

# REDEFINING COMMON GOOD FOR WOMEN IN ROUSSEAU'S PHILOSOPHY

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*Abstract: In earlier times, no traces of segregation existed between men and women, but later differences arose, and disproportionate relations among humans could be observed when nature was attributed based on the labor performed in society and the kind of function performed in the family. Although these factors should not have been the cause for legislative degeneration, they became the basis of measuring equality and inequality in the private sphere. If seen from Jean Jacques Rousseau's perspective, people moved away from ties of nature to natural inequalities. This article will explore the historical underlining to gain insight into the workings of the ascribed model and how philosophers of different sexes wanted to change it to make it more accommodating.*

## Introduction

The outline of this article primarily talks about the female position in the general outline of Rousseau's two primary texts, *Discourse on Inequality* and *The Social Contract*. In the *Discourse on Inequality*, he approaches both sexes differently based on the State of Nature and Civil State setup, mostly underlined by physiological differences. In *The Social Contract*, he inclines towards marginalizing women more towards the private sphere and away from the public sphere based on a human's capability to 'reason'. He cements the authenticity of human relationships based on the power of authority and social contexts. He strives to form a common identity based on moral and collective well-being, but this does not seem to include women in their complete form of being "equal" citizens. Family and public interest are not treated as the same moral agency.

It also discusses the position of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which gives us the prevailing belief of how women's development was directly related to their sexuality. The prejudice was that a woman's growth in any terms could lead to her de-sexualization. Also, they were pushed to adapt to reading only religious texts, which ingrained in them the fear of God in case they thought of venturing to work on improving their conditions. Therefore, their readings were controlled by patriarchal ideas, which tried to make them more sentimental rather than rational. Rousseau's ideas on Modern Republicanism comprised categorizing women as excellent and chaste moral guardians. She is reminded to take care of her collective duty for public obligations over her individualistic dispositions. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the first feminists during the Enlightenment period of Rousseau's time. She extensively talked about the co-education of both boys and girls so that they could cultivate their rational capacities to achieve social virtue. She emphasized that reason and emotions are the same, and both husband and wife should share duties in a marriage. Rousseau has advocated for a classless society to attain a model of thought based on virtuous citizens and human good. However, he still

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identified personal relations based on the subjugation of women. It is essential to understand the different nuances of history because we find patriarchal subjugation in different colors till now.

### I. Ideas of Nature and Reason

The inequality that exists between the sexes is the result of modifications in humans. Rousseau says, "Nature created humans," which means humans are derived from originality and devoid of any attributes that are uncalled for. Similar is the case for women as they are purely independent of uncalled qualities, which Rousseau advocates that they have from the start but later inculcated due to being mixed with the crowd. So, Rousseau himself gives us an explanation of their exclusion from the political arena. However, it is not understood why we did not call for removing such qualities and vouched for their inclusion. It is supposed to be an open-ended inquiry for comprehending civil rights, but it cannot be since it closes off a possible discourse on the equality of the sexes.

In the wake of the French Revolution and ongoing political debates in Britain, Wollstonecraft extended the arguments of political and civil rights to women. During those times, these entitlements within a legal system encompassed only land-owning men's participation in government activities to protect themselves and their property. Philosophers infrequently lodged questions about applying human rights to females, which took decisive turns during the American Revolution in the 1770s and eventually during the French Revolution in the 1780s. Wollstonecraft argues that the French Revolution in 1789 became an example of a political rebellion by the masses to free themselves from social oppression. However, only male rights were preserved. The idea grew more significant than the consolidation of power of landowners. Botting says,

The late medieval, Renaissance and early enlightenment "natural rights" of God's human creatures, which were generally patriarchal in implication or application, openly became "the rights of man." (Botting, 2016, 40)

The perimeter of this demand further widened,

Condorcet's 1790 essay "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship" and a year later, de Gouges's aforementioned "Declaration," asked for women to be granted the same civil and political rights as men in the new French republic. Their arguments began with the premise that republican citizenship rights ought to extend to all adults, not simply men. (Ibid., 43)

The idea of republican citizens of Europe and America of the late eighteenth century was dominated by white male subjects who owned property and paid taxes.

"Rousseau still commands interest as a chief literary representative of one of the greatest movements in the history of the world." (Murray, 1899, 357) He introduced a social regulation where he aspired to return to fraternal equality in the state of nature to move away from an artificial state of oppressive inequalities. There are various meanings and debates on understanding the term "nature."

Murray says, "A predominant use of the word is to denote that which is essential, which makes a thing what it is, and without which it would no longer be the same thing." (Ibid., 358) When we enquire into the nature of things, it is an attempt to discover the

primitive form of a thing. The reason here is considered as an original element of human nature. There are three spheres of philosophical interest: social, mental, and moral. "The problem involved in this antinomy is the relation of mind, morals, religion, and society to man's nature." (Ibid., 360) Nature is the form, and all the other things are attached to it. Classical Western philosophy advocates the primacy of intelligence or reason. However, modern thinkers objected to this, citing that everything cannot be explained rationally and requires mechanical actions.

Rousseau tries to identify two characteristics of natural man:

- Man's nature might be before reason. The man was later corrupted by science and art. For the well-being of man, they must give up their scientific and artistic pursuits and return to their dependent existence of raw instincts.
- Man is non-social by nature. In the second stage, he tries to wipe out his social instincts. He is individualistic. In that sense, family does not seem to be a distinct character of human society.

For Rousseau, it means acquiring the ideal of natural man as second nature and manifesting his true nature. On the other hand, women use their tongues and fashion to move naturally, and they are corrupted by art, transforming their nature to shallowness. Is the implication then that women had moral character but were corrupted? Rousseau says that "natural femininity" for a woman is double veiling. She cannot show what she is and what she has made herself up for. To elucidate this, he gives the example of the demeanor of Parisian women. Rousseau describes a fall from a paradise when the functioning of sexual differences disappears and, therefore, decomposes and corrupts society. His letter de amberte clearly shows that (theatre) contact between the two sexes will lead to domestication and destruction of the masculine. A man is not whole in identifying with the other; he must recognize himself as part of the universal. It happens in the second stage with the advent of civilization.

Compared to the natural state of man, the social state is artificial. If human beings are not social by nature, then why are women expected to go beyond themselves, include everyone in their individualism, and look after their well-being in the social state? It means that others impose these aspects on her. Murray says,

Hobbes finds a basis for social union in the natural impulses of passion and the natural dictates of reason. The social contract is, therefore, simply the formal enactment of natural law- the enactment necessary to give that law practical force. For Rousseau, on the other hand, society is based on a pure convention, which involves a more or less violent transformation of man's original nature. (Murray, 1899, 368)

For Hobbes, it is a union of the past and the present, but for Rousseau, it is the continued modification. In this way, people as a whole restrain individuality. The artificial reigns of social institutions and intellectual culture constrain his natural freedom. An individual's life will return to innocence once these shackles are broken. Also, the kind of intelligence provided under this rule is marred with corrupted and artificial intelligence and moral life. However, it is essential to discover that the advancement of present education is not based on natural or animal instincts by taking intelligence into play. He vouches for the virtue of magistrates who uphold civil harmony and reconciliation whenever society is marked by disturbance and differences. The people are guided by reason and enlightenment. He emphasizes the union of the holy and men, "Few realize just how much

the spirit of Christianity, the sanctity of morals, and discipline of oneself and gentleness toward others prevail in our clergy. Perhaps only the city of Geneva can offer the edifying example of such perfect union between a society of theologians and men of letters.” (Rousseau, 2010, 11) Along with reason, he emphasizes religion and spirituality to confirm the sanctity of morals in his work.

## II. Position of Women in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century

There was a prevailing belief that women could not be feminine and intellectual at the same time and that indulging in mental labor could desexualize a woman. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they witnessed an unprecedented rise in women poets and writers who challenged such beliefs. Pierre Roussel even compared the softness of a female’s brain tissue to their organs (Vila, 1995, 77). Women with intellectual and creative zest were considered “out of place.” There was another assumption concerning men that abstaining from female contact boosts their creative output.

According to Rousseau, the stand of geniuses is separated from women due to their anatomy. Even after the revolutionary period, women were separated from the areas of science, industry, etc. Women’s civic status was reduced to being minors after the enactment of the Napoleonic Code in 1804. So, how did the Enlightenment change the political, intellectual, and social discourse on the ideas of women? Some questioned their education and status in society since essential mental ability was sex-neutral. John Toland said that women are intellectually equal to men, and education is the means to reconstruct their societal identity (Champion, 2001, 322). As female literacy spread, publishers and writers identified them as new consumers for journals and books. On the other hand, literature in poetry, religion, novels, and schools presented and defined appropriate feminine behavior. This idea dominated the bourgeois ideology and ideals for women.

There existed tension between the two images of women. One was passive with ideal characteristics, and the other was more intellectually involved and engaged in public activities. Some women taboos associated with sexual behavior and legal subordination were prevalent. The young Irish philosopher George Berkeley compiled *The Ladies Library in three volumes, which covered* many topics related to women’s social, religious, and domestic functions and duties. Volume One focused on an educational curriculum for girls detailing their behavior. Volume Two highlighted women’s roles in society and family as daughters, wives, mothers, and widows. The third Volume focused on their religious exercise and functions. On the other side, William Flatwood advocated the education of young women and promoted the reading of intellectual texts. While Locke maintained that no inequality should exist in women’s education, and it did not matter to have a gender-based curriculum, Berkeley stated that their education should reflect their destiny as mothers and daughters. Berkeley’s work promoted traditional and impassive roles for women, which consisted of images of pure virgins, nurturing mothers, and compliant wives, with little reference to their intellectual activities.

These misogynist thinkers promoted the reading of religious texts to ingrain patriarchal ideas, claiming that God had prescribed these. It was a way to inculcate fear in them. Wollstonecraft recommended that women read canonical texts, history, and polity to uplift their social and political virtue. She urged women to read history and novels to move to the rational rather than the sentimental. She thought pure domestic education prevented women from broadening their rational perspectives on actions and lives and

advocated the same education for both boys and girls. According to her, educated wives will be respected rather than flattered, and marriage should be based on a model for equals. There is a disrupted partnership between Emile's spouses and *Julie*. So, there should be a promotion for equal partnership. There should be a political representation of citizen wives as they embrace civic education. Their political and civil oppression makes their understanding stunted and frivolous.

### III. Rousseau on Modern Republicanism

Jean Jacques Rousseau's concept of modern republicanism asserted a masculine template. He proclaimed that since women dominate men in the domestic sphere through sexual prowess, they cannot hold political power. As Botting puts it, to rationalize this, he gave explicit reasons in *Social Contract Theory*,

His theory of republicanism required a robust practice of sex-role differentiation, such that men were formal citizens in the public realm and women focused on the rearing of future male citizens and female denizens in the domestic sphere. Any mixing of the sexes in politics would undermine the stability of society and the government. (Botting, 2016, 41)

Rousseau reemphasized the domestic prowess of women, which was given as an excuse for women not being included in the political sphere. It seems like a menial compensation for them. He termed the adult men of the community to be the sovereign makers of law-prescribing Romans who marginalized their women. Carol Pateman stated it to be a "fraternal social contract" where women did not have actual access to freedom, rights, and power and stood outside the government (Dabora, 2017, 23). Barbara Vinken elaborates on modern times when she states,

The feminism of the last four decades spans two poles that could somewhat schematically be labeled identity versus difference...The differentially of the feminine does not find a new female identity but deconstructs the reigning scheme of the human-male identity by withdrawing the negative reflections of the feminine, indispensable for that human-male identity's constitution (Vinken, 1996, 181).

Simone de Beauvoir talked about advocating not only the particular but also the general. She claimed that it is important to liberate women from socio-historical and biological alienation so that they can function like men in society (Lazaro, 1986, 95). Political systems are built on narcissistic illusions. Rousseau charted a social contract in which a political order was based on a patriarchal relationship between the sexes. It was based on the condition that feminine work was away from the public sphere. The true culprit lies within men. In Europe, since the Enlightenment, men have been motivated by the fear of losing their power, including insinuating women trying to make men more like them. Montesquieu maintained that high republican virtue consisted of separation between man and woman in which women should mostly restrict themselves in front of others with manners. He said that women should confine themselves in houses so that men could concentrate on working for the "common good."

Empty appearance is the very essence of women, and when it reigns with and through them, the essence of men's virtue is corrupted. The danger of femininity, as it surfaces in

Montesquieu's and later in Rousseau's texts, does not so much consist in women manipulating men through the sheer power of the beguiling world; the female danger lies in the fact that with women's rhetoric reigns so absolutely that the very distinction between the improper and the proper, between being and appearance collapse. Masculinity and virtues depend on the possibility of a clear public distinction between being and appearance. So that men can remain men without being stained by femininity, women should not appear in public ((Vinken et al., 184-185).

Women have been accused of disturbing the order of society when they try to turn into males, i.e., by making liberal choices. This uncertainty also disturbs a family. The survival of women depends on the conservation of morals and the state, but the rise in their power in the state of civilization can cause it to collapse. Rousseau admires Spartan and Roman republics for their macho homo social body politics. The virtue of their male sex united these men. They argue that the inclusion of women might contaminate this cosmos. He has highlighted this danger in his two works *Letter a d' Alembert* and *Emile*.

Rousseau's works have given two reductions for an ideal free man.

- Rousseau's naturally good men were uncorrupted by society and self-determined.
- He has been widely criticized for his portrayal of women.

Barbara Vinken et al claims,

It is undeniable that on the one hand, Rousseau proclaims the free, self-determined man who some games back his lost nature as second nature while all the other hand, he aims at segregation and complementary of the sexes..... it is through women that the figure "men" is established and that this very establishment is added the same time obliterated. The idea of natural men, proclaims Rousseau, is nothing but natural. Man has to acquire this ideal nature as second nature (Ibid., 188).

Rousseau thinks that the only gift that a woman receives is her effect on others. He tries to glorify this by calling it a divine quality (They give false propositions about women to compensate for the inequality). Women dress up a lot to overshadow their natural shortcomings. Rousseau's definition of men is that they do not identify themselves with others but recognize themselves as a part of universal beings so that they do not alienate themselves by resembling the other half, i.e., women. When we look at the modern state, it is also engulfed with the fear of being contaminated with females driven by men's efforts at gender equality.

Rousseau calls women to be the precious half of his republic. He generally denotes them with a softer approach. They are the ones who are harmless, selfless, and amicable. Rousseau says, "Assures the happiness of the other and whose sweetness and goodness maintain its peace and good morals." (Rousseau, 11) They are happy only when they make themselves available for the well-being and glory of the state while being bound in marriage. He categorizes them by correlating their happiness with marriage. He objectifies them by suggesting that the garments they wear and their conversation and behavior with others should be simple and modest. When exposed to excesses in other countries, they behave in ridiculous and childish manners and develop a loose character. "Always remain as you are, the chaste guardians of our morals and all the gentle bonds of peace, asserting on every occasion the rights of the heart and nature in the interest of duty and virtue." (Ibid., 12) For him, morality comes from following duty and virtue in marriage by women. Nevertheless, the satire is that this should be included for both genders. Women are

expected to be obliged to follow their duties and rules in the private sphere, but when it comes to the public sphere, there is no mention of any moral and virtue space for them.

For Rousseau, the moral standard of a person is derived when his collective duty gains prominence over individual duty. However, women are expected to treat family life as the only function of their life, while men are expected to treat the family as a common good. Rousseau could not resolve the tension between private and public aspects for the good of the whole. Citizens prioritize public obligations when the state is better constituted. They then become less mindful of personal affairs. For women, the collective duty is only their family and non-state. The moral standard of women in these terms is not high.

Rousseau emphasizes *cercles* (circles), which are informal social groups where men enjoy associations with activities with other men. This segregation between men and women prevents the acquisition of "female softness" by men, which is politically a destructive attribute. These circles remind both men and women of their respective social roles. It also reinforces their ideas on identity and politics. However, the problem arises when he cannot provide a household model suitable for his political society. The models of the family in *Emile* and *Julie* are unstable, and the identities of its inhabitants are unable to shape civic life.

Rousseau's political philosophy has tried to reconcile the public and private. Unlike the Socratic model, unidimensionality will not help sustain a political model because including private associations is also necessary. However, Rousseau's ideas are full of contradictions between expectations and desires, and it is hard to reconcile the various responsibilities demanded by social life. He advocates for a person who has a distinct public and private life.

#### IV. Mary Wollstonecraft on Equality in Humanity

Wollstonecraft argued for the co-education of boys and girls, building on Locke's conception. On the other side, Kant, in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, says that it is difficult for women to act morally. It is because they cannot rationally grasp the universal principles of duty. In *Metaphysics of Morals*, he mentions that women should not be a part of active and self-governing citizens because they cannot do autonomous conduct in nature. Women were not considered naturally and morally equal and required the protection of men both in times of war and peace. These constructions meant that they were not looked at as persons in their nature but were defined by their sexual functions. Kant says that women's nature was devoid of autonomy. Their nature tends to depend on others, underlined by sexual functions.

Wollstonecraft and Olympus have extensively written against the masculinization of the rights system mentioned in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Wollstonecraft recommended cultivating women's rational capacities through education to acquire social virtue and human happiness. She gave three reasons for advocating women's human rights: they are part of humanity; the right to education is essential as it will help to synthesize political and civil rights; and rights should be granted irrespective of sex for the well-being of humanity.

French feminist activists showed a disconnection between natural and civil rights and the exclusion of half of humankind. There is an excerpt where powerful men joked about the rights of women. President John Adams of the USA wrote a letter to his wife, Abigail

Adams, saying that women do not need political power as they enjoy absolute power over their husbands. Wollstonecraft expressed skepticism on the divide between nature and society. Rousseau did not outright use the term “natural rights” but instead “rights of humanity,” “rights of woman,” and “civil and political rights.” She did not define human rights as natural but as subjects of government and humanity. Like Hobbes, she advocated for the development of human reason to realize human goods. Quoting from Botting,

Even if it was difficult to negotiate the “game” of life partly because of the impulses of passion, a person could rationally grasp the most important (and often most unexpected) moral lessons from the process of playing the game. The reason was transformed into this cooperative relationship with the passions and strengthened in the process. (Botting, 2016, 50)

Wollstonecraft established certain first principles of humanity to understand rights from a metaphysical point of view. In *The Rights of Woman*, she defined *rights* as the honor of moral beings. God designs moral beings to rise above the basic creation and acquire knowledge and virtue by exercising reason. The primary reason is to perceive a woman as right-bearing, and the second is that everyone should act morally towards others by using reason to enjoy the pleasures of equality. In this way, she developed a theological and philosophical foundation for a universalistic understanding of human rights. She argued in support of rationalism against empiricism, which said that law can be enforced only by government or one established by an absolute sovereign. It was also a defense from Voluntarism, which said that moral law came from personal will. She argued that if it came from divine will, rights are reduced to the impulses of human rules. The former idea of Anaxagoras was seconded by Stoics, who said every creature has a being in God. Stoics said that genuine goodness comes only from God, and the only way to win his grace is through the society that intentionally instituted it. It meant that moral life could not be attained from outside society. Therefore, morality can be attained with the grace of God in every human being. By giving “right” a divine touch, Wollstonecraft tried to elevate its position, emphasizing that the “rights” of humanity are beyond human control and hence can be regulated by them. It is derived from the sanctity of God, and therefore, everyone has the freedom of will to exercise it.

Wollstonecraft set forth a two-part rationalistic account of the basis of morality that pertained to both God and humankind:

- The moral law exists independently of God’s will but as part of his nature as the supreme rational being. God voluntarily subjected his will to it.
- The moral law is universal in its application to all humans who may grasp it via reason because they are made in the image of God. (Ibid., 54)

Many writers claim that since women also follow the moral law, they possess a reason to be one with God. Human rights independent of God’s will have an objective foundation. Wollstonecraft says that moral liberty is something with which individuals govern themselves rationally, following the universal principle of morality. In a way, this is the conception of their citizenship in a republic.

In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft argues that men were schooled in liberal arts, where they were given teachings on citizenship. “... since women were cut off from the moral and political teachings of civic republicanism, their capacity for conventional political virtue was badly undermined.” (Leddy and Kellow,



2016, 269) In *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), Adam Smith expressed his concern that the education of moral philosophy and ancient history was insufficient to train young men. He advocated for the inclusion of the feminine voice in novels. At the same time, Wollstonecraft rejected sentimental novels for despairing women's reading. Smith and Wollstonecraft argued that Enlightenment Education was insufficient to serve any gender. They advocated that girls should be educated more like boys and boys should be educated more like girls. In this scenario, the content of history posed a question since its writing has been primarily a male occupation and not a gendered process. It was felt because women were seen as submissive agents of men's desires.

Smith and Wollstonecraft were worried that Roman philosophy and history were not directed to their respective social goals. Wollstonecraft recommended that the readership of such canonical texts should be broadened. According to her, women could not perform their duties as citizens effectively since education was not sufficient enough to gain political and social equality like men. Her model for women was to be rational, not guided by passion, and read history rather than sentimental novels. She identified the cause of these failings at the civic level. Wollstonecraft maintained that a woman should denounce the feminine traits imposed on her by society. Domestic education prevented them from broadening their national perspective and taking action. This domestic arrangement eclipses women's virtue. Improvement can begin only when they are educated and trained on par with boys in the outside world, which will help them develop their virtue. Wollstonecraft and Smith both criticized the idea of two different educations for husband and wife for a happy and harmonious marriage. They advocated that it should be a partnership of equals. She argued that in this way, an educated wife would be respected and not become a subject of flattery. She should be respected and not only jump between being neglected or loved.

Wollstonecraft compared civic virtue on a national scale. Co-education of public virtue will entail the political representation of citizen wives and girls. She connected the exclusion of women in history to their exclusion of possession of virtue and being portrayed as dormant and submissive. A limited horizon leaves women stunted and solipsistic. (Ibid., 277) Women need to move out of ignorance and the domestic sphere of just fulfilling their familial duties capably, or else they will become slaves of pleasure. In obliviousness, they will find politics, literature, and business dry and not acquire the love for general happiness. Men interact with each other in all aspects of life and the world, including past, present, and future, even though they may not be friends or rivals; women interact in the domestic sphere, where they crave superficial attention and success. The conclusion is that private duties cannot be fulfilled entirely without a fulfilling understanding of universal benevolence and public virtue. Wollstonecraft argues that rather than being taught ethical and moral conduct and being prescribed behavior in society; girls should be educated in the public realm along with boys.

Wollstonecraft points to the ideological difficulties imposed against gender egalitarianism. To pose a challenge to this, she maintains that all women are born rational and, through education, should improve their status because reason binds a society. Bourgeois hegemony is based on segregated public and private spheres, presenting males as autonomous. Marriage equality can only occur when men and women receive the same education. She attacks the differentiation between reason and emotion. Emotions do not serve as a pure prerogative of women. Both reason and emotion, particularly, cannot be said to belong to one sex. She gives two analogies to argue against the idea of blind

submission by women to men. She says that clergy and the military want to please and get pleased. They also love idleness and fine clothes, characterized as women's vices. Destruction of the dichotomy of male and female will destroy the artificial structures of power. Laurie Finke brings this out clearly,

She insists that it is not the power of individuals or even institutions that has kept women from assuming equal citizenship with men but the power of the written word. Two writers who particularly epitomize Wollstonecraft's allegations of the power of masculine discourse to exclude and silence women as subjects and the power of the father to stifle his daughters are Rousseau and Milton. Both present the ideological work of the public sphere as the discursive formation that creates, enforces, and even naturalizes the dichotomies of gender that degrade women. (Finke, 1992, 143)

Wollstonecraft considers Rousseau responsible for removing women's representation in philosophy and education. She recognizes this exclusion in Sophie's education and the elimination of equality from institutions in his work. Dena Goodman asserts, "... *Letter to d'Alembert* signaled Rousseau's rejection of a larger model of enlightenment that she describes as grounded in female-centered mixed-gender sociability that gendered French culture, the Enlightenment, and civilization itself as feminine." (Goodman, 1994, 365)

Rousseau claims that males and females cannot be educated alike as they differ in character and temperament. A woman's task is to make a man's life easy, and the former's education should be relative to the latter. It is a natural order in which things should work. Women should indulge in playing with dolls, doing domestic chores, and doing needlework. The trivial nature of activities allows Rousseau to maintain such narrow prejudices. These practices are inculcated in young girls as 'natural.' Therefore, his perfect society exists without women. Wollstonecraft critiques these revolutionary authorities who tried to shape women's identity and define their 'nature' and needs.

#### V. The Trilogy of Church/State/Household

Rousseau asserts that social organizations can maintain and sustain the wholeness in his ideal society. In this condition, there needs to be harmony in social life and obligations. He identified damaging factors of a society that can be curbed by resolving conflicts between the state, church, and household. This is because all three institutions have a significant impact on the identities of individuals. Fulfilling obligations to all three is quite impossible. The domestic sphere in *Julie* and *Emile* is developed at the cost of citizenship, especially for women. They are expected to let go of their aspirations for family's sake. Christianity is inconsistent with citizenship as it considers itself to be that of equal power. However, the former demands passivity from its members compared to being proactive. Rousseau tried to unite them under a Sovereign to curb such occasional conflicts. In this way, both public and private domains are separated. John Warner, in *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations*, states, "The claims that our private associations and beliefs make on our identities must, therefore, be consistent with the requirements of citizenship" (Warner, 2015, 188) Warner maintains that Rousseau's solution to this problem is a middle point between two extremes presented by Socrates on one hand and Hobbes and Locke on the other hand when he writes,

Socrates seeks to resolve the political problems created by the existence of religion and the family by eliminating the private realm and instituting a collectivistic program of civic education that unites all citizens through devotion to the common good. Hobbes and Locke, on the other hand, insist on the liminality of narrow selfishness and make it the basis for a politics of private acquisition. (Ibid., 188)

According to Warner, Rousseau thereby rejects both the former's concentration of private self and the latter's private interest, "Instead, he recruits that domain and the associations within it into the process of citizen identity formation, arguing that properly structured and private associations can catalyze connection to the regime by instilling in citizens effective habits that facilitate mutual respect and fraternity." (Ibid, 13) These pillars are necessary for psychological unity. Economic gains in these terms do not contribute to preserving the wholeness of Rousseau. To preserve people's interests, Sovereignty will act as the locus of authority around which other institutions will revolve. It will resolve conflict and try to maintain harmony. Warner states, "...all political societies require that private aims are pursued within the constraints of law. Rousseau demands further that the citizens' role as a sovereign/subject take psychological precedence over his other social roles and responsibilities." (Ibid, 190) According to Rousseau, the fundamental obstacle to political stability is the action or use of private will beyond what is required, which hinders the functioning of the General Will. To restrain the usurping of power, assemblies are established for accountability. The assemblies will act as reminders for sovereigns to stop misuse of power or else it will be unseated.

Assemblies also promote social stability. They reinforce a psychological salience in people's minds of their identity of being part of something on a large scale. The logic is that the more citizens associate with others, the more they can fulfill their duties and uphold their identity. Everyone will live through one another and not depend on finances or family for fulfillment. Rousseau draws a clear picture of the sustenance of his state, which is political in the pure sense in which women do not have a clear identity. The legislative assembly acts as a catalyst to form the identity of the citizens, reminding citizens of their equal moral worth by giving them the same rights, thereby attributing political equality. It reinforces a sense of importance in people's minds, reaffirming their dignity. They align themselves with the feelings of self-worth and power. However, women are excluded from this as they do not possess political equality.

## VI. The Concept of Rights

Botting states that subjective rights are those rights that belong to an individual human subject or agent; for medieval theologians, these primarily included individual rights to property and the simple use of nature for survival. (Botting, 2016, 26-27) Political theorists such as Martha Nussbaum and Mary Ann Glendon have discussed "overlapping consensus," meaning that human dignity forms the basis for universal human rights. In context, it is essential to understand the relationship of rights with other moral concepts such as respect, sentience, equality, etc. The issue is understanding the political and ethical aspects of subjective rights concerning women. With a social contract tradition and enlightenment background, moral entitlements have been linked with nourishment, survival, citizenship, etc. Subjective rights are grounded in will and are presumed to be derived from natural law. Hegel's subjective rights consisted of inner and outer forces, and

the freedom of will was not identified with bodily impulses. For Hegel, will is recognized by others independently of psychological aspects.

In including women, it is important to see human rights as a philosophical and universal concept. Botting states,

In 1793 London, Sophia, “a person of quality,” published an extended essay entitled *Woman Not Inferior to Man*. Its provocative subtitle invoked the “natural right of the fair sex to perfect equality of power, dignity, and esteem with the men.” Sophia uses the Enlightenment-era discourse of “natural rights arising from seventeenth-century treatises by Frenchman Francois Poulain de la Barre and Englishman John Locke, to demand from men our right to share with them in public action. (Ibid., 30)

Botting further writes,

Particularly within eighteenth-century Protestant and dissenting Christian Theologies, philosophers conceived rights as rooted in a rational human nature designed by the divine Creator. Thinkers such as Kant and Wollstonecraft understood rights as a product of the human subjective mental capacity to use reason to construct abstract principles of ethical conduct. For Wollstonecraft and her theological mentor, the Reverend Richard Price, these principles derived from God's universal, rational, moral law. Humans typically had access to God's law via reason once this mental faculty was sufficiently developed through education. (Ibid., 31)

In Catholic theological tradition, subjective rights were conceived as something obtained from the natural conditions in which humans lived. William of Ockham argued that natural rights were simple things used to utilize nature's bounty. (Spade and Panaccio, 2019) Suarez said that rights were used to exercise an individual's will and spoke for women's rights, which were applied in a limited way. He defended a maiden's right to her freedom in the context of female chastity on which she possessed the right, and it was not for her father or suitors to give away. It is a significant contribution to feminist ethics, as it is a natural right of a girl to be free from any coercion. Hugo Grotius, a Dutch jurist, supported the account of historian Ammianus Marcellinus that since women possess childlike reasons, they cannot equal the mental capabilities of men and require guidance in matters concerned with ethics and intellect. (Botting, 2016, 34) Botting explains,

In war, women had a natural right to be secure from male violence because of the broader social need to protect female reproductive powers for a nation's self-perpetuation. In peace, the sexes had a common right to monogamous marriage, the criminalization of polygamy, and the restriction of divorce to cases of adultery because such contractual legal arrangements established a kind of equilibrium between them despite their sexual inequality. (Ibid., 35)

Women were not considered naturally and morally equal and required the protection of men both in times of war and peace. These constructions meant that they were not looked at as persons in their nature but were defined by their sexual functions. Women's rights were based on their outside value of sexual and reproductive powers. Dissenting against this thought, as per Botting, Mill legitimized women's claim to human rights. He reinforced moral authority by trying to reform the institution from within.

Contemporary theorists have raised the issue of using personal testimony to advocate human rights claims. Some of them have legitimized it as a literary and law strategy. Catherine McKinnon has recounted the women's experiences of sexual violence to raise awareness of the domination of women on this subject. (Albert, 2006, 314) Martha Nussbaum has recorded the case of two lower caste women from India in her article, which gave self-reflection on what is needed to improve human development in a marked region. (Nussbaum, 2004, 332)

Botting states, "There is a growing consensus among feminists that only by building into theories of justice a plurality of women's perspectives can we even begin to enhance women's sense of "agency and well-being" in general." (Botting, 2016, 209) The lines between the listener and the subject stir sympathy for the other. While building this argument, for fear of appearing to not promoting human rights, the author risks not treating the subject as an end itself. Wollstonecraft wrote *Maria, who gave narrative forms of two women, Jemima and Maria*, who asserted struggles in the family and class. Botting, writing about *Maria*, states, "One of the moral objectives of the novel was to show how such intersectional comparisons of women's experiences across classes might inspire a kind of sensitive solidarity among them for their distinct but related struggles." (Ibid, 218) Jemima belonged to a very low strata of society, and she had been exploited both economically and sexually from the beginning, and everyone treated her as belonging to another species. As a more privileged woman, Maria offered her an escape from the asylum together, creating a wholly female family. Botting writes,

Wollstonecraft had argued that poor women were among the worst victims of the patriarchal social and political order, she used the unexpected friendship of Jemima and Maria to show that women's mutual recognition of how class-stratified their experiences of gender-based oppression can spark a common quest for the realization of women's human rights.... (Ibid.)

It is essential to highlight the intersectional women's experiences from a broader perspective to understand what they are missing. Identifying particular group suppression is essential to get past collective injustice, which helps precede a social movement. Works such as these help navigate women's brave struggle against patriarchy. Wollstonecraft's works made her a secular icon for civic equality. She helped rewrite the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776 to apply equal political and civil rights to everyone. Women's movements have recently revived into highly national and international organizations to realize women's rights to education, motherhood, suffrage, etc.

Raghuramaraju, in *Caliberating Western Philosophy for India*, reveals that the state of nature is hypothetical and not historical. The state is not empirical but rational. He writes,

He dissociates rights from nature, which are found in conventions. State-based nature is grounded in the contract and is a product of reason and will. Rousseau institutes individual will be based on rationality and is a foundation of the social fabric. (Raghuramaraju, 2020, 22)

## VII. Rousseau's Thought on Classless Society

According to Rousseau, women's experience of *themselves* is understood to be fluid as their boundaries are volatile. Men construct their selfhood of independent nature, and women are responsible for all dependent relationships. Laurie Finke quotes him,

“I argue that the individual is constructed out of the languages available to the subject in her culture; subjectivity, that is, is primarily semiotic.” (Finke, 1992, 11) At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the “self” was understood to be autonomous and separate from others. It originated in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, and Descartes. Rousseau recommends a classless society when he advocates that young people of marriageable age should choose their partners rather than letting their parents choose for them, as their parents would be more concerned about forming social connections. As Warner puts up,

Whereas arranged marriages tend to centralize economic and political influence in ways that vitiate political liberty, voluntary unions strengthen republican values: young people, Rousseau reasons, will consult their moral tastes rather than pocketbooks. (Warner, 2015, 202)

The promotion of this idea is also to produce virtuous citizens for the state to do human good. However, we note satire in this model of thought. Even though Rousseau advocates curbing distinctions based on class, he does not do so in the name of sex. He tries to identify personal relations with politics. Nevertheless, the only thing that is common between both the public and private spheres is the patriarchal domination of women. Therefore, in both aspects, he maintains this distinction because he does not want them to be the source of rebellion/rival to the highest authority. As Finke notes,

However, the success of the ideology of bourgeois individualism depended primarily upon two significant and interdependent semiotic realignments: the development of public arenas outside of the monarch’s court for intellectual and cultural exchange and a preconception of the family within texts for and about women, which deemphasized genealogical ties and elevated domesticity as the primary means by which the individual locates him- or herself within society. (Finke, 1992, 11)

This public sphere (bourgeois) created a site for men sharing universal reasons where they came together to engage in ideas. In contrast, socially desired behaviors were imposed for practices of the domestic sphere. It was made to appear as if people have always functioned in this way. Practices of conduct books were imposed where virtues of morality and modesty were sought to be inculcated. According to Finke’s interpretation of Mary, correspondence between public and private function in such a way that it was a deconstruction of modern subjectivity. (Ibid., 115) Mary Wollstonecraft’s book *Vindication of Rights of Women* caused an uproar. Her intellectual indiscretions were considered sexual indiscretions. She was called a masculine female. She articulated female representation in the public sphere, which, on the other hand, can also be considered a call for supporting the ideals of the French Revolution and the talk of rationality.

Rousseau says that the arts and sciences have led to the corruption of morals. After the state of nature, men have become wickeder and miserable in state government even though it is seen as a stage for the happy development of society. Interpreting Rousseau, Samuel Chew claims there will be no inequality wherever there is neither rich nor poor. (Chew, 1917, 322)

### Conclusion

Rousseau wrote *Discourses on Inequality* (1755), which gives his view of the historical background of humankind and explains what he means by the terms Reason, Nature, and Passion. In *Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau talks about the political system he wants for a living. So, there are two opposite forms of arguments because he only partially accepts the place of women in nature and their possession of reason. On the one hand, Rousseau claims that women have the moral worth necessary to form relationships and function in society. On the other, he completely rejects the possession of reason by women as they do not have an active will to participate in the functions of the public sphere. So, we find two contradictory arguments in his works, and he fails to give any reconciliatory approach.

This article provides us with a historical background to understand the issues of contemporary times. People institute leaders to defend their freedom. Freedom is evaluated with virtue and goodness, whose importance is compared with value where there has been a solid reference for male children. However, Rousseau claims that women's virtue consisted of giving up their freedom to others. His arguments do not support a fair nature of rights and obligations.

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