

Victorian Patriarchal Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Legend of True Womanhood

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Abstract

Victorian society laid much emphasis on the moral righteousness of women and therefore expected of woman to be an Ideal Woman. The Victorians made proper arrangements of education and tutoring to inculcate the four cardinal virtues of True Womanhood in Victorian woman. As indicated by Barbara Welter (1966), the four cardinal virtues, which a lady was required to have keeping in mind the end goal to become a True Woman, were “piety”, “purity”, “submissiveness” and “domesticity”. The paper contests the idea of the True Womanhood through an array of instances from literature, religion, and socio-political practices. It also explores Victorian patriarchal politics of the legend of True Womanhood to reveal the reason for the rise and fall of the “Ideal”.

Keywords: Ideal Woman, Cult of True Womanhood, Piety, Purity, Submissiveness, Domesticity

Introduction

The industrial revolution not only brought tremendous changes in the gender roles, but also escalated gender discrimination. Güneş (2011) takes this argument further and writes that Victorian man took the role of a woman in the Victorian society for granted and assumed that he existed at the “centre of meaning by enforcing women to conform to the expressive role expected of them, a role that dictates conformity and obedience” (p. 110). This presumed role of an undisputed monarch engendered social and moral superiority in Victorian man. Güneş (2011) identifies “two separate worlds for the heterosexual relationship in society -the public world of men and the private world of women, in which there is not only a rigid division in terms of gender but also a division of social relationships between men and women” (p. 133). The statement reveals degraded life of a Victorian woman under the unabashed authority of Victorian man. Victorian man did not make any allowance for the Victorian woman to discover her true potentials and charisma. Rather, he forced perverted and appalling conventions of life upon her. Susan Kent (1990) succinctly explains the social status of a woman in Victorian era and states that “Barred by law and custom from entering trades and professions by which they could support themselves, and restricted in the possession of property, woman had only one means of livelihood, that of marriage” (p. 86). Victorian man considered woman merely an object of décor, and humiliating and debilitating statements as “at a certain age, when you have a house and so on, you get a wife as part of its furniture” (Kent, 1990, p. 91)

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gives sufficient proof of the malevolent and vindictive nature of Victorian patriarchy. Similarly, according to the Victorian legal system, woman had no legal rights and in case of any legal issue, “justice was administered according to a male view of her rights, and of how she ought to behave. It seemed appropriate that justice was portrayed as a blindfolded woman, since her scales were so tilted in favor of men” (Perkin, 1993, p. 113). The legal protection to domestic violence victims was granted through the 1853 Act of the *Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children*. Before the Act, women were made subject to sever domestic injustices, which included even flagellation, torture and confinements. Victorian man did not permit woman to take any legal action or claim divorce in such drastic situations. Similarly, in situations where the parents have to separate, the father was given the custody of the children.

These moral, social, and legal injustices were aimed to subjugate woman and use her as a tool for his means. Subsequently, Victorian woman, being physically feeble and emotionally submissive, provided herself as best tool for exercising man’s brutal authority. “The concentration of power in the hands of men, the containing of women to the private sphere...had resulted in a society in which ‘there is nothing that expresses the woman’s point of view. There is nothing that tallies with the woman’s soul...everything is arranged upon a plan different from their own’” (Kent, 1990, p. 149). Such apathy led Victorian woman to cower to “the private sphere of the home and hearth”, and allowed Victorian man to unleash his treachery “in the public sphere of business, politics and sociability” (Abrams, 2011, p. 1). As a result, Victorian women quit the public sphere and took refuge in house and hearth. These socio-cultural and political issues not only sidelined Victorian woman, but also put her existence as a *being* at stake. The study aims at investigating the politics of True Womanhood in the backdrop of industrial revolution. We also focus on the rise, fall of the Ideal Womanhood, and explore the dynamics of the four cardinal virtues, which were deemed necessary to become an ideal woman.

The nineteenth century industrial revolution, the innovations in the field of transportation and mechanics, the invention of steam engine and embracing of the industrialized family system revolutionized human life. The era was an epoch of extraordinary social and economic changes. Victorian Britain saw a remarkable rise of capitalist economy with the growth of industries and capitalism, the middle classes gradually became conscious of their economic, political and cultural authority. The industrial revolution altered the resources of employment, production and commerce; it also resulted in widespread changes in the socio-cultural hierarchy.

The flourishing capitalism produced more industrialized and commercialized market economy. These industries separated the public sphere from the private world. This split the traditional business models of domestic industries where men and women worked together. The ramifications of the revolution cataclysmically influenced the family system. Firstly, it further confused the already unjust and prejudiced gender roles in a patriarchal society. Secondly, the bifurcation of society into masculine and feminine roles

further widened the gender gap prevalent in the society. Since industrial revolution brought new ideology of life and work, a dire need of redefinition of gender roles became an essential issue to address.

Literature Review

This exacting authority of Victorian man made Victorian woman become conscious of the fact that she cannot challenge the authority of man in public sphere. In addition, she had to contend herself within the private space of home. However, the resignation to the private sphere also made her conscious of the fact that she must create her influence within the private sphere. To achieve a significant role in society, she had to invest her energies in domestic affairs and moral supremacy. Victorian woman realized that her supremacy lies in modeling the statue of the Ideal Womanhood. To be an Ideal Woman was an enormous undertaking and duty, in this manner, the perfect of True Womanhood was early engraved upon young ladies. Young ladies, at an early age, were prepared to be dutiful, having discretion, and defender of her virginity. She set herself up for marriage by keeping herself modest for her future spouse and learning the abilities vital to deal with a family unit and back kids. Motherhood was esteemed as the most satisfying occupation. This ideal woman would adhere to exalted personal and moral characteristics. The Victorian society identified the possessor of these qualities with the Cult of True Womanhood.

On the other hand, Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837, provided an opportunity for Victorian woman to display the ideal of True Womanhood in its totality. Queen Victoria "placed the division of public and private realms into newly urgent, and sometimes perplexing, prominence" (Abrams, 2011, p. 1). She presented herself as a role model for the Victorian woman. With all those tiring duties of a monarch, she played her role as a wife and mother very skillfully, and did not let any inadequacy appear in her responsibilities. As a result "female tenderness and modesty thus became an emphatically political issue, and a rebuke to men who would presume less of women" (Adams, 2009, p. 86).

Looking at the ideology of separate sphere from politico-economic perspective, Digby (1992) calls the issue of the female labor and wages "notorious" (p. 205). She argues that the division of separate sphere further undermined the female labor because "women's work and women's rates were conditioned by the values that placed women's responsibilities primarily in the home, in the private sphere" (Digby, 1992, p. 205). Therefore, the division of labor changed from a system of co-working in domestic industries to the industrialized economic system where man became the provider and woman became the manager of the house. However, Digby (1992) calls this economic ideal "an aspiration rather than a universal reality" (p. 206). Since such a system did promise women emancipation, but in reality did not help improve the woman situation in Victorian England. Therefore, the situation gave rise to the creation of two parallel but different "female worlds" (Digby, 1992, p. 208). On one hand there was the private world constituted strictly on private experiences of home and hearth. The borderland constituted

yet another world, which is the “intermediate or semi-detached area between public and private sphere” (Digby, 1992, p. 208). It is this intermediate spaces, which, according to Digby (1992), “allowed ‘official’ Victorian values to be silently transgressed – by working-class women working outside home, or by mainly middle-class women engaging in semi-public activities – but without formal recognition necessarily having to be taken of such ‘frontier violation’” (p. 198).

King (2005) is of the view that the religious vehemence of Victorian society also took its part in ascertaining the authority of Victorian Ideal Womanhood. She believes that the origin of the “Cult of True Womanhood” and “Ideal of Womanhood” was only possible through religious vehemence of the age. She associates it with the extensive augmentation of Evangelicalism during the first half of 19th century. It was the period when the “images of the Madonna and of angels therefore contribute[d] to the formation of the Victorian feminine ideal, in both visual and literary representations. What emerges out of this iconography is a highly idealised picture of woman as disembodied, spiritual and, above all, chaste (King, 2005, p. 10). Contrary to that, Welter believes that the Victorian concept of “True Womanhood” was deep rooted in English society. The versions of domestic ideal remained perceptible in different ages, although, never came to limelight. According to Adams (2009), it is no surprise to know that “versions of the domestic ideal held ground among women as well as men” (p. 87). With multifarious societal development, slowly and gradually it also received proper acknowledgment and recognition. Particularly, in 19th century society, “where values changed frequently, [...] where social and economic mobility provided instability as well as hope, one thing at least remained the same -- a true woman was a true woman, wherever she was found” (Welter, 1966, p. 152). Victorian society, as a whole, actually uplifted and strengthened the concept of “Cult of True Womanhood” and “Ideal Womanhood”.

Presently, the inquiry emerges as what makes a woman a "Perfect Woman" or what measures do "True Womanhood" credit to? In this connection, Welter considers four major attributes of True Womanhood. Welter (1966) asserts that:

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues-piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power (p. 152).

Welter (1966) further explains the four cardinal virtues of True Womanhood. An Ideal Woman was a religious woman. She received strength from engagement in religious activities. Bible was a part of her life and particular times during the day were dedicated to reading and teaching of the Bible. Hence, the Ideal Woman developed an acute sense of moral emptiness, since she realized that she is not doing enough to become a “better Eve, working in cooperation with the Redeemer” (Welter, 1966, p. 152) to bring the

world back to obedience and virtue from its rebellion and sin. Her religiosity was an effort to bring the world out of sin. Piety was the source of her spiritual strength. It was considered an appeasement for a disturbed mind, and a pursuit that did not require from a woman leaving the private sphere. Irreligion in women was too appalling to consider.

Purity was a revered virtue of Victorian Ideal Womanhood. According to Welter (1966) woman without sexual purity was considered “unnatural” and “unfeminine” (p. 154). Therefore, the Ideal Woman took great care to protect her sexual purity. Victorian society upheld controlled sexuality as a cardinal virtue in an Ideal Woman. The protection of her virginity until matrimony epitomized Ideal Womanhood. True Woman exhibited the most significant feminine virtue that Victorian Britain craved to safeguard. The Victorian Ideal Woman not only remained loyal to the notion of sexual purity, but also accomplished stringent control over her sexual urges. Virginity was an Ideal Woman’s greatest treasure, which she was expected to bestow upon her husband only. Sex before marriage, or extramarital relationships was heinous crime and an Ideal Woman guarded her virginity with her life. An Ideal Woman, who managed to withstand man’s assault on her virtue, was superior and powerful than him. A True Woman’s authority evolved through her cautious channelizing of her sexual urges, by making them subordinate to her husband’s sexual urges and exigencies.

The most “feminine virtue” (Welter, 1966, p. 158) of an Ideal Woman was her accommodation to the patriarchal power. Genuine Woman was aloof, inefficient, devoted to family unit obligations, and submitting to man as a little girl, mother and spouse. An Ideal Woman was instructed to know her true place in a patriarchal family structure. As a mother, she dealt with kids and took care of the domestic chores. As a little girl, she kept up her devotion and virtue by perusing conduct books, Bible and going to chapel. As a spouse, she was required to fulfill her better half’s sexual inclinations. In the expressions of Welter (1966), True Woman was “required to submit to fortune” (p. 161).

An Ideal Woman’s place was at the house. She believed domesticity to be a morally elevating mission. Since girlhood, she received training in cooking, needlework, nursing, and in making the home as a “cheerful place, so that brother, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time” (Welter, 1966, p. 163). As the public sphere defined masculinity of a man, the private sphere defined femininity of a woman. Ideal Woman was a quintessence of the values of loyalty, morality and domestic excellence by building a special home which would serve as a refuge from the world where her husband, son, brother could take shelter from the exhaustive, volatile and decadent public sphere.

Taking after the basic ideals, the True Woman not just displayed herself as an epitome of moral uprightness, additionally as a skillful laborer and sharp administrator. Her renewed individuality encouraged her to claim the long denied adoration and affirmation from Victorian patriarchy. The acceptance of her moral righteousness and excellence in domestic chores by Victorian patriarchy satiated her longing for reception as a *being*.

Adams (2009) considers this recognition was very much crucial for the Victorians woman:

In part because it offered women a dignity long denied them. Traditionally demeaned as daughters of Eve, creatures of undisciplined desire who lured men into temptation, women now were exalted as paragons of restraint, while men became the embodiment of sexual license (p. 9).

Linton further demonstrates the portrayal of an Ideal Woman in the words that an Ideal Woman is a woman “of home birth and breeding. It meant a creature generous, capable, [and] modest” (Linton, 1883). An Ideal Woman’s attractiveness did not come, essentially, from her bodily facade, but “purity and dignity of her nature” was the principal attributes, which made her profoundly attractive and glowing. Linton’s portrayal and interpretation of True Womanhood will help us in better understanding the “Ideal of Womanhood”. Linton (1883) states that an Ideal Woman is:

Neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind; a girl who, when she married, would be her husband’s friend and companion, but never his rival; one who would consider his interests as identical with her own, and not hold him as just so much fair game for spoil; who would make his house his true home and place of rest, not a mere passage-place for vanity and ostentation to pass through; a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress (p. 71).

Linton’s depiction precisely demonstrates that the Ideal Womanhood persistently dedicated herself to the family, household chores, and established relations with neighbors prudently. These domestic endeavors and trainings produced a pleasant continence on her face. She felt an astonishing satisfaction in her toil, and believed that some heavenly authority has approved her to carry out all this labor and energy. She embarked on all this blissfully because she was “content to be what God and nature had made them” (Linton, 1883, p. 71). In performing her domestic duties, a True Woman never complained, and accepted all sorts of predicaments and reservations daringly. The true abilities of a True Woman became visible only when she devoted her true self to her home. According to Linton (1883) a True Woman’s “noblest virtues come out only in the quiet sacredness of home, and the most heroic lives of patience and well-doing go on in seclusion, uncheered by sympathy and unrewarded by applause” (p. 71). The statement alludes to the True Woman devotedness to the house hold undertakings, where she did tiring and aggravating tasks, not for any monetary advantage, or any commendation from the relatives, however considering it as a divine obligation. For an Ideal Woman, home was a shelter from the corrupt and sinful public sphere. It was in home, that the True Woman could display her commended character and shower the bounties of her greatness upon her family, with no material longing.

The “Cult of True Womanhood” did not appear suddenly on Victorian stage; rather it was a product of decades of preaching and teaching. The “Ideal of Womanhood” had

remained a part of English society. With the emergence of industrial society and separation of separate spheres, the nineteenth century patriarchy felt a desperate necessity to tutor Victorian woman in domestic errands, in household affairs, in indoctrinating righteousness and moral values in them, and to dissuade her from outreaching the public sphere. The larger sectors of society agreed to Alcott's (1840) view that "the future holiness and happiness of the world in which we live, depend much more on the character of the rising generation of the female sex" (p. 19). For these reasons writers, clergymen and moralists designed and circulated advice books, guides and pamphlets. These pamphlets, books and chronicles were of immense assistance to Victorian woman at every stage of life i.e. to model them on "Ideal of Womanhood" archetype. Mrs. John Sandford (1842) in her book *Woman, in her Social and Domestic Character* discusses the necessity of religious studies and its influences on woman in molding their moral character and social status. Rogers (1850) gives a twofold advice to young women. He says that young women should devote "some serious hours, some industrious moments; some time apportioned to the culture of the mind, [and] the enriching of the memory with stores of useful knowledge" (p. 5). These stories were rendered from Bible and lives of saints in order to inculcate moral righteousness among young women. Secondly, by "culture of mind" he means the wisdom of making distinction between the virtuous and vicious deeds. Secondly, he advises young women to retain this prudence, for it will help in fostering "moral faculties [...] for the best good of those around you" (Roger, 1850, p. 5). Roger (1850) further elaborates the essence of real beauty in the words that:

Be assured there is no beauty like that of goodness—there is no power like that of virtue; personal beauty may attract the admiration of the passing hour, but it is the richer beauty of moral worth, the loveliness of the soul, that commands the deepest reverence, and secures the most enduring affection (Roger, 1850, p. 7).

Rogers (1850) believes that such faculties, if developed, will eventually culminate in nurturing women of reverence and veneration. He further adds that "even men who have no religion themselves, but who are men of judgment, and whose opinion is worth the most, respect and admire a lady most, who displays in her character the " beauty of holiness"" (p. 12) Any sort of lack or weakness in the display of the "beauty of holiness" was strongly discouraged. The writers of such conduct books propagated a spiritual and material-less approach towards the life.

In the same way, Alcott (1840) not only ascertains the moral uprightness as a stimulus for spiritual exaltation, but also worldly dominance. For accomplishing such materialistic supremacy in a patriarchal society, Alcott (1840) urges the young woman to "make herself acquainted, as far as she possibly can, with the nature of her influence, and the consequent responsibilities which devolve upon her" (p. 19). This desire does not come from some wicked prejudices against the patriarchal social setup, but a profound belief in the moral righteousness of woman. Alcott (1840) believes that "the day has gone by in which physical force was supposed to rule the world. Moral influence is now the order of

the day; and they whose moral influence is most weighty and powerful, are they who most effectually bear rule” (p. 20).

Along these lines, the Ideal Womanhood turned into a focal vitality of the family structure, even within the sight of a solid patriarchal. The Ideal Womanhood became a central energy reservoir of the family system, even in the presence of a strong patriarchal hegemony. Victorian Ideal Women advocated approaches for a new turn in domestic life. In such domestic system, no doubt, man remained the chief of the family but the foundation of unification and authority issued from an ideal woman. This feminine ideal not only conquered the home, but also established a strong moral sense, of course, appreciated and esteemed by Victorian man.

The ideology of separate spheres and the significance of the cardinal virtues were reinforced by the literature of the period. The portrayal of Ideal Woman in literature of the era further endorsed the authenticity of the distinctive individuality of True Womanhood. Men of letters lavishly praised her. Poets composed poems to sing her glory. Writers produced fiction, bearing her exotic character. We see Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927) as the exemplification of True Womanhood. *To The Lighthouse* (1927) delineates Mrs. Ramsay in the very soul of the Ideal Woman in the novel. She shows the most astonishing qualities of a Victorian Ideal Woman. An examination of her character uncovers comparability of her deepest qualities with that of the Cult of True Womanhood. The ecclesiasts used the pulpit to adore her magnificence. Indeed, there is no surprise in such prolific praise and honor because she deserved that respect and honor. Her physical beauty was adored, and her beauty of character worshiped. Coventry Patmore, in her long narrative poem “*The Angel in the House*” immortalized the “Ideal Woman”. Patmore idealizes the “ideal” to a quintessence of virtues and uprightness. The “ideal” was tactful “in mind and manners”. In conversation, she was “candid”. She knew “the way to vanquish or evade” brains. This “amiable and innocent” ideal took great “pleasure in her power to charm” (Patmore, 1863, 121-127). Patmore’s sublime poem provides as an idyllic description of a docile, dependent, self-sacrificing Victorian Ideal Woman. Patmore’s angel is a dependent creature and he writes:

To him she'll cleave, for him forsake
 Father's and mother's fond command.
 He is her lord, for he can take
 Hold of her faint heart with his hand. (Patmore, 1856, Canto II: 98 - 100)

Patmore’s poem *The Angel in the House* in essence idealizes the feminine ideal of Victorian England. He attributes mythological aspect to the *angel* and that also with a purpose. The philosophy behind idealizing a feminine ideal is to shape a society where woman play only a docile and submissive part. The idea of emancipation was novel to such feminine ideals. Therefore, they serve best the purpose of slavery and subjugation, which they hailed as submissiveness.

Discussion

Victorian man did every effort to subjugate woman. This process of subjugation happened at different intervals and through different means. Sometime physical power was used to civilize the feminine brute. At other times, financial means were used to enslave woman. The social and political methods of woman slavery were also in vogue during Victorian era. In other words, Victorian man has always been in search of new methods to subjugate woman. He seized every opportunity that could help him enslaving woman. The Victorian man blatantly used religion to harass woman. Abusing woman in the name of family was a frequent feast. Victorian woman was socially exploited by the Victorian patriarchy. Economic dependence was a curse dawned upon Victorian woman since she was discouraged to take active participation in the public sphere, she was advised to “accept the hand of the first young man who desired to pay taxes” (p. 5).

Among so many ways to subjugate Victorian woman, the pseudo-exaltation of Victorian woman to the status of True Womanhood served the Victorian man’s purpose efficiently. To conclude the process of woman subjugation, the Victorian patriarchy designed the Cult of True Womanhood. The fashioning of Ideal Womanhood aimed at counterattacking all sorts of emancipatory movements.

With the advent of industrial age, Victorian woman saw new opportunities for herself. The expanding capitalist culture promised new avenues to discover. With a renewed faith in herself, the Victorian woman dared to experiment new ventures that would end her long established slavery to patriarchy. The gradual infrastructure development offered woman opportunities to get educated. The increasing number of boarding schools and colleges for women promised a new era in her education. This helped in psychological and intellectual awakening of Victorian woman. Victorian woman realized her own potentialities and capabilities that not only helped her in awakening her spirit, but also employed them to decipher the hegemonic designs of Victorian patriarchy. She became aware of the reasons behind the idolization of Ideal of Womanhood. She understood the politics involved in the establishment of the feminine ideal. Education not only broadened her outlook but also equipped her with skills to perform official tasks efficiently. Woman in late nineteenth century occupied managerial posts in industry. The change in position at workplace resulted in woman’s economic independence. She was no more shackled in the family system as a mere consumer in the growing capitalist society. Although, gender discrimination kept on haunting the industrial revolution, but still it gave woman some sense of financial independence. The wages of female workers were low in comparison to that of male workers, and sexual harassment at workplace was frequent, yet there was a sense of freedom among women because of the new circumstances. Inequality in duty hours hindered her, in financial progress, and women were not allowed to occupy executive positions in industries and firms, however, 19th century woman faced these challenges boldly.

Reflecting on the politics of True Womanhood it is pertinent to mention that Victorian patriarchy used the manipulative narrative of the Ideal Womanhood in order to thwart the revolutionary New Woman of *fin de siècle*. Victorian patriarchy had foreseen the social changes that industrial revolution would bring with it. He knew that industrial revolution would make an array of opportunities available to women of the nineteenth century, however, Victorian patriarchy was least inclined to share the bounties of industrialization. Above all Victorian man was afraid of female emancipation.

Although woman emancipatory movements had been on the rise since the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, these movements were disorganized and limited to certain quarters of England, thus, progressing slowly. The industrial revolution not only triggered the woman emancipatory movements but also provided a platform to all such movements. These emancipatory movements heralded the end of the long established dominance of patriarchy in England. Victorian man felt severe threat to his social authority, financial control and religious hegemony.

On the other hand, woman had become more educated, independent and above all aware of the patriarchal politics of Ideal Womanhood. However, being confined to the private sphere of home, Victorian woman had developed a narrow and limited outlook of the public sphere. She was unaware of the ruthlessness of public sphere – the sphere was described as a space of evil and moral corruption. She was taught that spiritual salvation could be achieved only in private sphere and was barred from gaining literacy in public sphere.

The Victorian patriarchy deprived woman of basic education, yet on the other hand mocked woman's lack of knowledge. Education promised intellectual freedom and Victorian man at no cost could allow freedom that would result in questioning the hierarchal order. Education freed the mind of the New Woman of all sorts of prejudices. It empowered her to demand a long denied social justice.

From the study of Victorian scriptures and manual, it appears that the whole idea of the True Womanhood was merely propaganda. The propaganda campaign was launched to materialize the hegemonic designs of Victorian patriarchy. Paz (2011) argues that the emergence of the New Woman on the social canvas was “a result of a profound dissatisfaction with traditional Victorian roles for women” (p. 126). Her argument is reinforced when we study the situation of women in Victorian society, we realize that, the situation was far worse than it was portrayed in novels and stories of that era. Woman was expected to play the role of the *angel* in the house, but that angel was living a miserable life. Cruea (2005) exposes the double standards of Victorian patriarchy and writes that an Ideal Woman “was assumed to be a pillar of moral strength and virtue, she was also portrayed as delicate and weak, prone to fainting and illness” (p. 189). A True Woman would be advised to abstain from physical work, as her poor physique would hinder in performance. She was also warned against her emotionally unstable nature. Therefore, Crues (2005) claims that Ideal Woman's “emotional and physical frailty” (p.

189) provided an opportunity to the Victorian man to act the protector and breadwinner role. It further paved the way for her utter submission to the Victorian man. Victorian woman's restriction to the private sphere also made her financially dependent on him.

According to Paz (2012) the New Woman writers took this challenge to expose in their works "the hypocrisy of enforced marriage, motherhood and the perils of sexual and intellectual ignorance" (p. 128). They depicted the Victorian double standards exhibited in their attitude towards woman of Victorian era. The politics of True Womanhood earned Victorian patriarchy what it desired i.e. subjugation of Victorian woman. Victorian woman suffered patriarchal cruelty in the name of religion, society and economy. Woman in Victorian England was deprived of basic human rights. She was denied her due legal rights. She was not allowed to own property. She could not establish her own business. She even could not claim the custody of her children in case of a divorce. All these cruel laws were framed by the Victorian patriarchy. The political arena of Victorian England was jolted when woman demanded her legal rights. Surprisingly, she was not denied her legal rights on the basis of any legal implication rather the Victorian patriarchy feared that giving legal rights to woman would disturb the power structure of home. In other words, for Victorian man it was unacceptable to give a woman her due share in property and inheritance. Since for the Victorians woman was a commodity, an entity that could be used for bargains. Usually these bargains occurred at the time of marriage where the bridegroom family would demand a hefty dowry.

Conclusion

Consequently, under such profound training, Victorian woman, developed a genuine sense of morality and godliness. As a daughter, she learned and practiced the most outstanding moral codes. She, not only adapted herself to the likeness of her parents, but also a guide to her siblings. She embarked on the journey of marriage with a pious mind, chaste heart, and pure body. She did her best to provide comfort, peace and love to her husband, so that he may not go astray. As a housemistress, she employed all of her strength to make home a real heaven. Lastly as a mother, she nursed and provided best possible education and moral training to her children. In short, in every manner and matter, "Ideal of Womanhood" kept her morality and virtuosity exalted, and religiously complied with the four cardinal virtues. This has made her presence a source of blessing for others.

However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the New Woman realized that she had been deceived in the name of Ideal Womanhood. Victorian constructed the ideal of True Womanhood merely to retain their patriarchal supremacy. Twentieth century promised a new era of intellectual freedom and social progress, however, this promise could only be materialized when women took part in the development of the nation in every field. Since the New Woman revolted against the patriarchal norms of the era and tore the mask of True Womanhood, she was considered a threat to the male chauvinistic social system. The New Woman intellectually and socially freed herself from chains of

True Womanhood. She became aware of her real self and sexual potentialities, and channelized them for causes far greater than mere sexual gratification of man.

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