

Change of expectations of men and women in 1800s

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American democracy had a very close correlation or connection with the family background and the general domestic landscape. The popular belief of many artists was that form was commonly perceived in totally suburban terms. The backdrop behind this ideology was the strong support and promotion given by Suburbia to bring about this transformation.

Catherine Beecher beautifully and deftly handles this narration of women roles in the 1800's giving us an insight into how men and women co-existed and helped each other in various tasks. She tells us that women, who lived then, were tough as they had to do jobs that entailed a lot of labor such as tedious house work and bearing and tending children. Elders in those days believed that these chores helped the women to keep in good shape because it helped to strengthen their muscles and organs.

According to women these days, the emphasis is laid on stimulating their brain through excessive studying and thereby they neglect their physique making it weak and vulnerable to disease. In an aristocracy, where work is dishonored, it is customary for the lower class to work for the benefit and enjoyment of the upper class but this is not so in a democracy where work is honored, because everyone works hard for themselves and their own welfare. Such high democratic principles can be seen in Christianity, where the child is taught at a young age to do service to others. Jesus Christ is the best example one can take to see his self sacrificing attitude towards his race and Christian principles and teachings are based on this. Good Christian parents should see to it that they render the best possible training in virtues

to their children, so that they would grow up to be benevolent and self-sacrificing to all around them.

Speaking on the post Civil War Gwendolyn Wright speaks to us about those people who moved to the suburbs to escape the problems of poor health and political and social unrest. Picturesque landscapes and the use of natural materials for buildings brought them more close to nature. But the decades after the Civil war saw the suburbs take on a different implication. Those families who could afford a house in the suburbs were labeled as “ middle class”.

The cult of home and motherhood reached its pinnacle in the last decades of the nineteenth century. People living in the suburbs very often would visit the city to enjoy the restaurants, parks, museums and other exciting things the city had to offer. Against such a backdrop, the sentiments of celebrating the pure suburban home intensified.

The Victorian built home served as a haven for its inmates because of its compactness and beautiful layout and setting. It had rooms allotted for different activities and a beautiful hearth or fireplace which served as a sort of ritual centre. In fact the suburban home is considered to be a sort of strategy which helped to keep the children off the dangerous streets and help them to grow into disciplined individuals.

John Highham’s article published in 1970, kindled great interest on the topic of masculinity. According to him, a whole generation of men, young and old, urban or suburban had problems of anxiety about their masculinity.

Alongside this, another culture that emerged from the middle – class, was termed as “ masculine domesticity”. This portrayed the fathers taking up

additional responsibilities in the family household when the need arose, which included helping in the house work and looking after or playing with the kids after taking leave from work. Such a culture emphasized companionship more than patriarchal rule. As time passed by, the suburbs came to be considered as the natural habitat of domestic man.

Such a culture served as an alternative to feminism and at the same time it encouraged men to acknowledge the importance of the domestic front and in so doing the husband and wife lived happily in peaceful companionship.