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Panjapon Tangpigulthong

How the world change by Mary Wollstonecraft

770 words

The belief that “woman should not be educated” is what people — both men and woman — believed during the 18th century. During that time, people and tradition are completely different from the present as they are taught with the belief that women are feebler than men and that they do not need to receive education. Therefore people treated women as a maid of the house who only takes care of children and family, but that is not a norm and view of feminism today. Mary Wollstonecraft, who symbolized womanhood of this period, is the first feminist who wants to establish equality between men and women in terms of education¹. Back in the days, no one would agree to let women have an education like today. This has led Mary to write a book to pass her thoughts on feminism during French revolution (1790). Her all-time famous writing “*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*” was the first feminism book that has enlightened the world and encouraged them to pay more attention on women’s rights². Besides her book, she also claimed fairness for women’s education and the position of women in the society.

Mary Wollstonecraft was not only a British feminist, but also philosopher, writer, thinker, and much more³. She was brought up in an adverse family environment in which her father always harmed her mother, so during her teenage she would often stay around her

¹ Emily W Sunstein. A different face: The life of Mary Wollstonecraft, Harper & Row (1975) p. 200-202

² Mary Wollstonecraft, "Introduction," A Vindication of the Rights of Women, 9 October 2009
<<http://www.bartleby.com/144/103.html>>

³ Wikipedia contributors. “Mary Wollstonecraft” *Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia*. 11 July 2012.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Wollstonecraft>

mother's door⁴. This may have been the reason that triggered her stand to advocate woman's rights. She also published the book about women's rights "*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*" which was famous until today. She passed away with septicemia at the age of 38⁵.

As the concept of feminism shows a more outstanding role, it can be described as a person who works for the rights and equality of women. During the 18th century, there were no feminist who would bravely express their feelings about inequality toward others. Back then, people usually defined women's sphere and position in society as a 'stay-at-home housewife' because they should be doing outside work like males. They think that women are naïve, powerless and do not have the capability to achieve greater tasks. Even women, they still did not believe in themselves as they were planted with these thoughts and ridiculous beliefs of who they were supposed to be⁶. Regardless of this, Mary Wollstonecraft held a different perspective. She tried to empower women to see that men and women are equal and that they can become more. She was the only woman who stood up for women's rights and thus, she decided to speak out by cooperating with other famous thinkers during that time, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Paine. She only cooperated with them on some topics and Mary was sure they will defend and protect women.⁷

Mary Wollstonecraft's book, "*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*", focuses on the education of women. She mentioned that many women are silly, but it is not because god wants them to be silly, it is because men who do not allow women to study⁸. She believed

⁴ Claire Tomalin. *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* 1975 p.174

⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft. 2012. Biography.com 11 September 2012. <<http://www.biography.com/people/mary-wollstonecraft-9535967>>

⁶ William Godwin, "Memoirs of the Author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*," *English Romantic Writers*, 2nd edition (Harcourt: 1995), p.66.

⁷ Dr.Faith Duman, Hitit University. *The roots of modern feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution*. Vol. 2 No.9 May 2012 p.75-76

⁸ Tomaselli, Sylvana, "Mary Wollstonecraft", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/wollstonecraft/>>

that women are all equal in the eyes of god and in order to build a good and lasting marriage, women should have an equal education and position⁹. If they do not have the same level of education, it would be difficult to understand each other. Moreover, women were seen as the ones who provide education to children, so if women do not have any education it would be difficult to teach their children. What she claimed was that she wanted women to have equal education as men to prolong the marital status and enhance personal relationships¹⁰. Additionally, women should be in an appropriate position in the society, not just as housewives at home.

In conclusion, it is obvious that the view of feminism has changed dramatically from 18th century to today. Mary Wollstonecraft was a pioneer for women and her book “*The Vindication of the Rights of Women*” reflects an immense change in women’s rights. She was considered a candle light in the darkness; women are able to obtain higher education and play important roles in both occupational and societal positions. It cannot be denied that the rights of women are almost or even equal to that of men¹¹. This shows that Mary Wollstonecraft’s thinking and teaching are right. Women are not silly, but they are far more valuable than what they were perceived to be.

⁹ Wollstonecraft, M. (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Chapter XII On National Education. Available in *the informal education* <http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/wollstonecraft_on_national_education.htm>

¹⁰ Jone Johnson Lewis. “Arguments of Mary Wollstonecraft in ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’” About.com Guide. 5 June 2012 <<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/wollstonecraft/a/wollstonecraft-rights.htm>>

¹¹ EuroNinila. “In Today’s Society Women are ALMOST equal to Men”. Hubpage 16 August 2012 <<http://euroninila.hubpages.com/hub/Men-and-women-ALMOST-equal>>