

THE LIVES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN¹

Ayşe SEVİMLİ*

Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal female entrapment and the proper place and roles of women in nineteenth-century British society. It will explore how women are limited not only in their private lives, but also in their public lives since their domain is only accepted as the domestic or household spheres, where they can look after their husband, children, and home. This study will show that not only household spheres but also marriage can cause female entrapment since it degrades some women into the position of slave and condemns them to a life of repetition and routine. It focuses on the fact that most women had few or no opportunities outside the home since they were given very limited rights to divorce, to own property, to get education, and to vote as a member of the same society with men. It also emphasizes the fact that they are always expected to be bound to their husband in terms of their personal rights since woman is thought to have a deficient capacity for managing things.

Keywords: *Female entrapment, the roles and place of women in society, male domination.*

19. YÜZYIL İNGİLİZ KADINLARININ HAYATI

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı ondokuzuncu yüzyılda, İngiliz toplumunda kadın tutsaklığı, kadınların toplumdaki yer ve rollerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışma, kadının sadece özel yaşamında değil, görevlerinin çocuk, eş ve ev bakmak olarak görülmesinden dolayı sosyal yaşamında da sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Sadece ev hayatının değil, bazı kadınları köle pozisyonuna düşüren ve onları tekrarlarla dolu rutin bir hayata sürükleyen evliliğin de kadın tutsaklığına sebep olduğunu göstermektedir. Erkekle aynı toplumun bireyi olan kadının boşanma, mal-mülk, eğitim ve oy verme hakkının olmadığı vurgulanırken, aynı zamanda kadına evinin dışında sosyal yaşamda da olma hakkının verilmediği vurgulanmıştır. Kadının bir şeyleri başarmak için yeterli kapasiteye sahip olmadığı düşünüldüğünden, kişisel haklar yönünden genellikle erkeğe bağlı olmasının beklendiği savunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Kadın tutsaklığı, kadınların toplumdaki yer ve rolleri, erkek egemenliği.*

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* Instructor, Hakkari University, School Of Foreign Languages, aysesevimli@hakkari.edu.tr

Introduction: The Place and Roles of Women

In the nineteenth-century Britain, many women were forced to live restricted lives because they were seen as the weaker sex. Middle and upper-middle class women were limited to roles as wives and mothers since they were not given any other responsibilities despite the fact that these roles were enough for them. Family and home were regarded as essential, and they were always seen as women in their divine, socially-constructed roles of reproduction, nurturing, and looking after children. The existence of family was seen as dependent on the work of woman since the idea of home and women were inseparable. Since “[...] family had become intimately associated with the idea of ‘home’ and a woman was an essential component of home-making [...]” (Simonton, 2006, p. 14), family and home were synonymous with woman and femininity in nineteenth-century British society. Although a household was defined by its patriarchal head in the eighteenth century, it began to be defined by the woman of the house in the nineteenth century.

Besides being restricted to roles in the home, women were also restricted in their marriage rights, divorce rights, property rights, education rights, and political rights since their place was always secondary in society. A woman could not necessarily marry the man she loved, nor could she divorce a man whom she was forced to marry since patriarchal society made the woman a legal possession in marriage. Furthermore, women had no property rights before, during, or after marriage, nor could they demand any right to education or have a voice in public affairs as a member of society since the man-made laws gave no recognition to woman. She was restricted within the four walls of her home and removed from public affairs. The more she was restricted to her home, the less human she became since her thinking power was generally uncultivated.

However, all of these restricted things in the lives of women started to change through the century even if they remained limited. Women started to gain more importance in life not only as females but also as members of society along with men. During the late 1890s, the concept of the “*new woman*” (Altick, 1973, p. 59) started to spread since women were taken from their conventional places to be put in their contemporary places as people who are independent of their husbands both in terms of their financial situation and their lives. Women started to have new proficiencies other than just being a wife and a mother with the changes in economy, class structure, and most importantly in the legal system. They started to be paid in return for their work although they are never paid while they are workers in their own homes.

The most important and initial reason for these changes is the existence of the Industrial Revolution since it opened new doors to women in terms of their proficiencies with its new inventions as it altered the place of man from home and farm to the outside. As the Industrial Revolution drew men into factories as a work force when it just started in 1760, it also started to draw working class women into the same area by 1820 since women were also needed in the work force because of the new inventions that required the contributions of women to the division of labor in the production of new products. After full subjections, the only hindrance to women is class difference since working class women were forced to compete with the same difficulties a little more when compared to the upper and middle class women. Upper and middle class women did not change their living styles after the Industrial Revolution since their financial situation was sufficient enough not to work under these hard conditions as the wives of rich men. Although some of them were not forced to compete under these hard working conditions because of their sufficient financial situation, they even dealt with other common problems of women like gaining more rights in education, the right to vote, and also property and divorce rights since they were also deprived of them even if their financial situation was better.

As the factories opened their doors to women after the Industrial Revolution, they could also find jobs in schools, hospitals, shops, and offices as teachers, nurses, and

secretaries. Although nursing was a disreputable job in the early 1800s, it became respectable since they were better in looking after someone when compared to some men. At the end of the 1800s, women were efficient nurses in hospitals as men were insufficient to meet the needs of the public. The ones who succeeded in these exams were sent to work in other places for three years after taking one year compulsory education. As they became nurses, they could also become doctors who took part in the medical profession, although their numbers were limited to just Elizabeth Blackwell, Mary Walker, and Sarah Laguen Frozer since they were mostly preferred to be seen as nurses or caregivers as if they did not have enough courage and intelligence to be active doctors in hospitals like men (Keeter, LeClair, White, 2007).

The Marriage of Woman

In the nineteenth century, women lived in an age characterized by gender inequalities in which she was just restricted to the roles of mother and wife, while man was given a space outside the home as breadwinner. At the beginning of the century, women were restricted to their homes just to raise children, clean, cook, and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for their husbands since she was created for the service of her husband and household. Womanhood and wifhood were accepted as the destiny of woman since it was believed woman was created for man. Even if this argument is both dangerous and restrictive for a woman as it erases herself from life, an American writer claimed in this domain that (Brownson, 1885, p. 389):

“Woman was created to be a wife and a mother; that is her destiny. To that destiny all her instincts point, and for it nature has specially qualified her. Her proper sphere is home, and her proper function is the care of the household, to manage a family, to take care of children, and attend to their early training. For this she is endowed with patience, endurance, passive courage, quick sensibilities, a sympathetic nature, and great executive and administrative ability. She was born to be a queen in her own household, and to make home cheerful, bright, and happy.”

These popular images of Victorian Woman came from a poem called “The Angel in the House” by Coventry Patmore. This angel was also expected to be passive, powerless, charming, graceful, self-sacrificing, pious, and dedicated to her husband. This angel was also expected to pursue her faith, being the guardian of her home and undertaking all the responsibilities of her household. Although obedience and dedication were important in women, it should be noted here that women who maintained these qualities reluctantly were condemned in society since there was a common belief that “If they hoped to maintain an image of themselves as ‘ladies,’ or even as ‘true’ women, they had to accept the sphere defined for them by the myth, and live within its prescriptive boundaries, no matter how high the price paid” (Jordan, 1999, p. 55-56).

In this sense, one can see that Jordan’s argument is not different from that of John Stuart Mill who also emphasizes the importance of voluntariness in these actions. Like Jordan, Mill (1869) also claims that “Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favorite” (p.17) since it was believed that voluntariness doubles their pleasure in the eyes of men. However, it can be argued here that not only Ellen Jordan but also John Stuart Mill lead us to think that women can have the feeling of anxiety and entrapment in their inner self since they are not presented choices to follow other than being reluctant even if they are uncomfortable and unwilling to follow these actions.

While a woman is expected to be a voluntary servant, her husband is seen as the leader of his home even though working outside cannot bring any chance to be a leader within the home. If the leadership is related to the place where they work, women will become leaders of their homes since they spend their whole time, even their whole lives, within it. When women are accepted as leaders of their homes, men’s proper sphere can also be accepted as the world

generally since they are mostly working outside. As the historian Aileen Kraditor (1969) states, one can say that:

“Men have never had a “proper sphere” since their sphere has been the world and all its activities. There have always been, accordingly, human beings who happened to be male. Women, on the contrary, have occupied sharply circumscribed spheres — the home, the church, the philanthropic society or sewing circle — regardless of differences among individuals in talents and tastes, and have, accordingly been thought of as females who happened to be human.” (p.10)

Nevertheless, this power relationship between man and woman is socially constructed since all men and women are created equal. Even if both men and women claim to have the same rights and privileges by birth, some women are not allowed to use them in the male-dominated society of nineteenth-century Britain since many middle and upper middle class women imprisoned within four walls of the home after marriage. Marriage mostly becomes a prison for them where they can lose their identities because of the “divine existence” of their husbands. Marriage mostly takes not only their identities but also their origins since they start to belong to the origin, name, and country of their husbands. Simone De Beauvoir (1972, p. 449) states that:

“In marrying, [...] she becomes his vassal. He is the economic head of the joint enterprise, and hence he represents it in the view of society. She takes his name; she belongs to his religion, his class, his circle; she joins his family, she becomes his ‘half.’” She follows wherever his work calls him and determines their places of residence; she breaks no more or less decisively with her past, becoming attached to her husband’s universe; she gives him her person, virginity and a rigorous fidelity being required.”

The idea that “Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man [...]” (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 31) was mostly accepted in nineteenth-century Britain among women since they behaved as if they were created just for the needs of their husbands. In this era, woman was simply expected to console her husband from mental and physical exhaustion of his daily work although she also had tiring work in the home during the day such as looking after children and taking care of the house. As if these responsibilities were not enough, she was also expected to have laughter in her eyes and warmth in her heart to create a sweet environment in her home since (Ruskin, 1997, p. 116):

“This [is] the true nature of home — it is a place of Peace; the shelter not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed either by husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be a home; it is then only a part of the outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in it.”

However, one can claim here that not only men but also women deserve the same mental and physical exhaustion as well as smiling eyes since they are also spending their time and energy for the sake of their husband’s children and home as husbands spend their days to earn a living for them.

A woman in her home takes all the responsibilities for the kitchen since she prepares food. The disappearance of servants from the middle class (Simonton, 2006) also required the involvement of women in the kitchen since the kitchen is also seen as the housewife’s workplace. The kitchen is accepted as the place where women create love with their hands for their families as well as accepted as the place where family integration is encouraged in the same home. An editorial in a British magazine called *Woman’s Own* claims in 1960s that

“The kitchen has become the most important room in the house. This is the room which, more than any other, you like to keep shining and bright. A woman’s place? Yes. For it is the heart and the meaning of home. The place where, day after day, you make with your hands precious gifts of love” (Gillis, 1997, p. 129).

While this editorial emphasizes the kitchen’s advantages for the family, some feminists like Simone De Beauvoir focused on its disadvantages since it also creates a kind of entrapment for women by isolating them from their environment. According to De Beauvoir, this entrapment in the kitchen affects the psychology of housewives since physical isolation brings

depression with it. Even if it has some advantages like encouraging family integration in the same home, De Beauvoir does not approve it since she believes that it makes women psychologically depressed by closing them among the same four walls. De Beauvoir (1972) claims that the kitchen just brings passivism and longing for liberty since “Woman is shut up in a kitchen or in a boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are clipped, and it is found deplorable that she cannot fly” (p.616). Although De Beauvoir is talking about twentieth century woman in this quotation, her point is completely relevant to the nineteenth century woman since many of the woman’s fate does not change in both centuries.

In spite of these physical and psychological tiring works of women, their efforts are sometimes ignored in patriarchal society, not only by men but also by man-made laws since some women are unpaid workers in their homes. Although some women work harder in their homes than some men work outside of the home, men’s work is accepted as more tiring and valuable just because it includes competitiveness and entrepreneurship. When men describe the meaning of work, this discrimination between the works of men and women can be more easily seen: “Work, as defined by men, [mostly] meant the competitive, changing world of wage labor and entrepreneurship. Women’s efforts in the home, though physically arduous, were no longer “work” because women were unpaid and because of their increasing invisibility from the perspective of men” (Evans, 1982, p. 68).

While some women are exhibiting their constructed roles that include encompassing, production, reproduction, consumption, and nurture, they are also ruining half of their life and health at the same time although they may not be valued by their husbands. They become sick and weak not only bodily but also psychologically after tiring days that are dedicated to make life comfortable for others, even if sickness and weakness are accepted as their normal condition in the nineteenth-century Britain. But there must be some reason behind this self-sacrifice of women to men since nobody wants to spend her whole life for others without being valued. It is easy to find the reason since “The female of genus homo is economically dependent on the male. He is her food supply” (Gilman, 2007, p. 11). Since the man is her food supply, the woman is mostly seen as responsible for the care of all the males in her family including husband, brother, father, and children, without expecting anything in return other than food, clothing, and shelter.

A woman’s labor in her home can be seen as employment although it is part of her functional duty from which she earns no money. Since her home is seen as her appropriate and appointed place of action not only by religion but also by society, she is not paid for her duties in the home since she is ‘paid’ by her husband with food, clothing, and shelter. In fact, this attitude toward women enables some men to produce more wealth than before since they do not have to pay for their household services as their wives supply them. This attitude helps some men to save their money as they do not have to pay for servants since their wives become the servants of their homes. In this sense, not only women but also some men use motherhood and wifehood as a trade to save money, as some women earn food, clothes, and shelter without demanding other things.

In addition to this socially constructed ideology toward woman, another reason for woman’s entrapment in the home is the Industrial Revolution. Economic growth, changes in the class structure, legal system, and urbanization also made a great impact on the lives of middle class women living in Britain since all of them separated the working spheres of men and women. With the Industrial Revolution, men were taken away from their homes to work in industry although men and women were originally working together on the farm before the arrival of the Industrial Revolution. Men and women were working together not only on their farms but also in their homes since there was no division of labor at home as there was on the farm. Both could also take part in the raising of children and in domestic responsibilities since

men's work was either at home or in the fields of their family farms that were very close to home.

However, as eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Britain passed from an agrarian society to an urban society, the separate spheres of middle-class men and women were created since outside the home there was a division of labor. Since men were forced into wage jobs outside the home and deserted their farms, they could not share the work at home as before. As men started to look for higher incomes outside the home, women started to take part in much of the works both on the farm and at home since men had less and less time to spend for both. Bloch (1992) states that the separate spheres of men and women brought structural changes to the home and family: "The structural change that altered parental roles the most, however, was the gradual physical removal of the father's place of work from the home... In the absence of these other parental figures, childrearing responsibilities slowly become less diffused, more exclusively focused on mothers" (p. 16).

Nineteenth-century marriages were not so different from women's restricted roles in society since "[a woman] became a [married woman], a hidden person, sunk into and merged with the personality of her husband" (Perkins, 1989, p. 2). As the woman was described through the identity of her father before marriage, she was also described through the identity of her husband after marriage since women's lives were always defined in one way or another by ties to the males around her. A woman's definition through her father, brother, or husband limits her existence in society since she has no identity without the surname of the males around her. After marriage, a woman also changed her ancestors since she was forced to accept her husband's ancestors as a subordinate member of her new family. After marriage, a woman was forced to adopt a different culture since "For women [... marriage] meant frequent adaptation to different sets of economic and cultural circumstances" (Simonton, 2006, p.16).

Even if a woman becomes a hidden person in marriage, she still needs to get married since marriage contributes to her existence in society. With marriage, a woman becomes valuable since she is given the opportunity to be a wife and mother, which are the most important features for a nineteenth-century woman. Although being a wife and mother seems an opportunity, Marry Wollstonecraft (1792) claims that "[...] the only way women can rise in the world, [is] by marriage. And this desire makes mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act: —they dress: they paint, and nickname God's creatures" (p. 10). This argument leads us to think that these women who are childlike cannot be expected to govern a family or bring up rational children who question since these women have not completed their own self-development yet in life.

In the nineteenth century, single women attracted social disapproval since staying single meant hindering a woman's function of reproduction. Single women were also pitied since reproduction was supposed to fulfill a woman. Although women were subjected to domination in marriage, it became the life plan of most woman, while singleness was a fate to be avoided since "[...] for most woman marriage meant release from a childlike and humiliating dependence on the parental home [...] a greater freedom to go about and make separate friends, even sometimes of the opposite sex" (Perkins, 1989, p. 3). However, nothing happens as most women expect in marriage since the rule of the strongest covers their life without giving women a moment to take a breath for themselves. After marriage, some women waste their lives imagining how they could be happy with a man who is deeply in love with them since the reality sometimes falls short of the dream.

In the nineteenth century, young girls were raised with the idea that unmarried women turned into old maids who are an object of scorn and ridicule in society. They were brought up to believe that marriage is above all else, in their families and among their friends, since it was believed that marriage is the fulfillment of womanhood. Engagement becomes more important than whom they are engaged with (Croly, 1875, p. 45-46):

“To be engaged is the triumph and secret object of the young girl’s life. It raises her on a pedestal and at once makes her an object of interest to her family and friends. [...] no wonder girls consider the being engaged of more importance than whom they are engaged to. [...] It is this [...] that which should be [...] the end and ultimate [aim] of their desires and aims.”

Even if marriage is accepted as important for the value of woman in society, it does not make every woman really happy since some just pass from the domination of their fathers to the domination of their husbands. Although they see marriage as an escape from the rules of their father and an entrance to a new life, they realize after marriage that it is just the continuation of the previous limited life since “After marriage, [some] man has anciently the power of life and death over his wife” (Mill, 1869, p. 35). The male forgets that excessive authority and subordination sometimes kills the wonderful confidence and affection since some women feel like a servant instead of like a wife whose place is equal in marriage and in society. As the marriage mostly kills confidence and affection, it also kills some emotions in the heart of the woman since she sees her husband as her leader or governor instead of as the owner of her heart.

In fact, man takes his power from laws to treat woman as a second-class person since they let man represent the entity that a wife and a husband create through marriage. Laws do not recognize the existence of a woman by making the man representative of the marriage although the woman should have the same rights as the man. But this power comes not only from laws but also from the upbringing of women since it includes the total obedience of women to men. Women are told from their infancy that female weakness and outward obedience is the best way to get male protection; as Wollstonecraft (1792) says, “Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weaknesses, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, will obtain for them the protection of man...” (p. 20). As they are taught how they can be obedient to their husbands, they are also taught how to make themselves loved and honored by their husbands since their initial role will be gaining the heart of their husbands after marriage.

A nineteenth-century marriage for some women became another form of captivity since they mostly were not asked whether they want to marry or not before being given to a man who is chosen by their fathers. It is claimed by John Stuart Mill (1869) that “Originally women were taken by force, or regularly sold by their father to the husband. Until a late period in European history, the father had the power to dispose of his daughter in marriage at his own will and pleasure, without any regard to her” (p.35). Even if she is asked whether she wants to marry or not by the church just to hear the word “yes” in front of the public as men asked during the marriage ceremony, it is perfunctory since she is already expected to say yes before the ceremony with the force of her father. Here, marriage sees a woman as a slave and a dependent rather than an individual, who can be forced to accept an unwanted marriage. John Stuart Mill (1869) also adds that “[...] the wife’s position under the common law of England is worse than that of slaves in the laws of many countries [...]” (p.36) since their slaves can use their own earnings how they want to some extent. Although some women in England cannot even decide on their own marriages since the law does not protect their rights, some countries like Rome guaranteed the rights of its slaves, accepting them as members of society.

However, if she does not want this match and attempts to refuse it, she has no guarantee that her refusal will be accepted in this patriarchal society since her choice in life is not as important and reliable as her father’s. She is assumed to be passive, gentle, modest, and most importantly obedient to the expectations of her father since she is a subordinate household member, both in her husband’s and her father’s home. But the righteousness and validity of this marriage can be questioned since a marriage without desire cannot be called a true marriage: a true marriage requires a free bond of love and willingness. Ludwig Feuerbach (2008) states that “For a marriage the bond of which is merely an external restriction, not the voluntary, contented self-restriction of love, in short, a marriage which is not spontaneously concluded,

spontaneously willed, self-sufficing, is not a true marriage, and therefore not a truly moral marriage” (p. 222). But Feuerbach forgets that it can be hard every time catching a moral marriage in a system that makes a woman mistress of her home while making the man master of the same home. He ignores the fact that the mistress and master of the same home cannot continue to love each other with passion and desire since love and passion can sometimes be removed because of the unequal power between them.

Male dominance continues in the matter of pregnancy in marriage since some women were not given any chance to decide whether to produce a child or not from her marriage. In a nineteenth-century marriage, some husbands had total access to the wife’s body as if she is a possession whose manipulation is in the hand of its owner. Since there becomes a possession and possessor relationship between a wife and a husband, he is naturally given the right to force his wife not only to have sex but also to give birth even if the woman is reluctant to have sex and to give birth. In sex and childbirth, women are mostly degraded to the position of slave rather than a human being since some men see her as a tool to satisfy their lust and to get a child, as Engels (1972) also claims by saying, “The man took command in the home also, the woman is degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children” (p. 22). Until the middle of nineteenth-century some women are seen more as females than persons since their sexuality is given more importance than their existence. It was believed that women were formed to please men sexually since pleasure is accepted as the most important area of a woman’s life. She was always expected to be agreeable instead of challenging his passion since the laws of nineteenth century nature mostly require woman’s total enslavement to man not only psychologically but also physically.

Although women biologically become the mothers of their children whether they produce them voluntarily or not, the custody of the children belongs to the father since he becomes the sole owner of everything in the marriage. When the custody belongs to the father, his right to his children is limitless: he can send them away to grow up somewhere else or to be raised by somebody else, despite the fact that the children have a mother in their lives. The laws always defended the idea that “The legal custody of children belonged to the father. During the lifetime of a sane father, the mother had no rights over her children [...] and the father could take them from her and dispose of them as he thought fit” (Perkins, 1898, p. 14-15). But, this defense is so strict and restrictive for women that it does not even leave any chance for them to live with their own children in their own home by separating them. Although living together is already their natural right as men, the laws ignore their existence in the family by taking this right from their hands. However, it should be noted here that this changes over time since the rights of women gradually improve as the time passes. The act of the custody of infants in 1839 gave the chance to take custody of their children in the event of separation or divorce among couples. Unlike before, women were saved from living apart from their children since the man no longer had the right to take her children from her.

The Divorce of Woman

Divorce was taboo until the late nineteenth century. Once a woman married, she had no right to quit this marriage since marriage makes her the property of her husband. Even if a woman had an endurable marriage, there was nothing she could do since the police could capture and return her if she ran away from an unhappy marriage. After such an event, a husband could even punish his wife by imprisoning her in the home, which was sanctioned by the church, law, custom, and society. If a woman tried to withdraw from a marriage, she was not allowed to take her possessions with her, as Mill (1869) indicates: “If she leaves her husband, she can take nothing with her, neither her children nor anything which is rightfully her own” (p. 38). Marriage was an inescapable destiny for a woman since she cannot desert it without being threatened with loss of her possessions and children even if she is unhappy in marriage. As

marriage was the fate of girls of proper age, it was also the fate of all married women since they were forced to continue in it even if they do not want to. In those times, a woman was only allowed to leave her home “[...] when she is christened, when she is married, and when she is buried” (Gilman, 2007, p. 33), but not when she is divorced since it is believed that a woman is just created for her home where she can continue her marriage and reproduction.

Even adultery could not be a reason for a woman to divorce since the marriage contract requires the self-sacrifice of women regardless of the situation. As if they are the sole guardian of morality in society, they are forced to accept the infidelities of their husbands while a man is never forced to accept the same thing. In a divorce, adultery is not a sufficient reason to divorce a husband since women were required to change their husbands’ adultery with other guilt. As a woman is pushed to find reasons other than adultery to divorce her husband, adultery was never the disgraceful offence for a man as it was for a woman. It was never seen as the fault of the man until the late nineteenth-century since society blamed women for not satisfying the needs of her husband. As adultery was not seen as the man’s disgraceful offense, he was also given the right to take everything from his wife, including property and children. Holmes and Nelson (1997) also clarifies this fact about adultery in their book *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain* by saying “While a wife’s adultery was sufficient cause to end a marriage, a woman could divorce her husband only if his adultery had been compounded by another matrimonial offense, such as cruelty or desertion” (p. 40).

Richard D. Altick (1973) also emphasizes the same discrimination between men and women in terms of adultery in his book *Victorian People and Ideas* by saying, “A husband could divorce his wife on the simple ground of adultery, but a wife has to prove not only her husband’s adultery but an additional offense such as desertion, cruelty, rape, or incest” (p. 58). He also claims that the subordination of women was inescapable even in the event of adultery of the man since the woman was not given the chance to divorce her husband without proving his desertion, cruelty, rape, or incest in addition to his adultery. However, while he emphasizes the woman’s subordination in adultery in the 1880s, he also clarifies the fact that this ideology starts to change at the beginning of the 1890s with the appearance of the new woman in the society. He mentions that the new woman starts to replace the idea that adultery is a worse offense for a woman than for a man since they sought equal moral rights with man as members of the same society. (Altick, 1973)

Within nineteenth-century British marriage, women also had difficulties in terms of sexuality since excessive sexual desires in women were seen as abnormal. Within the Victorian marriage, a woman was expected to know less about sexuality and to have very little desire since sexuality was thought to be a quality that only a man should have. Even the expression of sexual desire by a woman was seen as a disease that needed to be cured since having sexual desires was totally identified with the man. The wise woman of the Victorian period was expected to have at least two sexual relations with her husband in a week since a woman who satisfies her husband’s needs completely was seen as a whore or prostitute. Although they are expected to satisfy their husband’s desires, they can be named as a whore or prostitute when the amount of their sexual relations is beyond expectation. (Smythers, 2008)

Since men were seen as lustful, they were allowed to have sex with multiple partners during their marriage, while women were expected to have sex only with their husbands. A woman who had sexual relations outside of marriage was accepted as ruined or fallen, although this situation was seen as normal for a man. Evans (1982) tells us that “[...] the expression of female sexuality outside marriage, or some other form of socially sanctioned relationship is, unlike that of men, generally regarded as unacceptable” (p. 122). Men were free in terms of their sexual relationships during marriage, and they could spend their entire wife’s properties or inheritance on mistresses, while women were stigmatized for the same sexual relationships. Apart from these facts, a woman was also expected to have premarital chastity since a bride

must be virgin on the first night of her marriage. Since the lack of maidenhood was taboo in the nineteenth-century, a woman without virginity was rejected by society, while the man was never questioned about his premarital relationships.

However, women were no longer forced to endure an onerous marriage and were even allowed to bring court actions against their husbands after the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1890. This act gave women limitless access to divorce although women could not demand it before even if there was adultery and violence in the marriage. Having education and a profession were not the only developments in their lives since they also started to gain more rights concerning divorce as men. They also had the chance to quit their marriage without taking any harm both psychologically and economically since the laws start to recognize their marriage rights.

The Property Rights of Woman

Whatever their social rank, women were always seen as second class citizens in the eyes of the law since their property rights were limited. Married women were not permitted to hold property, to sign a contract, or to open a bank account without the consent of her husband at the start of nineteenth century since a married woman had no rights under English common law. A woman also could not bring actions in court or be a witness in a criminal case without the consent of her husband since neither her word nor her deeds were recognized by law, as she was dedicated to live just for her husband and not for herself. According to this common law, a married woman had no legal existence since “A man and a wife were one person in law; her existence was, as it were, absorbed in that of her husband; she lived under his protection or cover, and her condition was called coverture” (Perkins, 1989, p. 13).

When a man and a woman were married, the property rights of the woman were legally given to her husband since the husband represents the sole entity that a man and a woman create within marriage. A woman even lost all her rights over her own body along with her possessions since her body also became the property of her husband through the marriage contract. After marriage, a wife’s personal properties like stocks, shares, jewels, household goods, money in hand and money in the bank became her husband’s property as well as the money that she earned since her husband had sovereignty over his wife. English common law broke the equality between wife and husband by approving the representation of woman by man although both of them should be treated as equal. It openly declares the weaknesses of woman in front of man by not letting her maintain her property in marriage.

The rights and privileges of Victorian women were so limited that both married women and single women were forced to comply with those limitations. Both were deprived of property rights within the family since the family wealth automatically passed down the male line by ignoring the existence of daughters in the family. Even if a woman received any property from her father, the percentage was smaller than that of her brothers, who got nearly all the property. As women were not recognized in marriage in terms of property rights, they were also not recognized in their father’s home when properties were shared among siblings.

A nineteenth-century woman’s fate did not change in terms of property when there was divorce. As they were not allowed to keep property during the marriage, they were also not allowed to demand anything after divorce since English common law did not mostly defend a divorcing woman. In such a situation, the only way in which she can demand her possessions back was her husband’s misconduct during the marriage, since a husband also promised to satisfy his wife’s needs in return for her domestic and womanly services within the marriage contract. In fact, it is groundless here to discuss the rights of a woman’s demanding anything after divorce since the laws make the marriage as an indissoluble union. The laws reduce woman to a thing created just for marriage by making it an inescapable sphere. As Gilman (2007) describes: “Marriage is the woman’s proper sphere, her divinely ordered place, her natural end. It is what she is born for, what she is trained for, what she is exhibited for” (p. 44).

However, through the end of the nineteenth century things also start to change in terms of property rights as they changed in terms of Custody Act and Matrimonial Causes Act. After the Married Woman's Property Act in 1884 woman rescued from being dependent on their husbands in terms of property since it let them keep their own property. They were no longer forced to share their earnings with their husbands since women began to be seen as independent and separate persons from their husbands.

The Political Rights of Woman

The same limitations can also be seen in a woman's lack of political rights since they were not given the same opportunity to vote or take part in parliament as men. They were seen as second class citizens in a society founded on liberty and equality since their rights was not recognized by their own government. Women could have no voice in public affairs since public affairs were always accepted as the job of men. Although women were also expected to feel, judge, discourse, and discriminate as men do, they were allowed only to do so for private functions since it was believed that "Women belong to the family and not to political society and nature created them for domestic cares and not for public functions" (Bonald, 1983, p. 89).

The ideology of separate spheres of man and woman can also be seen in the political arena in the 1880s since women were still regarded as workers in the home who were expected to be in the service of their husbands and children. Although men were given the chance to deal with public functions beside their role as breadwinner, middle class women were not given the same chance to be in public service since they were just expected to sooth their husband's sorrow and lighten their husband's cares. However, John Stuart Mill, in *The Subjection of Women*, claims the righteousness of the participation of women in public affairs since the combination of minds will be available for the higher service of humanity. Unlike Bonald, Mill (1869) suggests that "Women in general would be brought up equally capable of understanding business, public affairs and the higher matters of speculation, with men" (p. 93) since the female brain is also capable to meet the demands of public service as men. In fact, nineteenth century has a sample like Queen Victoria who can achieve to be in political area although this era refuses to give this chance to women. It can be said that Queen Victoria does not only achieve to be a queen but also has the privilege of naming the era after her since the name of this era comes from her name. However, it should be noted here that even Queen Victoria presented herself in a wifely role as queen since it is hard escaping from the social roles completely in a society where the roles are just accepted as being mother and wife.

Education of Woman

Nineteenth-century women were also discouraged from being educated since it was socially and culturally unsuitable for a woman to be educated. In this period, the woman who desired education was seen as unsexed, as if education took something from her womanhood. Education was always seen as the right of men since their brains were seen as brighter than women's brains. In the nineteenth century, more importance was given to the education of sons than daughters since a female mind was believed to have limited capabilities. Although the mind's nature and constitution are the same for both men and women, men were always seen as superior to women since their body strength was also higher than a woman's. According to Simonton (2006), however, strength of mind and body are not well proportioned and :

"It is well established that men and women have the same nature and the same constitution. The proof lies in that female savages are as robust, as agile as male savages; thus the weaknesses of our constitution and of our organs belong definitely to our education, and are a consequence of the condition to which we have been assigned in the society" (p. 99)

Because of the low expectations of the mind and role of women, the ingredients of their education became completely different from man's education. Until the late nineteenth century a woman's education just included traditional domestic skills like sewing, looking after the

children, and cooking, while men's education could include the branches of science. Besides their traditional domestic skills, they were also educated to be agreeable and pleasing in the eyes of their husbands since they were believed to be created to please their husbands. As Rousseau (1972) says:

“...The education of the women should be always relative to the men. To please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to educate us when young, and take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable: these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught in their infancy.” (p. 88)

Although their education was full of domestic responsibilities and skills, and to be pleasing, education was seen as detracting from these roles since it was thought that it would prevent them from realizing their responsibilities if they spend time for their own personal improvement. But we must ask whether it was right to restrict a woman's education because of all these conventional roles since the mind does not function differently according to men and women. It is an undeniable fact that if a man can take degrees in schools, a woman can also do so since they also have natural talents, as Simonton (2006) also claims :

“If women studied in universities alongside men, or in other universities set aside for them in particular, they could take degrees and aspire to the titles of Doctor and Master in Theology, Medicine and [...] Law. And their natural talents, which fits them so advantageously for learning would also suit them to be successful teachers.” (p. 99)

However, things also start to change for women in terms of education since they were needed when education was made compulsory after the Elementary Education Act in 1870, which required schooling of ten years for children. The government opened teacher training programs in order to educate women to make them future teachers although it did not recognize their existence a few years earlier. Although the government tried to keep woman out of lessons like history, geography, and literature just a few years before, it started to educate them now in these areas since such knowledge was needed in schools when compared to the knowledge of sewing, cooking, and child care. As the profession of teaching improved, the educational prospects of girls also improved in the late nineteenth century since upper-class and middle-class girls were allowed to take the same kind of education with boys. Some schools and colleges were founded for them since it was understood that both men and women can achieve the same things and can have the same intellectual capacity. Although they were not allowed to go to school before, they could now study in the same class with boys (Altick, 1973).

Conclusion

To sum up, the nineteenth-century was an era for some women when their freedoms were restricted. Middle class women were not given the same rights in society that men were given. Since they were seen as weaker, they mostly lived at home as mother and wife. Their initial roles were to provide sex and marriage, which were seen as components of womanhood. Women were most acceptable in society if they were good as housekeepers and mothers. Most women had few or no opportunities outside the home. They were not usually given a chance to earn a living as men were given. Men were generally accepted as breadwinner and women were expected to bound to their husband in terms of their monetary needs. Working women mostly were unacceptable in the society since their domain was not earning money. Nineteenth-century British society rejected working women since they were the angel of their house.

Since women were seen as the weaker sex, their education was also restricted compared to men. It was thought that if they spent time on their education, they would neglect their home, their children, and their husband. A female brain was not accepted as equal to the brain of a man since there was a common belief that it cannot supply the needs of the professions. Since a female brain was not seen satisfactory, their education just contained needlework, making boxes, preparing good foods, and raising qualified children.

The man also had authority over the children. Although women looked after the children, the men had the right to send the children somewhere else to be raised and educated. It was important for a woman to sacrifice herself for her marriage, her husband, her children, and her home since this selflessness was thought to bring success to the family, husband, and children of the woman. Marriage mostly became a prison for them where they can lose their identities because of the “divine existence” of their husbands. Marriage mostly took not only their identities but also their origins since they started to belong to the origin, name, and country of their husbands.

Besides, divorce was not also a right for women since their separation from their husband was an unacceptable event in society. Once a woman married, she had no right to quit this marriage since marriage makes her the property of her husband. Marriage was an inescapable destiny for a woman since she cannot desert it without being threatened with loss of her possessions and children even if she is unhappy in marriage. As marriage was the fate of girls of proper age, it was also the fate of all married women since they were forced to continue in it even if they do not want to.

Their property rights were not so different from other rights since married women were not permitted to hold property like stocks, shares, jewels, household goods as well as not permitted to sign a contract, or to open a bank account without the consent of her husband since a married woman had no rights under English common law. According to this common law, a married woman had no legal existence since when a man and a woman were married, the property rights of the woman were legally given to her husband since the husband represents the sole entity that a man and a woman create within marriage. English common law broke the equality between wife and husband since it openly declares the weaknesses of woman in front of man by not letting her maintain her property in marriage

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl İngiliz kadın tutsaklığı, kadının yeri ve rolleri dünya yazınında en önemli konulardan birisi olarak yerini almıştır. Çünkü kadın-erkek ayrımı hayatın neredeyse her alanında yerini almış ve kadını erkek egemenliği altına sokmuştur. Kadın denilince akla ilk gelen şey onun iyi bir anne, eş ve ev hanımı olması gelmiştir. Bunlar onun değişmeyen kaderi olarak görülmüş, zincirlerini kırıp yeni kimlikler edinmesine müsaade edilmemiştir.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl İngiliz evlilik şart ve koşullarına bakıldığında ilk kadın-erkek ayrımını görebiliriz. Kadın ve erkek eşit haklarla yaratılmalarına rağmen, toplumun oluşturduğu yargılar kadın ve erkeği birbirinden ayırmış, hatta kadını erkekten geri bir pozisyona koymuştur. Evlilik kadınlar için bir tutsaklık olmuş, kadınların sınırlarının çizildiği bir müessese haline almıştır. Bu müessese oluşturulurken kadına evleneceği kişiyi seçme hakkı verilmemiştir. Baba ya da abinin uygun gördüğü biriyle kadın evlendirilmiş, bir erkek egemenliğinden diğerine geçmişlerdir. Çünkü evlenmek demek aynı zamanda evleneceğin kişinin kökeni olmak demek ve onun soyadı altında onun dili, dini, ırkı, toplumu ve sınıfı ile onun memleketinde yaşamak demektir.

Evliliklerinde mutlu olmayan kadınlar için boşanma hakkı yoktur, çünkü boşanma bu dönemde bir tabudur. Evli bir kadın olduktan sonra bu kimliğinden vazgeçmek neredeyse olanaksızdır, çünkü evlilik kadını da adamın bir eşyası yapmıştır. Bu anlamda yasalarda kadından yana değildir çünkü çoğu erkekler tarafından oluşturulmuş taraflı maddelerdir. Evlilik çoğu zaman kadın için kaçınılmaz bir kader olmuştur, çünkü eşi onu aldatırsa bile aldatılma nedeni yine kadında aranır. Ya da zina kadın için boşanma sebebi olamaz; çünkü yasalar kadından zinayı başka hatalarla desteklemelerini istemektedir.

Evlilik, boşanma haklarının yanı sıra kadının kısıtlı olduğu diğer alan mal-mülk edinme hakkıdır. Kadın kendi ailesinden hiç bir hak talep edemezken, eşinden de bu anlamda beklenti içine girmemelidir. Kadının kendi ailesi varlıklı bile olsa, kadının bunlar üzerinde bir hakkı yoktur ve mal tümüyle babadan oğula geçer. Aile kadına miras vermeye karar verse dahi, bunun yüzdesi erkek kardeşlerle karşılaştırıldığında çok az olur.

Evlilik kadını da erkeğin sahip olduğu bir nesne durumuna getirdiği için, kadın sahip olduğu her şeyi eşine vermek durumunda kalır. Kadının altını, eşyası, parası ya da değerli her nesi varsa bunlar evlilikle erkeğin egemenliğine geçmektedir. Kadın kendi parasını kendisi kazansa dahi bunda söz söyleme hakkı yoktur, çünkü erkek baskınlığı burada da galip gelmektedir.

Politik haklar noktasında da kadın hiç yok denecek kadar azdır. Eşitlik ve adalet üzerine kurulmuş bir toplumun parçası oldukları halde devlet onların varlıklarını tanımamış ve onlara seçme ve seçilme hakkı vermemiştir. Oy verme ya da parlamentoda bulunma kadının olacağı en son yerdir, çünkü bu alanlar kadının anlamadığı sadece erkeğin akıl yetiştirebileceği alanlar olarak görülmüştür. Burada şu gerçek unutulmaktadır ki kadın ve erkek eşit beyin gücüne sahip olarak yaratılmıştır. Kadına da kendini gerçekleştirme fırsatı verilse o da kamusal alanda başarılı olabilecektir.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyılda çoğu zaman İngiliz kadınına eğitim de yoktur. Kadının eğitimsiz toplumu genellikle korkutmuştur. Bilgi güçtür mantığından yola çıkarak eğitimin kadın da yaratacağı yeni ruh hali toplumu tedirgin etmiştir. Aslında kadın hiç eğitimsiz değildir. Ama alanı kendi dünyasıyla alakalıdır. Öğrenebildiği tek şey nasıl iyi dikildiği, nasıl iyi bir anne ve eş olunduğudur. Bir bilim dalında kadını görmek çok zordur, çünkü toplum buna müsaade etmemektedir. Erkek çocuklarının eğitimine daha çok önem verilmiştir, çünkü kız çocuklarının bu anlamda yeterli kapasiteye sahip olmadığı düşünülmektedir. Kadın ve erkeğin zihin yapısı aynı olduğu halde fiziksel olarak güçlü olan erkek zihinsel olarak güçlü kabul edilmiştir. Hâlbuki, beden gücü aynı zamanda zihin gücü demek değildir.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl başında İngiltere’de kadın tüm bu haklardan yoksunken, ondokuzuncu yüzyıl sonlarına doğru kadın toplumda yerini almaya başlamıştır. Sadece kadın

olarak değil, toplumun bir bireyi olarak değer görmeye başlamıştır. 1890'ların sonunda bir "Yeni Kadın" kavramı oluşmuştur ki bu kadın eşinden hem ekonomik hem de sosyal anlamda bağımsızdır. Değişen ekonomik, sosyal, yasal sistemle birlikte anne ve eş kimliklerinin dışında da kimlikler edinmeye başlamışlardır. Evlerinde kendi evlerinin karşılığı ödenmeyen işçisiyken ondokuzuncu yüzyıl sonunda emeklerinin karşılığı ödenen insanlar haline gelmişlerdir.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl sonlarında kadının varlığının kabul edilmesinin en büyük sebebi Endüstri Devrimidir. Endüstri Devrimi erkeği evinden, tarlasından aldığı gibi kadına da bu iş bölümüne dahil etmiştir. Üretilen yeni ürünler sayesinde erkek iş gücü yetersiz kaldığı için kadın da ürünlerin seri olarak üretilmesinde paya sahip olmuştur. Endüstri Devrimi sadece fabrika kapılarını açmamıştır kadına. Kadın artık okullarda öğretmen, hastanelerde hemşire ya da doktor, ofislerde sekreter olarak iş bulabilmeye başlamıştır. Endüstri Devrimi kadın sınıf ayrımını alıp eli ekmek tutan kadınlar meydana getirmiştir. Kadına eğitim de zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Erkekle aynı sınıfta yer almakla birlikte aynı eğitim içeriklerine sahip olmuştur. Onlarda artık dikiş, nakış, yemek kitabı yerine tarih, coğrafya, matematik gibi kitapları okur hale gelmişlerdir. Devrimle birlikte boşanma tabu olmaktan çıkmıştır. Kadın boşanmak için mahkemeye başvurabilmektedir, hatta çocuklarının velayetini bile talep edebilmektedir. Miras alanında oluşan yeni yasalarda mal-mülk haklarını garanti etmiş, sahip olduklarını eşlerine verme mecburiyetini ortadan kaldırmıştır.