

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
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**Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
*Department of Letters and English Language*



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Degree in the field of English Language and Literature

**Major: Literature and Civilisation**

# **Women empowerment in A Vindication of The Rights of Woman by mary wollstonecraft**

Presented and publicly defended by

**WIDAD ZENATI**

Supervised by

**Dr.Cheikh Abderrahim**

Jury

Dr.Sayehlombarek Samira	Kasdi Merbah University	Chairperson
Dr.Abderrahim Cheikh	Kasdi Merbah University	Supervisor
Prof.Halimi Mohamad seghir	Kasdi Merbah University	Examiner
Dr.Belrabi Ahmed nourrdine	Kasdi Merbah University	Examiner

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## **Dedication**

*My father*

*A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust allah ,For supporting and encourage me to  
believe in myself*

*My mother*

*Effection, love,and prays of day and night make me able to get such success and honor*

**widad**



## Acknowledgement

*First and foremost, We thank Almighty Allah, my Creator, for providing us with the finest that life has to offer and for showering His grace on us along our journey to complete this work.*

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*Special thanks go to our parents, sisters, brothers and classmates for their continuous assistance and motivation.*

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*Thank you all.*



## Abstract

This report provides an overview of the status, or lack thereof, of women's role in 18th century England. It then covers Wollstonecraft's reaction to Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas on women's education, as well as the Ardens, a family of professional teachers, and their impact on Wollstonecraft's future educational efforts. If women are actually equal to males in terms of reasoning, then this would appear to be the decisive element in what their 'character' might achieve. Women may be considered to have contingently evolved dispositions that prevent them from refining their reason in virtue since they are not always offered the same social and educational possibilities as males. Nonetheless, they are always capable of doing so. Women's liberation, according to Wollstonecraft, does not have to imply a reversal of conventional norms. Indeed, allowing women independence may help them to more fully realize their virtue since they will be able to develop that virtue freely, according to their own liberty to apply reason.

**Keywords:** women education , mary wollstonecraft,A Vindication of The Rights of Woman , women in the 18th , liberation.

## ملخص

يقدم هذا التقرير لمحة عامة عن حالة ، أو عدم ، دور المرأة في إنجلترا في القرن الثامن عشر. ثم يغطي رد فعل ، وهي عائلة من المعلمين المحترفين Ardens على أفكار جان جاك روسو حول تعليم المرأة ، وكذلك Wollstonecraft التعليمية المستقبلية. إذا كانت المرأة مساوية للذكور فعليًا من حيث التفكير ، Wollstonecraft ، وتأثيرهم على جهود فسيظهر هذا كعنصر حاسم في ما يمكن أن تحققه "شخصيتها". قد يُنظر إلى النساء على أنهن لديهن نزعات طارئة تمنعهن من تحسين عقلمن في الفضيلة ، حيث لا يُمنحن دائمًا نفس الإمكانيات الاجتماعية والتعليمية مثل الذكور. ومع ذلك ، فهم قادرون دائمًا على القيام بذلك. لا يجب أن يتضمن تحرير المرأة ، وفقًا لولستونكرافت ، عكس الأعراف التقليدية. في الواقع ، قد يساعد السماح للمرأة بالاستقلال على إدراك فضيلتها بشكل كامل لأنها ستكون قادرة على تطوير تلك الفضيلة بحرية ، وفقًا لحريتها في تطبيق العقل..

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# Introduction

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a pivotal work of writing which actually resounds in women's liberation and basic liberties developments of today. Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) composed the book to some degree as a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, published in late 1790. Burke considered the French Revolution to be a development which would unavoidably fall flat, as society required customary designs. Wollstonecraft's underlying reaction was to compose *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), an answer of Burke that contended for parliamentary change, likewise contending against Burke – however Wollstonecraft continued to go above and beyond, and, interestingly, revolutionarily, that 'I will initially think about women in the fantastic light of human creatures, who, in the same manner as men, are put on this planet to unfurl their resources'.

Mary Wollstonecraft, often known as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was an English writer and impassioned champion for women's educational and social equality. She was born on April 27, 1759, in London, England, and died on September 10, 1797, in London. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a feminist classic, she expressed her thoughts.

Wollstonecraft, the daughter of a farmer, taught school and served as a governess, both of which influenced her ideas in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787). . In 1788, she began working as a translator for Joseph Johnson, a London publisher who published several of her works, including *Mary: A Fiction* (1788). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), her mature essay on women's roles in society, advocates for equal education for men and women. Wollstonecraft left England in 1792 to see the French Revolution in Paris, where she resided with Captain Gilbert Imlay, an American.

Fanny, her daughter, was born in the spring of 1794. She attempted suicide the next year, heartbroken about the end of her relationship with Imlay.

Wollstonecraft moved to London to work for Johnson once more, and she became a member of a prominent radical circle that met at his house, including William Godwin, Thomas Paine, Thomas Holcroft, William Blake, and, after 1793, William Wordsworth. In 1796, she began a relationship with Godwin, and they married on March 29, 1797, when Mary was still pregnant. Mary died 11 days after the birth of her second daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who went on to become a novelist best known as the author of *Frankenstein. Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), a travelogue with a sociological and philosophical bent, and *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), a posthumously published unfinished novelistic sequel to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, are among Wollstonecraft's late notable works.

### **The objective of study**

- Women life in the 18th century
- Through the present research we aim to show how Mary Wollstonecraft argued for the rights of women to be educated, and the main goal was to see women get close enough to portions of generally forbidden to them in the 18th century

**Research questions**

- How was it women's life look like in 18th century?
- What is the purpose of "a vindication of the rights of women"?
- Why did Mary Wollstonecraft fight for women's rights?
- What was the impact of "A vindication of the rights of women"

**The hypothesis**

- A Vindication of The Rights of Woman called for female fairness, especially in the space of schooling
- Women were by and large caught in their homes and would just perform homegrown disarray and obligations. Nature and the general public had given them jobs as the home guardians

**Methodology**

We use in this dissertation is descriptive and analytical methods. The literary theory that we will rely on to analyze the novel is feminism which male behaviors towards women and female identity in the essay. We will collect data from the essay as a primary source as well as scholarly articles, books, and websites

**Chapter One**

Will provide an overview of the role of women in the 1800<sup>th</sup> century and how were treated

**Chapter Two** will include the purpose of A Vindication of The Rights of Woman and how mary Wollstonecraft argue for women education , and dispuite essentialist ideas about women nature

### **Chapter Three**

The analysis of *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*



## **CHAPTER-I. The Role of Women in the 1800<sup>th</sup> century**

## **Introduction**

High fashion was popular in the 1800s, but exclusively for wealthy women. They dressed elegantly, although lower-class women frequently wore rags. Women were not considered human since they were considered property. They were owned by their fathers before marriage and by their spouses after marriage. Women had little political clout since they were owned by males and had no economic factor. Everything they possessed belonged to their fathers or spouses. Rape had no legal standing, and many women were subjected to domestic violence. Women who attempted to leave an undesirable marriage would be apprehended and punished by the law. Women were not permitted to attend college. For girls, physical exertion was harmful and unacceptable. They were instructed to protect their fragile health in order to have healthy children.

**1.1. 1.1. Women should only be educated in domestic subjects**

Women's education remained a shadowy life; the majority of women had no education at all, and impoverished women were unable to read or write. Gender, class, religion, and nationality have all had an impact on education. Women's education in the Britain was historically aimed to teach middle and upper-class girls enough to make them acceptable marriage material for males, and classes were frequently given at home by poorly trained governesses. Education was viewed as a means of making women better wives and mothers rather than as a means of changing their life. 'Decorative, modest, marriageable individuals' should be taught to females. Music, Latin, Greek, and lessons in social graces and etiquette were frequently taught. Only a select few were taught at a high level in disciplines like as mathematics, and this was frequently in the company of their brothers. Women's education has always shaped by social expectations. If working-class girls were educated at all, they were taught the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as household skills like needlework. They were taught in elementary schools, which were typically dame schools — tiny schools managed by working-class women in their own homes – or Sunday schools organized by the church or charitable organizations. Academic study was thought to go against women's nature and that too much information may harm women's fertility, therefore women were discouraged from pursuing academic goals for fear of jeopardizing their loyalty to the home. Women's higher education was frequently opposed by church officials, who claimed that it contradicted biblical precepts. “The only subjects that girls existed taught in school were language; reading and writing. Other courses included wifely responsibilities and activities such as knitting, midwife, cooking, and waving among others”



“Higher education was a privilege for some girls of the middle and higher social levels who were educated at ‘boarding-schools’ in subjects like English, French, Dancing, Music and Needlework. The education was finished at the age of 15 or 16 due to the early marriage of women. After this education in school, women were allowed to educate themselves e.g. by the library of their husbands but most did not. The few ‘learned ladies’ and their literary work mostly remained covert so that it could not be criticized or made ridiculous”

## **1.2. Women's position in society**

In theory, a single woman's legal position in the 18th century was the same as that of a male. Whether she was unmarried or married had a significant impact on her legal situation. For the most part, single women enjoyed the same rights and obligations as men, including the ability to own property, enter into contracts, and sue. However, her gender would always make a direct equivalent to a man impossible. Women had no rights under private law; there was no space for them, which resulted in their exclusion from citizenship.” Theoretically, the legal status of the single woman was the same as that of a man in the 18th century. The legal position was crucially affected depending on whether she was single or married. Single women had, for the most part, the same rights and responsibilities as did men; owning properties, making contracts, suing, however, her gender would always make a straightforward equivalence to a man difficult. In private law, no woman had any rights; there was no place for them, which led to an exclusion from citizenship.

“Throughout the century a skirmish went on between conservatives who argued for the grand principle of subordination and progressives, who, guided by the clear light of reason, contended for woman’s rational and social equality.”

The married lady, on the other hand, was regarded in a completely different light.” whatever the lived reality, the representation of marriage certainly moved towards such an ideal in the literature of the period, e.g. *The Spectator*. A married woman had no separate legal identity; her existence was ‘covered’ under that of her husband. Her property passed into the control of her husband. She neither was able to enter into contracts nor to sue or be sued. Moreover, she had no legal rights over her children and, unbelievably nowadays, had no right to leave the house without the permission of her husband. The law therewith infantilised married women by treating them as incapable of handling their own affairs “

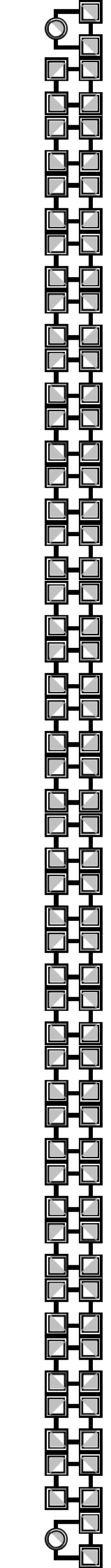
A married woman may acquire property, but due to rigorous restrictions, her authority could not expand. These restrictions prevented women from using property allocated for upkeep as a source of capital. This resulted in a lack of economic power and agency, and it was one of the main reasons for women's exclusion from citizenship, which was based on land ownership.” A married woman could own property but her power did not increase anyway due to severe limitations.

These limitations avoided that women could take property intended for maintenance and use it as capital. This resulted in a lack of economic power and agency and is one of the key factors in women’s exclusion from citizenship, which was rooted in the ownership of land

## **Conclusion**

Women were largely stuck in their houses, doing solely domestic turmoil and tasks. Nature and society had assigned them the tasks of housekeepers, ethical keepers for the home and society, and housewives for their own families. Housewives were expected to bear offspring, care for the children, and submit to their husbands. Women were socially regarded as weaker and so inferior to their male counterparts. Some could equate such a

situation to slavery. Women had little say over their own lives. Everything in society was completely controlled by males.



**Chapter-II. The purpose of A Vindication  
of The Rights of Woman by mary  
Wollstonecraft**

## **Introduction**

The English women's rights pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft released her classic book, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." She attributed much of the responsibility for women's lower political, intellectual, and social position to "faulty education" in it. She made a number of proposals in "Vindication" aimed at improving the quality of education for women. Boys and girls attending the same school and sharing a curriculum rich in experiential learning, particularly in scientific subjects, were among them. She pushed for more physical activity and play, as well as health education tailored to women's needs. These and other educational initiatives established her as a key progenitor of a slew of current, generally recognized educational breakthroughs. "The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's "A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN in 1792, represented probably the first sustained argument in English for women's rights."1 It helped articulate an emerging debate within English society and on the Continent regarding the legal, political, intellectual and social status of women"7.

The work also looked at Wollstonecraft's claim that women's "fault education" contributed significantly to their lower status. Education, according to the author, is a critical component.

In the process of establishing a new social order in which women would be able to achieve their full and equal rights?areas where there are men. She remarked in A VINDICATION OF WOMAN'S RIGHTS "that a proper education; or, to speak with more precision, a well studied mind . . . would enable a woman to support a single life with dignity".

## **II.2. To argue for women education**

Women were deemed 'by nature' incapable of thinking or reasoning as well as men in Wollstonecraft's period and culture, and they were often denied the chance to obtain an education. Wollstonecraft begins her work by emphasizing the position's ambiguous character. How can anybody suggest that women lack intellectual potential if they are denied the chance to develop it? She issues the following challenge to everyone who believes women are cognitively inferior: educate women, then see if they indeed have inferior capacity for any subject. What possible reason could there be for society not to attempt this? Were its authorities worried that women weren't inferior after all? Indeed, the entire book is a powerful argument for women's education, and I believe her views on this matter are excellent.

She claimed that, like men, women should be free to pursue any type of education based on their particular ability. She also stated that women should be able to engage in politics and hold positions of societal importance. All of these things were inconceivable at the time, but today they're a given.

## **II.2. To dispute essentialist ideas about women nature**

” In general, Wollstonecraft argues that people are not ‘by nature’ one way or the other – rather, that women were ‘socialized’ to be a certain way because of their station in society. In this she is an early thinker in the ‘nature versus nurture’ debate”

Women act in various ways because they've been socialized to do so, not because they have a 'feminine nature' that gives them certain 'weak' features. They were encouraged to maintain their constitutions weak by being prevented from activity as youngsters, for example. Their submissive and modest behavior was appreciated, reinforcing such attributes, and their compliance was cherished first and foremost because it was in the best interests of their dads – their 'male masters' in everything but name.” She concludes that it would be folly to assume that these traits are natural when women are so obviously raised to behave in this way.”

## **II.3. Subjugation Perverts Both Sides**

Wollstonecraft also contends that virtue cannot exist without freedom. Although this viewpoint is not explored in a single portion of the book, it appears from beginning to conclusion.” She illustrates the idea with colorful examples. Subjugated women will use trickery and cunning to get what they want, and trickery and cunning are not virtues. Soldiers will be superficial for a similar reason, she says: they have to obey orders, and are told not to think. Little surprise perhaps then that they are also traditionally considered relatively dumb – just like women. She jokes, no wonder women have a fondness for men in uniform!”

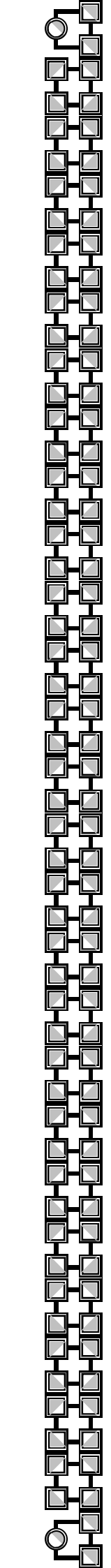
“People who are subjugated are not free and so are not free to use reason to decide what the right and the wrong thing to do is. Thus they do not have the minimal requirements to act morally. With mere obedience left to them, virtue will be barred from them. So without freedom, there is no morality. Submission corrupts. However, subjugation will pervert not only the subjugated; those who subjugate will be failed or flawed moral beings too. They often act with impunity, and they will be obeyed, which will often lead to abusive behavior, which also can hardly be called virtuous. So power and subjugation corrupt both the powerful and the powerless. This is a no-win situation, where neither side achieves the moral maturity that can lead to happiness and a life well-lived. Wollstonecraft, therefore, argues for an end to subjugation, and for men and women to create a world with equality, for the good of both sexes”



These significant considerations are enough to earn Wollstonecraft a place of esteem in the literary world. the history of philosophy, because she holds one of the Enlightenment's most radical stances. Women should not be treated like children “my own sex,I hope,excuse me,if I treat them like rational creatures ,instead of flattering their fascinating graces , and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood , unable to stand alone “(Wollstonecraft.p13)

## **Conclusion**

Wollstonecraft advocates for women's financial independence, asserts the necessity for civic duty and action, argues for the need of being a good citizen as well as a good mother, and discusses the numerous interests that women might pursue in society. Chapters ten and eleven discuss parental responsibilities, emphasizing the need for educational changes in order for women to be decent mothers who do not tyrannize or pamper their children. She discourse on overcoming the oppression and denial of women's potential in society in her day, with corresponding challenges for their houses and society as a general. Wollstonecraft expresses her belief that the absence of women' education is primarily to blame for adult women's plight. They are considered as second-class citizens who are primarily concerned with looking lovely, graceful, and modest; they buy into the tyranny; and they lack the means to defend their fundamental rights or the understanding that they are in this situation.



**CHAPTER-III. THE analysis of A Vindication  
of The Rights of Woman by mary  
wollstonecraft**



## **Introduction**

Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) authored *Reflections on the French Revolution* in response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, which was published in late 1790. Burke considered the French Revolution as a movement doomed to fail because society needs established structures like hereditary positions and property to survive. Wollstonecraft's first answer was to publish *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), a refutation to Burke's argument for legislative reform, in which she claimed that religious and civic liberty were part of a man's birthright, and that corruption was mostly caused by ignorance. This was not the first time someone argued for men's rights; Thomas Paine released his *Rights of Man* in 1791.

*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was written in 1791 and first published in 1792, with a second version issued the following year. It was marketed as the first book of the work, although Wollstonecraft never completed the series. There have been publications written before this era that urged for the reform of female education, frequently for moral grounds or to better prepare women for their function as men's companions.

Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, condemns women's education in her introduction:

“ I attribute [these problems] to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men, who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers ... the civilised women of this present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.” (Wollstonecraft.p11)

Wollstonecraft's ideas were frequently ahead of their time. She suggests, for example, the development of a national education system to operate mixed-gender schools in Chapter

12 'On National Education.' She also contends that giving women the right and opportunity to earn a living and sustain themselves is critical for their dignity.

The book's chapters contain a wide range of issues, and the numerous digressions in the text back up William Godwin's claim that Wollstonecraft produced the book in only six weeks. Wollstonecraft's tone expresses both her personal sense of humour as well as her outrage at the precarious condition that most women were forced into:

“ My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone.” (Wollstonecraft.p13)

### **III.1. Educated women for better society**

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**III.2. In the following quote Mary argues that if women are shallow it is because they were forced to be and how you raised them**

“Though from infancy that beauty is women's scepter (power), the mind shapes itself to the body and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison “ (Wollstonecraft, p127)

**III.3. Mary addresses this idea in the following quote that if women's vices are due to oppression by men**

“Slaves and mobs have always gone to excesses in that way once they have broken loose from authority the bent bow straightens with violence when the hand that is forcibly holding it is suddenly relaxed” (Wollstonecraft, p94)

"Women are told from their infancy, and 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 man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives." (Wollstonecraft, 19)

This is the main argument Wollstonecraft provides for why women are subordinate to men: from the minute they are born, every aspect of their upbringing is geared at making them weak, obedient, and reliant on men. Women have been taught to believe that they must be pretty in order to attract men. They take pleasure in their own frailty and lack of physical prowess. They get into fights with other women. Because they are isolated to the private realm, they have no other interests or obligations.



## **Conclusion**

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman by Mary Wollstonecraft is an essay on overcoming the ways in which women in her day were oppressed and denied their full potential in society, causing issues for their families and society as a whole. The dedication is to Charles M. Talleyrand-Périgord, the late bishop of Autun, whose ideas on female education were vehemently opposed by Wollstonecraft.

Wollstonecraft advocates for reason and logic, and she analyzes the negative consequences of unrestricted, arbitrary political authority, as well as the vices linked with wealth and inherited titles. ... the different ways in which women are treated as second-class citizens. They've been taught that their appearance is everything, and they've learned to develop fragility and artificiality in order to appear appealing to others. They are seldom self-sufficient and rarely use logic.

Virtue should not be gender-specific; both men and women were created by God and have souls, therefore they have the same proclivity to reason and acquire virtue. Female dependency is not natural, as it was in her day. Insipidity and pettiness are the outcome of women's confinement in the house and incapacity to engage in the public arena.

Wollstonecraft aspires to bring forth a "revolution in female manners.."

She scorns the notion that a woman's life's ultimate objective is pleasure. Reason and common sense are frequently overlooked in favor of passion and sentiment, and young females are trained from an early age to be only concerned with themselves. These patterns are troublesome for moms, who either pamper or disregard their children.

Furthermore, because husband and wife should be comrades, marriage should resemble friendship.



## General Conclusion

In Victorian culture, women had just one basic purpose in life: to marry and participate in their husbands' hobbies and enterprises. Unless women were from a wealthy family, they would study housewife skills such as weaving, cooking, washing, and cleaning before marrying. Women were primarily confined to their homes, engaged solely in domestic strife and responsibilities. Nature and society had entrusted them with the roles of housekeepers, ethical guardians for the home and society, and housewives for their own households. Housewives were supposed to give birth to children, care for them, and submit to their husbands. Women were viewed as weaker and inferior to their male counterparts in society. Some could compare this scenario to slavery. Women had very little control over their life. Males had unlimited control over everything in society.

In reaction to French politician Talleyrand-essay Périgord's on public education, Mary Wollstonecraft produces *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Her point is that if women are not "educated to become the partner of man," progress in knowledge and virtue will be halted. The lack of women's education, according to Wollstonecraft, has resulted in tremendous unhappiness. Women are taught that their major purpose in life is to find love, and they are not encouraged to develop their reason or morality.

Wollstonecraft focuses on middle-class women in her critique of contemporary conceptions of women's education, seeing them first as "human creatures... put on this planet to develop their capacities." Her reasoning is based on the assumption that reason is what makes individuals human, that virtue is what separates people, and that virtue is gained via knowledge.

The frequent idea that men and women should strive for separate values is dismissed by Wollstonecraft. She believes that, while men and women have distinct responsibilities in

life, they should aim for the same ideals. However, because women's education is sometimes haphazard, they are not given enough opportunities to develop their reason and reach morality. They're more commonly groomed to please males, preparing themselves for a limited span of life—courtship and early marriage—rather than a lifetime. They aren't even equipped to create long-term relationships or adequately care for their children.

Women are never given the opportunity to fight with hardship and hence gain knowledge and morality since they are taught that pleasure is the overarching objective of their existence. Instead of learning to rely on logic, they are encouraged to be led by their emotions and sensitive senses, which does not equip them to be excellent husbands and mothers. If widowed, or if seduced and "ruined" by a man—situations in which women are left without any means to sustain themselves financially—their lack of education makes them especially susceptible. On the question of women's education, Wollstonecraft explicitly criticizes numerous eighteenth-century writers. Her most in-depth critique is of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who claims that women merely need to be educated to serve males. Fordyce's emotive sermons are likewise dismissed, as are Gregory's decorum regulations. She comes to the conclusion that many of these repressive norms have been accepted by women because they have not been educated to differentiate between reason and prevalent biases. She also discusses the significance of first impressions as a youngster, the value of humility for both sexes, and the difference between external repute and virtue.usceptible.

Wollstonecraft argues for a "revolution" for women, emphasizing that their inferior status is the result of men's preconceptions rather than any inherent inferiority. When women are given the freedom to grow their knowledge and affections, this will be shown. Women

will gain more freedom as they are liberated from ignorance, as befitting intelligent creatures with human souls, and society as a whole will benefit.

The 21st century has given women fresh hope and given them positive empowerment. They used to live under a spouse or father's shadow, but now that they have developed their own identities, they can live on their own. Women's freedom has reached several turning points, and society has advanced significantly. Despite their many years of hardship, they have been able to effectively forge their own identity. Women of today are decorated with patience and tenacity, which has enabled them to reach the heights of achievement. Earlier, Only housewives, who were expected to cook, clean, and take care of their families, were thought of as women. Today, many effectively multitask at home in addition to dealing with challenging clients at work. In the best possible way, women are more concentrated, have a distinct decision-making authority even at senior leadership level, and occasionally are in a better position than males. Women's empowerment may hasten the growth and development of society. Undoubtedly, we are rebuilding the planet.





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