

# Puritan women

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Rights for women In the Puritan community were very scarce. The women lacked rights because men were seen as superior to them. Even though men were the ultimate leaders of the Puritan community, women still played a vital role throughout their society. With the limited rights women possessed, they impacted the Puritan community in many ways. Puritan women had little to no rights back then; however, they did play an important role in the Puritan society through their everyday duties/ oleos, marriage, and religion.

The duties and roles of the Puritan women differed from that of their husband's. In the patriarchal lifestyle, where men were the head of the household, women transferred subordination from their father to their husband (Themes and Variations In Men's and Women's Roles In Colonial America). Women were not to challenge men, have a temper, or be Insubordinate to their husbands. Even though It was a patriarchy, husbands soul entrusted the women with a wide range of practical responsibilities and viewed them as " deputy husbands" (Religion, Women, and theFamilyin Early America).

As a housewife, they were expected to fulfill various duties throughout the day. The major duties were made up offoodand clothing production, childbearing, thehealthof the family, and child-rearing. Being a mother was the most important role for a Puritan woman. As a mother, women had direct authority over their children. It was the Puritan women'sresponsibilityto bring up the children of their society correctly. Religious piety, manners, discipline, and affection were a few of the many things that the women taught their children (Childbirth and Motherhood).

Through the act of child-rearing, women were able to gain social status based on their skill. Under a patriarchy, the Puritan women were still able to obtain and uphold particular rights. The deferent tasks that the women were expected to perform set them apart from the role of Puritan males. The privileges within marriage were different for women than they were for men. With marriage, harsh consequences followed along for the women. The legal person's of women were completely subsumed under their husband's identity (Westerners 4).

Puritan women literally became the property of their husbands. Wealth was a major determinant in marriage. It was easier to marry off a woman with wealth because Puritan men were eager to marry for money. Without a great deal of dowry, women were not seen as desirable in the eyes of the men. In marriage, the severity of punishments for women was worse than the punishments for men. In the Puritan community, the act of adultery could be brought to court. If women were brought to court by their husbands on a charge of adultery they could be sentenced to the death penalty (Female Discontent).

Hester Prynne is a prime example for how the courts treated women in the Puritan society. The Scarlet Letter, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, descriptively describes one of the Puritan's court orders for adultery. The the pillory platform, and then and thereafter, for the remainder of her life to wear a "mark of shame" upon her chest (Hawthorne 54). Even though men and women had incomparable rights in marriage, some common ground was

trying to be attained. Religion encouraged affection, monogamy, and friendship within marriage (Marriage).

The women of the Puritan community were viewed in a patriarchal manner through the eyes of religion. The structure of patriarchy was upheld within churches. Churches believed that women had to subject themselves to the authority of man. The Holy Scriptures preached about a husband - wife relationship (Westerners 14). The spirituality of Puritan women was shunned throughout churches. Every aspect of a woman had to be scrutinized by men. Churches deemed women incapable of understanding or interpreting the work of the Spirit in their own souls (Westerners 20).

Theologians and religion had the same views of women. Theologians believed that woman courted heresy and blasphemy (Westerners 25). This resulted in the intellectual weakness of women religiously. In reaction to the criticizing from churches, women came together to discuss these matters. Anne Hutchinson, the leader of these discussions, encouraged the Puritan women to voice their religious opinions (Barber 1). In the end, the courts banished her from the colony for " wrongdoing," and women continued to follow the subservient expectations of the Church and the Puritan community.

The role of women in the Puritan society was one of limited to no rights. Women were inferior and subservient to their husbands. They were considered more to be property than person. Anything they owned became the property of their husband's including them. The most important role of women in the Puritan community was that of wife and mother. Their only

ability to gain social status was through successful child-rearing. Puritan women had no voice in their marriage or their religious worship. Even in legal matters, they were treated differently than men, especially when the women's fidelity was questioned.

The sentencing for Puritan women breaking the law could be severe as death. The Puritan society allowed women to fall off in most aspects, which led to their intellectual decrease in life. The life of Puritan women was very strict. There were only three areas in their life that held great importance: marriage, religion and children. Collectively and independently those three factors held great pride for Puritan women. Death was the only means of ending the continuous patriarchal cycle of their life. The women's life and soul existence was commitment to the husband and family.