

education, employment, and marriage. The improved racial climate enabled Chinese American women to pursue higher education and employment.

Although some immigrant women still found themselves trapped in Chinatown garment factories, increased numbers of them began moving into the technical, sales, and professional fields. But because of the discrimination, however, their earning power was often not commensurate with their level of education. Their gender identity as women placed them on the less challenging occupations, with the less number of wages. While their identity as the immigrants permits the capital owner the right to exploit them as the low paid labors.

The other majority of Chinese American women were still trapped in the "women professions" of teacher, nurse and clerical worker. Although they are entering in large numbers of professions traditionally dominated by men, they, like all women, are still relatively concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. And like all women, Chinese American women have yet to reach the upper echelons of power. Thus, becoming a career women for them often means of sacrificing the family, to achieve their goals of self fulfillment and good, independent economical condition. On the result that their choice to subjected themselves to the injustice and discriminative society, which are still mostly ruled by the patriarchal type of decision making, often become very burdensome for them. Women are underestimated to have no capability of managing serious responsibility, meanwhile the aggressiveness or competitiveness of the masculine

standard would become the very effective mechanism of women exclusion. Therefore public areas or professional career jobs often very cruel for women.

The new society in which they enter is the society with the double standard behavior before them, in the one hand, their interest for the low paid labors creates an interdependence relation, on the other hand, they are not very receptive to the new and strange members of the society. Therefore, most immigrants have to face the chronic social, economic, cultural and political problem in the new land. "...As an immigrant woman from China, I was misunderstood and discounted...". (<http://currents.ucsc.edu/index.html> August 23<sup>th</sup> 2002). Such kind of despair is common for Chinese immigrant women in America since they frequently experience the injustice and oppressive situation caused by their identity as women and Chinese.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **ANALYSIS**

The Woman Warrior is rich of meaning and very attractively invites people to read and analyze it. It touches many aspects of human life implemented in the themes of dual oppressions by the sexual and racial

discrimination, immigration, cultural assimilation, one seeking personality through the self consciousness, etc. But the writer here will limit her focus only to the dual oppressions depicted through the characters in the novel and continued by the process of one seeking individualized personality by the awakening of her self consciousness as a woman lives under the sexual or gender and racial discrimination. Two different cultural backgrounds on the story will enrich the readers with the more sensitive understanding of the different cultures on their perspectives toward women existence.

This analysis will answer the two problem statements, which become the interesting concern for the researcher. Firstly, the researcher will describe the fact of the Chinese and Chinese American women subordination and oppression within patriarchal culture as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior through feminist perspective. And it must also be noted that the social-cultural context of the novel will appear some of its characters not only with the sexual discrimination but doubled with the racial discrimination.

Secondly, the process of the narrator intensely establish her firm existential consciousness as a Chinese American woman will be explained based on theoretical approach of liberal feminism and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity. And the cultural background of the novel will also color the analysis to prevent its loose of context.



**A. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior**

As previously stated in the literary review, both Chinese and American cultures dictate women as the inferior human being to men with the role of domestic sphere to settle the household endeavors. Men are given the rights of enjoying the quality of humanity, while women are recognized as only the complementary of manhood and even they be the men's possession. Some religious beliefs – by which people rely on their faith and practical life commands – have proven to strengthen this view, resulted on the degradation and negligence of women's right to fulfil their humanity.

Women are more frequently forced to choose silence under oppressive situations conducted over them. The strong patriarchal system has successfully inarticulated them from uttering their own thought, feeling, requirements or self-authority. The Woman Warrior seems to set voices for some silent characters to reveal the unrecognized women of the narrator's familial life into historical existence. The forgotten individual, appeared in the character No Name Woman, is being brought back into the memory of even a larger amount of people, than those who want to forget her. The narrator intentionally dedicates the story on her aunt's fatal experience to commemorate her unrecognized existence and to remind the society of the fact of women subordination. "...I alone devote pages of paper to her..." (The woman Warrior: 16).

## 1. No Name Woman

The effort of recording the past tragedy begins in the narration of No Name Woman, an exact and real example of the absolutely victimized woman in front of the misogynist society. The lines of admonition around the forgotten aunt starts the novel,

“You must not tell anyone,” my mother said,” what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born” (3).

A mother's command to remain a secret the matter of the suicide aunt represents the individual and social negligence of women oppression. The misogynist society has constructed the communal definite judgement on women with tendency to blame and victimize them in case of sexual harassment. Instead of the fact that women have usually been psychologically and physically ruined by the aggressors in such cases, the society around No Name Woman refuse to give her sympathy for the reason of disgracing the family and tribe. On the contrary, the communal convention decides raid as the instrument of punishment through the hazardous terror for the accused woman. “The village had also been counting. On the night the baby was to be born the villagers raided our house...” (3). Traditional society here applies violence to overcome its

communal problem, rather than discussing for a just solution. And the executors of the raid are the ones, to whom No Name Aunt and the family have been so familiar with; all the villagers are kinsmen, once the narrator states. "...As the villagers closed in, we could see that some of them, probably men and women we knew well..." (4). Common to the cases of sexual, the actors usually are persons to whom the victims knew very well, perhaps the family relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, or someone related to them. Therefore, as well as the raiders are all her kinsmen, the men of the rape could not have been the strange one for No Name Woman, "He may have been somebody in her own household, but intercourse with a man outside the family would have been no less abhorrent. All the village were kinsmen..."(11).

Community's decision to raid No Name Aunt reflects the inclination of public misogynist to blame women as the source of foul behaviors, which has finally indifferenced men from their responsibility of sexual aggressions. And on the other hand, women as the victims are mostly powerless before the superior authority of the men. This powerlessness has been deeply penetrated into women's minds through the lifetime doctrines of men's superiority, and moreover when the real life incidents present her men's repression, women would easily be made submissive. Thus, No Name Woman is easily be made frightened of the men's threat not to tell anyone of his identity, and consistent to the end she remains the men's name a secret. "She kept the man's name to herself throughout

her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save her inseminator's name she gave silent birth" (11).

Fatalism and sacrificial characteristics are mostly recognized as typically women along with their tougher capacity of bearing serious psychological pressures. These attitudes have led No Name Woman into naïve acceptance of the injustice treatment upon her to finally take the responsibility of the remarked shameful mistake alone by herself. This silence has actually made women fail of cutting the chain of the perpetuated injustice demeanors conducted over them.

No Name Woman fails to realize the political aspects of her position within the case of the sexual harassment. Although her silence has made up of cutting the continuance of the patrilineal descent, when she paradoxically erases the paternal trace by betraying the fundamental fragility of undisputed paternal authority, her silence does state the acknowledgment and the resignation to the authority of the masculine patriarchal system. Her insistence of justice must have actually been able to warn men and the society to reconsider the reproduction of the patriarchal system, yet she fails to realize and take this opportunity. Finally, her silence can only speak of women powerlessness in front of patriarchal system. This complicated problem could have happened for at least two reciprocal fundamental reasons; the misogynist positioning of women as the inferior and thus objects of sexual discrimination including within is sexual harassment, and men's positioning as the superior endowed with the rights of governing and conquering women.

This silence cannot be parted from the cultural background of the Chinese tradition. Chinese philosophical tradition relies its harmony on the collectivism, which in some sort has conquered one's individuality before the communal interest. The value of collective harmony has frequently prevented someone from establishing his or her own subjective individuality to have the absolute and inexorable rights of choosing. Moreover women as also sexually discriminated; they were seized from their actual rights of free choice and therefore surrender to the authority of patriarchal society. "...My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Women in the old China did not choose. Some men had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil..." (6).

Chinese tradition through its religious beliefs has conquered woman to remain obedience to the superior sex. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have determined some stereotypes of regarded virtuous women such as obedience, humbleness and domesticity, which remain women to stay subordinate under men. Such guidelines constitute women to be submissive on men's rules, even if those women are trapped in the injustice situation. This traditional perspective has been deeply rooted into women's mind and wholly established common characteristics of Chinese women.

Most Chinese women's characters are fragile and uncertain of their own human existence. They could not fight patriarchal standard that their existence is measured by men's pleasure of them. Men's acknowledgment on women requires certain condition, such as beautiful, tenderness, submission and obedience. And

women's existence would only be real when they fulfil all such requisites. As long as women still give the right of acknowledging their existence on the judgement men and the patriarchal society, women would remain sticks on the fragile and uncertain character. If that so, women's fighting will just to be accepted by men and the society under the patriarchal standard. "...To sustain her being in love, she often worked at herself in the mirror, guessing at the colors and shapes that would interest him, changing them frequently in order to hit on the right combination. She wanted him to look back..." (9). Thus it can be understood, that in this story, No Name Woman's effort to be recognized by men is by beautifying herself. Or in other words, to capture her adored men's recognition she must be on the line of the traditional patriarchal standard of being a woman. This construction of the fragile and uncertain characteristics can be traced back through the psychological experience under certain social and cultural background.

Since their younger age, women are not given the chance to establish their own individualized personal, they were raised with less self esteem than those of the men ever experience. Psychologically they become tenderly attacked by any pressure come from out of their own self. The control of the outer, from any other person or from the community take greater charge on the self, and one's individuality is being damaged into losing her self-realization. By such condition women are prone to be victimized by others without any objective correction of whomsoever to be properly blamed.

Even there has been a rejection to women since their birthday because Chinese society considers girl birth as a shame, and raising them is a waste work. No Name Woman's decision to bring the baby with her into death may also be motivated by the reality that the baby is a girl, which would only be regarded as burdensome for the family and society. Two lines of the novel explain this; "...To be a woman, to have daughter in starvation time was a waste enough..." (6). Continued by the line "...It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15).

Meanwhile, men are used to the endowed rights of governing and demanding women to serve their demands. Men enslave women at home, in social life or at the employment range with the inappreciative demeanors, which are physically or psychologically harmful for the economic, social and political existence. One of its implementation is the sexual harassment in which men are obviously victimize women as only the objects of sexual pleasure.

...They both gave orders: she followed. "if you tell your family, I'll beat you. I'll kill you. Be here again next week." No one talked sex, ever. And she might have separated the rapes from the rest of living if only she did not have to buy her oil from him or gather wood in the same forest. I want her fear to have lasted just as long as rape lasted so that the fear could have been contained. No drawn-out fear. But women at sex hazarded birth and hence lifetimes. The fear did not stop but permeated

everywhere. She told the man, “I think I’m pregnant” He organized the raid against her... (7).

The fantasy of the narrator imagines the men to have organized the raid when he realized his sexual activities might disgrace him with the woman’s pregnancy. This fantasy could have been true, in the part that men might be able and empowered to completely victimize women for many reasons of sexual pleasure, good name, etc. Common to happen till the present days, that men could easily humiliate women into objects, but then refuse to take the responsibility and perhaps reverse the shame onto women. On daily practical attitudes men are so imperative upon women.

The value of obedience has also proven to be absolutely repressive over women. Men and women under the relationship pattern of subject and object have victimized women as to obey men’s desires. “...his demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told (6). No Name Woman surrender herself to the rape without resistance as she was frightened of his regarded higher authority over women, following the image of men as the powerful, while women are the only powerless creature to obey the men’s interest. Strengthened by the great influence of the social beliefs in which she was raised on the self-positioning as the inferior human being, with the obligation of highly and blindly adore the men for whatever they expect from women.

Men could confidently appear with this superior proud as their births are always being expected. Son’s birth has become the standard of being functionally success of becoming a woman and a wife. And son is expected to continue the patriarchal descent line, to take the responsibility of maintaining the family life. “...a family must be whole, faithfully keeping the descent line by having sons to feed the old and the dead, who in turn look after the family...” (13). The subtle role division of the male and female in the Chinese tradition has given the greater responsibility to hold



the survival of the family into the hands of sons. This view has become a long time concern of women movement ever since they struggle their rights against the masculine power. By lying the greater responsibility on men, women are as if being spoiled on the comfortable position and easier role on the descent line. However, this comfort results less opportunity for women to actualize and explore their talents, to exercise their potentials of handling the same big responsibility as those of men's and the automatic consequence is that women were regarded to deserve only the less human rights compared to the men's rights. Women are driven into only the domestic affairs, without any opportunity of participation in the public field. While, the communal measure of one respectable person is those with the public achievement for the public advantages. In other words, before stepping on the effort of the public affairs participation, the men and the society have denied women from attaining any higher achievement than those of men. The problem, firstly, is not that women were unable to make use of the actual rights, but that they were made lost of their rights.

As also happen to women's individual rights to raise the out of marriage baby. Women's decision to be a single parent has actually been a difficult choice. But in the context of this story, even this choice cannot be understood by the society whose myth is that out of marriage pregnant woman is a disgrace for the family and the society. This once again confirms that the communal spirit of the society is unable to accept the individual interest above the social demands. Thus, the naïve infidelity of

No Name Woman gains only the effort of the society to bring her back to the realization of their collectivism.

...The villagers were speeding up the circling of events because she was too shortsighted to see that her infidelity had already harmed the village, that waves of consequences would return unpredictably, sometimes in disguise, as now, to hurt her... (13).

Living under tightly strong community, in which collective relation is more highly appreciated than the private individuality, forces a person to willingly sacrifice her or his own requirements when there is the communal interest that demands their attention. Referring to such philosophical thought, the society uses the reason of communal harmony to force their regarded absolute true regulation to anyone who daringly persuade their individual right and against the harmonious collective life. This seemingly criticizes the two contradictory concepts of individualism and collectivism, in which the pull of these two ideologies has failed to combine both to become the harmonious extreme aspects that are acquired each on certain occasions. And the Chinese tradition as characteristically eastern philosophy failed to consult both and falls to the extreme of collectivism, which tends to underestimate the individual aspects of one's life. Therefore, when the ignorant No Name Woman plainly go through a period of false pregnancy there has been made a public opinion formation to force the aunt to take the consequence.

...The frightened villagers, who depended on one another to maintain the real, went to my aunt to show her a personal, physical representation of

the break she had made in the “roundness”. Mislaying couples snapped off the future, which was to be embodied in true offspring. The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them... (13).

The narrator here emphasizes the raid of the villagers as the act of punishing one’s prominent private individuality. The community insists its member to always be on the line of tradition and beliefs and be inside the circle of communal kinsmen. And thus,

...This roundness had to be made coin-sized so that she would see its circumference: punish her at the birth of her baby. Awaken her to the inexorable. People who refused fatalism because they could invent small resources insisted on culpability. Deny accidents and wrest fault from the stars... (13).

The decision of No Name Woman to commit suicide may be understood as an effort of reestablishing her cultural responsibility for her cultural mistake of mislaying the roundness of the collective life. The bearing of the out of marriage pregnancy has seriously surprised the community who has been used to the determined rule of the old tradition and the authority of some beliefs, which govern the society’s life. So, the aunt enacts on her own body and the no descent line child, the punishment of the tribe, fulfilling her filial, social and cultural responsibility to her circle by eliminating the source of contamination from its center and thereby restoring it to its unbroken configuration. “She may have gone

to the pigsty as a last act of responsibility: she would protect this child as she had protected its father...” (15).

The punishment for No Name Woman has not finished yet after her death, the actually most painful punishment is the non-existent recognition of the family. “...The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family’s deliberately forgetting her...” (16). The family with all the descendents is expected to forget her as if she was never been born in the world. The series of sexual harassment and the society’s raid have been easily neglected as if it never happened, along with the effort of forgetting the source of the disgrace. This negligence would reproduce the enforcement of the patrilineal authority and legitimacy on the women’s subordination.

The admonition function of the incident is that women use it to warn the girls not to make a fool of sexual matter, by unconsciously restricted girls from the free and wide opportunity of exercising their potential in the contribution on the economic, social and political affairs. “The work of preservation demands that the feelings playing about in one guts not be turn into action.....fear at the enormities of the forbidden kept her desires delicate, wire and bone...” (8). Sexual restriction will extend into the restriction of exploring and revealing the other women’s potentials into the public achievement. This certainly leads women into passivity, which is frequently believed by the society as the attached stereotypes of women preventing them from participation on the public sphere. Women under the patriarchal paradigm, “Suatu sistem otoritas laki-laki yang menindas perempuan melalui institusi sosial, politik dan ekonomi...” (Humm in Rahayu,

2002: 332), have lost their rights to play a great and equal role of governing the economic, social and political matter.

Women restriction has also been implemented in the cultural field as women are expected to stay and maintain the old tradition, while men are suggested to adventure the new and more challenging culture.

...They expected her alone to keep the traditional ways, which her brothers, now among the barbarians, could fumble without detection. The heavy, deep-rooted women were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning. But the rare urge west had fixed upon our family, and so my aunt crossed boundaries not delineated in space... (8).

While, the sexual restriction itself begins to take its definite form on the biological phenomenon of menstruation. "...Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful..." (5). Menstruation has become a symbol of adultery for girls. And start from the very first time they menstruate, biologically they are productive, and sexually they are regarded mature to have a sexual intercourse with men. Therefore, since the time, girls are obliged to take more careful behavior on their social intercourse. Some rules of clothing, the behavioral ethics, the hour of hanging out, are some real concrete and practical attitudes that in some sort have been made more restricted for women rather than for the men.

The bigger obligation of neutralizing the situation to avoid the sexual harassment is usually relied over women although the evident explains that the men are the aggressors and the women are the victims. Mother's warning for their daughters to be careful after the girls have menstruated is some how limited girls on their social interaction. This prevents them from sharpening their talent, broadening their experiences, or the long-term implication is that women are made less capable of handling public interest by the lack of the experiences. While the boys on their teenage and adult age are set freer than girls, many excuses given to them to pass trials and errors on their life, and thus they are used to go on the higher self esteem and self confidence.

Marriage is then the next important sequel of life, but for the old Chinese, marriage is not about romantic love of a couple set free to decide to get marriage motivated by their own commitment. It was more about taking a daughter in law to be an employee for the family, therefore "...among the very poor and the wealthy, brothers married their adopted sisters, like doves..."(12). The choices of husbands or wives were entirely parent's prerogatives. And moreover for girls, whose existences were regarded burdensome for the family, having them get marriage was like releasing the burden. This inappreciative acknowledgment sent girls to become no better than slaves for the husband's family. Wives would then submit themselves to settle the household occupations of the husband's family with the unbearable treatment from the family, otherwise they might

be sent home or sold to some landowners for slaves. In the case that husband left the wife without children, the parents in law directly have the right to get rid of her by selling her or mortgaging her, as long as it is more profitable for them. "...Her husband's parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her. But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me..." (7-9).

In the familial life, economically, women are made dependent on men, as they have no rights of inheritance or of the family property. Only the sons heir the rights of having the divided goods, while daughters would be sent to become the

...When the goods were divided among the family, three of the brothers took land, and the youngest, my father, choose an education. After my grandparents gave their daughter away to her husband's family, they had dispensed all the adventure and all the property... (8).

Such condition causes women to be powerless and have no strong bargaining position in front of the men since their existence is absolutely on the husband's hand. The incapability of earning money and the obligation of handling the household matter have force them to be passively accept the fact that husbands have taken the greater responsibility on the familial life and thus they have to obey them.

The role division of men and women has been institutionalized into the job division of the public and private or domestic field. The division qualified men into the public sphere and women turned into the domestic sphere, base on the tradition which give the privilege of ruling the public affair and attaining the highest achievement in the communal contribution to the men. Women with the attached stereotypes as the weak, emotional,

irrational, dependent, etc, are regarded fits only to the domestic role as wives or slaves. "...When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves..." (19). Girls or women since their younger age have been indoctrinated by the older generation to accept the value of the virtuous women to be wives or slaves, and they are entrapped into the domestic sphere of household affairs according to the patriarchal role division. Chinese girls receive such role pattern from the society as something in common and being penetrated into the young generation as if it is natural to become the tradition. The patriarchal tradition enforces the authority and legitimacy of the old culture to name and thus control the place of women within the patrilineage and thereby to establish the erasure of female desire and the denial of female self-representation.

Even the old China did restricted women to the physical body through the foot binding tradition. Many times the narrator is grateful as she is no more living in a society of such tradition , "...but my mother said we were lucky we didn't have to have our feet bound when we were seven (9). In some old traditions, the restriction conducted over women extends to the physical treatment, and foot binding is characteristically Chinese tradition.

Chinese woman is culturally destined to live under men's authority from the day she was born to the death. Before marriage she is the father's own, on the marriage life she lives under husband's authority, and



when her husband died she would submit her life to her oldest son as the regarded superior one to take charge of her. Threatened as to resemble to property, women never have the full authority of their own body and soul to freely think, feel or communicate their ideas and decide what they expect to do.

The other characters of the narrator's relatives who experience the repression caused by the patriarchal system are Brave Orchid and Moon Orchid. More than that, both of them have to face the racial discrimination as they live in the new nation with the strange language which make them silent by communication incapability to others. Fa Mu Lan, although the narrator positions her as the positive model of being a woman, still in fact being compelled to confess that women have to play on the masculine standard when they desire to achieve public acknowledgment.

## 2. The Warrior Woman; Fa Mu Lan

The legend of the Woman Warrior to inspire the narrator's personal identity presents a heroine woman successfully combat the society's enemy. Her figure has destroyed many unequal stereotypes attached to women as to prove that women and men are the same at everything. Women conditioned to grow in a physical and rational exercise would also be able to achieve the quality that was believed as only men's strength. Nevertheless, her empowerment as if fail to threaten to disrupt the

representations of the patriarchal circle, when in her battle, she is not representing herself as a woman but enacting the scenario of male selfhood. I put on my men's clothes and armor and tied my hair in a man's fashion..." (36). This choice of physical performance states that the society is not really acceptable to the figure of female. Thus, her strategy of involving the public affairs must be through the masculine standard, since to present as barely a woman often means a confrontation with the doubt from the society. There has been a strict distinction of men and women on the matter of private and public contribution, and unfortunately women are not trusted with the equal quality of public achievement. The society has enforced its patriarchal tradition to women, which finally limits them from their freedom of expressing their gender pride as barely a woman.

The other ironic fact is shown in the case that someone's success will only be highly appreciated, when it is men's success. "...My parents killed a chicken and steamed it whole, as if they were welcoming home a son..." (34). This statement may be interpreted into two interpretations, firstly it may want to say that the Woman Warrior is proud of the manly appreciation given by the family. But it may also become an affirmation that all this long women are not regarded as to deserve of this kind appreciation. But above all, it explains that subordination has disrupted women on the very principal of humanity, that is their existence as also human being like those of men.

### 3. Brave Orchid

Brave Orchid is actually an extraordinary woman said to have a higher qualified character than other common women are in the time. She appears with strong will, independent, brave and determined personality throughout the story. She would confidently decide and materialize

whatever she expects to be right. Her entire life experience in China is the relief of a woman who daringly faces the world on its either good or bad condition. She performs as to successfully neglect the patriarchal system in order to confidently contribute the public employment and widely accepted by the Chinese society as the figure of special and valuable woman. Instead of this experience, in America, Brave Orchid must involve into the trouble of gender and racial discrimination, and thus life becomes harder for her compared to the former life in China.

Like other Chinese immigrant women, she is confronted to the fact of difficult labor condition. The economic situation of most Chinese immigrant families would not permit women to remain in the home; they also have to go to work to assist in supporting their families. But they have found that American employment discriminates women, especially the non-white ones. The majority of them have only been able to find jobs in low paying garment sweatshops where they must endure long hours and unhealthy working conditions. These working women experience exploitation and deteriorating living conditions along with the principle of capital holders to make use of those immigrant women to be the source of cheap workers.

One of the factors that creates this racial discrimination is the fact that most of those Chinese immigrant women are illiterate in English language, that they could not entirely read, write, nor speak the language. This crucial weakness has made some of them choose the housebound

condition and therefore economically dependent upon their husbands. But most who decide to obtain an employment are force to reconcile with the low waged labor. Brave Orchid who was a medical employee in China found that her medical level of education is no more useful for earning money in America. The English illiteracy and the racial discrimination have sent her into the job of only picking up tomato and finally join her husband in the laundry. Whether at work place or in the home, their problems and oppressions as cheap labors and housewives are rooted in their position as women.

Language illiteracy has also discouraged women from cultural assimilation, defeat them from mingeling with the new environment. Brave Orchid expresses this failure through her term of ghost to name every new strange material showing her rejection to the new custom, and to remain a traditional woman intently preserves her family from harm by maintaining the old traditions against the erosions of American culture.

...But America has been full of machines and ghost-Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghost, Five and Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the white Ghosts and their cars. There were Black Ghosts too, but they were open eyed and full of laughter, more distinct than White Ghosts...(96-97).

Brave Orchid loses the free space of implementing her Chinese tradition, and fails to anticipate just how misplaced the traditions and myths have become in the new world. But still through the conventions of chanting some Chinese legend such as The Woman Warrior, and through the storytelling of some Chinese ancestors, she keeps China drawn around her family in a linguistic and gustatory circle.

#### 4. Moon Orchid

Moon Orchid in her tragic story of familial conflict is depicted as a woman abandoned by her husband, who embodies the patriarchal view that women should always remain silent and never question male authority. The episode in which Moon Orchid reluctantly confronts her Americanized husband demonstrates how essentially voiceless a Chinese woman is who lives in a traditionally patriarchal society. Meeting her husband after many years apart, Moon Orchid is incapable of voicing her years of anger and grief, "...but all she did was open and shut her mouth without any words coming out..." (152). Moon Orchid's traditional Chinese upbringing has so completely conditioned her to be passive toward men. She is uncertain of her valuable existence as a woman and wife and thus psychologically very prone of deliberate speech terror. The main problem of her husband's unfaithful commitment is once again language barrier,

the husband needs a wife to assist his interaction with the American society and Moon Orchid absolutely fails in this part. Moon Orchid's unsuccessful confrontation with her husband has emphasized how important language is to personal identity, to enable one to argue her thought and feeling.

## 5. The Narrator

And finally sexual discrimination faced by the narrator herself is also clearly represented in the novel. Since her childhood, the narrator has been very sensitive of this sexual discrimination. And her attitude is clear and firm, that she refuses and unwillingly reconciles with even the smallest manifestation of patriarchal values.

The most difficult time of the narrator is the first phase of her denied existence as a girl in a misogynist society, where being men is a pride and freedom and being women is a burden and obedience. And then, her racial identity as Chinese in American society brings her into an inarticulate experience of interaction with the American society. Her identity as a girl and at the same time a Chinese immigrant in America has burdened her with double oppressions.

Firstly, her female sexual identity has to face the cultural and social system, which condition girls to hardly appreciate and be confident with their femininity. The society and even the family are in lines of patriarchal proclivity to

regard women as worthless and thus present less friendly social intercourse for them. It is psychologically harmful for girls in their growing process as it frequently prevents them from socializing with the valued self-esteem and self-confidant. And consequently, women are humiliated by the false consciousness as the subordinate human being under the men's superiority. Such beliefs and attitudes certainly legitimate the misogynist tendency upon women.

Narrator of The Woman Warrior has experienced this social denial since her child age, some statements explain this, "...I don't know. Bad, I guess. You know how girls are. There's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls." (46). Her own mother, confirming that women insofar have also become the agents of maintaining the misogynist tendency, delivers this speech. Women have been subjugated by the patriarchal doctrine to agree and cooperate to the system as the historically accepted as the common and natural law. And most importantly is that they have been made powerless and lose their desire to oppose against those injustice system.

The inappreciative attitude upon women is commonly and vulgarly performed by the society, just as follows:

...I minded that the emigrant villagers shook their heads at my sister and me. "One girl-and another girl, " they said, and made our parents ashamed to take us out together. The good part about my brothers being born was that people stopped saying, "all girls, "but I learned new grievances. "Did you roll an egg on my face like that when I was born?" "Did you have a full month party for me?" "Did you turn on all the

lights?” “Did you send my picture to grandmother?” “Why not? Because I’m a girl? Is that why not?” “Why didn’t you teach me English?” “You like having me eaten up at school, don’t you?...”(46).

Every individual either men or women long to be fully himself or herself in a way that does not diminish anything that essential to their sense of personal dignity. But the cultural determination has given the opportunity of fulfilling one’s humanity exclusively for men, as they are adored as the expected generations to continue the familial inheritance. Son’s birth will bring about the pride for the family, and ironically that women fullness as truly women is measured by her success of having son. Consequently, women serve the patrilineal lines and alienate their own sex. Therefore brother’s birth for a daughter means a new realization of her differentiated and less expected child discerned firstly through the ceremonial detail held for only son’s birth.

Son’s public acceptance will then be strengthened in the growing phase of children. Through a very simple example, narrator presents such way of thinking,

...”Come, children. Hurry. Hurry. Who wants to go out with great uncle?” On Saturday mornings my great-uncle, the ex- river pirate, did the shopping. “Get your coats, whoever’s coming.”

“I’m coming. I’m coming. Wait for me.”

When he heard girls’ voices, he turned on us and roared, “No girls!” and left my sisters and me hanging our coats back up, not looking at one another. The boys came back with candy and new toys. When they



walked through Chinatown, the people must have said, “a boy-and another boy- and another boy!”...(47).

Secure acknowledgment is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. This experience must have torn down her self-esteem and therefore girls need more difficult individual conflicts to construct their firm existential conscience. Purposefully, she states that such differentiation on obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for one sex, that is female.

This inconvenient condition leads the narrator into a denial to her feminine identity to escape from the inappreciative collective behavior of the society, and unsurprisingly stated by the narrator, an explicit denial of her sexual identity as follows; “...I might as well have said, I’m not a girl...” (46). This sentence has implicitly asserted female’s yearning for equal recognition and opportunity to exercise their fullness of their human personhood in every sphere.

Narrator’s denial on her femininity would then require an escapee to build her firm existence to gain others’ recognition. And realizing that male identity is the expected sex to be born and proudly acknowledged by the family and community, she seeks other’s attention by presenting herself as a male. This masculine identification occurs on her child and teenage age and therefore brings about an extreme opposition and destructive attitude, as it is characteristically childish; “...I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two. “Bad girl,”my mother yelled, and sometimes that made me gloat rather than cry. Isn’t a bad girl almost a boy?” (47). This behavior is motivated by the denial of the society toward girls, which burden her with some feeling of unexpected and worthless child in the family and society. “When one of my parents or the emigrant villagers said, “Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds,” “I would thrash on the floor and scream so hard I couldn’t talk. I couldn’t stop” (46).

Narrator’s awareness on the unequal differentiation committed over women has sensitively arisen since her child hood. And the most conspicuously different treatment over both sexes lies on the job differentiation. She discovers

that domestic responsibility is obliged only for girls, but ironically, female existence is regarded shameful while the adoration approved only for men. Secure acknowledgement is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. Therefore using her naïve and childish logical thought, she trespasses against the unequal differentiation by showing that she could also behave resemble and become almost a boy. By refusing everything considered as female obligations, she insists to prove that female sexuality also carries out masculine qualities, which may also be endowed with some privileges. Purposefully she states that such differentiation on the obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for the one sex, that is female.

Women live under subordination of patriarchal culture will long-life be positioned as the secondary after men. Thus, before the system changed into the equal and just for women, this sex would still seek of equal position to men.

...I went away to my college – Berkeley in the sixties – and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy. I would have like to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs. That was for my brother, who returns alive from Vietnam ...(47).

Narrator's desire to turn into a male only confirms women's longing for the equal acknowledgement and freedom to express their unique feminine quality to accept the same appraisal from the community.

Resemble to her sexual identity, her racial identity as a Chinese living in American society has also burdened her with the more suffering of racial discrimination. Once the narrator said, "...Even now China wraps double binds around my feet" (48). Double oppression is undeniable for women of Chinese immigrants in their new destination environment, their victimized sexual discrimination will be added by the racial discrimination for some reasons.

Some adaptation has to be made for the different cultures, including certain standard of being a woman. Actually, both cultures view women on a subordinate way. But the narrator who was once from the common peoples of the Chinese society taste the more rigid convention of the Americans. "...Normal

Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American feminine..." (172).

Language has also become their prime reasons of their powerless and inarticulate existence within the solid American society. Incapability of mastering English language gives narrator an experience of being a silence pupil in her school, as happen to many Chinese students; "...The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl..." (166). This silence gives the experience of being repressed persons as they hardly mingle with the Americans. As result, narrator and other Chinese students are frequently regarded as the nonexistent ones within the plural environments of her school.

Social interaction has also burdened the narrator with the experience of uttered insults of the native for her Chinese identity, "Order more of that nigger yellow, willya?" the boss told me. "Bright, isn't it Nigger yellow." "I don't like that word," (48). The word nigger is usually used by the white to ridicule the Afro-American people, and there is a historical sense of segregation that was addressed upon them through time since their first arrival into the island until nowadays situation. And such kind of discrimination has also usually been addressed upon the immigrants of other races, including the Chinese ones.

Adult Chinese immigrants, as happen to the narrator's parents, are mostly troubled with their political, economical, social and cultural discrimination. Politically, America applies certain law to limit the number of immigrants entering the state. Thus many illegal immigrants have to survive in America by opposing or hiding from the immigrant officers. "...The immigrants I know hide

their names, sojourner take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence...” (5). Narrator recognizes that most Chinese immigrants are afraid of performing their real existence, as the Chinese and harmful adaptation has to be made, by hiding their real identities to adjust to the law.

Their populations are also prone and powerless of government’s policies. Their illegal statues would lessen government’s risk and responsibility when it forcefully applies certain regulations. “...When urban renewal tore down my parents’ laundry and paved over our slum for a parking lot, I only made up gun and knife fantasies and did nothing useful...” (48). These people have no strong bargaining position to fight for their own requirements. Nothing is done but submitted their life to the United States laws and policies.

Economically, the native capital owners use most first generation immigrants in United States to become their low paid and submissive labors. Therefore many of them have to work under exploitation, working in the unhealthy environment, without any health and safety insurance, and most importantly is that their wages are obviously insufficient for supporting the life necessities.

Social and cultural aspects are also important to catch the attention, but especially the Chinese immigrants are known as hardly ever to mingle with the other races, as they have made a strong cultural defense from the influences of the other cultures. China town is the symbol of the solid Chinese immigrants who tightly maintain their collective racial inheritance with the strong support each other on the political, economical, social and cultural issues.

Facing the very complicated situation, the narrator is intensely constructed to have a wistful thinking of one's existence. Her in-articulation has been concluded through the line of, "...I thought talking and not talking made the difference between the sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves..."(186). Such conclusion has certainly motivates her to have a high self-esteem and self-confidant to reveal her personality, despite the unfriendly culture toward women and Chinese of her environment.

Finally, the important notion is that the repressive and injustice patriarchal tradition that she experiences since the younger age, added by the myth of The Warrior Woman and the story of her relatives have given a great contribution on her process of establishing her existential conscience as a Chinese-American Woman.

## **B. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Novel The Woman Warrior**

This second subchapter analysis will be the answer of the question of the narrator's concept of woman existential conscience as a Chinese American Woman. As mentioned before, the researcher uses liberal feminism thought and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity as her theoretical approach. Therefore the researcher will use these theoretical bases to explain the

construction of the narrator's continuous process of establishing her concept of Chinese American women existential conscience.

This analysis would reveal the narrator's counter idea of her individual existential consciousness by emphasizing her struggle against gender and racial discriminations. As previously explained in the first subchapter of the analysis, narrator and many women around her are the objects of both oppressions. Patriarchal system has torn them since the physical body to the dizziness or destruction of the existential conscience as the equal human being to men. Without knowledge and sensitive recognition of the whole structure of patriarchal system, women frequently fall to the false consciousness of their experiences as the unchangeable destiny. Thus, sexual harassment, women domesticity, women's lack of education, and many other manifestations of patriarchal system receive the legitimization as the common and natural law. The suicide aunt, and the totally silent aunt are the examples of the extreme subjugation of women consciousness, which make them absolutely fail of realizing their own rights. The unbearable pressure the society's punishment, which had finally forced No Name Aunt to commit suicide, is actually the logical consequence of the misogynist patriarchal system. And women's silence, like happen to narrator's aunts, only empowers the oppressive system. Therefore, narrator's commitment is then to strengthen women with the stable consciousness of their existence.

Some other characters in the novel have also presented the fact of discrimination, not only of the sexual reason, but doubled with the racial reason. Narrator's mother and aunt, and the narrator herself have to accept the less appreciative behavior from the society caused by their sexual identity as women. Moreover, its culture rules women to obey and be submissive to their men. And, at the same time, they must be along with their men fight the discriminative treatment from the native white people.

The importance of the facts of discrimination is that this has become the core by which narrator bases her existential consciousness. Narrator's consciousness has arisen since her child age through her disappointment of social oppressive attitudes upon women and especially toward her selfhood as a girl born

from the Chinese immigrants living in American society and culture. Thus, her struggle is then to reveal women as the same qualified human to men to gain the equal opportunity of everything. By, at the same time, growing the awareness of disapproval toward racial discrimination. She confirms that women – of whatever races – will attain their firm existences on their successes of playing the same and equal roles as men. Yet, such liberal concept does not limit her to give an appreciation on women’s active and free choice to live either with the feminine or masculine values.

The Woman Warrior is the story of women struggle to establish their firm existences within the injustice and discriminative patriarchal system. Narrator grows up in a strong determination of Chinese and American cultures on how to be a virtuous woman. She closely engages to the Chinese tradition about women position through her mother’s storytelling. And at the same time her effort to mingle with Native American society brings her to an understanding of American feminine standard.

The experiences of many women in her family have taught her that being any kind of women is absolutely a matter of choice. Even though culture has determined a lot of restrictive guidance to the gender of women, but culture has also created legend which on the contrary has been able to encourage women to realize and bravely choose their own extraordinary ways of life resemble to the opportunity given to men. Chinese culture has determined girls to the future of wives and slaves. The dutifulness of being a Chinese woman in the time is as the prime childbearer, burdened with all works of household matters. “...When we Chinese girls listened to the adult talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves...” (19). Clear distinction of the private and public

contribution has discriminatively limited women from the chance of freely develop their potentials or to play greater role than the household affairs. But Chinese women possess the alternatively extraordinary figure of Fa Mu Lan from the legend of The Swordwoman, which inspires them to reveal themselves, as the free and unrestricted women trespass against the system.

...I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother, who may not have known its power to remind. She said I would grow up a wife and sale, but she taught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman...(20).

The story gives her the spirit of a strong and free woman, encourage her to deconstruct the limitation and gain the unlimited space of firstly being fully human being. This powerful character appears through her adoration toward the Swordwoman, "...We could be heroines, swordwoman. Even if she had to rage across all China, a swordwoman got even with anybody who hurt her family. Perhaps women were once so dangerous that they had to have their feet bound..." (19). Through the sentence she states women capacity of reaching the highest achievement and criticizes foot-binding tradition as a means of remaining women from their optimal achievements and as only implicitly stating that previously women were those in charge of the authority of human civilization.

Narrator's process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman cannot be separated from the cultural background of Chinese and American traditions. The narrator has passed through individual and communal experiences of sexual and racial discrimination. Her problem of racial discrimination has begun to be over through her realization of universalism over racial fanaticism, together with serious effort to adapt to the new culture.

...We belong to the planet now, Mama. Does it make sense to you that if we're no longer attached to one piece of land, we belong to the planet?



Whenever we happen to be standing, why, that spot belongs to us as much as any other spot.” Can we spend the fare money on furniture and cars? Will American flowers smell good now?... (107).

Meanwhile her process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman would finally be concluded on a liberate and humanize existence of women. This is conceptualized into the one who unwillingly surrender to patriarchal subjugation as applied on the injustice prejudices of women stereotypes, with an important effort of proving women’s capacity of education and public participation while at the same time setting up feminine values on equality with masculine values.

Narrator emphasizes women possession of the same rights to enjoy freedom and autonomy of their own selves to express and develop their fullness of their humanity. The efforts begin on her acceptance of her sexual identity as barely a woman, supported by her referential record of women valuable position in the Chinese tradition;

...And I had to get out of my hating range. I read in an anthropology book that Chinese say, “Girls are necessary too”; I have never heard the Chinese I know make this concession. Perhaps it was a saying in another village. I refuse to shy my way anymore through our Chinatown, which task me with the old sayings and the stories... (52-53).

In regard of real sexual discrimination, this has become her first statement of an acceptance toward an also valuable womanhood. Social and

cultural discrimination upon woman will no more suffer her with despair disappointment, but realizing women's large capacity and valuable femininity would become the most strategic instruments of gender equality.

Concrete thoughtful idea lies on her critical and dialectical discussion of women existence, which is materialized in the legend of the woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan. Her realization on women subordinate position through the oppressive experiences of her women relatives has encouraged her to dialectically build an ideal figure of women. A heroine lives in the existential consciousness of men and women equality with a great courage to give evidence of women's great personality.

The narrator materializes her ideal figure of women through the character of Fa Mu Lan – great women in the Chinese legend – as a figure to whom the narrator resembles herself and entrusts her concept of women. She intentionally leaps from the story of hers to the story of the swordwoman or Fa Mu Lan without any quotation mark as if to confirm that the life story of the swordswomen is actually her own fantasy autobiography. From the original Chinese story of Fa Mu Lan, narrator actively makes some improvements for the story to figure out this character as bringing a lot of deconstruction toward the cultural biased gender stereotypes.

Firstly, she proves that women's stereotypes as the weak, ignorant, irrational, emotional, dependent, submissive etc are absolutely cultural construction. Thus on a more neutral condition women may also be constructed

on either feminine or masculine characteristics. The swordwoman successfully performs women on a strong, rational, free and independent personality.

The swordwoman or the woman warrior gains her education beyond the common circle of community and family, but in an otherworldly place where male and female difference is not constructed in a patriarchal system. Her educators are a couple beyond childbearing ages whose relationship appears to be one of relative equality. And the education they offer encourages her to forge an identity, not through conventional formulations of women's selfhood, but through a close identification with the creatures of nature and the secrets of natural space. In such a space, female sexuality remains a natural event rather than a cultural phenomenon that situates girls in a constellation of attitudes established by the patriarchal society. She is far from the patriarchal concepts of being a woman in whom certain cultural constructions adhere certain gender stereotypes which more frequently harmful for women.

The beginning part of the second chapter of The Woman Warrior is the story of how the swordwoman is hardly and seriously trained by her two teachers. Being thought on the different way to common Chinese girls, her physical power is being exercised to gain the bodily strong and skilful girl. She is capable of self-defense by using weapons or physical skill through her learning of the special skill of creatures around her.

...After five years my body became so strong that I could control even the dilations of the pupils inside my irises. I could copy owls and bats, the words for "bat" and "blessing" homonyms. After five years the deer

let me run beside them. I could jump twenty feet into the air from a standstill, leaping like a monkey over the hut. Every creature has a hiding skill and a fighting skill a warrior can use...(23-24).

This is testimonial for women struggle on its deconstruction to the cultural beliefs on women as the physically weak creatures with the whole life dependence on men's accompaniment and protection. It confirms Margaret Mead's premise that women on a certain cultural situation may appear with masculine stereotypes of patriarchal society.

Next swordwoman's success is conquering white tiger and nature with its dangerous and adventurous situation. It presents woman on an independence quality of settling their own problems without depending on men's assistance.

Not only the physical skill does the women warrior capable of mastering, rationality that was previously regarded as masculine quality belongs only to men is becoming one of the subject learnt by Fa Mu Lan. "...I learn to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes..."(29). She develops her rational thought by learning to analyze and accept the complex and paradoxical phenomenon of the world. Knowledge was once a powerful instrument of understanding and controlling certain paradigm by which men maintain their dominance over women. But given to the swordwoman, it has become a powerful instrument of realizing her free, autonomous and equal position toward men. Fa Mu Lan appears as a woman on the unlimited and free opportunity to develop and express the deepest potentials of the body, mind and heart by which the capacity of every person depends on. It trespasses against the

assumed incapacity of women for universal, rational and logical thought that doomed them to the inferior statuses.

She is undergoing the special training in purpose of setting free the village from the baron's despotism. She would then dedicate the greatest contribution for the villagers to bring them back freedom of the intruders. And once again this action destroys cultural prejudices that women are not in capacity of involving the public complicated sphere. On the contrary, the same opportunity would result the same possibility for both sexes to play the role and may even cooperate each other on handling public problems. This would give the same opportunity for women and men to attain public achievement refers to the standard of the noble existence. "...You can be remembered by the Han people for your dutifulness..."(23). Opposes the previous determination that public achievement, as the highest standard of one's existence in China, is a privilege for male citizen. Extraordinarily differ to the other conventional women, Fa Mu Lan, is actively and revolutionarily leads the social, political and economical change of her village. She has proven that women, when they have the same opportunity to men, will also be articulate and powerful in front of the oppressive condition.

Fa Mu Lan is extraordinarily different to other women in the matter of her characteristics. Cultural prejudices set up on gender stereotypes lose its meaning in front of the swordwoman's leadership. She could stand firmly on her own self as an independent, strong, and powerful, with the great talent of leadership capable of handling the great mass of troops to fight on the battle of freedom. Social and cultural expectations usually provide men with greater chance

of leading position. Men would automatically be chosen first for the place of leader, while women are regarded as more suitable for the position of men's assistants. Gender stereotypes of women, such as weak, emotional and irrational are consequently doubtful for the society to trust them with the great responsibility. Whereas these stereotypes have actually based on only social prejudices, ignoring the fact that women are given the less opportunity to the access of education and to experience the challenges life offer to exercise one's potencies. But the swordwoman gains both the education and the adventurous experience, which finally shape her character into a woman of powerful leadership. Most importantly, her political awareness is naturally developed against the repression.

Narrator's imagination of the swordwoman as to present her ideal concept of a woman seems to be very much influenced or resemble to liberal concept of feminism. The liberal feminist's spirit is clearly appeared in the way that narrator present the swordwoman as a woman with the same and even higher capability than men, thus the right of the same and equal education and public participation will also belong to women.

But we must be very careful to evaluate the very last part story of Fa Mu Lan. We may come into a conclusion of an ambiguity or a distortion of narrator's concept of feminism when we read that the last and final dedication of the swordwoman is to get back into domestic roles. It seems to be an antithesis for her first statement of undifferentiated being from the men, but it actually there the narrator's dialectical and critical thought lies.

Narrator states the importance of drawing out and developing the difference and uniqueness of both sexes rather than only stressing the potency of similarities. Having returned home, the swordwoman kneels down before her parents in law, "...Now my public duties are finished ...I will stay with you, doing farmwork and housework, giving you more sons..." (53-54). A liberal feminist might suggest that this decision is performing a socially constructed gender role, which in itself denies women's autonomy. Thus it draws back feminist struggle to attain the same and equal opportunity to play a greater role in the public sphere, out of the domestic field. Therefore, Fa Mu Lan's decision to return to the domestic affairs after her heroic action seems so ironic to the struggle of women and men equality. This may be regarded betraying the spirit of equality that she deconstructed before on her successful public contribution. But dialectically, when this decision is freely and actively chosen under the consciousness of sexual equality of both men and women, this has become absolutely an autonomous choice of a human being called woman. Indeed, on this decision lies a respect to womanhood. Narrator highly appreciates femininity and women's active choices so that the problem is no more the dichotomy between public and private sphere, but the appreciation toward both masculine and feminine values.

Swordwoman's final decisions to return home and totally involved to the domestic world and the function of childbearing is an active, autonomous and free choice. Her process of proving the androgenic character and capability of someone either male or female has brought her to the realization or consciousness

of her autonomous, free and powerful existence to choose whatever she expects. The narrator refuses to be entrapped into only the dichotomy of public and private sphere that limits the understanding of human freedom. More of that, she reveals feminism deeper into the problem of appreciating both masculine and feminine values, rather than places them in opposition. And narrator's commitment is to appreciate whatever women's choices, as long as the decision is the free, autonomous and active choices of the individual, rather than a total submission to the patriarchal system.



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### E. Background of Choosing the Subject

Realizing the subordinate position posted for women, feminists struggle to break the bonds of patriarchal culture in order to gain the acknowledgement of women as fully human being to be freely exercising their personal existence in every sphere. Feminists attain to overcome the conventional stereotypes and gender biases deeply penetrated in the unconscious mind of women and men and at the same time, seeking freedom for self-definition, self affirmation and self determination. All the effort is to establish women's consciousness of their existence, to commit them politically aware of their position in the patriarchal society, and moreover is to re-thinking and re-construct the present pattern of women and men's relationship for the more just and equal relation for both sexes.

America along with some European countries draws a hard long struggle of feminism movement. The issues have also developed parallel to women problems in each epoch. Many feminists born to strike women's rights which have been neglected and bring consequences to women repression in the whole history of human life. Women have been omitted from the recorded history written with central focus on men. Therefore some contemporary feminist argue that the apparent exclusion or marginality of women in the textual history has also become the concern of feminist to trespass against the malestream theory and

historical report. The efforts take the form of the development of theoretical approach and great contribution were also given by women writers who wrote in feminist consciousness. They brought back women to become the subjects of their own political, social and economic role in the human history.

One of the extraordinary women acknowledged as feminist for her thought presented in a novel is Maxine Hong Kingston. She is recognized as one of the most outspoken contemporary feminist in America whose concern is to report women's names and deeds in a text. And that she comes from a minor Chinese subculture living in the United States makes her special on her specific women experience.

She was born to Chinese immigrant parents, in Stockton, on 27 October 1940. She wrote her first two books, The Woman Warrior and China Man, in Hawaii, a time and place provided her with the necessary distance and perspective to sort out her identity problems. Her primary questions on sexism that lies in her consciousness has motivated her to write down her women relatives story to present women real condition living in the injustice patriarchal system.

Many interesting aspects of the novel, primarily dealt with women experiences, have attracted the researcher to examine certain understanding of feminism under influence of certain racial and national identity. Thus, "...Kingston's main project in The Woman Warrior is to avenge oppression by reporting stories about the women in her family..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002) would become an unexhausted source for such feminism analysis. The misogyny of Chinese Culture

which had forced her aunt into suicide and the regarded non-existent position in her family encountered by Maxine through the ideology of liberal feminism, "... a critical concern with the value of individual autonomy and freedom from supposedly unwarranted restriction by others..." (Beasley 1999: 51). By retelling the story of her family she put an individual autonomy on those the oppressed women and established her own feminism thought to build up her womanly existential consciousness.

And in this research, the researcher is interested to analyze novel The Woman Warrior, since it depicts a landscape of the consciousness and experience of especially the contemporary American born daughter of Chinese immigrant parents to seek her gender, racial and national identity.

The researcher finds that Maxine's understanding of the misogynist tendency in her Chinese culture has encouraged her to oppose it by using the developed western feminist point of view. She reads the experiences of the marginalized and subordinated women in her origin culture through women perspective. By using liberal feminist thought, Maxine demands the equal rights and opportunities for women and the acknowledgement of their subjective existence in the history of social, economic, and political life. This women perspective enables her to regain women subjectivity for the Chinese women who have been silenced and muted by the patriarchal tradition. Thus, her womanly consciousness then arises through series of contradictory women portraits presenting some real conditions and ideal potentialities to be "not-the second sex".

While her racial and national identity is what makes her reconcile the two cultures into a newly syncretism identity. Therefore, it is certainly unavoidable that her book is written under the subconscious of those mix and syncretism of the Chinese and American cultures. "... She ties the American way of life in with the Chinese way of life..."(<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/canam/kingston.htm> 2002).

On the one hand, Stockton, Maxine's residential relatively small Chinese population becomes a literary microcosm for her to familiarize herself with the Chinese culture and tradition. Her mother played great role in this occasion, by retelling stories about No Named Woman, her aunt who become the victim of sexual harassment, and the legendary swordswoman, Fa Mu Lan, she shaped Maxine's gender identity in the context of Chinese culture. The mother penetrated the myth of Chinese women destined her future adult life into the role of "wife and slave", while in the mean time, she fired Maxine's imagination to become a revolutionary woman with the story of The Woman Warrior.

On the other hand, Maxine is also the product of American conscience, with the dominant history of feminism. She lives in the time when the feminist movement flared up on its insistence on equality between women and men. The extent of rationalistic feminist theories, supplied by many western feminist thinkers, vigorously impact most women's conscience to demand their rights in all life aspects as human being.

Under such syncretism conscience, Maxine is a feminist, who realizes and struggles to break the oppressive patriarchal system by awakening women's

self-consciousness through her novel. "... Mitchel dan Oakley mengatakan bahwa seseorang dapat dikategorikan sebagai feminis jika ia mempertanyakan hubungan kekuasaan laki-laki-perempuan, namun ia juga harus secara sadar menyatakan dirinya sebagai feminis..."(Mughtar 1999:6). Finally, Maxine's woman consciousness is formed through the experiences of Chinese womanhood and the influences of the western feminist thinkers.

Her identity as a Chinese American woman is also unique for the researcher in which it gives her the capability of understanding the double oppression of the Chinese immigrant women in America. Being immigrants itself has often meant meeting the hostility of the native-born population and the discriminatory treatment of the destined States government. And culturally, the United States common metaphor of the melting pot tends to be assimilationist which vanish ethnic differences by regarding immigrants' original cultures as the less important to the host culture. Moreover, being Chinese immigrant women living in America always means confrontation with the double jeopardy of racism and sexism. As they fight side by side with Chinese men against racial injustice in America, they have to resist an equally pernicious oppression -- the oppression of sexism, which, though rooted in their Chinese patriarchal culture, is nurtured in America, especially in the Chinese community.

As the second generation of Chinese immigrants, Maxine is witnessing the incapability of many Chinese immigrant women to adapt to the American culture. Language often becomes the problem of the Chinese immigrant women, since most of them were unfamiliar to English. In addition, the lack of education

and skill has also been one factor to limit their access to the opportunities associated with the public life which then kept them in the private and less challenging role in the immigrant communities. It excludes women from the history of Chinese immigrant sacrifices and grievances to gain their firm existence in the new culture and society. Therefore, the emergence of Chinese women in the history of traditional China as well as in the Chinese American society has become the purpose of Maxine writing activities.

Since her first glance of reading its title, the researcher found the phrase The Woman Warrior to be strongly rises and challenges women's consciousness on their existence toward the patriarchal system. The Woman Warrior presents women existential conscience on women self awareness of their dehumanized and oppressed existence against the patriarchal culture which then leads them to construct their consciousness of their equal existence toward men. It opposes the masculine paradigm, as only men believed of having the power to become fully human being while women are the weak and dependent. By performing contradictory characters, Maxine seems to passionately want to prove that gender differentiation does not equivalent to sex differentiation.

For Maxine, being woman does not spontaneously deal with weakness, dependency, irrationality, passivity, or emotion. On the contrary, she believes that when women were given a chance and were taught to be strong, independent, rational, active, etc, they can also bear what is being characterized as masculine.

Gender differentiation into men and women is arbitrary characters that may attach to both sexes, male and female. This point once again confirms

Maxine's choice to be much influenced by the liberal feminist conception of "... fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature - that is, as women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Further reading will guide the readers, page by page, enjoying much more complex understanding of women and their realization of their regarded secondary sex which lead them into either deteriorated body and soul or into a tough and firm self construction.

The book itself was first published in 1975, the first of the four novels written by Maxine Hong Kingston. Unsurprisingly, The Woman Warrior won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction in 1976 and was rated as one of the top ten nonfiction books of the decades. The American audiences warmly welcome the book either as a regarded novel or as a kind of autobiography. It is recognized to be a nonfiction work of art as it talks about her own self and her relatives' dramatic way of life, but since it is a kind of rewriting a storytelling of her mother, it is undeniable that she adds many fictional elements into the book. Therefore "... the book is not really an autobiography as a specific genre but an "autobiographical form" that combines fiction and nonfiction..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002 ).

The good appreciation of the book employs it together with China Man, to be widely taught as source book in literature, women's studies, sociology, ethnic studies, and history classes. Many objections derive from many Asian American critics on its generic status, rejecting the perception which view the book as a representative of most Chinese Americans' experiences, Maxine

regarded as presenting her own personal experiences in the book. However, many other critics and especially the researcher, acknowledge the book as highly valued worth of becoming the resource book for studying a specific aspect of American life.

### **F. Problem Statement**

Dealing with the feminism thoughts and issues in relation to the establishment of one's self identity relying on this novel, the writer will analyze the subject as follows:

3. How is the representation of women subordination within patriarchal culture as reflected in The Woman Warrior?
4. How is the narrator's concept of Chinese American women's existential conscience as reflected in The Woman Warrior?

### **G. Scope And Limitation**

The researcher limits her analysis into an understanding of the process of conceptualizing Chinese American Women existential conscience as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior. By firstly giving much attention on women experiences of discrimination as the principal concern of feminism, the researcher would then move into an analysis of narrator's concept of Chinese American women existential conscience by using an approach of liberal feminism.



## **H. Benefit Of The Research**

This research is held in purpose of getting some benefits:

1. To give a clear and broad understanding of the presentations of women subordination in the novel The Woman Warrior.
2. To give a clear understanding of certain construction of Women Existential Conscience especially of those the Chinese American Women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior.

## **E. Methodology**

Literary works written by some of the best American authors can be used as artifacts and mental evidence of American history. Literary works in the form of novel, story, poetry, drama, biography, treatise, document, etc are the illustrations, experiences portrait, and reflections of particular society in a certain era. "...Literature is the expression, through the art and language, of total culture of a people drawn together at a time and place. History provides the facts; art and philosophy provide the cultural pattern and meaning (Spiller 1981: 3). Since literature is essentially a part of culture, an "interdisciplinary approach" is appropriately relevant to the analysis. This is relied on the idea of culture itself, which is complex, constructed from many aspects of human experiences.

American Study as an interdisciplinary study effectively grapples the problem of human and the environment with the assistance of some other disciplines by demonstrating the interconnections of the ideas. To have such a

comprehensive view the American Study students must also employ the interdisciplinary connections between the past, present and future. It is actually a newly emerging discipline draws on and waves together theories and research from numerous fields throughout the humanities, history, and social science. Thus American Studies is an interdisciplinary discipline includes social science, literary, history, politics and economic structures so forth.

This thesis is going to analyze an autobiographical novel, The Woman Warrior, written by Maxine Hong Kingston. The novel will become the micro phenomenon to be interdisciplinary analyzed using the feminist literary criticism, sociological approach and historical approach, pass through time past, present and future in order to understand comprehensively the macro phenomenon around the novel.

1. Feminist literary approach focused in the concept of liberal feminism will be useful to understand the novel through women perspective in behalf of revealing women oppressive problems in the patriarchal culture and their struggle to overcome it.
2. Sociological approach enables the researcher to analyze the novel without missing its social context, in account of its plural time, place and cultural backgrounds.
3. Historical approach is used in purpose of understanding the development of feminism thought and issues which inspires the whole body of the novel and gives much influence to the writer.

## **F. Method Of The Reaserch**

This research will be a literary research, means that the researcher will use every relevant data, classified into primary data and supportive data:

- c. The primary data will be every data of the novel The Women Warrior written by Maxine Hong Kingston, which is related to the study.
- d. The supportive data will be from all possible referential data. It can be from books, magazines, reviews from Internet, encyclopedia, journals, or discussion, etc.

### **G. Thesis Representation**

#### **CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION**

- O. Background of Choosing The Subject
- P. Problem Statement
- Q. Scope and Limitation
- R. Benefits of the Research
- S. Methodology
- T. Method of Research
- U. Thesis Representation

#### **CHAPTER II : LITERARY REVIEW**

- C. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought
  - 1. Women Existence Based on Confucianism
  - 2. Women Existence Based on Taoism
  - 3. Women Based on Buddhism
- D. Feminism Thought On Women Existence

1. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society
2. Liberal Feminism Concept of Women Existence
  - a. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities
  - b. Women's Rights for Education
  - c. Women's Rights for Public Participation
- G. Critique on the Hegemony of Masculinity
- H. Chinese American Women Double Oppression in the Patriarchal American Society
  1. The History Of Chinese Immigrant Women in America
  2. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

### **CHAPTER III : ANALYSIS**

- A. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.
- B. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.

### **CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **B. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought**

## 1. Women Existence Based on Confucianism

Confucianism has sometimes been called a religion, although Confucius was not a founder of religion in the usual sense. He was the first and greatest Chinese philosopher and the founder of Chinese literature. His teaching was found in the early part of the Analects, a collection of his sayings assembled by his disciples. In the course of China's long history, Confucius stands out as the most prominent figure. Without any claim to divinity or reference to the supernatural, the teaching of Confucius have exercised such a molding influence that if the Chinese way of life were to be characterized in one word, it would be Confucian.

Although Confucius established a wise and morally based philosophy, still unavoidably the whole context of his thought was the condition and the cultural background of the society –his early philosophical thought had no real commitment to subordination of women, but over time Confucian teachings were expanded upon. Thus, in a society in which patriarchal tradition has deeply penetrated into the subconscious mind of its people, Confucius was not in the exceptional, his teaching proved to have strongly maintained and even strengthen the subordinate view and treatment toward women.

He used a lot of masculine symbolism in his teaching. His full development of the Confucius virtues is exemplified by the Chun-tzu, or the superior men, performance of an ideal gentleman and a state official. The highest existence of an individual would be gained on his achievement and contribution in the collective and state life. A person is morally evaluated according to his or her

adherence to social roles prescribed by ancient rituals that were designed for collective achievement. Such an idealistic humanism teaching, reach its peak manifestation on the social and political achievement as the highly appreciated by the society, but has become only the men's right. On the other hand, women were restricted from their potentialities of their highest achievement contribution to the collective life. "...The goodness of a man is determined by how well he plays his set of social roles as son, husband, father and/or public official, while, a woman is judged by her performance as daughter, wife, and mother ..."(Li 1995: 412)

Confucian interpretations further reinforced male authority and patrilineal customs. According to the Confucian structure of society, women at every level were to occupy a position lower than men. Most Confucians accepted the subservience of women to men as natural and proper. Chinese culture destined women to be led and to follow others. As Confucius "...held that a son must shield his father's crime and care for his own relatives more than for those of others..." (Collier's encyclopedia 1990: 150), he had given the higher responsibilities, and at the same time, the sufficient fulfillment of one's humanity into the hand of men. While, women were given the less challenging role considering their regarded weak and dependent persons, thus, collective contribution as the highest existential achievement was made impossible for them. By the condition, women were uncertain of their own selves; they were hardly capable of determining their self-esteem and self-determination as fully human being.

There has been a sharp distinction between men and women gender roles, public sphere is exclusively men's space and domestic sphere is specifically for women. "...The roles assigned to women, however, were inferior since they involved only domestic and thus less important activities..". (Li 1995: 412-413). Being born as men means endowed by the privilege of getting education, growing up on a worth self esteem, and the great opportunity of collective achievement. While women were restricted from the opportunity of social involvement relevance to the traditional value that women's duty is not to control or take charge since they were believed as naturally passive. Women sphere was limited into only the domestic and procreation function.

In the filial life, women were conditioned to be more under pressured by the patriarchal power of defining women's greatest duty as giving birth a son. The greatest failure of being women was the failure to produce a son with the consequences of loosing their status in the society and the feeling of worthless. This would lead women to keep getting pregnant until she had a boy. And on the case the girl baby was born, the baby might be treated badly, and would be raised under the feeling of worthless either. Girl baby had always been condemned as only burdensome for the family. Therefore, while boy's birth would be happily celebrated and announced to the whole society, girl's birth would be regarded shameful, quietly and compulsorily accepted by the family. Thus, feeding girls was regarded as only wasting stuff for nothing, family would prefer to feed the cattle with the regarded more valuable and benefited purpose than feeding baby girls.

Women were deprived from the opportunity of establishing a firm independent existence and status unless attached to their husband. They were not given the equal opportunity to the men as an individual to achieve their full potential. "...Women's greatness stands behind their husbands' achievements, fame, and success; each successful man has a virtuous woman supporting him.." (Li 1995: 413). Such an illusionary image of virtuous women to satisfy the gender as receiving a great appreciation behind the men's status, but proves to have become a deceitful mechanism of patriarchy to confine women space of self actualization. The measurement of women existence did not lie on their individual achievement, but on the husband's fame and success in the social life –women excellence was defined in term of men success.

This myth proved to have absolutely subjugated women deeply sank into the unconscious mind and made women incapable of realizing the injustice treatment conducted upon them, on the contrary women considered it as common and natural. Confucius has taught a specific moral guidance that seems to calm down women to feel comfortable in the secondary sex position. The moral code of the "three obedience and four virtues"; has conquered women to be

...Obedience to the father before marriage, to the husband after marriage, and to the son after the husband's death; and the virtues of loyalty, proper speech, modest demeanor, and diligent work. Central to this tradition were the ideas that "men should be respectable and women humble", and that the lack of learning in woman is a virtue....( Li 1995: 413)



“Obedience” has certainly become a total subjugation to women, softness and modesty revealing only the false consciousness into women’s mind, when it is presented in the virtuous value measuring the respectable women. Along their life time women were always under men’s authority, having no freedom to exist as her own self. This norm was actually risky for women – since men, to whom the absolute authority was praised – would have the controlling power competent to demand women’s total obedience to do whatever they expected from women. Women were thrown away into the existence of only men’s slave. Instead of this horrible situation, women were still expected to have and perform higher aesthetic behavior to carefully guard the family respectable name in the society. A kind of another limitation to women’s self actualization, since behavioral restriction often means a closure to women’s creativity and courage to sharpen their personality in the sense of free and individual virtue. The Confucian virtue of collectivism prevent the embodying of the concept of individual worth of women social members, women were respected only on her performance of the traditionally predetermined social roles.

Knowledge is then the key role of patriarchal system; it is always a powerful instrument into self-realization of the existential consciousness for every individual. Thus as patriarchy has maintained women from the access of education, women were made lost of their opportunity of fulfilling their humanity through knowledge. Son would always be the first choice on education matter, while daughter would be needed for the household matter. Either men or women would then strengthen patriarchal system.

In the Chinese filial hierarchy women were absolutely weak and unequipped with the right of property possession. By marriage, women would soon be brought to the husband's house, and therefore lose their membership on their own family. Thus, Chinese tradition gave the inheritance rights only to the male members of the family.

...In the traditional family, a woman had no inheritance rights as a result of being perceived as not fully human; she was merely an instrument for housework and reproduction; she remained at home and was subjected to restrictive and humiliating rituals, enslaved by the father, brother(s), and husband... (Li 1995: 414).

Women have been made satisfy on their secondary position by the virtue. And it was continuously strengthened by the societies on their acceptance and perpetuation of the patriarchal system, despite of the many disadvantages for women themselves. Women would remain inferior as long as they were still subjected to the restrictive and humiliating treatment from every-men of their life. And most importantly is that the oppressive ideology must be deconstructed for the equal and just pattern of women and men relationship.

## 2. Women Existence Based on Taoism

Taoism is two radically Chinese movement –on the one hand, a philosophy, on the other hand a positive religion. Taoism is named after its central idea, Tao, or “the way”, the basic principle of the universe. Philosophic Taoism has exalted mysticism, naturalness, and simplicity, the securing of solace in misfortune by cultivation of inward calm, laissez faire, optimism, and skepticism of doctrinaire program (Collier’s Encyclopedia 1990: 65). It has provided spiritual inspiration and moral standards for the Chinese, while imbuing Chinese poetry, landscape of painting and other art forms with its love of nature and sense of serenity. As both a philosophy and religion Taoism has supplied strength and refuge to the old, the poor, the oppressed, and also to rebels and secret societies.

Taoism may have been the only major Chinese philosophical school that worships femininity.

...In the Taoist bible, Dao De Jing, Lao Tzu, the founder, built his cosmology (the natural order) and ethics –the philosophy of Yin and Yang –on female virtues and characteristic traditionally attributed to women, such as gentleness, softness, humbleness, tolerance, obedience, and women function to give birth and take ‘lower position’, etc... (Li 1995: 414)

However, Lao Tzu’s Taoism hardly embodies a fair conception of femininity. As a philosophical thought, Taoism was inseparable from the social, political or cultural condition of his time, as did his teaching represented the patriarchal system that lied women in the real subjugated position. Although, it

proved to give an appraisal toward women on its highly valued feminine characteristics, some of the regarded natural female images, such as obedience, humbleness, lower positioning were actually the products of certain divisions of labor which then perpetuated by the social prejudices as the virtuous stereotypes of women.

These regarded 'natural' women characteristics were actually the sources of women subordination. The virtue of 'obedience', not different from the Confucian virtue, depressed women to be bearable and quietly accepted the injustice execution directed toward them. They were made silence by the belief that valuable women ought to be committed under men's control. There would be no rebellion from the oppressed women when their consciousness have been calmed down into the point of the incapability of analyzing such an injustice condition as the injustice one. What makes the patriarchal system strongly authorized the relation pattern of women and men, is that it has deeply rooted into women's consciousness to make them cooperate with the system.

Moreover, the virtues of 'humbleness and lower positioning' have firmly defined women second position, as "the other" for the men. Men were acknowledged as fully human being, and women were to occupy the additional position for the completeness of being gentlemen. Women existence as the equal human being to the men was definitely ignored under the patriarchal and patrilineal tradition, which have been adopted by the Taoist. "...Women are valued by him, but only because of their usefulness for other ends. This

instrumentalist evaluation of women's status.....failed to generate a real respect for women for their own worth as equal human beings..." (Li 1995: 415).

Unsurprisingly that in China until the coming of modern thought, there had been many cases of women and children selling by the husband and father. Women possession had to mean the benefit for the men rather than for the romantic and respectful relationship. The cultural recognition of women for the place of only slaves have legitimized the practice of women trading, thus although legally their position was wife, but their function was slave. This confirmed women's status as inferior from the men. When the existence of women as fully human being ended up in the instrumentalist functions for the demand of the opposite's sex, women have been made worthless human. It becomes an ultimate degradation of an individual humanity.

...Lao Tzu takes for granted the dominant social perspective of his time and views women from the conventional position of a dominant male. Unfortunately, the legacy of Lao Tzu, perhaps contrary to his intention, serves to reaffirm socially constructed gender difference as the 'natural order', providing a philosophical justification for the unjust practice.... (Li 1995: 415)

Philosophical thought and religion are the two strongest beliefs and ideology to define human life. When both of them have determined such an injustice paradigm toward a certain group of the society, hardly ever this certain community wins the struggle against the paradigm, unless the change is ultimately to the paradigm itself. Taoism as a philosophical thought ignores women's

perspective, and fails to see the injustice thought and practice in the society. This even prepares the legitimization –through the disadvantageous images of women as natural and valuable- for the instrument of measuring women as virtuous, blind to catch the fact that women have been deteriorated by such a repressive practice.

### 3. Women Existence Based on Buddhism

Buddhism is the great oriental tradition founded by Buddha Gautama, flourished in India since about A.D 500, and widely spread into Northern China on the first century A.D. Buddhism encountered indigenous system of thought, the most important of which were Confucianism and Taoism. Confucian essential practice is primarily concerned with ethical, social, and political principles involved in the conduct of affairs in family, community, and state. Taoism, more speculative, reflects concern with cosmic, metaphysical, and mystical matters, often expressed in poetical, metaphorical, or paradoxical language. It expressed the altitude of searching beyond the Confucius of associated life to realize harmony with the ultimate nature of way (Tao) of the universe. Buddhism had to adjust to both ways of thinking.

The matter of fact here is that Buddhism has also become the other main source of the view of women as inferior. “...The traditional contempt for women in China is linked to the Buddhist ascetic teaching that women are the source of all evils on earth because female sexuality causes men to commit crimes...” (Li 1995: 414). This images is found in almost every religion, Christian condemned

Eve as the temptation to drive Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, it then created negative image for women in the whole history of Christianity. Islam has also regarded women as sexually destroying men's purity, therefore women have to cover their whole body. Buddhism is not in an exception, it also believes that women must be avoided, as they would just prevent men from reaching their highest level of meditation.

### **C. Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

#### **1. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society**

This subchapter of Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society is written by mainly refers to several source books. Those books are, Beyond Feminism written by Cornelius F Murphy Jr, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman written by Mary Wollstonecraft, The Feminine Mystique written by Betty Friedan, The Second Sex written by Simon De Beauvoir, and Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial written by Mansour Fakhri.

Women existence has become the main concern of feminism movement in the history of women struggle for about the last three centuries. Feminist moves on the purpose of criticizing the weak positioning of women in front of patriarchal society, in which women are subjugated in the whole aspect of human life, where their existence is ruined culturally, socially, economically and politically. The main effort is then to rethinking and reconstruct the present injustice pattern of

women and men relationship, to gain the just and equal existence of men and women, by liberating women from their deprived world. Feminists ought to implement their concept of equal rights of women to the men in a real organized movement for the realization of transformed society in which women are guaranteed to the same and equal rights to the men. While,

...The liberation which contemporary feminists seek, is not merely freedom from marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence but freedom for self definition, self affirmation, and self determination; in other words, the effective recognition of their full humanity as persons and the freedom to exercise that person-hood in every sphere... (Murphy 1995: 45).

Women existence becomes a troublesome issue throughout human history as women have been subjected to the indignities of patriarchal culture that have pervaded every aspect of their lives since the very beginning of human live. Since the ancient world, the rule of fathers has confirmed the supremacy of men within the home as well as their dominance through the whole of the social, economic and political world.

The biblical story of human creation has become the first and strong standpoint of the subordinate view upon women. Man was created first and in the solution of his loneliness, woman was then created from one of the man's ribs to be the helpmeet for him. Such a story was then being interpreted in the sense that men were expected to be the superior human to whom the covenant was centered. While, women were created only for the function of companionship for the main



human, men, although both of the sexes were acknowledged to be blessed by God. Moreover when woman, Eve, as a temptress was the one to urge Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she was then considered to the source of evil. For such consideration women were then strongly marked to have the demonic characterization, so that except for the reason of their regarded less rational human being, women were kept distance away from the public sphere for the reason of their regarded deceive, and deceit dangerous temperament.

Three Semitic religions, Judaism, Christian and Islam had born under the progressive development of Hebrew patriarchal culture, which is critically analyzed as the oppressive and marginalizing toward women. Those Semitic religions were in capacity of giving new explanations of the world and human destiny, but its universal symbols were much presented in a male degree and the abstract ideals were to be interpreted exclusively by men in the course of their own fulfillment of a divine plan. Therefore, feminist proves, through the analysis of the Holy Scriptures of some religions, that the teaching of the religious believes have become the most fundamental instrument of the on going discriminative view toward women. Women were expected to serve men, as the representation of God, in subordinate roles. And while displaying virtues of obedience, modesty, and fidelity they should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust. This discriminative view was then seen as natural and women were presented on the image of the obedience, weak, dependent, irrational, emotional, deceitful, and many other negative and disadvantaging stereotypes culturally attached to women.

As it does the religions hold the patriarchal system, the philosophical thought also becomes the agent of subordinate view on women. "...For Augustine the distinction that arose from physical differences were directed, by analogy, to the inward subjection of the passions to the power of deliberative action..."(Murphy 1995: 6), therefore in the medieval theology, male was given the higher rights for domination. Most philosophers were unable to see women subjugation as a certain and urgent problem needs to have a philosophical base for the grounded solution of the existential matter. Even "...Aristotle's world was hierarchical and divided. He drew distinctions within, and between, the varieties of existence. The polis, the central human reality –a domain of excellence– was sharply distinguished from the darker world of domesticity ..." (Murphy 1995: 4).

Men were endowed with privilege of finding their moral fulfillment through their participation in the political life of the community. The polis was a place for men to display the excellence of their character and to have a life experience higher than that, which is possible within the world of domesticity. While, women were excluded from the higher realm of politics, social, economics, or cultural participation. This subordination was coupled with the more pervasive discrimination firmly linked to their procreative function, a function described as passive in nature. This different characterization and male-female functional statues fulfill the plan and design of the male, to be raised to a position of supremacy, while the female are to be raised to the position of inferiority.

Women were also close to images of dependent and subservient to the men. Her existence lies on the men statues, for her humanity was not fully

acknowledged in the patriarchal society. Women existed only to fulfil the additional and servitude function for the men. Even

...Rousseau declares that a woman should never for a moment feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself... (Wollstonecraft 1992: 28).

Women position as only the companion for men is actually a clear statement that women are not recognized as fully human equal to men. Rousseau whose theory was to establish the conscience and recognition of equality among men, has excluded women from his frame of thought. Moreover, his guideline to see women as only the objects of desire has brought about an oppressive view and attitude toward women.

Such misogynist view has increased the possibility of women to become the victims of sexual harassment, which exist whenever the personal destiny of any individual is subject to the power or purposes of someone of the opposite sex. Sexual harassment has become one of the crucial issue struggled by feminist to overcome many cases caused by subconscious hatred toward women. The patriarchal society has itself subconsciously brought the sexual objectification toward women that permissively led men to use women for their sexual satisfaction. Therefore, many cases of sexual harassment occur to degrade women to loose their comfort and self-esteem. It takes the varied forms, from the offensive vulgar jokes, the unwanted touching, sexual attitude for compensation,

till many cases of raping, done by men. Such cases would not reveal if firstly women were not being viewed as the object of sexual pleasure, but the equal human being to the men.

In educational matter, women are given less opportunity either for exercising her rational thought, critical reflection, or arguing their argumentative reasoning. Knowledge as a powerful instrument of self-realization has been made inaccessible for women as mechanism of controlling women understanding to maintain men's control over women. In the past, women were kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence. Instead of hardening women's minds by the several principles of reason and philosophy, they breed to useless education, which terminate in vanity and sensuality. Mary Wollstonecraft protested

... the education given to the women of her time, that from their infancy women were taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of men; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives... (Wollstonecraft 1992:21).

Women's virtues degraded into only the artificial qualities such as; fondness for dresses and physical beauty which are considered as something natural, and purity of the heart regarded as innocence which tend to be an ignorance of women. Women were made comfortable by the less challenging roles, for actually they were kept away from establishing their independent

individuality. Neither family nor the society give them critical atmosphere to exercise their individual personae, to strengthen them in reasoning and arguing arguments, and enable them to stand firmly on their own thought. The authority of men strongly restricted women from freedom of having their own will, as women were actually treated as men's possessions.

The discriminative treatment on women also relies on the political participatory. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women were absolutely weak and even excluded from the political life. The practice of politics was perceived as a combative struggle of conquest and power, thought of as a field of endeavor more suitable for the actions of men than for the influence of women. In the public participation, women were excluded from the hierarchical structure, which have the formal power in the society. In the nation state life, women lost their rights of ruling their own political life for they were not given the rights of voting. It became tremendous issue awaken women to realize their marginalized position.

Then, women enfranchisement had ever become a great issue needed a difficult and long time struggle to claim that women were heirs to the same rights in society as men and having endowed some forms of political participation through the rights of voting. Women suffrage needs long time journey to be finally succeeded in gaining the rights of the vote for women. The right of political participation did not automatically mean an open and free access to the same and equal power in the hierarchical structure of the society. Leadership was still the excellence for men, and women appearance were restricted to the less challenging roles, as their existence were still in the domain of companionship for

men. Women, seeking to express their insights and develop their talents within professional and intellectual communities, often find that their access were limited by the regarded more legitimate roles of men.

Thus, feminist found through their contextual analysis, that women subordination has conquered women deeply to their subconscious. And most women accept such discriminative view as something natural and common, which leads them to cooperate to the patriarchal culture. Hatred toward women appears not only from men, but women themselves have also played participation on the misogynist view on other women. So that, either men or women become the agents of transferring the patriarchal view of keeping women's inferior position.

## **2. Liberal Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

Feminism movement occurred firstly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the long history of women deprivation. Women revolution began in response to rising expectations after women became aware of their being treated as “the other” from the men. There were some important preconditions for the resurgence of women's movement. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century were the eras of the enlightenment thought with its liberal concepts of the social contract, individualism, independence, democracy and equality of opportunity theorized by some writers such as John Lock and JJ Rousseau. Therefore, the first standpoint of feminist movement took their theoretical ground on the liberal thought. Although those Lock and Rousseau still maintained the patriarchal foundations of society as they challenged feudal and absolutist authority, other writers quickly applied to women their arguments

for the “rights of man”. The work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Mead, Harriet Taylor Mill, John Stuart Mill and Betty Friedan were some representatives of this perspective. Their writings as well as their strategic political movements articulated women’s protest on the subordination.

The subsequent development of feminism born four prominent mainstreams of feminism based on the theoretical approach and the issues as concern of women movements. These mainstreams of feminism are liberal, radical, marxist and socialist feminism. Each theorizes differently the historical motives and mechanism of social and cultural perpetuation of women subordination, concluded by the strategic platform of women’s movements.

But in purpose of seeking a specific concept of “existential conscience” of Chinese American women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior, the researcher defines that the most appropriate feminist literary approach would be based on the concept of liberal feminism.

This first mainstream of feminism grounded their theory to the liberal thought, on the new discourse of freedom, equality, autonomy and individualism, as the natural rights possessed by all men and women. “...In liberal feminism there is also a critical concern with the value of individual ‘autonomy’ and ‘freedom’ from supposedly unwarranted restrictions by others...”(Beasley 1999: 51). Liberal feminists convince that freedom from the cultural restriction and prejudices will make women possible to realize their firm individuality and freely develop their self-autonomy.

c. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities

Gender inequalities have become the first concern of liberal feminism. The understanding of gender differentiation as natural and God given destiny has proved to drive inequalities primarily toward women. Differ to the concept of sex, as genetic and biological classification of person into male and female, gender is the result of social, cultural and psychological construction. "...Gender is a social construction that varies across culture, over time within a given culture, and in relation to the other gender..." (Wood 1997: 22). Misunderstanding of gender as attached to sex, man must be masculine and woman must be feminine, has destined women on the subordinate position with the regarded inferior stereotypes of femininity. Women, from infancy, are encouraged to conform to certain feminine stereotypes prescribed by the society to be the "...attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationship (Wood 1997: 22). And these stereotypes unfavourably restrict women in the ignorant and domestic boundaries unsatisfiedly desire what men have got.

Liberal feminists encounter gender inequalities by presuming the sameness between men and women. "...Liberal feminist political strategies reflect a conception of a fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature-that is, since women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Thus, the list of women stereotypes as the ignorant, irrational, emotional, weak, and dependent, etc was failed to get the confirmation against the liberal feminist thought. Liberal feminist thoughtfully realize that such



gender stereotypes are socially and culturally created, and that women under the same and equal opportunity to the men will convincingly obtain men's quality.

Margaret Mead through an anthropological research proved that such gender stereotypes were extremely social and cultural prejudices upon women. Masculine and feminine are the quality interchangeably attached to either men or women. She reported that certain society may prescribe women to be more dominating and sexually aggressive than men, and the other society may conform men to be more delicate and nurturing than women. There is no evidence yet to confirm if both sexes were to be raised in the exactly the same condition and treatment, they would grow on the present characters stereotypes of the masculine and feminine.

...Margaret Mead, in her observations of life in the South Sea Islands found that qualities such as aggressiveness, independence, gentleness and passivity were not sex-linked at all but rather resulted from social conditioning. "There is no evidence that suggests women are naturally better at carrying for children (than men)," she said in 1946; "With the fact of childbearing out of the center of attention, there is even more reason for treating girls first as human beings, than as women... (Chafe 1972:210).

Mead's observation deconstructs gender inequalities on the patriarchal society, and furthermore promises the reconstruction of relation pattern of women and men into the just and equal relationship.

d. Women's Right for Education

Liberal feminists' strategy for women transformation into equality is concerning with the rights of education and public participation. Rationality, which belongs to women as to men, has become the basic undeniable argument for women to claim the right of education and public participation.

Marry Wollstonecraft was the first feminist to write down her thought, whose work was the first serious political and social manifesto which seriously concerned with the condition of women asserting that women were heirs to the same rights to the men in society. She challenged the patriarchal prejudices toward women by declaring women as also rational agents like those of men, whose inferiority was systematically caused by the lack of education. "...Wollstonecraft's message... asserted that women who were given equal rights and equal opportunities could change, develop, and grow to become people whose contribution to society was as great and as varied as the contribution of men." (Hymowitz and Weissman 1978: 78).

If women are generally feeble both in body and mind, natural reasons give no evidence to become the accusation rather than the education reason with the argument that women are, like men, rational individuals and that they should have equal rights to the access of education. The fact presented that women were imprisoned to the narrow understanding of everything, and they were left to the ignorant when the renaissance has said to bring the enlightenment for human being. But this was not women's destiny, this rather the result of the hindrance of

women from the opportunity to explore their talent or to exercise their intellectual ability through the education.

Therefore, according to liberal feminists, the first strategic solution for women marginalization is the equal access to education. “But I still insist that not only the virtue but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creature (Wollstonecraft 1992:42). Knowledge would transform women from the ignorant and irrational human beings into the ones with the realization or consciousness of their deprived humanity, to finally encourage them into the struggle of human completeness. Later contemporary liberal feminist agrees Wollstonecraft’s conclusion that women subordination rooted in the unavailability of the equal civil rights and equal opportunity for education to men.

c. Women’s Opportunity for Public Participation

The dichotomy between the public and private sphere has become the other important concern of liberal feminism. Gender differentiation born gender roles that constituted women to deal only with domesticity and men actively contribute the public affair. “...marriage has also been an economic partnership in which a woman gives priority to homemaking and childcare while a man gives priority to his career...” (Thorne, Kramarae and Henley 1983: 217).

Women’s biased gender stereotypes determine them to fulfil the expectation of the less appreciated role as housewives. The society is used to the

myth that the highest profession a woman can engage in is that of charming wife and wise mother, in spite of the fact of the intelligent, educated women might be capable of good leadership. "...The identity which society bestowed on women was that of wife and mother, not business competitor with men. Marriage and child bearing constituted the goal of female existence, just as material success in the outside world represented the goal of men..." (Chafe 1972: 97).

The dominant patriarchal ideology was that men would govern society and that women would rule the private sphere. Active participation in the society covers the power to control and regulate the social, cultural, economical, and political continuous transformation. And women whose rights of contribution was muted by the social and cultural prejudices would be dehumanized into only the passive objects of most of the regulation and transformation. By then women loose their individualized subjectivity to become the agents of changes, and even suffer the social, cultural, economical, and political marginalization, while psychologically they become tender and fragile. Public policies are frequently resolute on gender insensitivity with consequence that women's interests are ignored.

Liberal feminists, relevant to the liberal theory that every individual should be equal, claim the equality of the sexes in the public and private sphere. The approach is that of women "going public", which means an individual approach to fight for power and influence on equal terms with men without changing the rules of the game. "...Thus in liberal feminist thought there is a focus on the public sphere, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the

rights of individuals to compete in the public marketplace...”(Beasley 1999: 51). They believe women are the same as men, therefore women have to work her way up to a male-dominated society to achieve a true equality. The result is that public citizenship and the equal attainment with men in the public arena would also become women’s rights, on the other hand, men have to share equally in childbearing and handling the domestic tasks.

The new pattern of male-female relationship needs the mutual interdependence of both sexes to realize the equal opportunity and the responsibility sharing of domestic and public life between men and women. In the type of family, where independence is equal, interdependence is mutual and obligation is reciprocal, women might be able to combine public participation with the life in the home. Since political equality between men and women must include a major change in the private sphere, for example, the equalization of the working hours; a shift in the responsibilities; breaking the patterns that divide men and women of inequality between work in the home and work outside.

By emphasizing women equal opportunity in the public life, liberal feminist has also placed great emphasis on self-development, with goal of “wholeness, realization of one’s own full potential”. Feminist assumes that freedom and equality would only exist on women’s opportunity for gaining rational thought and participation on the public sphere. Liberal feminist’s platform of their struggle for the just society is constructed in the concept of equal opportunity and rights for each individual, moreover within it is the equal opportunity and rights for women. The main assumption is that woman is also

“rational” human being opposing the ancient attached stereotype which present women as the irrational and ignorant half human beings inappropriate of interfering the public business. Therefore, the feminist movement is the struggle of the equal opportunity for women to the access of knowledge and self-actualization and active participation in the public life.

#### **D. Critique on Hegemony of Masculinity**

Liberal concept of feminism, as previously explained, offers the theory of sameness between the sexes. This solution perfectly fulfils the objective of equality, which implicates on the acceptance of women on the formal education system and opportunity to interfere public affairs. It offers the comprehension of women as fully human being with the potential and capacity to absorb knowledge and understand the world rationally and holistically. This movement greatly affects both women and men’s view on women’s fundamental existence as also fully human being who desire the fulfillment of their humanity. But as it historically moves on along with the issues which invites responds, liberal feminist’s ways of ending the patriarchy’s oppression and insisting women’s rights tend to absorb and internalize their opponent’s values; masculine values. This is clearly explained by Mansour Fakih in his book Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial.

As mentioned before that “rationality” has convinced women into the new image of womanhood, but at the same time some feminists concerned it as

having vanished women's excellence feminine aspects. The adoration on the masculine values has consequently disregard feminine values. "...They want what men have got, rather than questioning its value in any thorough sense..."(Beasley 1999: 52). The problem is then many high qualified aspects of femininity was being dishonored by women themselves on result of the insensitivity toward other women who stay manage themselves on the feminine values. ". "The specificities of maternal love were considered admirable but inferior..."(Murphy 1995:49). Thus many feminists on their movements dispose to do what Mansour Fakih states as "hosting the oppressor's ideology" (Fakih 1996: 102). Liberal feminists' optimism suggests women to compete in the public arena by using men's standard, supporting a notion of assimilationist tendency, rather than giving an influence of their feminine aspects into the arenas of activities associated with both men and women. The option of achieving true equality by active participation in the male-dominated society without changing the masculine rule of the game has motivated women to internalize and perpetuate the masculine values as to become their new and more admired values. Women would then be more confidants when they could think, speak and behave like men

Several masculine stereotypes such as the aggressiveness, competitiveness, rational superiority, etc are then dichotomized face to face with the feminine values, such as compassion, nurturing, holistic view, moral superiority, which then fall into the underestimation toward feminine values. Dichotomization has frequently delimited feminists' perspective on the positive and negative distinction of the masculine and feminine values.

Thus, instead of promoting women's equal position to the men by assuring the higher appreciation of womenlines, as previously stated, some feminists tend to urge women to prove themselves as having the sameness with men in all life aspects. While the evaluation of femininity failed to seek its noble values and applied it within the patriarchal society. This strategy frequently burdens women with the more suffering of subordination, especially for those who challenge the public male-dominated area, as the system become very exclusive to easily compel women from the competition. Despite the fact that feminine qualities – such as compassion, cooperation and moral superiority rather than aggressiveness and competition– are proved to be very effective for success leadership and more supportive for human life. After all, the aim of feminism is not a revenge to men, but freedom for both sexes to establish their firm existence as human being with an understanding that either a masculine or a feminine person is a legitimate mode of human existence.

## **E. Women In The Chinese American Society**

### **1. Brief History of Chinese Immigrant Women**

The first Chinese immigrant woman, Afong Moy, was brought to New York in 1834 as a showpiece to satisfy the curiosity of the American public. From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, because of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and much discriminative legislation, Chinese women could only emigrate as wives or daughters of merchants and U.S. citizens. Thus, very few



Chinese women came to the United States. During the entire period of unrestricted immigration thousands of Chinese women journeyed across the Pacific. Many women could not withstand the rigors of life in America and died or returned to China. During the same period numbers of Chinese men emigrating from China to America was much higher. Due to the imbalance in sex and the prohibition of intermarriage, many Chinese women were lured to America as prostitutes. Because of the sex imbalance and laws that forbade interracial marriage, the majority of Chinese women in 19th century America were prostitutes who had been kidnapped, lured, or purchased from poor parents in China and sold to America for high profits. In 1943, the U.S. Congress passed an act to repeal the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Later came the War Bride Act of 1945, and then Congress passed a bill enabling wives and children of Chinese American citizens to apply as non-quota immigrants. Decades later, the numbers of Chinese women in the United States noticeably increased to the balance number to men.

Their moves to America still carried out the Chinese custom that women were supposed to stay home to care for their husbands and children, and because of their language handicap, immigrant wives seldom worked outside of their homes. To subsidize their husbands' low income, they did menial work at home: sewing, washing, shelling shrimp, rolling cigars, etc. Women living in remote rural areas had even more difficult lives. Therefore Chinese immigrant women in America have to meet the pressure of the racial and sexual discriminations, both in the private and the public or social life.

## 2. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

Chinese women entering America would become a minority to face the double oppression by the racial and gender distinctions. America with its slogan of melting pot still segregated the minor races in the country either by the law or by the injustice social, economic and political subjugation. The Chinese women themselves arrived to the new island with the fundamental weakness, which was the illiteracy of the English language; they could not entirely read, write nor speak the language. The weak condition instantly made them economically weak and dependent to the husband, as they could have just stayed as housewives or take only the low paid jobs, like sewing, laundry, or working in the garment factory.

...I found myself entirely illiterate in English. I could not read, write or speak the language. I was instantly housebound and penniless. I had witnessed my parents working from dawn to dusk with limited income, my mother working at sewing factory in a basement in Chinatown. Her working conditions were unbearable...

(<http://www.chineseculture.about.com/cs/americanwomen/htm> August 23th 2002).

Moving to America does not make changes for them, Chinese women still have to play the subservient role from their traditional custom. In a woman's lifetime, she was supposed to obey her father when she was a girl, obey her husband when she got married, and obey her son when her husband died. She had no right to inherit the family property and was not even allowed to keep her own

name after marriage; she was addressed as her husband's wife or her child's mother. In addition, women were deprived of the right of education, even it was a virtue for a woman to be uneducated.

But the next majority of Chinese women who joined their husbands in America were well educated and employed in respectable professions in China. Instead, these female immigrants are usually unable to find a job to resume their professions in this new country due mainly language and cultural barriers. Therefore, they may encounter more difficulties in acculturation than those women who originally were in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. The shift from a professional to a housewife becomes the most prominent and miserable change that these Chinese immigrant women experienced in this new land. Meeting the challenge of adjusting to a new culture and social life from a professional to a housewife places a great deal of pressure on these educated Chinese women. They have strong desires and motivation to continue their professions, but have not obtained the support necessary accomplish their goals. As housewives, their social circle is very limited, which leads to isolation in the host culture.

But the social status of women changed dramatically over the past few decades. Chinese American women were then definitely affected and influenced by the 1960s civil rights and women's rights movements. They were encouraged to walk out of their houses and become active participants in society. Although many critical issues still exist in women's status in China, Chinese women, especially those who live in urban areas, have witnessed fundamental changes in

education, employment, and marriage. The improved racial climate enabled Chinese American women to pursue higher education and employment.

Although some immigrant women still found themselves trapped in Chinatown garment factories, increased numbers of them began moving into the technical, sales, and professional fields. But because of the discrimination, however, their earning power was often not commensurate with their level of education. Their gender identity as women placed them on the less challenging occupations, with the less number of wages. While their identity as the immigrants permits the capital owner the right to exploit them as the low paid labors.

The other majority of Chinese American women were still trapped in the "women professions" of teacher, nurse and clerical worker. Although they are entering in large numbers of professions traditionally dominated by men, they, like all women, are still relatively concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. And like all women, Chinese American women have yet to reach the upper echelons of power. Thus, becoming a career women for them often means of sacrificing the family, to achieve their goals of self fulfillment and good, independent economical condition. On the result that their choice to subjected themselves to the injustice and discriminative society, which are still mostly ruled by the patriarchal type of decision making, often become very burdensome for them. Women are underestimated to have no capability of managing serious responsibility, meanwhile the aggressiveness or competitiveness of the masculine

standard would become the very effective mechanism of women exclusion. Therefore public areas or professional career jobs often very cruel for women.

The new society in which they enter is the society with the double standard behavior before them, in the one hand, their interest for the low paid labors creates an interdependence relation, on the other hand, they are not very receptive to the new and strange members of the society. Therefore, most immigrants have to face the chronic social, economic, cultural and political problem in the new land. "...As an immigrant woman from China, I was misunderstood and discounted...". (<http://currents.ucsc.edu/index.html> August 23<sup>th</sup> 2002). Such kind of despair is common for Chinese immigrant women in America since they frequently experience the injustice and oppressive situation caused by their identity as women and Chinese.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **ANALYSIS**

The Woman Warrior is rich of meaning and very attractively invites people to read and analyze it. It touches many aspects of human life implemented

in the themes of dual oppressions by the sexual and racial discrimination, immigration, cultural assimilation, one seeking personality through the self consciousness, etc. But the writer here will limit her focus only to the dual oppressions depicted through the characters in the novel and continued by the process of one seeking individualized personality by the awakening of her self consciousness as a woman lives under the sexual or gender and racial discrimination. Two different cultural backgrounds on the story will enrich the readers with the more sensitive understanding of the different cultures on their perspectives toward women existence.

This analysis will answer the two problem statements, which become the interesting concern for the researcher. Firstly, the researcher will describe the fact of the Chinese and Chinese American women subordination and oppression within patriarchal culture as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior through feminist perspective. And it must also be noted that the social-cultural context of the novel will appear some of its characters not only with the sexual discrimination but doubled with the racial discrimination.

Secondly, the process of the narrator intensely establish her firm existential consciousness as a Chinese American woman will be explained based on theoretical approach of liberal feminism and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity. And the cultural background of the novel will also color the analysis to prevent its loose of context.

**A. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior**

As previously stated in the literary review, both Chinese and American cultures dictate women as the inferior human being to men with the role of domestic sphere to settle the household endeavors. Men are given the rights of enjoying the quality of humanity, while women are recognized as only the complementary of manhood and even they be the men's possession. Some religious beliefs – by which people rely on their faith and practical life commands – have proven to strengthen this view, resulted on the degradation and negligence of women's right to fulfil their humanity.

Women are more frequently forced to choose silence under oppressive situations conducted over them. The strong patriarchal system has successfully inarticulated them from uttering their own thought, feeling, requirements or self-authority. The Woman Warrior seems to set voices for some silent characters to reveal the unrecognized women of the narrator's familial life into historical existence. The forgotten individual, appeared in the character No Name Woman, is being brought back into the memory of even a larger amount of people, than those who want to forget her. The narrator intentionally dedicates the story on her aunt's fatal experience to commemorate her unrecognized existence and to remind the society of the fact of women subordination. "...I alone devote pages of paper to her..." (The woman Warrior: 16).

## 1. No Name Woman

The effort of recording the past tragedy begins in the narration of No Name Woman, an exact and real example of the absolutely victimized woman in front of the misogynist society. The lines of admonition around the forgotten aunt starts the novel,

“You must not tell anyone,” my mother said,” what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born” (3).

A mother’s command to remain a secret the matter of the suicide aunt represents the individual and social negligence of women oppression. The misogynist society has constructed the communal definite judgement on women with tendency to blame and victimize them in case of sexual harassment. Instead of the fact that women have usually been psychologically and physically ruined by the aggressors in such cases, the society around No Name Woman refuse to give her sympathy for the reason of disgracing the family and tribe. On the contrary, the communal convention decides raid as the instrument of punishment through the hazardous terror for the accused woman. “The village had also been counting. On the night the baby was to be born the villagers raided our house...” (3). Traditional society here applies violence to overcome its communal problem, rather than discussing for a just solution. And the executors of the raid are the ones, to whom No Name Aunt and the family have been so familiar with; all the



villagers are kinsmen, once the narrator states. "...As the villagers closed in, we could see that some of them, probably men and women we knew well..." (4). Common to the cases of sexual, the actors usually are persons to whom the victims knew very well, perhaps the family relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, or someone related to them. Therefore, as well as the raiders are all her kinsmen, the men of the rape could not have been the strange one for No Name Woman, "He may have been somebody in her own household, but intercourse with a man outside the family would have been no less abhorrent. All the village were kinsmen..."(11).

Community's decision to raid No Name Aunt reflects the inclination of public misogynist to blame women as the source of foul behaviors, which has finally indifferenciated men from their responsibility of sexual aggressions. And on the other hand, women as the victims are mostly powerless before the superior authority of the men. This powerlessness has been deeply penetrated into women's minds through the lifetime doctrines of men's superiority, and moreover when the real life incidents present her men's repression, women would easily be made submissive. Thus, No Name Woman is easily be made frightened of the men's threat not to tell anyone of his identity, and consistent to the end she remains the men's name a secret. "She kept the man's name to herself throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save her inseminator's name she gave silent birth" (11).

Fatalism and sacrificial characteristics are mostly recognized as typically women along with their tougher capacity of bearing serious psychological

pressures. These attitudes have led No Name Woman into naïve acceptance of the injustice treatment upon her to finally take the responsibility of the remarked shameful mistake alone by herself. This silence has actually made women fail of cutting the chain of the perpetuated injustice demeanors conducted over them.

No Name Woman fails to realize the political aspects of her position within the case of the sexual harassment. Although her silence has made up of cutting the continuance of the patrilineal descent, when she paradoxically erases the paternal trace by betraying the fundamental fragility of undisputed paternal authority, her silence does state the acknowledgment and the resignation to the authority of the masculine patriarchal system. Her insistence of justice must have actually been able to warn men and the society to reconsider the reproduction of the patriarchal system, yet she fails to realize and take this opportunity. Finally, her silence can only speak of women powerlessness in front of patriarchal system. This complicated problem could have happened for at least two reciprocal fundamental reasons; the misogynist positioning of women as the inferior and thus objects of sexual discrimination including within is sexual harassment, and men's positioning as the superior endowed with the rights of governing and conquering women.

This silence cannot be parted from the cultural background of the Chinese tradition. Chinese philosophical tradition relies its harmony on the collectivism, which in some sort has conquered one's individuality before the communal interest. The value of collective harmony has frequently prevented someone from establishing his or her own subjective individuality to have the

absolute and inexorable rights of choosing. Moreover women as also sexually discriminated; they were seized from their actual rights of free choice and therefore surrender to the authority of patriarchal society. "...My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Women in the old China did not choose. Some men had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil..." (6).

Chinese tradition through its religious beliefs has conquered woman to remain obedience to the superior sex. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have determined some stereotypes of regarded virtuous women such as obedience, humbleness and domesticity, which remain women to stay subordinate under men. Such guidelines constitute women to be submissive on men's rules, even if those women are trapped in the injustice situation. This traditional perspective has been deeply rooted into women's mind and wholly established common characteristics of Chinese women.

Most Chinese women's characters are fragile and uncertain of their own human existence. They could not fight patriarchal standard that their existence is measured by men's pleasure of them. Men's acknowledgment on women requires certain condition, such as beautiful, tenderness, submission and obedience. And women's existence would only be real when they fulfil all such requisites. As long as women still give the right of acknowledging their existence on the judgement men and the patriarchal society, women would remain sticks on the fragile and uncertain character. If that so, women's fighting will just to be accepted by men and the society under the patriarchal standard. "...To sustain her being in love, she

often worked at herself in the mirror, guessing at the colors and shapes that would interest him, changing them frequently in order to hit on the right combination. She wanted him to look back..." (9). Thus it can be understood, that in this story, No Name Woman's effort to be recognized by men is by beautifying herself. Or in other words, to capture her adored men's recognition she must be on the line of the traditional patriarchal standard of being a woman. This construction of the fragile and uncertain characteristics can be traced back through the psychological experience under certain social and cultural background.

Since their younger age, women are not given the chance to establish their own individualized personal, they were raised with less self esteem than those of the men ever experience. Psychologically they become tenderly attacked by any pressure come from out of their own self. The control of the outer, from any other person or from the community take greater charge on the self, and one's individuality is being damaged into losing her self-realization. By such condition women are prone to be victimized by others without any objective correction of whomsoever to be properly blamed.

Even there has been a rejection to women since their birthday because Chinese society considers girl birth as a shame, and raising them is a waste work. No Name Woman's decision to bring the baby with her into death may also be motivated by the reality that the baby is a girl, which would only be regarded as burdensome for the family and society. Two lines of the novel explain this; "...To be a woman, to have daughter in starvation time was a waste enough..." (6).

Continued by the line "...It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15).

Meanwhile, men are used to the endowed rights of governing and demanding women to serve their demands. Men enslave women at home, in social life or at the employment range with the inappreciative demeanors, which are physically or psychologically harmful for the economic, social and political existence. One of its implementation is the sexual harassment in which men are obviously victimize women as only the objects of sexual pleasure.

...They both gave orders: she followed. " if you tell your family, I'll beat you. I'll kill you. Be here again next week." No one talked sex, ever. And she might have separated the rapes from the rest of living if only she did not have to buy her oil from him or gather wood in the same forest. I want her fear to have lasted just as long as rape lasted so that the fear could have been contained. No drawn-out fear. But women at sex hazarded birth and hence lifetimes. The fear did not stop but permeated everywhere. She told the man, "I think I'm pregnant" He organized the raid against her... (7).

The fantasy of the narrator imagines the men to have organized the raid when he realized his sexual activities might disgrace him with the woman's pregnancy. This fantasy could have been true, in the part that men might be able and empowered to completely victimize women for many reasons of sexual pleasure, good name, etc. Common to happen till the present days, that men could easily humiliate women into objects, but then refuse to take the responsibility and

perhaps reverse the shame onto women. On daily practical attitudes men are so imperative upon women.

The value of obedience has also proven to be absolutely repressive over women. Men and women under the relationship pattern of subject and object have victimized women as to obey men's desires. "...his demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told (6). No Name Woman surrender herself to the rape without resistance as she was frightened of his regarded higher authority over women, following the image of men as the powerful, while women are the only powerless creature to obey the men's interest. Strengthened by the great influence of the social beliefs in which she was raised on the self-positioning as the inferior human being, with the obligation of highly and blindly adore the men for whatever they expect from women.

Men could confidently appear with this superior proud as their births are always being expected. Son's birth has become the standard of being functionally success of becoming a woman and a wife. And son is expected to continue the patriarchal descent line, to take the responsibility of maintaining the family life. "...a family must be whole, faithfully keeping the descent line by having sons to feed the old and the dead, who in turn look after the family..." (13). The subtle role division of the male and female in the Chinese tradition has given the greater responsibility to hold the survival of the family into the hands of sons. This view has become a long time concern of women movement ever since they struggle their rights against the masculine power. By lying the greater responsibility on men, women are as if being spoiled on the comfortable position and easier role on the descent line. However, this comfort results less opportunity for women to actualize and explore their talents, to exercise their potentials of handling the same big responsibility as those of men's and the automatic consequence is that women were regarded to deserve only the less human rights compared to the men's rights. Women are driven into only the domestic affairs, without any opportunity of

participation in the public field. While, the communal measure of one respectable person is those with the public achievement for the public advantages. In other words, before stepping on the effort of the public affairs participation, the men and the society have denied women from attaining any higher achievement than those of men. The problem, firstly, is not that women were unable to make use of the actual rights, but that they were made lost of their rights.

As also happen to women's individual rights to raise the out of marriage baby. Women's decision to be a single parent has actually been a difficult choice. But in the context of this story, even this choice cannot be understood by the society whose myth is that out of marriage pregnant woman is a disgrace for the family and the society. This once again confirms that the communal spirit of the society is unable to accept the individual interest above the social demands. Thus, the naïve infidelity of No Name Woman gains only the effort of the society to bring her back to the realization of their collectivism.

...The villagers were speeding up the circling of events because she was too shortsighted to see that her infidelity had already harmed the village, that waves of consequences would return unpredictably, sometimes in disguise, as now, to hurt her... (13).

Living under tightly strong community, in which collective relation is more highly appreciated than the private individuality, forces a person to willingly sacrifice her or his own requirements when there is the communal interest that demands their attention. Referring to such philosophical thought, the society uses the reason of communal harmony to force their regarded absolute true regulation

to anyone who daringly persuade their individual right and against the harmonious collective life. This seemingly criticizes the two contradictory concepts of individualism and collectivism, in which the pull of these two ideologies has failed to combine both to become the harmonious extreme aspects that are acquired each on certain occasions. And the Chinese tradition as characteristically eastern philosophy failed to consult both and falls to the extreme of collectivism, which tends to underestimate the individual aspects of one's life. Therefore, when the ignorant No Name Woman plainly go through a period of false pregnancy there has been made a public opinion formation to force the aunt to take the consequence.

...The frightened villagers, who depended on one another to maintain the real, went to my aunt to show her a personal, physical representation of the break she had made in the "roundness". Mislaying couples snapped off the future, which was to be embodied in true offspring. The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them... (13).

The narrator here emphasizes the raid of the villagers as the act of punishing one's prominent private individuality. The community insists its member to always be on the line of tradition and beliefs and be inside the circle of communal kinsmen. And thus,

...This roundness had to be made coin-sized so that she would see its circumference: punish her at the birth of her baby. Awaken her to the inexorable. People who refused fatalism because they could invent small



resources insisted on culpability. Deny accidents and wrest fault from the stars... (13).

The decision of No Name Woman to commit suicide may be understood as an effort of reestablishing her cultural responsibility for her cultural mistake of mislaying the roundness of the collective life. The bearing of the out of marriage pregnancy has seriously surprised the community who has been used to the determined rule of the old tradition and the authority of some beliefs, which govern the society's life. So, the aunt enacts on her own body and the no descent line child, the punishment of the tribe, fulfilling her filial, social and cultural responsibility to her circle by eliminating the source of contamination from its center and thereby restoring it to its unbroken configuration. "She may have gone to the pigsty as a last act of responsibility: she would protect this child as she had protected its father..." (15).

The punishment for No Name Woman has not finished yet after her death, the actually most painful punishment is the non-existent recognition of the family. "...The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her..." (16). The family with all the descendents is expected to forget her as if she was never born in the world. The series of sexual harassment and the society's raid have been easily neglected as if it never happened, along with the effort of forgetting the source of the disgrace. This negligence would reproduce the enforcement of the patrilineal authority and legitimacy on the women's subordination.

The admonition function of the incident is that women use it to warn the girls not to make a fool of sexual matter, by unconsciously restricted girls from the free and wide opportunity of exercising their potential in the contribution on the economic, social and political affairs. "The work of preservation demands that the feelings playing about in one guts not be turn into action.....fear at the enormities of the forbidden kept her desires delicate, wire and bone..." (8). Sexual restriction will extend into the restriction of exploring and revealing the other women's potentials into the public achievement. This certainly leads women into passivity, which is frequently believed by the society as the attached stereotypes of women preventing them from participation on the public sphere. Women under the patriarchal paradigm, "Suatu sistem otoritas laki-laki yang menindas perempuan melalui institusi sosial, politik dan ekonomi..." (Humm in Rahayu, 2002: 332), have lost their rights to play a great and equal role of governing the economic, social and political matter.

Women restriction has also been implemented in the cultural field as women are expected to stay and maintain the old tradition, while men are suggested to adventure the new and more challenging culture.

...They expected her alone to keep the traditional ways, which her brothers, now among the barbarians, could fumble without detection. The heavy, deep-rooted women were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning. But the rare urge west had fixed upon our family, and so my aunt crossed boundaries not delineated in space... (8).

While, the sexual restriction itself begins to take its definite form on the biological phenomenon of menstruation. "...Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful..." (5). Menstruation has become a symbol of adultery for girls. And start from the very first time they menstruate, biologically they are productive, and sexually they are regarded mature to have a sexual intercourse with men. Therefore, since the time, girls are obliged to take more careful behavior on their social intercourse. Some rules of clothing, the behavioral ethics, the hour of hanging out, are some real concrete and practical attitudes that in some sort have been made more restricted for women rather than for the men.

The bigger obligation of neutralizing the situation to avoid the sexual harassment is usually relied over women although the evident explains that the men are the aggressors and the women are the victims. Mother's warning for their daughters to be careful after the girls have menstruated is some how limited girls on their social interaction. This prevents them from sharpening their talent, broadening their experiences, or the long-term implication is that women are made less capable of handling public interest by the lack of the experiences. While the boys on their teenage and adult age are set freer than girls, many excuses given to them to pass trials and errors on their life, and thus they are used to go on the higher self esteem and self confidence.

Marriage is then the next important sequel of life, but for the old Chinese, marriage is not about romantic love of a couple set free to decide to get marriage

motivated by their own commitment. It was more about taking a daughter in law to be an employee for the family, therefore "...among the very poor and the wealthy, brothers married their adopted sisters, like doves..."(12). The choices of husbands or wives were entirely parent's prerogatives. And moreover for girls, whose existences were regarded burdensome for the family, having them get marriage was like releasing the burden. This inappreciative acknowledgment sent girls to become no better than slaves for the husband's family. Wives would then submit themselves to settle the household occupations of the husband's family with the unbearable treatment from the family, otherwise they might be sent home or sold to some landowners for slaves. In the case that husband left the wife without children, the parents in law directly have the right to get rid of her by selling her or mortgaging her, as long as it is more profitable for them. "...Her husband's parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her. But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me..." (7-9).

In the familial life, economically, women are made dependent on men, as they have no rights of inheritance or of the family property. Only the sons heir the rights of having the divided goods, while daughters would be sent to become the ...When the goods were divided among the family, three of the brothers took land, and the youngest, my father, choose an education. After my grandparents gave their daughter away to her husband's family, they had dispensed all the adventure and all the property... (8).

Such condition causes women to be powerless and have no strong bargaining position in front of the men since their existence is absolutely on the husband's hand. The incapability of earning money and the obligation of handling the

household matter have force them to be passively accept the fact that husbands have taken the greater responsibility on the familial life and thus they have to obey them.

The role division of men and women has been institutionalized into the job division of the public and private or domestic field. The division qualified men into the public sphere and women turned into the domestic sphere, base on the tradition which give the privilege of ruling the public affair and attaining the highest achievement in the communal contribution to the men. Women with the attached stereotypes as the weak, emotional, irrational, dependent, etc, are regarded fits only to the domestic role as wives or slaves. "...When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves..." (19). Girls or women since their younger age have been indoctrinated by the older generation to accept the value of the virtuous women to be wives or slaves, and they are entrapped into the domestic sphere of household affairs according to the patriarchal role division. Chinese girls receive such role pattern from the society as something in common and being penetrated into the young generation as if it is natural to become the tradition. The patriarchal tradition enforces the authority and legitimacy of the old culture to name and thus control the place of women within the patrilineage and thereby to establish the erasure of female desire and the denial of female self-representation.

Even the old China did restricted women to the physical body through the foot binding tradition. Many times the narrator is grateful as she is no more living in a society of such tradition , "...but my mother said we were lucky we didn't

have to have our feet bound when we were seven (9). In some old traditions, the restriction conducted over women extends to the physical treatment, and foot binding is characteristically Chinese tradition.

Chinese woman is culturally destined to live under men's authority from the day she was born to the death. Before marriage she is the father's own, on the marriage life she lives under husband's authority, and when her husband died she would submit her life to her oldest son as the regarded superior one to take charge of her. Threatened as to resemble to property, women never have the full authority of their own body and soul to freely think, feel or communicate their ideas and decide what they expect to do.

The other characters of the narrator's relatives who experience the repression caused by the patriarchal system are Brave Orchid and Moon Orchid. More than that, both of them have to face the racial discrimination as they live in the new nation with the strange language which make them silent by communication incapability to others. Fa Mu Lan, although the narrator positions her as the positive model of being a woman, still in fact being compelled to confess that women have to play on the masculine standard when they desire to achieve public acknowledgment.

## 2. The Warrior Woman; Fa Mu Lan

The legend of the Woman Warrior to inspire the narrator's personal identity presents a heroine woman successfully combat the society's enemy. Her

figure has destroyed many unequal stereotypes attached to women as to prove that women and men are the same at everything. Women conditioned to grow in a physical and rational exercise would also be able to achieve the quality that was believed as only men's strength. Nevertheless, her empowerment as if fail to threaten to disrupt the representations of the patriarchal circle, when in her battle, she is not representing herself as a woman but enacting the scenario of male selfhood. I put on my men's clothes and armor and tied my hair in a man's fashion..." (36). This choice of physical performance states that the society is not really acceptable to the figure of female. Thus, her strategy of involving the public affairs must be through the masculine standard, since to present as barely a woman often means a confrontation with the doubt from the society. There has been a strict distinction of men and women on the matter of private and public contribution, and unfortunately women are not trusted with the equal quality of public achievement. The society has enforced its patriarchal tradition to women, which finally limits them from their freedom of expressing their gender pride as barely a woman.

The other ironic fact is shown in the case that someone's success will only be highly appreciated, when it is men's success. "...My parents killed a chicken and steamed it whole, as if they were welcoming home a son..." (34). This statement may be interpreted into two interpretations, firstly it may want to say that the Woman Warrior is proud of the manly appreciation given by the family. But it may also become an affirmation that all this long women are not regarded as to deserve of this kind appreciation. But above all, it explains that subordination has disrupted women on the very principal of humanity, that is their existence as also human being like those of men.

### 3. Brave Orchid

Brave Orchid is actually an extraordinary woman said to have a higher qualified character than other common women are in the time. She appears with strong will, independent, brave and determined personality throughout the story. She would confidently decide and materialize whatever she expects to be right. Her entire life experience in China is the relief of a woman who daringly faces the world on its either good or bad condition. She performs as to successfully neglect the patriarchal system in order to confidently contribute the public employment and widely accepted by the Chinese society as the figure of special and valuable woman. Instead of this experience, in America, Brave Orchid must involve into the trouble of gender and racial discrimination, and thus life becomes harder for her compared to the former life in China.

Like other Chinese immigrant women, she is confronted to the fact of difficult labor condition. The economic situation of most Chinese immigrant families would not permit women to remain in the home; they also have to go to work to assist in supporting their families. But they have found that American employment discriminates women, especially the non-white ones. The majority of them have only been able to find jobs in low paying garment sweatshops where they must endure long hours and unhealthy working conditions. These working women experience exploitation and deteriorating living conditions along with the principle of capital holders to make use of those immigrant women to be the source of cheap workers.

One of the factors that creates this racial discrimination is the fact that most of those Chinese immigrant women are illiterate in English language, that



they could not entirely read, write, nor speak the language. This crucial weakness has made some of them choose the housebound condition and therefore economically dependent upon their husbands. But most who decide to obtain an employment are forced to reconcile with the low waged labor. Brave Orchid who was a medical employee in China found that her medical level of education is no more useful for earning money in America. The English illiteracy and the racial discrimination have sent her into the job of only picking up tomato and finally join her husband in the laundry. Whether at work place or in the home, their problems and oppressions as cheap labors and housewives are rooted in their position as women.

Language illiteracy has also discouraged women from cultural assimilation, defeat them from mingling with the new environment. Brave Orchid expresses this failure through her term of ghost to name every new strange material showing her rejection to the new custom, and to remain a traditional woman intently preserves her family from harm by maintaining the old traditions against the erosions of American culture.

...But America has been full of machines and ghost-Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghost, Five and Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the white Ghosts and their cars. There were Black Ghosts too, but they were open eyed and full of laughter, more distinct than White Ghosts...(96-97).

Brave Orchid loses the free space of implementing her Chinese tradition, and fails to anticipate just how misplaced the traditions and myths have become in the new world. But still through the conventions of chanting some Chinese legend such as The Woman Warrior, and through the storytelling of some Chinese ancestors, she keeps China drawn around her family in a linguistic and gustatory circle.

#### 4. Moon Orchid

Moon Orchid in her tragic story of familial conflict is depicted as a woman abandoned by her husband, who embodies the patriarchal view that women should always remain silent and never question male authority. The episode in which Moon Orchid reluctantly confronts her Americanized husband demonstrates how essentially voiceless a Chinese woman is who lives in a traditionally patriarchal society. Meeting her husband after many years apart, Moon Orchid is incapable of voicing her years of anger and grief, "...but all she did was open and shut her mouth without any words coming out..." (152). Moon Orchid's traditional Chinese upbringing has so completely conditioned her to be passive toward men. She is uncertain of her valuable existence as a woman and wife and thus psychologically very prone of deliberate speech terror. The main problem of her husband's unfaithful commitment is once again language barrier, the husband needs a wife to assist his interaction with the American society and Moon Orchid

absolutely fails in this part. Moon Orchid's unsuccessful confrontation with her husband has emphasized how important language is to personal identity, to enable one to argue her thought and feeling.

## 5. The Narrator

And finally sexual discrimination faced by the narrator herself is also clearly represented in the novel. Since her childhood, the narrator has been very sensitive of this sexual discrimination. And her attitude is clear and firm, that she refuses and unwillingly reconciles with even the smallest manifestation of patriarchal values.

The most difficult time of the narrator is the first phase of her denied existence as a girl in a misogynist society, where being men is a pride and freedom and being women is a burden and obedience. And then, her racial identity as Chinese in American society brings her into an inarticulate experience of interaction with the American society. Her identity as a girl and at the same time a Chinese immigrant in America has burdened her with double oppressions.

Firstly, her female sexual identity has to face the cultural and social system, which condition girls to hardly appreciate and be confident with their femininity. The society and even the family are in lines of patriarchal proclivity to regard women as worthless and thus present less friendly social intercourse for them. It is psychologically harmful for girls in their growing process as it frequently prevents them from socializing with the valued self-esteem and self-

confidant. And consequently, women are humiliated by the false consciousness as the subordinate human being under the men's superiority. Such beliefs and attitudes certainly legitimate the misogynist tendency upon women.

Narrator of The Woman Warrior has experienced this social denial since her child age, some statements explain this, "...I don't know. Bad, I guess. You know how girls are. There's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls." (46). Her own mother, confirming that women insofar have also become the agents of maintaining the misogynist tendency, delivers this speech. Women have been subjugated by the patriarchal doctrine to agree and cooperate to the system as the historically accepted as the common and natural law. And most importantly is that they have been made powerless and lose their desire to oppose against those injustice system.

The inappreciative attitude upon women is commonly and vulgarly performed by the society, just as follows:

...I minded that the emigrant villagers shook their heads at my sister and me. "One girl-and another girl, " they said, and made our parents ashamed to take us out together. The good part about my brothers being born was that people stopped saying, "all girls, "but I learned new grievances. "Did you roll an egg on my face like that when I was born?" "Did you have a full month party for me?" "Did you turn on all the lights?" "Did you send my picture to grandmother?" "Why not? Because I'm a girl? Is that why not?" "Why didn't you teach me English?" "You like having me eaten up at school, don't you?... (46).

Every individual either men or women long to be fully himself or herself in a way that does not diminish anything that essential to their sense of personal dignity. But the cultural determination has given the opportunity of fulfilling one's humanity exclusively for men, as they are adored as the expected generations to continue the familial inheritance. Son's birth will bring about the pride for the family, and ironically that women fullness as truly women is measured by her success of having son. Consequently, women serve the patrilineal lines and alienate their own sex. Therefore brother's birth for a daughter means a new realization of her differentiated and less expected child discerned firstly through the ceremonial detail held for only son's birth.

Son's public acceptance will then be strengthened in the growing phase of children. Through a very simple example, narrator presents such way of thinking,

..."Come, children. Hurry. Hurry. Who wants to go out with great uncle?" On Saturday mornings my great-uncle, the ex- river pirate, did the shopping. "Get your coats, whoever's coming."

"I'm coming. I'm coming. Wait for me."

When he heard girls' voices, he turned on us and roared, "No girls!" and left my sisters and me hanging our coats back up, not looking at one another. The boys came back with candy and new toys. When they walked through Chinatown, the people must have said, "a boy-and another boy- and another boy!"...(47).

Secure acknowledgment is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. This experience must have torn down her self-

esteem and therefore girls need more difficult individual conflicts to construct their firm existential conscience. Purposefully, she states that such differentiation on obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for one sex, that is female.

This inconvenient condition leads the narrator into a denial to her feminine identity to escape from the inappreciative collective behavior of the society, and unsurprisingly stated by the narrator, an explicit denial of her sexual identity as follows; "...I might as well have said, I'm not a girl..." (46). This sentence has implicitly asserted female's yearning for equal recognition and opportunity to exercise their fullness of their human personhood in every sphere.

Narrator's denial on her femininity would then require an escapee to build her firm existence to gain others' recognition. And realizing that male identity is the expected sex to be born and proudly acknowledged by the family and community, she seeks other's attention by presenting herself as a male. This masculine identification occurs on her child and teenage age and therefore brings about an extreme opposition and destructive attitude, as it is characteristically childish; "...I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two. "Bad girl," my mother yelled, and sometimes that made me gloat rather than cry. Isn't a bad girl almost a boy?" (47). This behavior is motivated by the denial of the society toward girls, which burden her with some feeling of unexpected and worthless child in the family and society. "When one of my parents or the emigrant villagers said, "Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds," "I would thrash on the floor and scream so hard I couldn't talk. I couldn't stop" (46).

Narrator's awareness on the unequal differentiation committed over women has sensitively arisen since her child hood. And the most conspicuously different treatment over both sexes lies on the job differentiation. She discovers that domestic responsibility is obliged only for girls, but ironically, female existence is regarded shameful while the adoration approved only for men. Secure acknowledgement is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. Therefore using her naïve and childish logical thought, she trespasses against the unequal differentiation by showing that she could also behave resemble and become almost a boy. By refusing everything considered as

female obligations, she insists to prove that female sexuality also carries out masculine qualities, which may also be endowed with some privileges. Purposefully she states that such differentiation on the obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for the one sex, that is female.

Women live under subordination of patriarchal culture will long-life be positioned as the secondary after men. Thus, before the system changed into the equal and just for women, this sex would still seek of equal position to men.

...I went away to my college – Berkeley in the sixties – and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy. I would have like to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs. That was for my brother, who returns alive from Vietnam ...(47).

Narrator's desire to turn into a male only confirms women's longing for the equal acknowledgement and freedom to express their unique feminine quality to accept the same appraisal from the community.

Resemble to her sexual identity, her racial identity as a Chinese living in American society has also burdened her with the more suffering of racial discrimination. Once the narrator said, "...Even now China wraps double binds around my feet" (48). Double oppression is undeniable for women of Chinese immigrants in their new destination environment, their victimized sexual discrimination will be added by the racial discrimination for some reasons.

Some adaptation has to be made for the different cultures, including certain standard of being a woman. Actually, both cultures view women on a subordinate way. But the narrator who was once from the common peoples of the Chinese society taste the more rigid convention of the Americans. "...Normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American feminine..." (172).

Language has also become their prime reasons of their powerless and inarticulate existence within the solid American society. Incapability of mastering English language gives narrator an experience of being a silence pupil in her school, as happen to many Chinese students; "...The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl..." (166). This silence gives the experience of being repressed persons as they hardly mingle with the Americans. As result, narrator and other Chinese students are frequently regarded as the nonexistent ones within the plural environments of her school.

Social interaction has also burdened the narrator with the experience of uttered insults of the native for her Chinese identity, "Order more of that nigger yellow, willya?" the boss told me. "Bright, isn't it Nigger yellow." "I don't like that word," (48). The word nigger is usually used by the white to ridicule the Afro-American people, and there is a historical sense of segregation that was addressed upon them through time since their first arrival into the island until nowadays situation. And such kind of discrimination has also usually been addressed upon the immigrants of other races, including the Chinese ones.

Adult Chinese immigrants, as happen to the narrator's parents, are mostly troubled with their political, economical, social and cultural discrimination. Politically, America applies certain law to limit the number of immigrants entering the state. Thus many illegal immigrants have to survive in America by opposing or hiding from the immigrant officers. "...The immigrants I know hide their names, sojourner take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence..." (5). Narrator recognizes that most Chinese immigrants



are afraid of performing their real existence, as the Chinese and harmful adaptation has to be made, by hiding their real identities to adjust to the law.

Their populations are also prone and powerless of government's policies. Their illegal statues would lessen government's risk and responsibility when it forcefully applies certain regulations. "...When urban renewal tore down my parents' laundry and paved over our slum for a parking lot, I only made up gun and knife fantasies and did nothing useful..." (48). These people have no strong bargaining position to fight for their own requirements. Nothing is done but submitted their life to the United States laws and policies.

Economically, the native capital owners use most first generation immigrants in United States to become their low paid and submissive labors. Therefore many of them have to work under exploitation, working in the unhealthy environment, without any health and safety insurance, and most importantly is that their wages are obviously insufficient for supporting the life necessities.

Social and cultural aspects are also important to catch the attention, but especially the Chinese immigrants are known as hardly ever to mingle with the other races, as they have made a strong cultural defense from the influences of the other cultures. China town is the symbol of the solid Chinese immigrants who tightly maintain their collective racial inheritance with the strong support each other on the political, economical, social and cultural issues.

Facing the very complicated situation, the narrator is intensely constructed to have a wistful thinking of one's existence. Her in-articulation has been

concluded through the line of, "...I thought talking and not talking made the difference between the sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves..."(186). Such conclusion has certainly motivates her to have a high self-esteem and self-confidant to reveal her personality, despite the unfriendly culture toward women and Chinese of her environment.

Finally, the important notion is that the repressive and injustice patriarchal tradition that she experiences since the younger age, added by the myth of The Warrior Woman and the story of her relatives have given a great contribution on her process of establishing her existential conscience as a Chinese-American Woman.

### **C. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Novel The Woman Warrior**

This second subchapter analysis will be the answer of the question of the narrator's concept of woman existential conscience as a Chinese American Woman. As mentioned before, the researcher uses liberal feminism thought and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity as her theoretical approach. Therefore the researcher will use these theoretical bases to explain the construction of the narrator's continuous process of establishing her concept of Chinese American women existential conscience.

This analysis would reveal the narrator's counter idea of her individual existential consciousness by emphasizing her struggle against gender and racial discriminations. As previously explained in the first subchapter of the analysis, narrator and many women around her are the objects of both oppressions. Patriarchal system has torn them since the physical body to the dizziness or destruction of the existential conscience as the equal human being to men. Without knowledge and sensitive recognition of the whole structure of patriarchal system, women frequently fall to the false consciousness of their experiences as the unchangeable destiny. Thus, sexual harassment, women domesticity, women's lack of education, and many other manifestations of patriarchal system receive the legitimization as the common and natural law. The suicide aunt, and the totally silent aunt are the examples of the extreme subjugation of women consciousness, which make them absolutely fail of realizing their own rights. The unbearable pressure the society's punishment, which had finally forced No Name Aunt to commit suicide, is actually the logical consequence of the misogynist patriarchal system. And women's silence, like happen to narrator's aunts, only empowers the oppressive system. Therefore, narrator's commitment is then to strengthen women with the stable consciousness of their existence.

Some other characters in the novel have also presented the fact of discrimination, not only of the sexual reason, but doubled with the racial reason. Narrator's mother and aunt, and the narrator herself have to accept the less appreciative behavior from the society caused by their sexual identity as women. Moreover, its culture rules women to obey and be submissive to their men. And,

at the same time, they must be along with their men fight the discriminative treatment from the native white people.

The importance of the facts of discrimination is that this has become the core by which narrator bases her existential consciousness. Narrator's consciousness has arisen since her child age through her disappointment of social oppressive attitudes upon women and especially toward her selfhood as a girl born from the Chinese immigrants living in American society and culture. Thus, her struggle is then to reveal women as the same qualified human to men to gain the equal opportunity of everything. By, at the same time, growing the awareness of disapproval toward racial discrimination. She confirms that women – of whatever races – will attain their firm existences on their successes of playing the same and equal roles as men. Yet, such liberal concept does not limit her to give an appreciation on women's active and free choice to live either with the feminine or masculine values.

The Woman Warrior is the story of women struggle to establish their firm existences within the injustice and discriminative patriarchal system. Narrator grows up in a strong determination of Chinese and American cultures on how to be a virtuous woman. She closely engages to the Chinese tradition about women position through her mother's storytelling. And at the same time her effort to mingle with Native American society brings her to an understanding of American feminine standard.

The experiences of many women in her family have taught her that being any kind of women is absolutely a matter of choice. Even though culture has

determined a lot of restrictive guidance to the gender of women, but culture has also created legend which on the contrary has been able to encourage women to realize and bravely choose their own extraordinary ways of life resemble to the opportunity given to men. Chinese culture has determined girls to the future of wives and slaves. The dutifulness of being a Chinese woman in the time is as the prime childbearer, burdened with all works of household matters. "...When we Chinese girls listened to the adult talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves..." (19). Clear distinction of the private and public contribution has discriminatively limited women from the chance of freely develop their potentials or to play greater role than the household affairs. But Chinese women possess the alternatively extraordinary figure of Fa Mu Lan from the legend of The Swordwoman, which inspires them to reveal themselves, as the free and unrestricted women trespass against the system.

...I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother, who may not have known its power to remind. She said I would grow up a wife and sale, but she thaught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman...(20).

The story gives her the spirit of a strong and free woman, encourage her to deconstruct the limitation and gain the unlimited space of firstly being fully human being. This powerful character appears though her adoration toward the Swordwoman, "...We could be heroines, swordwoman. Even if she had to rage across all China, a swordwoman got even with anybody who hurt her family. Perhaps women were once so dangerous that they had to have their feet bound..."

(19). Through the sentence she states women capacity of reaching the highest achievement and criticizes foot-binding tradition as a means of remaining women from their optimal achievements and as only implicitly stating that previously women were those in charge of the authority of human civilization.

Narrator's process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman cannot be separated from the cultural background of Chinese and American traditions. The narrator has passed through individual and communal experiences of sexual and racial discrimination. Her problem of racial discrimination has begun to be over through her realization of universalism over racial fanaticism, together with serious effort to adapt to the new culture.

...We belong to the planet now, Mama. Does it make sense to you that if we're no longer attached to one piece of land, we belong to the planet? Whenever we happen to be standing, why, that spot belongs to us as much as any other spot." Can we spend the fare money on furniture and cars? Will American flowers smell good now?... (107).

Meanwhile her process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman would finally be concluded on a liberate and humanize existence of women. This is conceptualized into the one who unwillingly surrender to patriarchal subjugation as applied on the injustice prejudices of women stereotypes, with an important effort of proving women's capacity of education and public participation while at the same time setting up feminine values on equality with masculine values.

Narrator emphasizes women possession of the same rights to enjoy freedom and autonomy of their own selves to express and develop their fullness of their humanity. The efforts begin on her acceptance of her sexual identity as barely a woman, supported by her referential record of women valuable position in the Chinese tradition;

...And I had to get out of my hating range. I read in an anthropology book that Chinese say, "Girls are necessary too"; I have never heard the Chinese I know make this concession. Perhaps it was a saying in another village. I refuse to shy my way anymore through our Chinatown, which task me with the old sayings and the stories... (52-53).

In regard of real sexual discrimination, this has become her first statement of an acceptance toward an also valuable womanhood. Social and cultural discrimination upon woman will no more suffer her with despair disappointment, but realizing women's large capacity and valuable femininity would become the most strategic instruments of gender equality.

Concrete thoughtful idea lies on her critical and dialectical discussion of women existence, which is materialized in the legend of the woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan. Her realization on women subordinate position through the oppressive experiences of her women relatives has encouraged her to dialectically build an ideal figure of women. A heroine lives in the existential consciousness of men and women equality with a great courage to give evidence of women's great personality.

The narrator materializes her ideal figure of women through the character of Fa Mu Lan – great women in the Chinese legend – as a figure to whom the narrator resembles herself and entrusts her concept of women. She intentionally leaps from the story of hers to the story of the swordwoman or Fa Mu Lan without any quotation mark as if to confirm that the life story of the swordswomen is actually her own fantasy autobiography. From the original Chinese story of Fa Mu Lan, narrator actively makes some improvements for the story to figure out this character as bringing a lot of deconstruction toward the cultural biased gender stereotypes.

Firstly, she proves that women's stereotypes as the weak, ignorant, irrational, emotional, dependent, submissive etc are absolutely cultural construction. Thus on a more neutral condition women may also be constructed on either feminine or masculine characteristics. The swordwoman successfully performs women on a strong, rational, free and independent personality.

The swordwoman or the woman warrior gains her education beyond the common circle of community and family, but in an otherworldly place where male and female difference is not constructed in a patriarchal system. Her educators are a couple beyond childbearing ages whose relationship appears to be one of relative equality. And the education they offer encourages her to forge an identity, not through conventional formulations of women's selfhood, but through a close identification with the creatures of nature and the secrets of natural space. In such a space, female sexuality remains a natural event rather than a cultural phenomenon that situates girls in a constellation of attitudes established by the



patriarchal society. She is far from the patriarchal concepts of being a woman in whom certain cultural constructions adhere certain gender stereotypes which more frequently harmful for women.

The beginning part of the second chapter of The Woman Warrior is the story of how the swordswoman is hardly and seriously trained by her two teachers. Being thought on the different way to common Chinese girls, her physical power is being exercised to gain the bodily strong and skilful girl. She is capable of self-defense by using weapons or physical skill through her learning of the special skill of creatures around her.

...After five years my body became so strong that I could control even the dilations of the pupils inside my irises. I could copy owls and bats, the words for “bat” and “blessing” homonyms. After five years the deer let me run beside them. I could jump twenty feet into the air from a standstill, leaping like a monkey over the hut. Every creature has a hiding skill and a fighting skill a warrior can use...(23-24).

This is testimonial for women struggle on its deconstruction to the cultural beliefs on women as the physically weak creatures with the whole life dependence on men’s accompaniment and protection. It confirms Margaret Mead’s premise that women on a certain cultural situation may appear with masculine stereotypes of patriarchal society.

Next swordswoman’s success is conquering white tiger and nature with its dangerous and adventurous situation. It presents woman on an independence quality of settling their own problems without depending on men’s assistance.

Not only the physical skill does the women warrior capable of mastering, rationality that was previously regarded as masculine quality belongs only to men is becoming one of the subject learnt by Fa Mu Lan. "...I learn to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes..."(29). She develops her rational thought by learning to analyze and accept the complex and paradoxical phenomenon of the world. Knowledge was once a powerful instrument of understanding and controlling certain paradigm by which men maintain their dominance over women. But given to the swordwoman, it has become a powerful instrument of realizing her free, autonomous and equal position toward men. Fa Mu Lan appears as a woman on the unlimited and free opportunity to develop and express the deepest potentials of the body, mind and heart by which the capacity of every person depends on. It trespasses against the assumed incapacity of women for universal, rational and logical thought that doomed them to the inferior statuses.

She is undergoing the special training in purpose of setting free the village from the baron's despotism. She would then dedicate the greatest contribution for the villagers to bring them back freedom of the intruders. And once again this action destroys cultural prejudices that women are not in capacity of involving the public complicated sphere. On the contrary, the same opportunity would result the same possibility for both sexes to play the role and may even cooperate each other on handling public problems. This would give the same opportunity for women and men to attain public achievement refers to the standard of the noble existence. "...You can be remembered by the Han people

for your dutifulness...”(23). Opposes the previous determination that public achievement, as the highest standard of one’s existence in China, is a privilege for male citizen. Extraordinarily differ to the other conventional women, Fa Mu Lan, is actively and revolutionarily leads the social, political and economical change of her village. She has proven that women, when they have the same opportunity to men, will also be articulate and powerful in front of the oppressive condition.

Fa Mu Lan is extraordinarily different to other women in the matter of her characteristics. Cultural prejudices set up on gender stereotypes lose its meaning in front of the swordwoman’s leadership. She could stand firmly on her own self as an independent, strong, and powerful, with the great talent of leadership capable of handling the great mass of troops to fight on the battle of freedom. Social and cultural expectations usually provide men with greater chance of leading position. Men would automatically be chosen first for the place of leader, while women are regarded as more suitable for the position of men’s assistants. Gender stereotypes of women, such as weak, emotional and irrational are consequently doubtful for the society to trust them with the great responsibility. Whereas these stereotypes have actually based on only social prejudices, ignoring the fact that women are given the less opportunity to the access of education and to experience the challenges life offer to exercise one’s potencies. But the swordwoman gains both the education and the adventurous experience, which finally shape her character into a woman of powerful leadership. Most importantly, her political awareness is naturally developed againsts the repression.

Narrator's imagination of the swordwoman as to present her ideal concept of a woman seems to be very much influenced or resemble to liberal concept of feminism. The liberal feminist's spirit is clearly appeared in the way that narrator present the swordwoman as a woman with the same and even higher capability than men, thus the right of the same and equal education and public participation will also belong to women.

But we must be very careful to evaluate the very last part story of Fa Mu Lan. We may come into a conclusion of an ambiguity or a distortion of narrator's concept of feminism when we read that the last and final dedication of the swordwoman is to get back into domestic roles. It seems to be an antithesis for her first statement of undifferentiated being from the men, but it actually there the narrator's dialectical and critical thought lies.

Narrator states the importance of drawing out and developing the difference and uniqueness of both sexes rather than only stressing the potency of similarities. Having returned home, the swordwoman kneels down before her parents in law, "...Now my public duties are finished ...I will stay with you, doing farmwork and housework, giving you more sons..." (53-54). A liberal feminist might suggest that this decision is performing a socially constructed gender role, which in itself denies women's autonomy. Thus it draws back feminist struggle to attain the same and equal opportunity to play a greater role in the public sphere, out of the domestic field. Therefore, Fa Mu Lan's decision to return to the domestic affairs after her heroic action seems so ironic to the struggle of women and men equality. This may be regarded betraying the spirit of equality

that she deconstructed before on her successful public contribution. But dialectically, when this decision is freely and actively chosen under the consciousness of sexual equality of both men and women, this has become absolutely an autonomous choice of a human being called woman. Indeed, on this decision lies a respect to womanhood. Narrator highly appreciates femininity and women's active choices so that the problem is no more the dichotomy between public and private sphere, but the appreciation toward both masculine and feminine values.

Swordwoman's final decisions to return home and totally involved to the domestic world and the function of childbearing is an active, autonomous and free choice. Her process of proving the androgenic character and capability of someone either male or female has brought her to the realization or consciousness of her autonomous, free and powerful existence to choose whatever she expects. The narrator refuses to be entrapped into only the dichotomy of public and private sphere that limits the understanding of human freedom. More of that, she reveals feminism deeper into the problem of appreciating both masculine and feminine values, rather than places them in opposition. And narrator's commitment is to appreciate whatever women's choices, as long as the decision is the free, autonomous and active choices of the individual, rather than a total submission to the patriarchal system.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

**A. Conclusion**

The Woman Warrior narrates a woman process of establishing her firm existential conscience as a Chinese-American Woman. By firstly performing the reality of women subordination in the injustice patriarchal culture, the narrator moves on to the process of encountering the oppression, not by a submissive acceptance, but by constructing the idealism of women existence. Her racial identity as Chinese living in America has also become a troublesome issue burdens her with one more reason of discrimination.

Narrator as the center character of the novel has closely in touch with women experiences of oppressive condition caused by their gender identity as

women. Being a woman has always meant being endowed with some social and cultural prejudices reflected firstly on some women stereotypes such as – weak, dependent, submissive, irrational, emotional, etc – which tend to qualify women as the less qualified being compared to men. The consequence is that women are restricted from the access of education as the instrument of enlarging the rational understanding and from the public participation by which one could establish their strong political position in a society. Thus, most women fail to establish their firm existential conscience and driven into the limited boundary of household field which frequently oppressive for them.

The Woman Warrior asserts the fact of women subordination begins from the most tragic one. Women with a total submission on men and her patriarchal society has become the victim of sexual harassment, and be punished by the society for her out of marriage pregnancy. Other characters of The Woman Warrior also suffer for gender inequalities in a varied level. The Woman Warrior has to compromise with the patriarchal standard of heroism. In a battle against the baron, pretending as a man is a must unless she has to face the doubt and non-cooperation of the society. Narrator's mother, Brave Orchid, moves to America means losing jobs because of her language barrier. And she finally has to deal only with the domestic field, which is not really proper for her strong and independent characteristics. And Narrator's other aunt, Moon Orchid, is a woman with the extremely weak personality. Constructed by the oppressive patriarchal culture she becomes absolutely silent and submissive under men's authority. Thus, after husband's negligence for years, Moon Orchid still could not fight for

her rights as a wife. And after all, the narrator herself has also been greatly disappointed with the patriarchal society, which give her less appreciation than her brothers.

The narrator and her relatives have also experienced racial discrimination. It covers all life aspects, through the social, economical, cultural and political matters of being citizen of America. Language barrier has mostly become the prime problem, which alienate them into the low paid jobs. Or the other women have to accept husband's decisions to settle them into only domestic fields.

But narrator, through her dialectical discussion of womanhood, has successfully deconstructed the social and cultural prejudices by conceptualizing the ideal figure of women through the Chinese legend of Fa Mu Lan. Fa Mu Lan is the materialization of her ideal woman, by whom some concepts of feminism inspire her personal construction.

Concept of liberal feminism with its theory of sameness and equality between women and men, implemented in the same and equal rights of education and public contribution have become the very important issues claimed by the narrator to exist within men and women relationship. Through this character, the narrator deconstructs the previously underestimated women into the realization of warrior woman. Narrator believes that under the same and equal treatment women would also be able to gain the quality that was previously believed as only men's quality.

The narrator demands the realization of the more just pattern of men and women relationship. The new system where women and men share the equal



responsibilities of both domestic and public field based on the principals of equal independence, mutual interdependence and reciprocal obligation. Within this pattern women and men are equally acknowledged as fully human being, thus sex will not deny either men or women to actualize their humanity.

Narrator's dialectical thought lies on the continuance of the above liberal concept of feminism. Without suggesting women to easily surrender to the previously regarded women's roles with a submissive acceptance as something common and natural, narrator refuses to be entrapped in the dichotomy of masculine and feminine values. Thus she commits to solve the inferior view over women by her high appreciation on femininity. Narrator's thought on women's freedom is presented on the holistic view of life. It is not just freedom from patriarchal subordination and oppression, but most of all is freedom to exercise their potentials, to sharpen their rational thought and to fully actualize their humanity. Narrator's concept of women existential conscience lies on her desire of women realization on their free, autonomous and subjective individuality. Women may live with either feminine of masculine aspects since both are the legitimate modes of being human.

### **Recommendation**

Novel The woman Warrior depicts a complex reality of Chinese American people deal with their effort to settle their new identity i the n the new environment. The researcher here focused her study only on the matter of

women's experience within the sexual and racial discriminative society through the feminist point of view. But actually the novel also presents some other conflicts which bring the characters to involve with racial discrimination of the society, and to undergo the psychological conflict in their effort to mingle with the society. This issue will be interesting to be analyzed considering the social - cultural fact of the blend plural races in American. Moreover its historical experience of racial discrimination has noted the terrified humiliation upon humanity.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. Background of Choosing the Subject

Realizing the subordinate position posted for women, feminists struggle to break the bonds of patriarchal culture in order to gain the acknowledgement of women as fully human being to be freely exercising their personal existence in every sphere. Feminists attain to overcome the conventional stereotypes and gender biases deeply penetrated in the unconscious mind of women and men and at the same time, seeking freedom for self-definition, self affirmation and self determination. All the effort is to establish women's consciousness of their existence, to commit them politically aware of their position in the patriarchal society, and moreover is to re-thinking and re-construct the present pattern of women and men's relationship for the more just and equal relation for both sexes.

America along with some European countries draws a hard long struggle of feminism movement. The issues have also developed parallel to women problems in each epoch. Many feminists born to strike women's rights which have been neglected and bring consequences to women repression in the whole history of human life. Women have been omitted from the recorded history written with central focus on men. Therefore some contemporary feminist argue that the apparent exclusion or marginality of women in the textual history has also become the concern of feminist to trespass against the malestream theory and historical report. The efforts take the form of the development of theoretical approach and great contribution were also given by women writers who wrote in feminist consciousness. They brought back women to become the subjects of their own political, social and economic role in the human history.

One of the extraordinary women acknowledged as feminist for her thought presented in a novel is Maxine Hong Kingston. She is recognized as one of the most outspoken contemporary feminist in America whose concern is to report women's names and deeds in a text. And that she comes from a minor Chinese subculture living in the United States makes her special on her specific women experience.

She was born to Chinese immigrant parents, in Stockton, on 27 October 1940. She wrote her first two books, The Woman Warrior and China Man, in Hawaii, a time and place provided her with the necessary distance and perspective to sort out her identity problems. Her primary questions on sexism that lies in her

consciousness has motivated her to write down her women relatives story to present women real condition living in the injustice patriarchal system.

Many interesting aspects of the novel, primarily dealt with women experiences, have attracted the researcher to examine certain understanding of feminism under influence of certain racial and national identity. Thus, "...Kingston's main project in The Woman Warrior is to avenge oppression by reporting stories about the women in her family..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002) would become an unexhausted source for such feminism analysis. The misogyny of Chinese Culture which had forced her aunt into suicide and the regarded non-existent position in her family encountered by Maxine through the ideology of liberal feminism, "... a critical concern with the value of individual autonomy and freedom from supposedly unwarranted restriction by others..." (Beasley 1999: 51). By retelling the story of her family she put an individual autonomy on those the oppressed women and established her own feminism thought to build up her womanly existential consciousness.

And in this research, the researcher is interested to analyze novel The Woman Warrior, since it depicts a landscape of the consciousness and experience of especially the contemporary American born daughter of Chinese immigrant parents to seek her gender, racial and national identity.

The researcher finds that Maxine's understanding of the misogynist tendency in her Chinese culture has encouraged her to oppose it by using the developed western feminist point of view. She reads the experiences of the

marginalized and subordinated women in her origin culture through women perspective. By using liberal feminist thought, Maxine demands the equal rights and opportunities for women and the acknowledgement of their subjective existence in the history of social, economic, and political life. This women perspective enables her to regain women subjectivity for the Chinese women who have been silenced and muted by the patriarchal tradition. Thus, her womanly consciousness then arises through series of contradictory women portraits presenting some real conditions and ideal potentialities to be “not-the second sex”.

While her racial and national identity is what makes her reconciles the two cultures into a newly syncretism identity. Therefore, it is certainly unavoidable that her book is written under the subconscious of those mix and syncretism of the Chinese and American cultures. “... She ties the American way of life in with the Chinese way of life...”(<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/canam/kingston.htm> 2002).

On the one hand, Stockton, Maxine’s residential relatively small Chinese population becomes a literary microcosm for her to familiarize herself with the Chinese culture and tradition. Her mother played great role in this occasion, by retelling stories about No Named Woman, her aunt who become the victim of sexual harassment, and the legendary swordswoman, Fa Mu Lan, she shaped Maxine’s gender identity in the context of Chinese culture. The mother penetrated the myth of Chinese women destines her future adult life into the role of “wife and

slave”, while in the mean time, she fired Maxine’s imagination to become a revolutionary woman with the story of The Woman Warrior.

On the other hand, Maxine is also the product of American conscience, with the dominant history of feminism. She lives in the time when the feminist movement flared up on its insistence on equality between women and men. The extent of rationalistic feminist theories, supplied by many western feminist thinkers, vigorously impact most women’s conscience to demand their rights in all life aspects as human being.

Under such syncretism conscience, Maxine is a feminist, who realizes and struggles to break the oppressive patriarchal system by awakening women’s self-consciousness through her novel. “... Mitchel dan Oakley mengatakan bahwa seseorang dapat dikategorikan sebagai feminis jika ia mempertanyakan hubungan kekuasaan laki-laki-perempuan, namun ia juga harus secara sadar menyatakan dirinya sebagai feminis...”(Mughtar 1999:6). Finally, Maxine’s woman consciousness is formed through the experiences of Chinese womanhood and the influences of the western feminist thinkers.

Her identity as a Chinese American woman is also unique for the researcher in which it gives her the capability of understanding the double oppression of the Chinese immigrant women in America. Being immigrants itself has often meant meeting the hostility of the native-born population and the discriminatory treatment of the destined States government. And culturally, the United States common metaphor of the melting pot tends to be assimilationist which vanish ethnic differences by regarding immigrants’ original cultures as the

less important to the host culture. Moreover, being Chinese immigrant women living in America always means confrontation with the double jeopardy of racism and sexism. As they fight side by side with Chinese men against racial injustice in America, they have to resist an equally pernicious oppression -- the oppression of sexism, which, though rooted in their Chinese patriarchal culture, is nurtured in America, especially in the Chinese community.

As the second generation of Chinese immigrants, Maxine is witnessing the incapability of many Chinese immigrant women to adapt to the American culture. Language often becomes the problem of the Chinese immigrant women, since most of them were unfamiliar to English. In addition, the lack of education and skill has also been one factor to limit their access to the opportunities associated with the public life which then kept them in the private and less challenging role in the immigrant communities. It excludes women from the history of Chinese immigrant sacrifices and grievances to gain their firm existence in the new culture and society. Therefore, the emergence of Chinese women in the history of traditional China as well as in the Chinese American society has become the purpose of Maxine writing activities.

Since her first glance of reading its title, the researcher found the phrase The Woman Warrior to be strongly rises and challenges women's consciousness on their existence toward the patriarchal system. The Woman Warrior presents women existential conscience on women self awareness of their dehumanized and oppressed existence against the patriarchal culture which then leads them to construct their consciousness of their equal existence toward men. It opposes the

masculine paradigm, as only men believed of having the power to become fully human being while women are the weak and dependent. By performing contradictory characters, Maxine seems to passionately want to prove that gender differentiation does not equivalent to sex differentiation.

For Maxine, being woman does not spontaneously deal with weakness, dependency, irrationality, passivity, or emotion. On the contrary, she believes that when women were given a chance and were taught to be strong, independent, rational, active, etc, they can also bear what is being characterized as masculine.

Gender differentiation into men and women is arbitrary characters that may attach to both sexes, male and female. This point once again confirms Maxine's choice to be much influenced by the liberal feminist conception of "... fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature - that is, as women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Further reading will guide the readers, page by page, enjoying much more complex understanding of women and their realization of their regarded secondary sex which lead them into either deteriorated body and soul or into a tough and firm self construction.

The book itself was first published in 1975, the first of the four novels written by Maxine Hong Kingston. Unsurprisingly, The Woman Warrior won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction in 1976 and was rated as one of the top ten nonfiction books of the decades. The American audiences warmly welcome the book either as a regarded novel or as a kind of autobiography. It is recognized to be a nonfiction work of art as it talks about her



own self and her relatives' dramatic way of life, but since it is a kind of rewriting a storytelling of her mother, it is undeniable that she adds many fictional elements into the book. Therefore "... the book is not really an autobiography as a specific genre but an "autobiographical form" that combines fiction and nonfiction..." (Feng: <http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/pcfeng/CALF/ch1.htm>: 2002 ).

The good appreciation of the book employs it together with China Man, to be widely taught as source book in literature, women's studies, sociology, ethnic studies, and history classes. Many objections derive from many Asian American critics on its generic status, rejecting the perception which view the book as a representative of most Chinese Americans' experiences, Maxine regarded as presenting her own personal experiences in the book. However, many other critics and especially the researcher, acknowledge the book as highly valued worth of becoming the resource book for studying a specific aspect of American life.

## **J. Problem Statement**

Dealing with the feminism thoughts and issues in relation to the establishment of one's self identity relying on this novel, the writer will analyze the subject as follows:

5. How is the representation of women subordination within patriarchal culture as reflected in The Woman Warrior?

6. How is the narrator's concept of Chinese American women's existential conscience as reflected in The Woman Warrior?

### **K. Scope And Limitation**

The researcher limits her analysis into an understanding of the process of conceptualizing Chinese American Women existential conscience as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior. By firstly giving much attention on women experiences of discrimination as the principal concern of feminism, the researcher would then move into an analysis of narrator's concept of Chinese American women existential conscience by using an approach of liberal feminism.

### **L. Benefit Of The Research**

This research is held in purpose of getting some benefits:

1. To give a clear and broad understanding of the presentations of women subordination in the novel The Woman Warrior.
2. To give a clear understanding of certain construction of Women Existential Conscience especially of those the Chinese American Women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior.

### **E. Methodology**

Literary works written by some of the best American authors can be used as artifacts and mental evidence of American history. Literary works in the form

of novel, story, poetry, drama, biography, treatise, document, etc are the illustrations, experiences portrait, and reflections of particular society in a certain era. "...Literature is the expression, through the art and language, of total culture of a people drawn together at a time and place. History provides the facts; art and philosophy provide the cultural pattern and meaning (Spiller 1981: 3). Since literature is essentially a part of culture, an "interdisciplinary approach" is appropriately relevant to the analysis. This is relied on the idea of culture itself, which is complex, constructed from many aspects of human experiences.

American Study as an interdisciplinary study effectively grapples the problem of human and the environment with the assistance of some other disciplines by demonstrating the interconnections of the ideas. To have such a comprehensive view the American Study students must also employ the interdisciplinary connections between the past, present and future. It is actually a newly emerging discipline draws on and waves together theories and research from numerous fields throughout the humanities, history, and social science. Thus American Studies is an interdisciplinaryly discipline includes social science, literary, history, politics and economic structures so forth.

This thesis is going to analyze an autobiographical novel, The Woman Warrior, written by Maxine Hong Kinston. The novel will become the micro phenomenon to be interdisciplinary analyzed using the feminist literary criticism, sociological approach and historical approach, pass through time past, present and future in order to understand comprehensively the macro phenomenon around the novel.

1. Feminist literary approach focused in the concept of liberal feminism will be useful to understand the novel through women perspective in behalf of revealing women oppressive problems in the patriarchal culture and their struggle to overcome it.
2. Sociological approach enables the researcher to analyze the novel without missing its social context, in account of its plural time, place and cultural backgrounds.
3. Historical approach is used in purpose of understanding the development of feminism thought and issues which inspires the whole body of the novel and gives much influence to the writer.

## **F. Method Of The Reaserch**

This research will be a literary research, means that the researcher will use every relevant data, classified into primary data and supportive data:

- e. The primary data will be every data of the novel The Women Warrior written by Maxine Hong Kingston, which is related to the study.
- f. The supportive data will be from all possible referential data. It can be from books, magazines, reviews from Internet, encyclopedia, journals, or discussion, etc.

## **G. Thesis Representation**

### **CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION**

- V. Background of Choosing The Subject

- W. Problem Statement
- X. Scope and Limitation
- Y. Benefits of the Research
- Z. Methodology
- AA. Method of Research
- BB. Thesis Representation

## **CHAPTER II : LITERARY REVIEW**

- E. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought
  - 4. Women Existence Based on Confucianism
  - 5. Women Existence Based on Taoism
  - 6. Women Based on Buddhism
- F. Feminism Thought On Women Existence
  - 3. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society
  - 4. Liberal Feminism Concept of Women Existence
    - a. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities
    - b. Women's Rights for Education
    - c. Women's Rights for Public Participation
- I. Critique on the Hegemony of Masculinity
- J. Chinese American Women Double Oppression in the Patriarchal American Society
  - 3. The History Of Chinese Immigrant Women in America
  - 4. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

### **CHAPTER III : ANALYSIS**

- C. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.
- D. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Woman Warrior.

### **CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **C. Women in the Patriarchal Chinese Thought**

##### 1. Women Existence Based on Confucianism

Confucianism has sometimes been called a religion, although Confucius was not a founder of religion in the usual sense. He was the first and greatest Chinese philosopher and the founder of Chinese literature. His teaching was found in the early part of the Analects, a collection of his sayings assembled by his disciples. In the course of China's long history, Confucius stands out as the most prominent figure. Without any claim to divinity or reference to the supernatural, the teaching of Confucius have exercised such a molding influence that if the Chinese way of life were to be characterized in one word, it would be Confucian.

Although Confucius established a wise and morally based philosophy, still unavoidably the whole context of his thought was the condition and the cultural background of the society –his early philosophical thought had no real commitment to subordination of women, but over time Confucian teachings were expanded upon. Thus, in a society in which patriarchal tradition has deeply penetrated into the subconscious mind of its people, Confucius was not in the exceptional, his teaching proved to have strongly maintained and even strengthen the subordinate view and treatment toward women.

He used a lot of masculine symbolism in his teaching. His full development of the Confucius virtues is exemplified by the Chun-tzu, or the superior man, performance of an ideal gentleman and a state official. The highest existence of an individual would be gained on his achievement and contribution in the collective and state life. A person is morally evaluated according to his or her adherence to social roles prescribed by ancient rituals that were designed for collective achievement. Such an idealistic humanism teaching, reach its peak manifestation on the social and political achievement as the highly appreciated by the society, but has become only the men's right. On the other hand, women were restricted from their potentialities of their highest achievement contribution to the collective life. "...The goodness of a man is determined by how well he plays his set of social roles as son, husband, father and/or public official, while, a woman is judged by her performance as daughter, wife, and mother ..."(Li 1995: 412)

Confucian interpretations further reinforced male authority and patrilineal customs. According to the Confucian structure of society, women at

every level were to occupy a position lower than men. Most Confucians accepted the subservience of women to men as natural and proper. Chinese culture destined women to be led and to follow others. As Confucius "...held that a son must shield his father's crime and care for his own relatives more than for those of others..." (Collier's encyclopedia 1990: 150), he had given the higher responsibilities, and at the same time, the sufficient fulfillment of one's humanity into the hand of men. While, women were given the less challenging role considering their regarded weak and dependent persons, thus, collective contribution as the highest existential achievement was made impossible for them. By the condition, women were uncertain of their own selves; they were hardly capable of determining their self-esteem and self-determination as fully human being.

There has been a sharp distinction between men and women gender roles, public sphere is exclusively men's space and domestic sphere is specifically for women. "...The roles assigned to women, however, were inferior since they involved only domestic and thus less important activities..". (Li 1995: 412-413). Being born as men means endowed by the privilege of getting education, growing up on a worth self esteem, and the great opportunity of collective achievement. While women were restricted from the opportunity of social involvement relevance to the traditional value that women's duty is not to control or take charge since they were believed as naturally passive. Women sphere was limited into only the domestic and procreation function.



In the filial life, women were conditioned to be more under pressured by the patriarchal power of defining women's greatest duty as giving birth a son. The greatest failure of being women was the failure to produce a son with the consequences of losing their status in the society and the feeling of worthless. This would lead women to keep getting pregnant until she had a boy. And on the case the girl baby was born, the baby might be treated badly, and would be raised under the feeling of worthless either. Girl baby had always been condemned as only burdensome for the family. Therefore, while boy's birth would be happily celebrated and announced to the whole society, girl's birth would be regarded shameful, quietly and compulsorily accepted by the family. Thus, feeding girls was regarded as only wasting stuff for nothing, family would prefer to feed the cattle with the regarded more valuable and benefited purpose than feeding baby girls.

Women were departed from the opportunity of establishing a firm independent existence and status unless attached to their husband. They were not given the equal opportunity to the men as an individual to achieve their full potential. "...Women's greatness stands behind their husbands' achievements, fame, and success; each successful man has a virtuous woman supporting him.." (Li 1995: 413). Such an illusionary image of virtuous women to satisfy the gender as receiving a great appreciation behind the men's status, but proves to have become a deceitful mechanism of patriarchy to confine women space of self actualization. The measurement of women existence did not lie on their individual

achievement, but on the husband's fame and success in the social life –women excellence was defined in term of men success.

This myth proved to have absolutely subjugated women deeply sank into the unconscious mind and made women incapable of realizing the injustice treatment conducted upon them, on the contrary women considered it as common and natural. Confucius has taught a specific moral guidance that seems to calm down women to feel comfortable in the secondary sex position. The moral code of the “three obedience and four virtues”; has conquered women to be

...Obedience to the father before marriage, to the husband after marriage, and to the son after the husband's death; and the virtues of loyalty, proper speech, modest demeanor, and diligent work. Central to this tradition were the ideas that “men should be respectable and women humble”, and that the lack of learning in woman is a virtue....( Li 1995: 413)

“Obedience” has certainly become a total subjugation to women, softness and modesty revealing only the false consciousness into women's mind, when it is presented in the virtuous value measuring the respectable women. Along their life time women were always under men's authority, having no freedom to exist as her own self. This norm was actually risky for women – since men, to whom the absolute authority was praised – would have the controlling power competent to demand women's total obedience to do whatever they expected from women. Women were thrown away into the existence of only men's slave. Instead of this horrible situation, women were still expected to have and perform higher aesthetic behavior to carefully guard the family respectable name in the society. A kind of

another limitation to women's self actualization, since behavioral restriction often means a closure to women's creativity and courage to sharpen their personality in the sense of free and individual virtue. The Confucian virtue of collectivism prevent the embodying of the concept of individual worth of women social members, women were respected only on her performance of the traditionally predetermined social roles.

Knowledge is then the key role of patriarchal system; it is always a powerful instrument into self-realization of the existential consciousness for every individual. Thus as patriarchy has maintained women from the access of education, women were made lost of their opportunity of fulfilling their humanity through knowledge. Son would always be the first choice on education matter, while daughter would be needed for the household matter. Either men or women would then strengthen patriarchal system.

In the Chinese filial hierarchy women were absolutely weak and unequipped with the right of property possession. By marriage, women would soon be brought to the husband's house, and therefore lose their membership on their own family. Thus, Chinese tradition gave the inheritance rights only to the male members of the family.

...In the traditional family, a woman had no inheritance rights as a result of being perceived as not fully human; she was merely an instrument for housework and reproduction; she remained at home and was subjected to restrictive and humiliating rituals, enslaved by the father, brother(s), and husband... (Li 1995: 414).

Women have been made satisfy on their secondary position by the virtue. And it was continuously strengthened by the societies on their acceptance and perpetuation of the patriarchal system, despite of the many disadvantages for women themselves. Women would remain inferior as long as they were still subjected to the restrictive and humiliating treatment from every-men of their life. And most importantly is that the oppressive ideology must be deconstructed for the equal and just pattern of women and men relationship.

## 2. Women Existence Based on Taoism

Taoism is two radically Chinese movement –on the one hand, a philosophy, on the other hand a positive religion. Taoism is named after its central idea, Tao, or “the way”, the basic principle of the universe. Philosophic Taoism has exalted mysticism, naturalness, and simplicity, the securing of solace in misfortune by cultivation of inward calm, laissez faire, optimism, and skepticism of doctrinaire program (Collier’s Encyclopedia 1990: 65). It has provided spiritual inspiration and moral standards for the Chinese, while imbuing Chinese poetry, landscape of painting and other art forms with its love of nature and sense of serenity. As both a philosophy and religion Taoism has supplied strength and refuge to the old, the poor, the oppressed, and also to rebels and secret societies.

Taoism may have been the only major Chinese philosophical school that worships femininity.

...In the Taoist bible, Dao De Jing, Lao Tzu, the founder, built his cosmology (the natural order) and ethics –the philosophy of Yin and Yang –on female virtues and characteristic traditionally attributed to women, such as gentleness, softness, humbleness, tolerance, obedience, and women function to give birth and take ‘lower position’, etc... (Li 1995: 414)

However, Lao Tzu’s Taoism hardly embodies a fair conception of femininity. As a philosophical thought, Taoism was inseparable from the social, political or cultural condition of his time, as did his teaching represented the patriarchal system that lied women in the real subjugated position. Although, it proved to give an appraisal toward women on its highly valued feminine characteristics, some of the regarded natural female images, such as obedience, humbleness, lower positioning were actually the products of certain divisions of labor which then perpetuated by the social prejudices as the virtuous stereotypes of women.

These regarded ‘natural’ women characteristics were actually the sources of women subordination. The virtue of ‘obedience’, not different from the Confucian virtue, depressed women to be bearable and quietly accepted the injustice execution directed toward them. They were made silence by the belief that valuable women ought to be committed under men’s control. There would be no rebellion from the oppressed women when their consciousness have been

calmed down into the point of the incapability of analyzing such an injustice condition as the injustice one. What makes the patriarchal system strongly authorized the relation pattern of women and men, is that it has deeply rooted into women's consciousness to make them cooperate with the system.

Moreover, the virtues of 'humbleness and lower positioning' have firmly defined women second position, as "the other" for the men. Men were acknowledged as fully human being, and women were to occupy the additional position for the completeness of being gentlemen. Women existence as the equal human being to the men was definitely ignored under the patriarchal and patrilineal tradition, which have been adopted by the Taoist. "...Women are valued by him, but only because of their usefulness for other ends. This instrumentalist evaluation of women's status.....failed to generate a real respect for women for their own worth as equal human beings..." (Li 1995: 415).

Unsurprisingly that in China until the coming of modern thought, there had been many cases of women and children selling by the husband and father. Women possession had to mean the benefit for the men rather than for the romantic and respectful relationship. The cultural recognition of women for the place of only slaves have legitimized the practice of women trading, thus although legally their position was wife, but their function was slave. This confirmed women's status as inferior from the men. When the existence of women as fully human being ended up in the instrumentalist functions for the demand of the opposite's sex, women have been made worthless human. It becomes an ultimate degradation of an individual humanity.

...Lao Tzu takes for granted the dominant social perspective of his time and views women from the conventional position of a dominant male. Unfortunately, the legacy of Lao Tzu, perhaps contrary to his intention, serves to reaffirm socially constructed gender difference as the 'natural order', providing a philosophical justification for the unjust practice.... (Li 1995: 415)

Philosophical thought and religion are the two strongest beliefs and ideology to define human life. When both of them have determined such an injustice paradigm toward a certain group of the society, hardly ever this certain community wins the struggle against the paradigm, unless the change is ultimately to the paradigm itself. Taoism as a philosophical thought ignores women's perspective, and fails to see the injustice thought and practice in the society. This even prepares the legitimization –through the disadvantageous images of women as natural and valuable- for the instrument of measuring women as virtuous, blind to catch the fact that women have been deteriorated by such a repressive practice.

### 3. Women Existence Based on Buddhism

Buddhism is the great oriental tradition founded by Buddha Gautama, flourished in India since about A.D 500, and widely spread into Northern China on the first century A.D. Buddhism encountered indigenous system of thought, the most important of which were Confucianism and Taoism. Confucian essential practice is primarily concerned with ethical, social, and political principles

involved in the conduct of affairs in family, community, and state. Taoism, more speculative, reflects concern with cosmic, metaphysical, and mystical matters, often expressed in poetical, metaphorical, or paradoxical language. It expressed the altitude of searching beyond the Confucius of associated life to realize harmony with the ultimate nature of way (Tao) of the universe. Buddhism had to adjust to both ways of thinking.

The matter of fact here is that Buddhism has also become the other main source of the view of women as inferior. "...The traditional contempt for women in China is linked to the Buddhist ascetic teaching that women are the source of all evils on earth because female sexuality causes men to commit crimes..." (Li 1995: 414). This images is found in almost every religion, Christian condemned Eve as the temptation to drive Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, it then created negative image for women in the whole history of Christianity. Islam has also regarded women as sexually destroying men's purity, therefore women have to cover their whole body. Buddhism is not in an exception, it also believes that women must be avoided, as they would just prevent men from reaching their highest level of meditation.

#### **D. Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

##### 1. Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society



This subchapter of Women Subordinate Position in the Patriarchal Society is written by mainly refers to several source books. Those books are, Beyond Feminism written by Cornelius F Murphy Jr, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman written by Mary Wollstonecraft, The Feminine Mystique written by Betty Friedan, The Second Sex written by Simon De Beauvoir, and Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial written by Mansour Fakhri.

Women existence has become the main concern of feminism movement in the history of women struggle for about the last three centuries. Feminist moves on the purpose of criticizing the weak positioning of women in front of patriarchal society, in which women are subjugated in the whole aspect of human life, where their existence is ruined culturally, socially, economically and politically. The main effort is then to rethinking and reconstruct the present injustice pattern of women and men relationship, to gain the just and equal existence of men and women, by liberating women from their deprived world. Feminists ought to implement their concept of equal rights of women to the men in a real organized movement for the realization of transformed society in which women are guaranteed to the same and equal rights to the men. While,

...The liberation which contemporary feminists seek, is not merely freedom from marginalization, oppression, discrimination, and violence but freedom for self definition, self affirmation, and self determination; in other words, the effective recognition of their full humanity as persons and the freedom to exercise that person-hood in every sphere... (Murphy 1995: 45).

Women existence becomes a troublesome issue throughout human history as women have been subjected to the indignities of patriarchal culture that have pervaded every aspect of their lives since the very beginning of human live. Since the ancient world, the rule of fathers has confirmed the supremacy of men within the home as well as their dominance through the whole of the social, economic and political world.

The biblical story of human creation has become the first and strong standpoint of the subordinate view upon women. Man was created first and in the solution of his loneliness, woman was then created from one of the man's ribs to be the helpmeet for him. Such a story was then being interpreted in the sense that men were expected to be the superior human to whom the covenant was centered. While, women were created only for the function of companionship for the main human, men, although both of the sexes were acknowledged to be blessed by God. Moreover when woman, Eve, as a temptress was the one to urge Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she was then considered to the source of evil. For such consideration women were then strongly marked to have the demonic characterization, so that except for the reason of their regarded less rational human being, women were kept distance away from the public sphere for the reason of their regarded deceive, and deceit dangerous temperament.

Three Semitic religions, Judaism, Christian and Islam had born under the progressive development of Hebrew patriarchal culture, which is critically analyzed as the oppressive and marginalizing toward women. Those Semitic religions were in capacity of giving new explanations of the world and human

destiny, but its universal symbols were much presented in a male degree and the abstract ideals were to be interpreted exclusively by men in the course of their own fulfillment of a divine plan. Therefore, feminist proves, through the analysis of the Holy Scriptures of some religions, that the teaching of the religious believes have become the most fundamental instrument of the on going discriminative view toward women. Women were expected to serve men, as the representation of God, in subordinate roles. And while displaying virtues of obedience, modesty, and fidelity they should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust. This discriminative view was then seen as natural and women were presented on the image of the obedience, weak, dependent, irrational, emotional, deceitful, and many other negative and disadvantaging stereotypes culturally attached to women.

As it does the religions hold the patriarchal system, the philosophical thought also becomes the agent of subordinate view on women. "...For Augustine the distinction that arose from physical differences were directed, by analogy, to the inward subjection of the passions to the power of deliberative action..."(Murphy 1995: 6), therefore in the medieval theology, male was given the higher rights for domination. Most philosophers were unable to see women subjugation as a certain and urgent problem needs to have a philosophical base for the grounded solution of the existential matter. Even "...Aristotle's world was hierarchical and divided. He drew distinctions within, and between, the varieties of existence. The polis, the central human reality –a domain of excellence– was sharply distinguished from the darker world of domesticity ..." (Murphy 1995: 4).

Men were endowed with privilege of finding their moral fulfillment through their participation in the political life of the community. The polis was a place for men to display the excellence of their character and to have a life experience higher than that, which is possible within the world of domesticity. While, women were excluded from the higher realm of politics, social, economics, or cultural participation. This subordination was coupled with the more pervasive discrimination firmly linked to their procreative function, a function described as passive in nature. This different characterization and male-female functional statuses fulfill the plan and design of the male, to be raised to a position of supremacy, while the female are to be raised to the position of inferiority.

Women were also close to images of dependent and subservient to the men. Her existence lies on the men statues, for her humanity was not fully acknowledged in the patriarchal society. Women existed only to fulfil the additional and servitude function for the men. Even

...Rousseau declares that a woman should never for a moment feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself... (Wollstonecraft 1992: 28).

Women position as only the companion for men is actually a clear statement that women are not recognized as fully human equal to men. Rousseau whose theory was to establish the conscience and recognition of equality among men, has excluded women from his frame of thought. Moreover, his guideline to

see women as only the objects of desire has brought about an oppressive view and attitude toward women.

Such misogynist view has increased the possibility of women to become the victims of sexual harassment, which exist whenever the personal destiny of any individual is subject to the power or purposes of someone of the opposite sex. Sexual harassment has become one of the crucial issue struggled by feminist to overcome many cases caused by subconscious hatred toward women. The patriarchal society has itself subconsciously brought the sexual objectification toward women that permissively led men to use women for their sexual satisfaction. Therefore, many cases of sexual harassment occur to degrade women to lose their comfort and self-esteem. It takes the varied forms, from the offensive vulgar jokes, the unwanted touching, sexual attitude for compensation, till many cases of raping, done by men. Such cases would not reveal if firstly women were not being viewed as the object of sexual pleasure, but the equal human being to the men.

In educational matter, women are given less opportunity either for exercising her rational thought, critical reflection, or arguing their argumentative reasoning. Knowledge as a powerful instrument of self-realization has been made inaccessible for women as mechanism of controlling women understanding to maintain men's control over women. In the past, women were kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence. Instead of hardening women's minds by the several principles of reason and philosophy, they breed to useless education, which terminate in vanity and sensuality. Mary Wollstonecraft protested

... the education given to the women of her time, that from their infancy women were taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of men; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives... (Wollstonecraft 1992:21).

Women's virtues degraded into only the artificial qualities such as; fondness for dresses and physical beauty which are considered as something natural, and purity of the heart regarded as innocence which tend to be an ignorance of women. Women were made comfortable by the less challenging roles, for actually they were kept away from establishing their independent individuality. Neither family nor the society give them critical atmosphere to exercise their individual personae, to strengthen them in reasoning and arguing arguments, and enable them to stand firmly on their own thought. The authority of men strongly restricted women from freedom of having their own will, as women were actually treated as men's possessions.

The discriminative treatment on women also relies on the political participatory. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women were absolutely weak and even excluded from the political life. The practice of politics was perceived as a combative struggle of conquest and power, thought of as a field of endeavor more suitable for the actions of men than for the influence of women. In the public participation, women were excluded from the hierarchical structure, which have

the formal power in the society. In the nation state life, women lost their rights of ruling their own political life for they were not given the rights of voting. It became tremendous issue awaken women to realize their marginalized position.

Then, women enfranchisement had ever become a great issue needed a difficult and long time struggle to claim that women were heirs to the same rights in society as men and having endowed some forms of political participation through the rights of voting. Women suffrage needs long time journey to be finally succeeded in gaining the rights of the vote for women. The right of political participation did not automatically mean an open and free access to the same and equal power in the hierarchical structure of the society. Leadership was still the excellence for men, and women appearance were restricted to the less challenging roles, as their existence were still in the domain of companionship for men. Women, seeking to express their insights and develop their talents within professional and intellectual communities, often find that their access were limited by the regarded more legitimate roles of men.

Thus, feminist found through their contextual analysis, that women subordination has conquered women deeply to their subconscious. And most women accept such discriminative view as something natural and common, which leads them to cooperate to the patriarchal culture. Hatred toward women appears not only from men, but women themselves have also played participation on the misogynist view on other women. So that, either men or women become the agents of transferring the patriarchal view of keeping women's inferior position.

## **2. Liberal Feminism Thought on Women Existence**

Feminism movement occurred firstly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the long history of women deprivation. Women revolution began in response to rising expectations after women became aware of their being treated as “the other” from the men. There were some important preconditions for the resurgence of women’s movement. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century were the eras of the enlightenment thought with its liberal concepts of the social contract, individualism, independence, democracy and equality of opportunity theorized by some writers such as John Lock and JJ Rousseau. Therefore, the first standpoint of feminist movement took their theoretical ground on the liberal thought. Although those Lock and Rousseau still maintained the patriarchal foundations of society as they challenged feudal and absolutist authority, other writers quickly applied to women their arguments for the “rights of man”. The work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Mead, Harriet Taylor Mill, John Stuart Mill and Betty Friedan were some representatives of this perspective. Their writings as well as their strategic political movements articulated women’s protest on the subordination.

The subsequent development of feminism born four prominent mainstreams of feminism based on the theoretical approach and the issues as concern of women movements. These mainstreams of feminism are liberal, radical, marxist and socialist feminism. Each theorizes differently the historical motives and mechanism of social and cultural perpetuation of women subordination, concluded by the strategic platform of women’s movements.



But in purpose of seeking a specific concept of “existential conscience” of Chinese American women as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior, the researcher defines that the most appropriate feminist literary approach would be based on the concept of liberal feminism.

This first mainstream of feminism grounded their theory to the liberal thought, on the new discourse of freedom, equality, autonomy and individualism, as the natural rights possessed by all men and women. “...In liberal feminism there is also a critical concern with the value of individual ‘autonomy’ and ‘freedom’ from supposedly unwarranted restrictions by others...”(Beasley 1999: 51). Liberal feminists convince that freedom from the cultural restriction and prejudices will make women possible to realize their firm individuality and freely develop their self-autonomy.

e. Reconstruction on Gender Inequalities

Gender inequalities have become the first concern of liberal feminism. The understanding of gender differentiation as natural and God given destiny has proved to drive inequalities primarily toward women. Differ to the concept of sex, as genetic and biological classification of person into male and female, gender is the result of social, cultural and psychological construction. “...Gender is a social construction that varies across culture, over time within a given culture, and in relation to the other gender...” (Wood 1997: 22). Misunderstanding of gender as attached to sex, man must be masculine and woman must be feminine, has

destined women on the subordinate position with the regarded inferior stereotypes of femininity. Women, from infancy, are encouraged to conform to certain feminine stereotypes prescribed by the society to be the "...attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationship (Wood 1997: 22). And these stereotypes unfavourably restrict women in the ignorant and domestic boundaries unsatisfiedly desire what men have got.

Liberal feminists encounter gender inequalities by presuming the sameness between men and women. "...Liberal feminist political strategies reflect a conception of a fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature-that is, since women are much the same as men, women should be able to do what men do..." (Beasley 1999: 52). Thus, the list of women stereotypes as the ignorant, irrational, emotional, weak, and dependent, etc was failed to get the confirmation against the liberal feminist thought. Liberal feminist thoughtfully realize that such gender stereotypes are socially and culturally created, and that women under the same and equal opportunity to the men will convincingly obtain men's quality.

Margaret Mead through an anthropological research proved that such gender stereotypes were extremely social and cultural prejudices upon women. Masculine and feminine are the quality interchangeably attached to either men or women. She reported that certain society may prescribe women to be more dominating and sexually aggressive than men, and the other society may conform men to be more delicate and nurturing than women. There is no evidence yet to confirm if both sexes were to be raised in the exactly the same condition and

treatment, they would grow on the present characters stereotypes of the masculine and feminine.

...Margaret Mead, in her observations of life in the South Sea Islands found that qualities such as aggressiveness, independence, gentleness and passivity were not sex-linked at all but rather resulted from social conditioning. "There is no evidence that suggests women are naturally better at carrying for children (than men)," she said in 1946; "With the fact of childbearing out of the center of attention, there is even more reason for treating girls first as human beings, than as women... (Chafe 1972:210).

Mead's observation deconstructs gender inequalities on the patriarchal society, and furthermore promises the reconstruction of relation pattern of women and men into the just and equal relationship.

f. Women's Right for Education

Liberal feminists' strategy for women transformation into equality is concerning with the rights of education and public participation. Rationality, which belongs to women as to men, has become the basic undeniable argument for women to claim the right of education and public participation.

Marry Wollstonecraft was the first feminist to write down her thought, whose work was the first serious political and social manifesto which seriously concerned with the condition of women asserting that women were heirs to the same rights to the men in society. She challenged the patriarchal prejudices

toward women by declaring women as also rational agents like those of men, whose inferiority was systematically caused by the lack of education. "...Wollstonecraft's message... asserted that women who were given equal rights and equal opportunities could change, develop, and grow to become people whose contribution to society was as great and as varied as the contribution of men." (Hymowitz and Weissman 1978: 78).

If women are generally feeble both in body and mind, natural reasons give no evidence to become the accusation rather than the education reason with the argument that women are, like men, rational individuals and that they should have equal rights to the access of education. The fact presented that women were imprisoned to the narrow understanding of everything, and they were left to the ignorant when the renaissance has said to bring the enlightenment for human being. But this was not women's destiny, this rather the result of the hindrance of women from the opportunity to explore their talent or to exercise their intellectual ability through the education.

Therefore, according to liberal feminists, the first strategic solution for women marginalization is the equal access to education. "But I still insist that not only the virtue but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creature (Wollstonecraft 1992:42). Knowledge would transform women from the ignorant and irrational human beings into the ones with the realization or consciousness of their deprived humanity, to finally encourage them into the struggle of human completeness. Later contemporary liberal feminist agrees Wollstonecraft's

conclusion that women subordination rooted in the unavailability of the equal civil rights and equal opportunity for education to men.

c. Women's Opportunity for Public Participation

The dichotomy between the public and private sphere has become the other important concern of liberal feminism. Gender differentiation born gender roles that constituted women to deal only with domesticity and men actively contribute the public affair. "...marriage has also been an economic partnership in which a woman gives priority to homemaking and childcare while a man gives priority to his career..." (Thorne, Kramarae and Henley 1983: 217).

Women's biased gender stereotypes determine them to fulfil the expectation of the less appreciated role as housewives. The society is used to the myth that the highest profession a woman can engage in is that of charming wife and wise mother, in spite of the fact of the intelligent, educated women might be capable of good leadership. "...The identity which society bestowed on women was that of wife and mother, not business competitor with men. Marriage and child bearing constituted the goal of female existence, just as material success in the outside world represented the goal of men..." (Chafe 1972: 97).

The dominant patriarchal ideology was that men would govern society and that women would rule the private sphere. Active participation in the society covers the power to control and regulate the social, cultural, economical, and political continuous transformation. And women whose rights of contribution was

muted by the social and cultural prejudices would be dehumanized into only the passive objects of most of the regulation and transformation. By then women loose their individualized subjectivity to become the agents of changes, and even suffer the social, cultural, economical, and political marginalization, while psychologically they become tender and fragile. Public policies are frequently resolute on gender insensitivity with consequence that women's interests are ignored.

Liberal feminists, relevant to the liberal theory that every individual should be equal, claim the equality of the sexes in the public and private sphere. The approach is that of women "going public", which means an individual approach to fight for power and influence on equal terms with men without changing the rules of the game. "...Thus in liberal feminist thought there is a focus on the public sphere, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the rights of individuals to compete in the public marketplace..."(Beasley 1999: 51). They believe women are the same as men, therefore women have to work her way up to a male-dominated society to achieve a true equality. The result is that public citizenship and the equal attainment with men in the public arena would also become women's rights, on the other hand, men have to share equally in childbearing and handling the domestic tasks.

The new pattern of male-female relationship needs the mutual interdependence of both sexes to realize the equal opportunity and the responsibility sharing of domestic and public life between men and women. In the type of family, where independence is equal, interdependence is mutual and

obligation is reciprocal, women might be able to combine public participation with the life in the home. Since political equality between men and women must include a major change in the private sphere, for example, the equalization of the working hours; a shift in the responsibilities; breaking the patterns that divide men and women of inequality between work in the home and work outside.

By emphasizing women equal opportunity in the public life, liberal feminist has also placed great emphasis on self-development, with goal of “wholeness, realization of one’s own full potential”. Feminist assumes that freedom and equality would only exist on women’s opportunity for gaining rational thought and participation on the public sphere. Liberal feminist’s platform of their struggle for the just society is constructed in the concept of equal opportunity and rights for each individual, moreover within it is the equal opportunity and rights for women. The main assumption is that woman is also “rational” human being opposing the ancient attached stereotype which present women as the irrational and ignorant half human beings inappropriate of interfering the public business. Therefore, the feminist movement is the struggle of the equal opportunity for women to the access of knowledge and self-actualization and active participation in the public life.

### **E. Critique on Hegemony of Masculinity**

Liberal concept of feminism, as previously explained, offers the theory of sameness between the sexes. This solution perfectly fulfils the objective of

equality, which implicates on the acceptance of women on the formal education system and opportunity to interfere public affairs. It offers the comprehension of women as fully human being with the potential and capacity to absorb knowledge and understand the world rationally and holistically. This movement greatly affects both women and men's view on women's fundamental existence as also fully human being who desire the fulfillment of their humanity. But as it historically moves on along with the issues which invites responds, liberal feminist's ways of ending the patriarchy's oppression and insisting women's rights tend to absorb and internalize their opponent's values; masculine values. This is clearly explained by Mansour Fakih in his book Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial.

As mentioned before that "rationality" has convinced women into the new image of womanhood, but at the same time some feminists concerned it as having vanished women's excellence feminine aspects. The adoration on the masculine values has consequently disregard feminine values. "...They want what men have got, rather than questioning its value in any thorough sense..."(Beasley 1999: 52). The problem is then many high qualified aspects of femininity was being dishonored by women themselves on result of the insensitivity toward other women who stay manage themselves on the feminine values. ". "The specificities of maternal love were considered admirable but inferior..."(Murphy 1995:49). Thus many feminists on their movements dispose to do what Mansour Fakih states as "hosting the oppressor's ideology" (Fakih 1996: 102). Liberal feminists' optimism suggests women to compete in the public arena by using men's



standard, supporting a notion of assimilationist tendency, rather than giving an influence of their feminine aspects into the arenas of activities associated with both men and women. The option of achieving true equality by active participation in the male-dominated society without changing the masculine rule of the game has motivated women to internalize and perpetuate the masculine values as to become their new and more admired values. Women would then be more confident when they could think, speak and behave like men

Several masculine stereotypes such as the aggressiveness, competitiveness, rational superiority, etc are then dichotomized face to face with the feminine values, such as compassion, nurturing, holistic view, moral superiority, which then fall into the underestimation toward feminine values. Dichotomization has frequently delimited feminists' perspective on the positive and negative distinction of the masculine and feminine values.

Thus, instead of promoting women's equal position to the men by assuring the higher appreciation of womenlines, as previously stated, some feminists tend to urge women to prove themselves as having the sameness with men in all life aspects. While the evaluation of femininity failed to seek its noble values and applied it within the patriarchal society. This strategy frequently burdens women with the more suffering of subordination, especially for those who challenge the public male-dominated area, as the system become very exclusive to easily compel women from the competition. Despite the fact that feminine qualities – such as compassion, cooperation and moral superiority rather than aggressiveness and competition– are proved to be very effective for success

leadership and more supportive for human life. After all, the aim of feminism is not a revenge to men, but freedom for both sexes to establish their firm existence as human being with an understanding that either a masculine or a feminine person is a legitimate mode of human existence.

## **F. Women In The Chinese American Society**

### **1. Brief History of Chinese Immigrant Women**

The first Chinese immigrant woman, Afong Moy, was brought to New York in 1834 as a showpiece to satisfy the curiosity of the American public. From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, because of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and much discriminative legislation, Chinese women could only emigrate as wives or daughters of merchants and U.S. citizens. Thus, very few Chinese women came to the United States. During the entire period of unrestricted immigration thousands of Chinese women journeyed across the Pacific. Many women could not withstand the rigors of life in America and died or returned to China. During the same period numbers of Chinese men emigrating from China to America was much higher. Due to the imbalance in sex and the prohibition of intermarriage, many Chinese women were lured to America as prostitutes. Because of the sex imbalance and laws that forbade interracial marriage, the majority of Chinese women in 19th century America were prostitutes who had been kidnapped, lured, or purchased from poor parents in China and sold to America for high profits. In 1943, the U.S. Congress passed an act to repeal the

1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Later came the War Bride Act of 1945, and then Congress passed a bill enabling wives and children of Chinese American citizens to apply as non-quota immigrants. Decades later, the numbers of Chinese women in the United States noticeably increased to the balance number to men.

Their moves to America still carried out the Chinese custom that women were supposed to stay home to care for their husbands and children, and because of their language handicap, immigrant wives seldom worked outside of their homes. To subsidize their husbands' low income, they did menial work at home: sewing, washing, shelling shrimp, rolling cigars, etc. Women living in remote rural areas had even more difficult lives. Therefore Chinese immigrant women in America have to meet the pressure of the racial and sexual discriminations, both in the private and the public or social life.

## 2. Chinese American Women Double Oppression

Chinese women entering America would become a minority to face the double oppression by the racial and gender distinctions. America with its slogan of melting pot still segregated the minor races in the country either by the law or by the injustice social, economic and political subjugation. The Chinese women themselves arrived to the new island with the fundamental weakness, which was the illiteracy of the English language; they could not entirely read, write nor speak the language. The weak condition instantly made them economically weak and

dependent to the husband, as they could have just stayed as housewives or take only the low paid jobs, like sewing, laundry, or working in the garment factory.

...I found myself entirely illiterate in English. I could not read, write or speak the language. I was instantly housebound and penniless. I had witnessed my parents working from dawn to dusk with limited income, my mother working at sewing factory in a basement in Chinatown. Her working conditions were unbearable...

(<http://www.chineseculture.about.com/cs/americanwomen/htm> August 23th 2002).

Moving to America does not make changes for them, Chinese women still have to play the subservient role from their traditional custom. In a woman's lifetime, she was supposed to obey her father when she was a girl, obey her husband when she got married, and obey her son when her husband died. She had no right to inherit the family property and was not even allowed to keep her own name after marriage; she was addressed as her husband's wife or her child's mother. In addition, women were deprived of the right of education, even it was a virtue for a woman to be uneducated.

But the next majority of Chinese women who joined their husbands in America were well educated and employed in respectable professions in China. Instead, these female immigrants are usually unable to find a job to resume their professions in this new country due mainly language and cultural barriers. Therefore, they may encounter more difficulties in acculturation than those women who originally were in the traditional roles of housewife and mother. The

shift from a professional to a housewife becomes the most prominent and miserable change that these Chinese immigrant women experienced in this new land. Meeting the challenge of adjusting to a new culture and social life from a professional to a housewife places a great deal of pressure on these educated Chinese women. They have strong desires and motivation to continue their professions, but have not obtained the support necessary accomplish their goals. As housewives, their social circle is very limited, which leads to isolation in the host culture.

But the social status of women changed dramatically over the past few decades. Chinese American women were then definitely affected and influenced by the 1960s civil rights and women's rights movements. They were encouraged to walk out of their houses and become active participants in society. Although many critical issues still exist in women's status in China, Chinese women, especially those who live in urban areas, have witnessed fundamental changes in education, employment, and marriage. The improved racial climate enabled Chinese American women to pursue higher education and employment.

Although some immigrant women still found themselves trapped in Chinatown garment factories, increased numbers of them began moving into the technical, sales, and professional fields. But because of the discrimination, however, their earning power was often not commensurate with their level of education. Their gender identity as women placed them on the less challenging occupations, with the less number of wages. While their identity as the

immigrants permits the capital owner the right to exploit them as the low paid labors.

The other majority of Chinese American women were still trapped in the “women professions” of teacher, nurse and clerical worker. Although they are entering in large numbers of professions traditionally dominated by men, they, like all women, are still relatively concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. And like all women, Chinese American women have yet to reach the upper echelons of power. Thus, becoming a career women for them often means of sacrificing the family, to achieve their goals of self fulfillment and good, independent economical condition. On the result that their choice to subjected themselves to the injustice and discriminative society, which are still mostly ruled by the patriarchal type of decision making, often become very burdensome for them. Women are underestimated to have no capability of managing serious responsibility, meanwhile the aggressiveness or competitiveness of the masculine standard would become the very effective mechanism of women exclusion. Therefore public areas or professional career jobs often very cruel for women.

The new society in which they enter is the society with the double standard behavior before them, in the one hand, their interest for the low paid labors creates an interdependence relation, on the other hand, they are not very receptive to the new and strange members of the society. Therefore, most immigrants have to face the chronic social, economic, cultural and political problem in the new land. “...As an immigrant woman from China, I was misunderstood and discounted...”. (<http://currents.ucsc.edu/index.html>) August

23<sup>th</sup> 2002). Such kind of despair is common for Chinese immigrant women in America since they frequently experience the injustice and oppressive situation caused by their identity as women and Chinese.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **ANALYSIS**

The Woman Warrior is rich of meaning and very attractively invites people to read and analyze it. It touches many aspects of human life implemented in the themes of dual oppressions by the sexual and racial discrimination, immigration, cultural assimilation, one seeking personality through the self consciousness, etc. But the writer here will limit her focus only to the dual oppressions depicted through the characters in the novel and continued by the process of one seeking individualized personality by the awakening of her self consciousness as a woman lives under the sexual or gender and racial discrimination. Two different cultural backgrounds on the story will enrich the readers with the more sensitive understanding of the different cultures on their perspectives toward women existence.

This analysis will answer the two problem statements, which become the interesting concern for the researcher. Firstly, the researcher will describe the fact of the Chinese and Chinese American women subordination and oppression within patriarchal culture as reflected in the novel The Woman Warrior through feminist perspective. And it must also be noted that the social-cultural context of the novel will appear some of its characters not only with the sexual discrimination but doubled with the racial discrimination.

Secondly, the process of the narrator intensely establish her firm existential consciousness as a Chinese American woman will be explained based on theoretical approach of liberal feminism and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity. And the cultural background of the novel will also color the analysis to prevent its loose of context.

**A. The Representation of Women Subordination within Patriarchal Culture as Reflected in The Woman Warrior**

As previously stated in the literary review, both Chinese and American cultures dictate women as the inferior human being to men with the role of domestic sphere to settle the household endeavors. Men are given the rights of enjoying the quality of humanity, while women are recognized as only the complementary of manhood and even they be the men's possession. Some religious beliefs – by which people rely on their faith and practical life commands



– have proven to strengthen this view, resulted on the degradation and negligence of women’s right to fulfil their humanity.

Women are more frequently forced to choose silence under oppressive situations conducted over them. The strong patriarchal system has successfully inarticulated them from uttering their own thought, feeling, requirements or self-authority. The Woman Warrior seems to set voices for some silent characters to reveal the unrecognized women of the narrator’s familial life into historical existence. The forgotten individual, appeared in the character No Name Woman, is being brought back into the memory of even a larger amount of people, than those who want to forget her. The narrator intentionally dedicates the story on her aunt’s fatal experience to commemorate her unrecognized existence and to remind the society of the fact of women subordination. “...I alone devote pages of paper to her...” (The woman Warrior: 16).

### 1. No Name Woman

The effort of recording the past tragedy begins in the narration of No Name Woman, an exact and real example of the absolutely victimized woman in front of the misogynist society. The lines of admonition around the forgotten aunt starts the novel,

“You must not tell anyone,” my mother said,” what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into

the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born” (3).

A mother’s command to remain a secret the matter of the suicide aunt represents the individual and social negligence of women oppression. The misogynist society has constructed the communal definite judgement on women with tendency to blame and victimize them in case of sexual harassment. Instead of the fact that women have usually been psychologically and physically ruined by the aggressors in such cases, the society around No Name Woman refuse to give her sympathy for the reason of disgracing the family and tribe. On the contrary, the communal convention decides raid as the instrument of punishment through the hazardous terror for the accused woman. “The village had also been counting. On the night the baby was to be born the villagers raided our house...” (3). Traditional society here applies violence to overcome its communal problem, rather than discussing for a just solution. And the executors of the raid are the ones, to whom No Name Aunt and the family have been so familiar with; all the villagers are kinsmen, once the narrator states. “...As the villagers closed in, we could see that some of them, probably men and women we knew well...” (4). Common to the cases of sexual, the actors usually are persons to whom the victims knew very well, perhaps the family relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, or someone related to them. Therefore, as well as the raiders are all her kinsmen, the men of the rape could not have been the strange one for No Name Woman, “He may have been somebody in her own household, but intercourse

with a man outside the family would have been no less abhorrent. All the village were kinsmen...”(11).

Community’s decision to raid No Name Aunt reflects the inclination of public misogynist to blame women as the source of foul behaviors, which has finally indifferiated men from their responsibility of sexual aggressions. And on the other hand, women as the victims are mostly powerless before the superior authority of the men. This powerlessness has been deeply penetrated into women’s minds through the lifetime doctrines of men’s superiority, and moreover when the real life incidents present her men’s repression, women would easily be made submissive. Thus, No Name Woman is easily be made frightened of the men’s threat not to tell anyone of his identity, and consistent to the end she remains the men’s name a secret. “She kept the man’s name to herself throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save her inseminator’s name she gave silent birth” (11).

Fatalism and sacrificial characteristics are mostly recognized as typically women along with their tougher capacity of bearing serious psychological pressures. These attitudes have led No Name Woman into naïve acceptance of the injustice treatment upon her to finally take the responsibility of the remarked shameful mistake alone by herself. This silence has actually made women fail of cutting the chain of the perpetuated injustice demeanors conducted over them.

No Name Woman fails to realize the political aspects of her position within the case of the sexual harassment. Although her silence has made up of cutting the continuance of the patrilineal descent, when she paradoxically erases

the paternal trace by betraying the fundamental fragility of undisputed paternal authority, her silence does state the acknowledgment and the resignation to the authority of the masculine patriarchal system. Her insistence of justice must have actually been able to warn men and the society to reconsider the reproduction of the patriarchal system, yet she fails to realize and take this opportunity. Finally, her silence can only speak of women powerlessness in front of patriarchal system. This complicated problem could have happened for at least two reciprocal fundamental reasons; the misogynist positioning of women as the inferior and thus objects of sexual discrimination including within is sexual harassment, and men's positioning as the superior endowed with the rights of governing and conquering women.

This silence cannot be parted from the cultural background of the Chinese tradition. Chinese philosophical tradition relies its harmony on the collectivism, which in some sort has conquered one's individuality before the communal interest. The value of collective harmony has frequently prevented someone from establishing his or her own subjective individuality to have the absolute and inexorable rights of choosing. Moreover women as also sexually discriminated; they were seized from their actual rights of free choice and therefore surrender to the authority of patriarchal society. "...My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Women in the old China did not choose. Some men had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil..." (6).

Chinese tradition through its religious beliefs has conquered woman to remain obedience to the superior sex. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have determined some stereotypes of regarded virtuous women such as obedience, humbleness and domesticity, which remain women to stay subordinate under men. Such guidelines constitute women to be submissive on men's rules, even if those women are trapped in the injustice situation. This traditional perspective has been deeply rooted into women's mind and wholly established common characteristics of Chinese women.

Most Chinese women's characters are fragile and uncertain of their own human existence. They could not fight patriarchal standard that their existence is measured by men's pleasure of them. Men's acknowledgment on women requires certain condition, such as beautiful, tenderness, submission and obedience. And women's existence would only be real when they fulfil all such requisites. As long as women still give the right of acknowledging their existence on the judgement men and the patriarchal society, women would remain sticks on the fragile and uncertain character. If that so, women's fighting will just to be accepted by men and the society under the patriarchal standard. "...To sustain her being in love, she often worked at herself in the mirror, guessing at the colors and shapes that would interest him, changing them frequently in order to hit on the right combination. She wanted him to look back..." (9). Thus it can be understood, that in this story, No Name Woman's effort to be recognized by men is by beautifying herself. Or in other words, to capture her adored men's recognition she must be on the line of the traditional patriarchal standard of being a woman. This construction of the

fragile and uncertain characteristics can be traced back through the psychological experience under certain social and cultural background.

Since their younger age, women are not given the chance to establish their own individualized personal, they were raised with less self esteem than those of the men ever experience. Psychologically they become tenderly attacked by any pressure come from out of their own self. The control of the outer, from any other person or from the community take greater charge on the self, and one's individuality is being damaged into losing her self-realization. By such condition women are prone to be victimized by others without any objective correction of whomsoever to be properly blamed.

Even there has been a rejection to women since their birthday because Chinese society considers girl birth as a shame, and raising them is a waste work. No Name Woman's decision to bring the baby with her into death may also be motivated by the reality that the baby is a girl, which would only be regarded as burdensome for the family and society. Two lines of the novel explain this; "...To be a woman, to have daughter in starvation time was a waste enough..." (6). Continued by the line "...It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15).

Meanwhile, men are used to the endowed rights of governing and demanding women to serve their demands. Men enslave women at home, in social life or at the employment range with the inappreciative demeanors, which are physically or psychologically harmful for the economic, social and political

existence. One of its implementation is the sexual harassment in which men are obviously victimize women as only the objects of sexual pleasure.

...They both gave orders: she followed. “ if you tell your family, I’ll beat you. I’ll kill you. Be here again next week.” No one talked sex, ever. And she might have separated the rapes from the rest of living if only she did not have to buy her oil from him or gather wood in the same forest. I want her fear to have lasted just as long as rape lasted so that the fear could have been contained. No drawn-out fear. But women at sex hazarded birth and hence lifetimes. The fear did not stop but permeated everywhere. She told the man, “I think I’m pregnant” He organized the raid against her... (7).

The fantasy of the narrator imagines the men to have organized the raid when he realized his sexual activities might disgrace him with the woman’s pregnancy. This fantasy could have been true, in the part that men might be able and empowered to completely victimize women for many reasons of sexual pleasure, good name, etc. Common to happen till the present days, that men could easily humiliate women into objects, but then refuse to take the responsibility and perhaps reverse the shame onto women. On daily practical attitudes men are so imperative upon women.

The value of obedience has also proven to be absolutely repressive over women. Men and women under the relationship pattern of subject and object have victimized women as to obey men’s desires. “...his demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told (6). No Name Woman surrender herself to the rape without resistance as she was frightened of his regarded higher authority over women, following the image of men as the powerful, while women are the only powerless creature to obey the men’s interest. Strengthened by the great influence of the social beliefs in which she was raised

on the self-positioning as the inferior human being, with the obligation of highly and blindly adore the men for whatever they expect from women.

Men could confidently appear with this superior proud as their births are always being expected. Son's birth has become the standard of being functionally success of becoming a woman and a wife. And son is expected to continue the patriarchal descent line, to take the responsibility of maintaining the family life. "...a family must be whole, faithfully keeping the descent line by having sons to feed the old and the dead, who in turn look after the family..." (13). The subtle role division of the male and female in the Chinese tradition has given the greater responsibility to hold the survival of the family into the hands of sons. This view has become a long time concern of women movement ever since they struggle their rights against the masculine power. By lying the greater responsibility on men, women are as if being spoiled on the comfortable position and easier role on the descent line. However, this comfort results less opportunity for women to actualize and explore their talents, to exercise their potentials of handling the same big responsibility as those of men's and the automatic consequence is that women were regarded to deserve only the less human rights compared to the men's rights. Women are driven into only the domestic affairs, without any opportunity of participation in the public field. While, the communal measure of one respectable person is those with the public achievement for the public advantages. In other words, before stepping on the effort of the public affairs participation, the men and the society have denied women from attaining any higher achievement than those of men. The problem, firstly, is not that women were unable to make use of the actual rights, but that they were made lost of their rights.



As also happen to women's individual rights to raise the out of marriage baby. Women's decision to be a single parent has actually been a difficult choice. But in the context of this story, even this choice cannot be understood by the society whose myth is that out of marriage pregnant woman is a disgrace for the family and the society. This once again confirms that the communal spirit of the society is unable to accept the individual interest above the social demands. Thus, the naïve infidelity of No Name Woman gains only the effort of the society to bring her back to the realization of their collectivism.

...The villagers were speeding up the circling of events because she was too shortsighted to see that her infidelity had already harmed the village, that waves of consequences would return unpredictably, sometimes in disguise, as now, to hurt her... (13).

Living under tightly strong community, in which collective relation is more highly appreciated than the private individuality, forces a person to willingly sacrifice her or his own requirements when there is the communal interest that demands their attention. Referring to such philosophical thought, the society uses the reason of communal harmony to force their regarded absolute true regulation to anyone who daringly persuade their individual right and against the harmonious collective life. This seemingly criticizes the two contradictory concepts of individualism and collectivism, in which the pull of these two ideologies has failed to combine both to become the harmonious extreme aspects that are acquired each on certain occasions. And the Chinese tradition as characteristically eastern philosophy failed to consult both and falls to the extreme of collectivism,

which tends to underestimate the individual aspects of one's life. Therefore, when the ignorant No Name Woman plainly go through a period of false pregnancy there has been made a public opinion formation to force the aunt to take the consequence.

...The frightened villagers, who depended on one another to maintain the real, went to my aunt to show her a personal, physical representation of the break she had made in the "roundness". Mislaying couples snapped off the future, which was to be embodied in true offspring. The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them... (13).

The narrator here emphasizes the raid of the villagers as the act of punishing one's prominent private individuality. The community insists its member to always be on the line of tradition and beliefs and be inside the circle of communal kinsmen. And thus,

...This roundness had to be made coin-sized so that she would see its circumference: punish her at the birth of her baby. Awaken her to the inexorable. People who refused fatalism because they could invent small resources insisted on culpability. Deny accidents and wrest fault from the stars... (13).

The decision of No Name Woman to commit suicide may be understood as an effort of reestablishing her cultural responsibility for her cultural mistake of mislaying the roundness of the collective life. The bearing of the out of marriage pregnancy has seriously surprised the community who has been used to the

determined rule of the old tradition and the authority of some beliefs, which govern the society's life. So, the aunt enacts on her own body and the no descent line child, the punishment of the tribe, fulfilling her filial, social and cultural responsibility to her circle by eliminating the source of contamination from its center and thereby restoring it to its unbroken configuration. "She may have gone to the pigsty as a last act of responsibility: she would protect this child as she had protected its father..." (15).

The punishment for No Name Woman has not finished yet after her death, the actually most painful punishment is the non-existent recognition of the family. "...The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her..." (16). The family with all the descendents is expected to forget her as if she was never born in the world. The series of sexual harassment and the society's raid have been easily neglected as if it never happened, along with the effort of forgetting the source of the disgrace. This negligence would reproduce the enforcement of the patrilineal authority and legitimacy on the women's subordination.

The admonition function of the incident is that women use it to warn the girls not to make a fool of sexual matter, by unconsciously restricted girls from the free and wide opportunity of exercising their potential in the contribution on the economic, social and political affairs. "The work of preservation demands that the feelings playing about in one guts not be turn into action.....fear at the enormities of the forbidden kept her desires delicate, wire and bone..." (8). Sexual restriction will extend into the restriction of exploring and revealing the other

women's potentials into the public achievement. This certainly leads women into passivity, which is frequently believed by the society as the attached stereotypes of women preventing them from participation on the public sphere. Women under the patriarchal paradigm, "Suatu sistem otoritas laki-laki yang menindas perempuan melalui institusi sosial, politik dan ekonomi..." (Humm in Rahayu, 2002: 332), have lost their rights to play a great and equal role of governing the economic, social and political matter.

Women restriction has also been implemented in the cultural field as women are expected to stay and maintain the old tradition, while men are suggested to adventure the new and more challenging culture.

...They expected her alone to keep the traditional ways, which her brothers, now among the barbarians, could fumble without detection. The heavy, deep-rooted women were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning. But the rare urge west had fixed upon our family, and so my aunt crossed boundaries not delineated in space... (8).

While, the sexual restriction itself begins to take its definite form on the biological phenomenon of menstruation. "...Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful..." (5). Menstruation has become a symbol of adultery for girls. And start from the very first time they menstruate, biologically they are productive, and sexually they are regarded mature to have a sexual intercourse with men. Therefore, since the time, girls are obliged to take more careful behavior on their

social intercourse. Some rules of clothing, the behavioral ethics, the hour of hanging out, are some real concrete and practical attitudes that in some sort have been made more restricted for women rather than for the men.

The bigger obligation of neutralizing the situation to avoid the sexual harassment is usually relied over women although the evident explains that the men are the aggressors and the women are the victims. Mother's warning for their daughters to be careful after the girls have menstruated is some how limited girls on their social interaction. This prevents them from sharpening their talent, broadening their experiences, or the long-term implication is that women are made less capable of handling public interest by the lack of the experiences. While the boys on their teenage and adult age are set freer than girls, many excuses given to them to pass trials and errors on their life, and thus they are used to go on the higher self esteem and self confidence.

Marriage is then the next important sequel of life, but for the old Chinese, marriage is not about romantic love of a couple set free to decide to get marriage motivated by their own commitment. It was more about taking a daughter in law to be an employee for the family, therefore "...among the very poor and the wealthy, brothers married their adopted sisters, like doves..."(12). The choices of husbands or wives were entirely parent's prerogatives. And moreover for girls, whose existences were regarded burdensome for the family, having them get marriage was like releasing the burden. This inappreciative acknowledgment sent girls to become no better than slaves for the husband's family. Wives would then submit themselves to settle the household occupations of the husband's family

with the unbearable treatment from the family, otherwise they might be sent home or sold to some landowners for slaves. In the case that husband left the wife without children, the parents in law directly have the right to get rid of her by selling her or mortgaging her, as long as it is more profitable for them. "...Her husband's parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her. But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me..." (7-9).

In the familial life, economically, women are made dependent on men, as they have no rights of inheritance or of the family property. Only the sons heir the rights of having the divided goods, while daughters would be sent to become the ...When the goods were divided among the family, three of the brothers took land, and the youngest, my father, choose an education. After my grandparents gave their daughter away to her husband's family, they had dispensed all the adventure and all the property... (8).

Such condition causes women to be powerless and have no strong bargaining position in front of the men since their existence is absolutely on the husband's hand. The incapability of earning money and the obligation of handling the household matter have force them to be passively accept the fact that husbands have taken the greater responsibility on the familial life and thus they have to obey them.

The role division of men and women has been institutionalized into the job division of the public and private or domestic field. The division qualified men into the public sphere and women turned into the domestic sphere, base on the tradition which give the privilege of ruling the public affair and attaining the highest achievement in the communal contribution to the men. Women with the

attached stereotypes as the weak, emotional, irrational, dependent, etc, are regarded fits only to the domestic role as wives or slaves. "...When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves..." (19). Girls or women since their younger age have been indoctrinated by the older generation to accept the value of the virtuous women to be wives or slaves, and they are entrapped into the domestic sphere of household affairs according to the patriarchal role division. Chinese girls receive such role pattern from the society as something in common and being penetrated into the young generation as if it is natural to become the tradition. The patriarchal tradition enforces the authority and legitimacy of the old culture to name and thus control the place of women within the patrilineage and thereby to establish the erasure of female desire and the denial of female self-representation.

Even the old China did restricted women to the physical body through the foot binding tradition. Many times the narrator is grateful as she is no more living in a society of such tradition , "...but my mother said we were lucky we didn't have to have our feet bound when we were seven (9). In some old traditions, the restriction conducted over women extends to the physical treatment, and foot binding is characteristically Chinese tradition.

Chinese woman is culturally destined to live under men's authority from the day she was born to the death. Before marriage she is the father's own, on the marriage life she lives under husband's authority, and when her husband died she would submit her life to her oldest son as the regarded superior one to take charge of her. Threatened as to resemble to property, women never have the full authority

of their own body and soul to freely think, feel or communicate their ideas and decide what they expect to do.

The other characters of the narrator's relatives who experience the repression caused by the patriarchal system are Brave Orchid and Moon Orchid. More than that, both of them have to face the racial discrimination as they live in the new nation with the strange language which make them silent by communication incapability to others. Fa Mu Lan, although the narrator positions her as the positive model of being a woman, still in fact being compelled to confess that women have to play on the masculine standard when they desire to achieve public acknowledgment.

## 2. The Warrior Woman; Fa Mu Lan

The legend of the Woman Warrior to inspire the narrator's personal identity presents a heroine woman successfully combat the society's enemy. Her figure has destroyed many unequal stereotypes attached to women as to prove that women and men are the same at everything. Women conditioned to grow in a physical and rational exercise would also be able to achieve the quality that was believed as only men's strength. Nevertheless, her empowerment as if fail to threaten to disrupt the representations of the patriarchal circle, when in her battle, she is not representing herself as a woman but enacting the scenario of male selfhood. I put on my men's clothes and armor and tied my hair in a man's fashion..." (36). This choice of physical performance states that the society is not



really acceptable to the figure of female. Thus, her strategy of involving the public affairs must be through the masculine standard, since to present as barely a woman often means a confrontation with the doubt from the society. There has been a strict distinction of men and women on the matter of private and public contribution, and unfortunately women are not trusted with the equal quality of public achievement. The society has enforced its patriarchal tradition to women, which finally limits them from their freedom of expressing their gender pride as barely a woman.

The other ironic fact is shown in the case that someone's success will only be highly appreciated, when it is men's success. "...My parents killed a chicken and steamed it whole, as if they were welcoming home a son..." (34). This statement may be interpreted into two interpretations, firstly it may want to say that the Woman Warrior is proud of the manly appreciation given by the family. But it may also become an affirmation that all this long women are not regarded as to deserve of this kind appreciation. But above all, it explains that subordination has disrupted women on the very principal of humanity, that is their existence as also human being like those of men.

### 3. Brave Orchid

Brave Orchid is actually an extraordinary woman said to have a higher qualified character than other common women are in the time. She appears with strong will, independent, brave and determined personality throughout the story. She would confidently decide and materialize whatever she expects to be right. Her entire life experience in China is the relief of a woman who daringly faces the world on its either good or bad condition. She performs as to successfully neglect the patriarchal system in order to confidently contribute the public employment and widely accepted by the Chinese society as the figure of special and valuable

woman. Instead of this experience, in America, Brave Orchid must involve into the trouble of gender and racial discrimination, and thus life becomes harder for her compared to the former life in China.

Like other Chinese immigrant women, she is confronted to the fact of difficult labor condition. The economic situation of most Chinese immigrant families would not permit women to remain in the home; they also have to go to work to assist in supporting their families. But they have found that American employment discriminates women, especially the non-white ones. The majority of them have only been able to find jobs in low paying garment sweatshops where they must endure long hours and unhealthy working conditions. These working women experience exploitation and deteriorating living conditions along with the principle of capital holders to make use of those immigrant women to be the source of cheap workers.

One of the factors that creates this racial discrimination is the fact that most of those Chinese immigrant women are illiterate in English language, that they could not entirely read, write, nor speak the language. This crucial weakness has made some of them choose the housebound condition and therefore economically dependent upon their husbands. But most who decide to obtain an employment are force to reconcile with the low waged labor. Brave Orchid who was a medical employee in China found that her medical level of education is no more useful for earning money in America. The English illiteracy and the racial discrimination have sent her into the job of only picking up tomato and finally join her husband in the laundry. Whether at work place or in the home, their

problems and oppressions as cheap labors and housewives are rooted in their position as women.

Language illiteracy has also discouraged women from cultural assimilation, defeat them from mingling with the new environment. Brave Orchid expresses this failure through her term of ghost to name every new strange material showing her rejection to the new custom, and to remain a traditional woman intently preserves her family from harm by maintaining the old traditions against the erosions of American culture.

...But America has been full of machines and ghost-Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghost, Five and Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the white Ghosts and their cars. There were Black Ghosts too, but they were open eyed and full of laughter, more distinct than White Ghosts...(96-97).

Brave Orchid loses the free space of implementing her Chinese tradition, and fails to anticipate just how misplace the traditions and myths have become in the new world. But still through the conventions of chanting some Chinese legend such as The Woman Warrior, and through the storytelling of some Chinese ancestors, she keeps China drawn around her family in a linguistic and gustatory circle.

#### 4. Moon Orchid

Moon Orchid in her tragic story of familial conflict is depicted as a woman abandoned by her husband, who embodies the patriarchal view that women should always remain silent and never question male authority. The episode in which Moon Orchid reluctantly confronts her Americanized husband demonstrates how essentially voiceless a Chinese woman is who lives in a traditionally patriarchal society. Meeting her husband after many years apart, Moon Orchid is incapable of voicing her years of anger and grief, "...but all she did was open and shut her mouth without any words coming out..." (152). Moon Orchid's traditional Chinese upbringing has so completely conditioned her to be passive toward men. She is uncertain of her valuable existence as a woman and wife and thus psychologically very prone of deliberate speech terror. The main problem of her husband's unfaithful commitment is once again language barrier, the husband needs a wife to assist his interaction with the American society and Moon Orchid absolutely fails in this part. Moon Orchid's unsuccessful confrontation with her husband has emphasized how important language is to personal identity, to enable one to argue her thought and feeling.

#### 5. The Narrator

And finally sexual discrimination faced by the narrator herself is also clearly represented in the novel. Since her childhood, the narrator has been very

sensitive of this sexual discrimination. And her attitude is clear and firm, that she refuses and unwillingly reconciles with even the smallest manifestation of patriarchal values.

The most difficult time of the narrator is the first phase of her denied existence as a girl in a misogynist society, where being men is a pride and freedom and being women is a burden and obedience. And then, her racial identity as Chinese in American society brings her into an inarticulate experience of interaction with the American society. Her identity as a girl and at the same time a Chinese immigrant in America has burdened her with double oppressions.

Firstly, her female sexual identity has to face the cultural and social system, which condition girls to hardly appreciate and be confident with their femininity. The society and even the family are in lines of patriarchal proclivity to regard women as worthless and thus present less friendly social intercourse for them. It is psychologically harmful for girls in their growing process as it frequently prevents them from socializing with the valued self-esteem and self-confidant. And consequently, women are humiliated by the false consciousness as the subordinate human being under the men's superiority. Such beliefs and attitudes certainly legitimate the misogynist tendency upon women.

Narrator of The Woman Warrior has experienced this social denial since her child age, some statements explain this, "...I don't know. Bad, I guess. You know how girls are. There's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls." (46). Her own mother, confirming that women insofar have also become the agents of maintaining the misogynist tendency, delivers this speech. Women

have been subjugated by the patriarchal doctrine to agree and cooperate to the system as the historically accepted as the common and natural law. And most importantly is that they have been made powerless and lose their desire to oppose against those injustice system.

The inappreciative attitude upon women is commonly and vulgarly performed by the society, just as follows:

...I minded that the emigrant villagers shook their heads at my sister and me. "One girl-and another girl, " they said, and made our parents ashamed to take us out together. The good part about my brothers being born was that people stopped saying, "all girls, "but I learned new grievances. "Did you roll an egg on my face like that when I was born?" "Did you have a full month party for me?" "Did you turn on all the lights?" "Did you send my picture to grandmother?" "Why not? Because I'm a girl? Is that why not?" "Why didn't you teach me English?" "You like having me eaten up at school, don't you?... (46).

Every individual either men or women long to be fully himself or herself in a way that does not diminish anything that essential to their sense of personal dignity. But the cultural determination has given the opportunity of fulfilling one's humanity exclusively for men, as they are adored as the expected generations to continue the familial inheritance. Son's birth will bring about the pride for the family, and ironically that women fullness as truly women is measured by her success of having son. Consequently, women serve the patrilineal lines and alienate their own sex. Therefore brother's birth for a

daughter means a new realization of her differentiated and less expected child discerned firstly through the ceremonial detail held for only son's birth.

Son's public acceptance will then be strengthened in the growing phase of children. Through a very simple example, narrator presents such way of thinking,

..."Come, children. Hurry. Hurry. Who wants to go out with great uncle?" On Saturday mornings my great-uncle, the ex-river pirate, did the shopping. "Get your coats, whoever's coming."

"I'm coming. I'm coming. Wait for me."

When he heard girls' voices, he turned on us and roared, "No girls!" and left my sisters and me hanging our coats back up, not looking at one another. The boys came back with candy and new toys. When they walked through Chinatown, the people must have said, "a boy-and another boy- and another boy!"...(47).

Secure acknowledgment is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. This experience must have torn down her self-esteem and therefore girls need more difficult individual conflicts to construct their firm existential conscience. Purposefully, she states that such differentiation on obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for one sex, that is female.

This inconvenient condition leads the narrator into a denial to her feminine identity to escape from the inappreciative collective behavior of the society, and unsurprisingly stated by the narrator, an explicit denial of her sexual identity as follows; "...I might as well have said, I'm not a girl..." (46). This sentence has implicitly asserted female's yearning for equal recognition and opportunity to exercise their fullness of their human personhood in every sphere.

Narrator's denial on her femininity would then require an escapee to build her firm existence to gain others' recognition. And realizing that male identity is the expected sex to be born and proudly acknowledged by the family

and community, she seeks other's attention by presenting herself as a male. This masculine identification occurs on her child and teenage age and therefore brings about an extreme opposition and destructive attitude, as it is characteristically childish; "...I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two. "Bad girl," my mother yelled, and sometimes that made me gloat rather than cry. Isn't a bad girl almost a boy?" (47). This behavior is motivated by the denial of the society toward girls, which burden her with some feeling of unexpected and worthless child in the family and society. "When one of my parents or the emigrant villagers said, "Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds," "I would thrash on the floor and scream so hard I couldn't talk. I couldn't stop" (46).

Narrator's awareness on the unequal differentiation committed over women has sensitively arisen since her child hood. And the most conspicuously different treatment over both sexes lies on the job differentiation. She discovers that domestic responsibility is obliged only for girls, but ironically, female existence is regarded shameful while the adoration approved only for men. Secure acknowledgement is actually the basic need of every human, which is also desired by the narrator. Therefore using her naïve and childish logical thought, she trespasses against the unequal differentiation by showing that she could also behave resemble and become almost a boy. By refusing everything considered as female obligations, she insists to prove that female sexuality also carries out masculine qualities, which may also be endowed with some privileges. Purposefully she states that such differentiation on the obligation and appreciation over both sexes is extremely injustice and oppressive for the one sex, that is female.

Women live under subordination of patriarchal culture will long-life be positioned as the secondary after men. Thus, before the system changed into the equal and just for women, this sex would still seek of equal position to men.

...I went away to my college – Berkeley in the sixties – and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy. I would have like to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs. That was for my brother, who returns alive from Vietnam ...(47).



Narrator's desire to turn into a male only confirms women's longing for the equal acknowledgement and freedom to express their unique feminine quality to accept the same appraisal from the community.

Resemble to her sexual identity, her racial identity as a Chinese living in American society has also burdened her with the more suffering of racial discrimination. Once the narrator said, "...Even now China wraps double binds around my feet" (48). Double oppression is undeniable for women of Chinese immigrants in their new destination environment, their victimized sexual discrimination will be added by the racial discrimination for some reasons.

Some adaptation has to be made for the different cultures, including certain standard of being a woman. Actually, both cultures view women on a subordinate way. But the narrator who was once from the common peoples of the Chinese society taste the more rigid convention of the Americans. "...Normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American feminine..." (172).

Language has also become their prime reasons of their powerless and inarticulate existence within the solid American society. Incapability of mastering English language gives narrator an experience of being a silence pupil in her school, as happen to many Chinese students; "...The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl..." (166). This silence gives the experience of being repressed persons as they hardly mingle with the Americans. As result, narrator and other Chinese students are frequently regarded as the nonexistent ones within the plural environments of her school.

Social interaction has also burdened the narrator with the experience of uttered insults of the native for her Chinese identity, “Order more of that nigger yellow, willya?” the boss told me. “Bright, isn’t it Nigger yellow.” “I don’t like that word,” (48). The word nigger is usually used by the white to ridicule the Afro-American people, and there is a historical sense of segregation that was addressed upon them through time since their first arrival into the island until nowadays situation. And such kind of discrimination has also usually been addressed upon the immigrants of other races, including the Chinese ones.

Adult Chinese immigrants, as happen to the narrator’s parents, are mostly troubled with their political, economical, social and cultural discrimination. Politically, America applies certain law to limit the number of immigrants entering the state. Thus many illegal immigrants have to survive in America by opposing or hiding from the immigrant officers. “...The immigrants I know hide their names, sojourner take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence...” (5). Narrator recognizes that most Chinese immigrants are afraid of performing their real existence, as the Chinese and harmful adaptation has to be made, by hiding their real identities to adjust to the law.

Their populations are also prone and powerless of government’s policies. Their illegal statues would lessen government’s risk and responsibility when it forcefully applies certain regulations. “...When urban renewal tore down my parents’ laundry and paved over our slum for a parking lot, I only made up gun and knife fantasies and did nothing useful...” (48). These people have no strong

bargaining position to fight for their own requirements. Nothing is done but submitted their life to the United States laws and policies.

Economically, the native capital owners use most first generation immigrants in United States to become their low paid and submissive labors. Therefore many of them have to work under exploitation, working in the unhealthy environment, without any health and safety insurance, and most importantly is that their wages are obviously insufficient for supporting the life necessities.

Social and cultural aspects are also important to catch the attention, but especially the Chinese immigrants are known as hardly ever to mingle with the other races, as they have made a strong cultural defense from the influences of the other cultures. China town is the symbol of the solid Chinese immigrants who tightly maintain their collective racial inheritance with the strong support each other on the political, economical, social and cultural issues.

Facing the very complicated situation, the narrator is intensely constructed to have a wistful thinking of one's existence. Her in-articulation has been concluded through the line of, "...I thought talking and not talking made the difference between the sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves..."(186). Such conclusion has certainly motivates her to have a high self-esteem and self-confidant to reveal her personality, despite the unfriendly culture toward women and Chinese of her environment.

Finally, the important notion is that the repressive and injustice patriarchal tradition that she experiences since the younger age, added by the myth

of *The Warrior Woman* and the story of her relatives have given a great contribution on her process of establishing her existential conscience as a Chinese-American Woman.

#### **D. Narrator's Concept of Chinese American Women Existential Conscience as Reflected in The Novel *The Woman Warrior***

This second subchapter analysis will be the answer of the question of the narrator's concept of woman existential conscience as a Chinese American Woman. As mentioned before, the researcher uses liberal feminism thought and feminist critique on the hegemony of masculinity as her theoretical approach. Therefore the researcher will use these theoretical bases to explain the construction of the narrator's continuous process of establishing her concept of Chinese American women existential conscience.

This analysis would reveal the narrator's counter idea of her individual existential consciousness by emphasizing her struggle against gender and racial discriminations. As previously explained in the first subchapter of the analysis, narrator and many women around her are the objects of both oppressions. Patriarchal system has torn them since the physical body to the dizziness or destruction of the existential conscience as the equal human being to men. Without knowledge and sensitive recognition of the whole structure of patriarchal

system, women frequently fall to the false consciousness of their experiences as the unchangeable destiny. Thus, sexual harassment, women domesticity, women's lack of education, and many other manifestations of patriarchal system receive the legitimization as the common and natural law. The suicide aunt, and the totally silent aunt are the examples of the extreme subjugation of women consciousness, which make them absolutely fail of realizing their own rights. The unbearable pressure the society's punishment, which had finally forced No Name Aunt to commit suicide, is actually the logical consequence of the misogynist patriarchal system. And women's silence, like happen to narrator's aunts, only empowers the oppressive system. Therefore, narrator's commitment is then to strengthen women with the stable consciousness of their existence.

Some other characters in the novel have also presented the fact of discrimination, not only of the sexual reason, but doubled with the racial reason. Narrator's mother and aunt, and the narrator herself have to accept the less appreciative behavior from the society caused by their sexual identity as women. Moreover, its culture rules women to obey and be submissive to their men. And, at the same time, they must be along with their men fight the discriminative treatment from the native white people.

The importance of the facts of discrimination is that this has become the core by which narrator bases her existential consciousness. Narrator's consciousness has arisen since her child age through her disappointment of social oppressive attitudes upon women and especially toward her selfhood as a girl born from the Chinese immigrants living in American society and culture. Thus, her

struggle is then to reveal women as the same qualified human to men to gain the equal opportunity of everything. By, at the same time, growing the awareness of disapproval toward racial discrimination. She confirms that women – of whatever races – will attain their firm existences on their successes of playing the same and equal roles as men. Yet, such liberal concept does not limit her to give an appreciation on women’s active and free choice to live either with the feminine or masculine values.

The Woman Warrior is the story of women struggle to establish their firm existences within the injustice and discriminative patriarchal system. Narrator grows up in a strong determination of Chinese and American cultures on how to be a virtuous woman. She closely engages to the Chinese tradition about women position through her mother’s storytelling. And at the same time her effort to mingle with Native American society brings her to an understanding of American feminine standard.

The experiences of many women in her family have taught her that being any kind of women is absolutely a matter of choice. Even though culture has determined a lot of restrictive guidance to the gender of women, but culture has also created legend which on the contrary has been able to encourage women to realize and bravely choose their own extraordinary ways of life resemble to the opportunity given to men. Chinese culture has determined girls to the future of wives and slaves. The dutifulness of being a Chinese woman in the time is as the prime childbearer, burdened with all works of household matters. “...When we Chinese girls listened to the adult talk story, we learned that we failed if we grew

up to be but wives or slaves...” (19). Clear distinction of the private and public contribution has discriminatively limited women from the chance of freely develop their potentials or to play greater role than the household affairs. But Chinese women possess the alternatively extraordinary figure of Fa Mu Lan from the legend of The Swordwoman, which inspires them to reveal themselves, as the free and unrestricted women trespass against the system.

...I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother, who may not have known its power to remind. She said I would grow up a wife and sale, but she thaught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman...(20).

The story gives her the spirit of a strong and free woman, encourage her to deconstruct the limitation and gain the unlimited space of firstly being fully human being. This powerful character appears though her adoration toward the Swordwoman, “...We could be heroines, swordwoman. Even if she had to rage across all China, a swordwoman got even with anybody who hurt her family. Perhaps women were once so dangerous that they had to have their feet bound...” (19). Through the sentence she states women capacity of reaching the highest achievement and criticizes foot-binding tradition as a means of remaining women from their optimal achievements and as only implicitly stating that previously women were those in charge of the authority of human civilization.

Narrator’s process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman cannot be separated from the cultural background of Chinese and American traditions. The narrator has passed through individual and communal

experiences of sexual and racial discrimination. Her problem of racial discrimination has begun to be over through her realization of universalism over racial fanaticism, together with serious effort to adapt to the new culture.

...We belong to the planet now, Mama. Does it make sense to you that if we're no longer attached to one piece of land, we belong to the planet? Whenever we happen to be standing, why, that spot belongs to us as much as any other spot." Can we spend the fare money on furniture and cars? Will American flowers smell good now?... (107).

Meanwhile her process of constructing her self-existential conscience as a woman would finally be concluded on a liberate and humanize existence of women. This is conceptualized into the one who unwillingly surrender to patriarchal subjugation as applied on the injustice prejudices of women stereotypes, with an important effort of proving women's capacity of education and public participation while at the same time setting up feminine values on equality with masculine values.

Narrator emphasizes women possession of the same rights to enjoy freedom and autonomy of their own selves to express and develop their fullness of their humanity. The efforts begin on her acceptance of her sexual identity as barely a woman, supported by her referential record of women valuable position in the Chinese tradition;

...And I had to get out of my hating range. I read in an anthropology book that Chinese say, "Girls are necessary too"; I have never heard the Chinese I know make this concession. Perhaps it was a saying in another



village. I refuse to shy my way anymore through our Chinatown, which task me with the old sayings and the stories... (52-53).

In regard of real sexual discrimination, this has become her first statement of an acceptance toward an also valuable womanhood. Social and cultural discrimination upon woman will no more suffer her with despair disappointment, but realizing women's large capacity and valuable femininity would become the most strategic instruments of gender equality.

Concrete thoughtful idea lies on her critical and dialectical discussion of women existence, which is materialized in the legend of the woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan. Her realization on women subordinate position through the oppressive experiences of her women relatives has encouraged her to dialectically build an ideal figure of women. A heroine lives in the existential consciousness of men and women equality with a great courage to give evidence of women's great personality.

The narrator materializes her ideal figure of women through the character of Fa Mu Lan – great women in the Chinese legend – as a figure to whom the narrator resembles herself and entrusts her concept of women. She intentionally leaps from the story of hers to the story of the swordwoman or Fa Mu Lan without any quotation mark as if to confirm that the life story of the swordswomen is actually her own fantasy autobiography. From the original Chinese story of Fa Mu Lan, narrator actively makes some improvements for the story to figure out this

character as bringing a lot of deconstruction toward the cultural biased gender stereotypes.

Firstly, she proves that women's stereotypes as the weak, ignorant, irrational, emotional, dependent, submissive etc are absolutely cultural construction. Thus on a more neutral condition women may also be constructed on either feminine or masculine characteristics. The swordwoman successfully performs women on a strong, rational, free and independent personality.

The swordwoman or the woman warrior gains her education beyond the common circle of community and family, but in an otherworldly place where male and female difference is not constructed in a patriarchal system. Her educators are a couple beyond childbearing ages whose relationship appears to be one of relative equality. And the education they offer encourages her to forge an identity, not through conventional formulations of women's selfhood, but through a close identification with the creatures of nature and the secrets of natural space. In such a space, female sexuality remains a natural event rather than a cultural phenomenon that situates girls in a constellation of attitudes established by the patriarchal society. She is far from the patriarchal concepts of being a woman in whom certain cultural constructions adhere certain gender stereotypes which more frequently harmful for women.

The beginning part of the second chapter of The Woman Warrior is the story of how the swordwoman is hardly and seriously trained by her two teachers. Being thought on the different way to common Chinese girls, her physical power is being exercised to gain the bodily strong and skilful girl. She is capable of self-

defense by using weapons or physical skill through her learning of the special skill of creatures around her.

...After five years my body became so strong that I could control even the dilations of the pupils inside my irises. I could copy owls and bats, the words for “bat” and “blessing” homonyms. After five years the deer let me run beside them. I could jump twenty feet into the air from a standstill, leaping like a monkey over the hut. Every creature has a hiding skill and a fighting skill a warrior can use...(23-24).

This is testimonial for women struggle on its deconstruction to the cultural beliefs on women as the physically weak creatures with the whole life dependence on men’s accompaniment and protection. It confirms Margaret Mead’s premise that women on a certain cultural situation may appear with masculine stereotypes of patriarchal society.

Next swordwoman’s success is conquering white tiger and nature with its dangerous and adventurous situation. It presents woman on an independence quality of settling their own problems without depending on men’s assistance.

Not only the physical skill does the women warrior capable of mastering, rationality that was previously regarded as masculine quality belongs only to men is becoming one of the subject learnt by Fa Mu Lan. “...I learn to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes...”(29). She develops her rational thought by learning to analyze and accept the complex and paradoxical phenomenon of the world. Knowledge was once a powerful instrument of understanding and controlling certain paradigm by which men

maintain their dominance over women. But given to the swordswoman, it has become a powerful instrument of realizing her free, autonomous and equal position toward men. Fa Mu Lan appears as a woman on the unlimited and free opportunity to develop and express the deepest potentials of the body, mind and heart by which the capacity of every person depends on. It trespasses against the assumed incapacity of women for universal, rational and logical thought that doomed them to the inferior statuses.

She is undergoing the special training in purpose of setting free the village from the baron's despotism. She would then dedicate the greatest contribution for the villagers to bring them back freedom of the intruders. And once again this action destroys cultural prejudices that women are not in capacity of involving the public complicated sphere. On the contrary, the same opportunity would result the same possibility for both sexes to play the role and may even cooperate each other on handling public problems. This would give the same opportunity for women and men to attain public achievement refers to the standard of the noble existence. "...You can be remembered by the Han people for your dutifulness..."(23). Opposes the previous determination that public achievement, as the highest standard of one's existence in China, is a privilege for male citizen. Extraordinarily differ to the other conventional women, Fa Mu Lan, is actively and revolutionarily leads the social, political and economical change of her village. She has proven that women, when they have the same opportunity to men, will also be articulate and powerful in front of the oppressive condition.

Fa Mu Lan is extraordinarily different to other women in the matter of her characteristics. Cultural prejudices set up on gender stereotypes lose its meaning in front of the swordwoman's leadership. She could stand firmly on her own self as an independent, strong, and powerful, with the great talent of leadership capable of handling the great mass of troops to fight on the battle of freedom. Social and cultural expectations usually provide men with greater chance of leading position. Men would automatically be chosen first for the place of leader, while women are regarded as more suitable for the position of men's assistants. Gender stereotypes of women, such as weak, emotional and irrational are consequently doubtful for the society to trust them with the great responsibility. Whereas these stereotypes have actually based on only social prejudices, ignoring the fact that women are given the less opportunity to the access of education and to experience the challenges life offer to exercise one's potencies. But the swordwoman gains both the education and the adventurous experience, which finally shape her character into a woman of powerful leadership. Most importantly, her political awareness is naturally developed against the repression.

Narrator's imagination of the swordwoman as to present her ideal concept of a woman seems to be very much influenced or resemble to liberal concept of feminism. The liberal feminist's spirit is clearly appeared in the way that narrator present the swordwoman as a woman with the same and even higher capability than men, thus the right of the same and equal education and public participation will also belong to women.

But we must be very careful to evaluate the very last part story of Fa Mu Lan. We may come into a conclusion of an ambiguity or a distortion of narrator's concept of feminism when we read that the last and final dedication of the swordwoman is to get back into domestic roles. It seems to be an antithesis for her first statement of undifferentiated being from the men, but it actually there the narrator's dialectical and critical thought lies.

Narrator states the importance of drawing out and developing the difference and uniqueness of both sexes rather than only stressing the potency of similarities. Having returned home, the swordwoman kneels down before her parents in law, "...Now my public duties are finished ...I will stay with you, doing farmwork and housework, giving you more sons..." (53-54). A liberal feminist might suggest that this decision is performing a socially constructed gender role, which in itself denies women's autonomy. Thus it draws back feminist struggle to attain the same and equal opportunity to play a greater role in the public sphere, out of the domestic field. Therefore, Fa Mu Lan's decision to return to the domestic affairs after her heroic action seems so ironic to the struggle of women and men equality. This may be regarded betraying the spirit of equality that she deconstructed before on her successful public contribution. But dialectically, when this decision is freely and actively chosen under the consciousness of sexual equality of both men and women, this has become absolutely an autonomous choice of a human being called woman. Indeed, on this decision lies a respect to womanhood. Narrator highly appreciates femininity and women's active choices so that the problem is no more the dichotomy between

public and private sphere, but the appreciation toward both masculine and feminine values.

Swordwoman's final decisions to return home and totally involved to the domestic world and the function of childbearing is an active, autonomous and free choice. Her process of proving the androgenic character and capability of someone either male or female has brought her to the realization or consciousness of her autonomous, free and powerful existence to choose whatever she expects. The narrator refuses to be entrapped into only the dichotomy of public and private sphere that limits the understanding of human freedom. More of that, she reveals feminism deeper into the problem of appreciating both masculine and feminine values, rather than places them in opposition. And narrator's commitment is to appreciate whatever women's choices, as long as the decision is the free, autonomous and active choices of the individual, rather than a total submission to the patriarchal system.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

**A. Conclusion**

The Woman Warrior narrates a woman process of establishing her firm existential conscience as a Chinese-American Woman. By firstly performing the reality of women subordination in the injustice patriarchal culture, the narrator moves on to the process of encountering the oppression, not by a submissive acceptance, but by constructing the idealism of women existence. Her racial identity as Chinese living in America has also become a troublesome issue burdens her with one more reason of discrimination.

Narrator as the center character of the novel has closely in touch with women experiences of oppressive condition caused by their gender identity as women. Being a woman has always meant being endowed with some social and cultural prejudices reflected firstly on some women stereotypes such as – weak, dependent, submissive, irrational, emotional, etc – which tend to qualify women as the less qualified being compared to men. The consequence is that women are restricted from the access of education as the instrument of enlarging the rational understanding and from the public participation by which one could establish their



strong political position in a society. Thus, most women fail to establish their firm existential conscience and driven into the limited boundary of household field which frequently oppressive for them.

The Woman Warrior asserts the fact of women subordination begins from the most tragic one. Women with a total submission on men and her patriarchal society has become the victim of sexual harassment, and be punished by the society for her out of marriage pregnancy. Other characters of The Woman Warrior also suffer for gender inequalities in a varied level. The Woman Warrior has to compromise with the patriarchal standard of heroism. In a battle against the baron, pretending as a man is a must unless she has to face the doubt and non-cooperation of the society. Narrator's mother, Brave Orchid, moves to America means losing jobs because of her language barrier. And she finally has to deal only with the domestic field, which is not really proper for her strong and independent characteristics. And Narrator's other aunt, Moon Orchid, is a woman with the extremely weak personality. Constructed by the oppressive patriarchal culture she becomes absolutely silent and submissive under men's authority. Thus, after husband's negligence for years, Moon Orchid still could not fight for her rights as a wife. And after all, the narrator herself has also been greatly disappointed with the patriarchal society, which give her less appreciation than her brothers.

The narrator and her relatives have also experienced racial discrimination. It covers all life aspects, through the social, economical, cultural and political matters of being citizen of America. Language barrier has mostly become the

prime problem, which alienate them into the low paid jobs. Or the other women have to accept husband's decisions to settle them into only domestic fields.

But narrator, through her dialectical discussion of womenhood, has successfully deconstructed the social and cultural prejudices by conceptualizing the ideal figure of women through the Chinese legend of Fa Mu Lan. Fa Mu Lan is the materialization of her ideal woman, by whom some concepts of feminism inspire her personal construction.

Concept of liberal feminism with its theory of sameness and equality between women and men, implemented in the same and equal rights of education and public contribution have become the very important issues claimed by the narrator to exist within men and women relationship. Through this character, the narrator deconstructs the previously underestimated women into the realization of warrior woman. Narrator believes that under the same and equal treatment women would also be able to gain the quality that was previously believed as only men's quality.

The narrator demands the realization of the more just pattern of men and women relationship. The new system where women and men share the equal responsibilities of both domestic and public field based on the principals of equal independence, mutual interdependence and reciprocal obligation. Within this pattern women and men are equally acknowledged as fully human being, thus sex will not deny either men or women to actualize their humanity.

Narrator's dialectical thought lies on the continuance of the above liberal concept of feminism. Without suggesting women to easily surrender to the

previously regarded women's roles with a submissive acceptance as something common and natural, narrator refuses to be entrapped in the dichotomy of masculine and feminine values. Thus she commits to solve the inferior view over women by her high appreciation on femininity. Narrator's thought on women's freedom is presented on the holistic view of life. It is not just freedom from patriarchal subordination and oppression, but most of all is freedom to exercise their potentials, to sharpen their rational thought and to fully actualize their humanity. Narrator's concept of women existential conscience lies on her desire of women realization on their free, autonomous and subjective individuality. Women may live with either feminine or masculine aspects since both are the legitimate modes of being human.

### **Recommendation**

Novel The woman Warrior depicts a complex reality of Chinese American people deal with their effort to settle their new identity in the new environment. The researcher here focused her study only on the matter of women's experience within the sexual and racial discriminative society through the feminist point of view. But actually the novel also presents some other conflicts which bring the characters to involve with racial discrimination of the society, and to undergo the psychological conflict in their effort to mingle with the society. This issue will be interesting to be analyzed considering the social-cultural fact of the blend plural races in American. Moreover its historical

experience of racial discrimination has noted the terrified humiliation upon humanity.

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