Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects

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**Introduction**

Mary Wollstonecraft was an educator, who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. Her document is an attempt to declare women equality in society and was written in response to Charles Maurice de Talleyr and-Périgord’s report. That report was published in 1791 and emphasized the domestic education of women only. In her document, Wollstonecraft reacted towards those educational and political theorists who had no belief in women education and had not considered women as human beings. She is known as “mother of feminism” who wrote for women right of education. In the novel, she not only acknowledged women role in the home but she also did not detach them from their role. She had a belief in their domestic life along with the need of public life (Wollstonecraft, 1792). According to her, domestic life is necessary to provide the foundation for public life. Therefore, women have to perform both duties; towards their family and towards the state in order to become an effective member of the society. Women should be given the rights of education as they have the responsibility of their children education. If they are educated they can perform these responsibilities well. Furthermore, these women would also be able to strengthen their matrimonial relationship due to understanding and cognitive skills. This paper will critically analyze the Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects and will discuss its effectiveness in the eighteenth and twenty-first century.

**Discussion**

In the first, second and third chapter of the novel she considered the necessity of reason and knowledge for mankind to perform their duties in the society. This called for equality between men and women to perform their duties effectively. Women must get an education to perform their duties effectively. She recommended marriage to be considered as a partnership between two rational human beings. In the fourth chapter, she asked women to come out of their unsatisfactory state. Then in the fifth chapter, she criticized different educational books written on the state of women in society. For example, she talked about Rousseau's Émile in detail and about Dr. Fordyce's Sermons. In the next two chapters, she empathized over the early association of ideas upon women character (Wollstonecraft, 1792). Her talk about the modesty as a sexual virtue is fascinating in chapter seven. In the next chapter, she targeted those people who care more about their public reputations as compared to their souls. Moreover, chapter nine is about social problems that are a result of inequality in society. Wealthy people had more respect and poor had less. She spoke against that and considered virtues as the standard for respect. Then the parents are the audience of her next two chapters. In addition, she also discussed the advantages of having a public school system. Then she closed her novel by discussing the faults of women.

Wollstonecraft has empathized over gender equality as an argument for their education and sexual standards in marital relationships. This had a revolutionary implication during the 18th century when there was a prevalence of sexual double standards. However, her writing did not support her argument of equality and in her writing, she regarded the dominance of masculine strength. She also considered men superior in social life and called them for the initiation of social and political changes. Women were educated and were not able to alter their situation on their own.

At the time of publication of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* America was a new nation that had emerged from the revolution. During the revolution, women played their key roles as the nation counted on the assistance of every native to free itself from the oppression of the British. However, at the end of the war, it was expected from women to return to their place in the home. As a matter of justice, they should be given rights as a citizen of the New Republic but the predecessor was not willing to hand over their privileges. For instance, Thomas Jefferson was in favor of female education. This argument was further ignited as a result of different events in the world. In 1789, the French started their own revolution and Mary Wollstonecraft took that as a start of democracy in the world and was very much influenced by this Revolution (smith, 2009). She was filled with the sentiments of liberty and took herself as a protector for women. She died in 1797 after giving birth to a daughter. Godwin wrote her biography and revealed about her previous child that was out of wedlock, her relationship with Gilbert Imlay and about her two suicide attempts that she made. His purpose was not to rescind his dead wife's repute, but he was the only portrayal of her life. That biography brought a catastrophic effect on her reputation. Horace Walpole after that remarkably mentioned her as a ‘hyena in petticoats’.

During the presidential election of 1800, the memoirs exploited her thoughts and used them against the Democrat-Republican candidate. However, this did not much disturb the Wollstonecraft reputation and her views about women education were still respected by those who considered women education necessary. This is evident in 18th to the 19th-century novels such as in novels of Charles Brockden Brown and in work of William Dunlap. Moreover, in 1847, the women’s movement approved the rights of a woman and started their campaign at Seneca Falls under the direction of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (smith, 2009).

Conversely, she was arguing for women education so they could manage a household effectively and provide their sons with better education to make them good Republican and future leaders. Her work is among the initial works of feminist philosophical works. She went beyond her argument for the education of women in her book and exposed readers to different injustices to women at that time. For example, they were not given the right to vote and to have their own property. They were also not allowed to perform high-level duties. All these were her experiences that were proving the basis for her argument for female education. Initially, the impact of this book over the audience was limited as her views were considered radical at that time. Moreover, her personal life also brought negative impact on her views(smith, 2009). However, in the twentieth century after the wave of feminism, her views became prominent in society.

**Conclusion**

*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* can be considered as a defense for women rights. The main emphasis is over their right to execution. This will make women a good mother, wife, and daughter. Education will equip her with cognitive and rational skills that she can use in her marital relationship. Although Mary Wollstonecraft asked for equality of women in different domains she did not state this explicitly in her writing (Wollstonecraft, 1792). Her novel is full of thoughts and beliefs of the Revolution. She has many times repeated her ideas and provide her comments over them.

Moreover, the novel was written at the time of countless political turmoil and has an effect of these incidences (smith, 2009). Her views were not accepted much in the eighteenth century and her name faded from print but she is still in public consciousness and now after the wave of feminism in the twentieth century she is considered as one of the pioneers of feminism.

References

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