Changing role of Women in Early 19 Century

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***Introduction***

A famous quotation infers, “Old order changeth yielding place to new”, reflecting Wood Krwatch’s idea, “All ages are the changing ages”. It would not be wrong to say that 19 century was followed by something very special that has not been observed in the reflection of other ages. One of the greatest refection could be found by exploring dictionary, the word "feminism" was not part of human ideology and perception before 19 century. This phrase was still uncommon, adhering to efforts that were made to improve status of women and incorporate their usefulness in society until 1910. “Women movement” is one of the major sections of changes that occurred during 19 century. It would not be wrong to call this movement as a struggle in which women strived to improve their status and position in society. The prime objective of this movement was to initiate charitable benevolence, social welfare, and temperance along with the struggles of civil rights and approach to remunerative occupations. The setting of these goals refers to awareness of people adhering to the stance of precautions that are implemented in the patriarchal society in early 1800. Changing role of women in early 19 century is more like a depiction of picture that changes with the change of angle. It is significant to note that that beginning of nineteen century is characterized by social, moral and ethical inequality.

**Discussion**

During the first half of nineteenth century, there were evangelical fires in the Second Great Awakening that swept nation. It was a revival of more optimistic and active religious sensibility taking into account that there was a shift in the role of women in America[[1]](#footnote-1). Two major events, transformation, and Protestantism in the circular of actions affirmed how women thought and lived. The subject time was more like a typical conversion in the revival of young women. It is significant to note that early 19 century was accompanied by a timeline that reflects women as a continual victim of both economic and social discrimination. The choices that were made by the upper and middle-class women were limited to spinsterhood, motherhood, and marriage. All decisions associated with women were made in the stance of domestic dependency, highlighting that women were discouraged from wages to buying believing that women who earn wages are quite unnatural. Moreover, if a woman could find a place to work the wages would be much less as compared to other workers[[2]](#footnote-2). The stance of low wages was accompanied by the absence of depressing, greater upward mobility and an unhealthy working conditions, taking into account that marriage was presented as a safe guise that could keep women out of all social and moral threats. Women were forced to do a large variety of work, taking into account that they should be dependent on their husband for financial support[[3]](#footnote-3).

In accordance with the evolution of nineteen century, it is asserted that Women movement was a promotion of moral and ethical position of females, taking into account a new series of new images for women. The phrases like, True womanhood, public womanhood, and new womanhood refers to platform where women were recognized as something that constituted society, asserting a clear contradiction with the roles of women in 19 century. It is significant to note that a woman was having blur edges during early nineteenth century, promoting an overlapping picture that long term change in attitude, power roles, societal identities and attitude towards gender, a reflection that was a power shift from patriarchal basis. It is affirming that 1820, 1830 and 1840 refers to nonproductive matron that became a symbol of “hegemony of bourgeois class” stressing an ideal that is now termed as, “The Cult of True Womanhood”. The aim of this ideal was to prescribe a code that could picture an actual female role, bound to nursery and kitchen, side by side overlaid by purity and pity. In a simplified form, the role of women was crowned by subservience. In accordance with, Barbara Welter in “Dimity Conviction, The American Women in the Nineteenth Century” reflected true women were designated as a symbolic keeper of morality and decency within home, as well as regarded as something that is innately superior to the other gender whenever it became a virtue. It is highlighted that women were treated as something that was other than man and its associated values and attributes like submissiveness, purity, domesticity, and pity as they were thought to be a stance that could make a woman natural[[4]](#footnote-4).

Women enjoyed a comparatively high status in a distant past; they were free from all the constraints of economics, society, and religion. In accordance with the research of Pardammshree Laxmanarayn, the ancient history of Oria women highlights a brighter and engaging role of women as that of the beginning of 19 century. The status of women was suppressed in the flow of religious and social laws taking into account that customs gradually became hostile referring to the interest of women class. R. C Majumdar has highlighted that pre-British women lived and observed social degradation affirming neither freedom nor opportunity could empower self-expression. Under the strong influence of British rule, structural transformation took a massive place in the physiography of Indian society. The transformation of British rule was more like a distinction in the position and status of women, taking into account that it gradually emerged from seclusion and confinement to destruct and destroy shackles of imposition and bondage[[5]](#footnote-5).

It is significant to note that the ideal of true women is more like an assumption that asserts task of creating, expanding and creating an industrialized civilization that is derived from wilderness. In accordance with the roles that are associated with women of 19 century highlights a figure that is acting as a protection for religion as well as a civilized society. 19 century demanded women who are actually an imposition of patriarchal society, taking into account that she should be trained to be obedient and portray good self-control. Each individual should have a well-taught set of values that could enforce virginity, stressing, women should be trained to realize that virginity is the “pearl of great price”, which is her greatest asset. The drifting of roles allows women to shift between the requirements that allowed her to save her chaste for future husband. Motherhood is another major attribute that was treated as a compulsion, empowering the ideal for republic motherhood. All these views were meant to be transferred with the help of familial relations and familial associations that could place a woman on the pedestal of required roles and duties. It is significant to note that this impression was equally conveyed by the schools, churches and other institutions that were performing any major or minor function. Nineteen century inferred a stance of “spate spheres”, taking into account that the two social pillars meet firstly at dawn and then dusk. This ideology highlighted the stance of paradigms that rest on "definition of natural characteristics of women and men". It is affirming that women were considered as physically weak and fragile as compared to men, placing men superior to women in accordance with moral pictures and timelines. It was the job of men to counterbalance the moral structure that is associated with the generation with the sole aim to manage because their superior being or husband is striving to earn a living side by side; he is working to prepare a generation that will be his representative[[6]](#footnote-6).

Education is also one of the major paradigms that was highlighted in terms of gender role transition, taking into account that women required new kind of education that could help her become “angle of house”. It is interesting and equally critical to note that girls belonging to middle class were coached and retained in terms of their education. Nineteenth century was a shift and a drift from the actual timeline of present time where women are not bound to traditional education leaving behind the stance of education that could lament scientific and historical accounts for an identity. A clear example of “accomplishments” can be found in the writing of Jane Austin "Pride and Prejudice”, depicting a snobbish lady who has all the skills that are required of a well learned and domestic woman. A context from the literary writing highlights,   
“*A women must have thorough and maple knowledge of drawing, singing music, modern language, dancing as well as a manner of walking. She must possess a certain impression of something in her air, address, and expression"[[7]](#footnote-7).*

It is asserted that women should be well learned to soften their erudition under the influence of graceful and actual famine character. A woman who strives for intellectual superiority was termed as “bluestocking", inferring that none of the women wanted to be one. The transition of role in 19 century brought a great shift in marriage and sexuality, it is highlighted that a woman was not made to focus on finding a perfect match in the form of a husband. Women were assumed to think about marriage because it was the only option that could lead an individual to “emotional satisfaction”. It is asserted that marriage and sexuality are two significant aspects that were considered as the demarcation of women roles. It could be found in, “Florence Nightingale” who longed for doing something productive. It was the impression of gendered roles that made her stay in restrictions. It was the “cult of domesticity” that made women stay bound to what was assigned to her. Women were not even allowed to speak to men unless they were married. It was highlighted that women had to cater to emotional gestation, taking into account that these obsessions could lead to a number of rebellions. It is significant to note that a prostitute was more like a shadow that could haunt a well-settled family. As a prostitute was an economic resource in the market place as well, still she was treated as a cursed and debilitated being. It is critical to note that doctors such as Acton highlighted that women may cause "disease" in men referring to certain contagious diseases. It was the reason, “Contagious Disease Act" was formulated in certain towns that empowered forced medical treatment of any lady who was suspected or found to be sex worker[[8]](#footnote-8).

A scholarly analysis of the nineteenth-century women has paved the way for the examination of gendered roles as well as resistance taking into account that “subjectivity” of women was a recurring and persistent phenomenon. A large number of studies have been concentrated in how white and middle-class women reacted to their assigned private and domestic spheres in the nineteenth century. There has been a massive interest in the dynamics of gender roles accompanied by societal expectation in minority and the lower class communities. Although these studies are complementary still there is a difficulty in making generalization of lives of women in terms of religious, cultural, economic and religious backgrounds.

***Conclusion***

In a nutshell, it can be asserted that men and women were not equal in 19 century, it would not be wrong to say that women were termed as “weaker sex”[[9]](#footnote-9). It not only affected the middle-class women but upper class as well, they had no reason that could allow them to go to work and leave the familial setting. It was the impression of middle class that made women stay confined to the realms of society and stay connected with their family only. An ideal woman was the one who could be the "angel in the house" and supports her husband. Women have very few rights, particular one married; they were treated as the property of their husband. Women were highly unfashionable in a general stance, taking into account that there were a number of reasons for which women could be divorced, ranging from disobedience to an assumption of adultery. All social institutions were actually meant for men; women were assumed as, “brainless” creatures who can't understand such things so they were excluded from all happening with strict instruction to keep them minds busy with households and other home activities. Women were not having the right to vote, no matter they are educated, or working in any section of social constructions.

End Notes

1. Burstein, Miriam Elizabeth. "Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Women in Nineteenth-Century Culture by Per Faxneld." *Comparative Literature Studies* 56, no. 1 (2019): e-6.
2. Meriwether, Margaret Lee. *A social history of women and gender in the modern Middle East*. Routledge, 2018.
3. Moore, John C. "The Nineteenth Century." In *A Brief History of Universities*, pp. 61-86. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2019.

1. Burstein, Miriam Elizabeth. "Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Women in Nineteenth-Century Culture by Per Faxneld." *Comparative Literature Studies* 56, no. 1 (2019): e-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Moore, John C. "The Nineteenth Century." In *A Brief History of Universities*, pp. 61-86. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Burstein, Miriam Elizabeth. "Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Women in Nineteenth-Century Culture by Per Faxneld." *Comparative Literature Studies* 56, no. 1 (2019): e-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Moore, John C. "The Nineteenth Century." In A Brief History of Universities, pp. 61-86. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Burstein, Miriam Elizabeth. "Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Women in Nineteenth-Century Culture by Per Faxneld." *Comparative Literature Studies* 56, no. 1 (2019): e-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Meriwether, Margaret Lee. *A social history of women and gender in the modern Middle East*. Routledge, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Moore, John C. "The Nineteenth Century." In *A Brief History of Universities*, pp. 61-86. Palgrave Pivot, Cham, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Meriwether, Margaret Lee. *A social history of women and gender in the modern Middle East*. Routledge, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Meriwether, Margaret Lee. *A social history of women and gender in the modern Middle East*. Routledge, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)