



## Research Article

# Role of Women in the Industrial Revolution of England: Shifting Roles and Lasting Effects

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## ABSTRACT



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The purpose of this paper is to look at the historic roles that women played in England's industrial revolution. This article discusses specific issues pertaining to women, such as their employment status, economic circumstances, variety of roles they play, and effects of the industrial revolution on their status. These themes include the roles that women played in the revolution, the direction of economic development, the various roles that women played in it, and the consequences of the revolution—particularly those that affected women. In terms of social stratification, the industrial revolution reduced economic and social inequality and gave different social classes better chances depending on the degree of social mobility in industrialized nations compared to traditional societies. In addition, there was a notable improvement in the degree of social, political, and economic participation of the population in comparison to the pre-revolutionary period. Women were able to attain economic independence by working in industry and taking care of their families. However, this also led to a lot of responsibilities, which made things difficult for women because of their low pay. This study used an analytical historical technique and was written in a descriptive style. It used local and worldwide works about women in addition to primary and secondary historical materials. This article discusses specific issues pertaining to women, such as their economic status, working circumstances, the range of roles they play, and how the industrial revolution has affected them. The topics include the roles that women play in the revolution, the direction of economic development, the various roles that women play in it, and the effects of the revolution, particularly on women. In terms of social stratification, the industrial revolution reduced economic and social inequality and gave different social classes better chances depending on the degree of social mobility in industrialized nations compared to traditional societies. In addition, there was a notable improvement in the degree of social, political, and economic participation of the population in comparison to the pre-revolutionary period. Women were able to attain economic independence by working in industry and taking care of their families. But because of their low pay, this also led to the creation of several responsibilities, which was difficult for women. This study used an analytical historical technique and was written in a descriptive style. It used local and worldwide works about women in addition to primary and secondary historical materials.

## INTRODUCTION

The industrial revolution introduced a novel economic structure and instigated cultural transformations that impacted women's lives, as women participated in the revolution in various capacities, and it was a multifaceted process that led to significant alterations in their circumstances. Contemporary sociologists have contributed to this concept as well. For example, they examined this issue in the book *Theory of Sociology in the Contemporary Era*, which will be discussed subsequently. "The industrial revolution impacted numerous Western societies during the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century." This revolution was not an isolated occurrence; it encompassed a succession of interconnected advancements that ultimately transitioned the western world from a primarily agrarian system to a completely industrialized

one. Extensive economic bureaucracies have developed to deliver the services required by industry and the novel economic framework of capitalism (Ritters, 2008, p. 7).

In the latter half of the 18th century, Europe experienced significant growth and advancement, which laid the foundation for the industrial revolution in England. The revolution that resulted in the establishment of a society reliant on machine manufacturing and mechanical energy utilization. The advancement of the transportation sector, the creation of the printing press, the reformation of religion, and the proliferation of Protestantism are the primary catalysts for the emergence of industrial civilization. In the initial phase, industrial society is characterized by the establishment of a manufacturing system that segregates the workplace from residential areas and draws workers from rural communities. In the second phase,

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commencing in the mid-19th century, advancements included the utilization of the steam engine in transportation, the expansion of the railway network, the enhancement of maritime and terrestrial transport fleets, the mass production of steel for the plastics industry, the invention of the telegraph, the advent of the electrical industry, the development of agricultural machinery, and the proliferation of knowledge. It encompasses experimentation, engineering, and the development of qualified and specialized personnel. Each of which has produced distinct industrial, economic, and societal ramifications.

During the third stage, significant advancements occur in the utilization of renewable energy, particularly electric power, the petroleum sector, telecommunications, and radio, alongside the application of technological and industrial innovations in warfare. The fourth stage of European industrial society transitions into the information era. During this age, mass media, including television, film, and subsequently computers, have significantly influenced social changes. Women significantly contributed to the Industrial Revolution through the establishment of social and cultural frameworks.

### Problem Statement

One of the main subjects discussed here is how the Industrial Revolution affected women's lives. Examining a number of historical sources reveals that the industrial revolution gave women in England many new opportunities, as well as beneficial effects on their lives. It is expected of women to do multiple roles at once, which can lead to role strain and tiredness that impairs their ability to perform these roles effectively.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this subject relies on how women participated in the industrial revolution, how economic advancement proceeded, and what kind of platform was available to them. From the perspective of social stratification, the industrial revolution decreased social and economic inequality and gave various strata favorable chances according to the degree of social mobility in industrialized societies compared to traditional cultures. Furthermore, there was a notable improvement in the people's degree of social, political, and economic engagement as compared to the pre-revolutionary period. Every day, societies advance, and the family undergoes significant transformation. Women were able to work in factories in addition to doing housework, which led to their economic independence.

### Research Methodology

This descriptive study, which employed the documentary technique and an analytical history-based approach, cited both first-hand and second-hand historical sources. We have consulted sociology, books on women, historical materials, and articles.

### Industrial Revolution and Its Socio-Economic Impact

England was the first nation in Europe to experience the industrial revolution in the 17th and 18th centuries, and other nations followed suit. The Industrial Revolution necessitated creativity and transformation; England's past as a nation of scientists was also well-suited for the Industrial Revolution. Thomas Southcliffe believed that trade with other nations, which expanded people's perspectives on the world, was the primary driver of the industrial revolution in England. A number of factors justify this, including the presence of regular and organized political and administrative structures, a favorable climate and geographic location, the growth of free trade within the nation, the ability to obtain sufficient capital through

property or sea trade, and the availability of coal mines. And England was at the forefront of the global industrial revolution because so many people profited from knowledge and reading, especially with the rise of notable scholars and inventors (Saeedi, 2001, p. 23).

The Industrial Revolution impacted every industry. The introduction of new technology and techniques in the agricultural business was one of the most significant advancements in England during the Industrial Revolution era. This development paved the way for the subsequent shift and transformation. All factories eventually began using mass production and sophisticated, specialized equipment. However, the nation's population was growing every day, and the outdated techniques of producing food could not keep up with this demand. As a result, food production increased during this time to meet the needs of the populace. Other developments from this revolution in England as a whole included the development of steam engines and their effects on the iron and textile industries, as well as modifications to banking, transportation, and communication systems. This revolution brought about both positive and negative effects: while the people's quality of living rose, it also caused suffering for the working-class and impoverished. As a result of this revolution, many villagers fled their villages and migrated to cities in search of employment, which increased unemployment and poverty rates in the nation's rural areas and opened the door for the development of a sizable industrial system (Karik, 2005).

England was the initiator of the industrial revolution because, after several centuries, this country had achieved successes such as political transformation, colonial and commercial development, the expansion of the sea fleet, and the growth of the middle class. Also, England's military and administrative situation in terms of land, labor, capital, and management was favorable and had progressed; these successes caused the industrial revolution to begin in this country. The revolution started in three basic fields: coal, weaving, and smelting. The revolution brought about changes in three basic fields: coal, weaving, and iron smelting. This revolution also led to the emergence of mechanized production factories. The 18th century inventions and the mechanization of industry, together with their social consequences, form an exciting history (Lucas, 2003, p. 980).

### Economic Shifts and Gender Roles: Impact on Women

An analysis of the industrial revolution's history and women's roles in England uncovers the relationship between domestic labor and market employment for women. In pre-industrial Britain, the distinction between work and home was ambiguous. Manufacturing facilities, corporate headquarters, and other establishments did not centralize economic output, with the bulk of individuals engaged in remote labor or employment in close proximity. Despite certain responsibilities being deemed exclusive to men and others to women, all labor was ultimately for the family unit. Nonetheless, the industrial revolution resulted in the dissociation of wage labor from the domestic sphere and its relocation to factories, offices, and analogous institutions. The industrial revolution delineated production from consumption, compelling men, women, and children to vacate the house for employment. Historically, men were linked to the former and women to the latter (Pamela, 2010).

The industrial revolution transformed the conventional methods of conducting business in Europe. Consequently, the machine supplanted manual and conventional procedures. Prior to the revolution, women engaged extensively in manual labor, including weaving and spinning; however, with the advent of

machinery in the 18th and 19th centuries, their labor transitioned from domestic settings to factories. Employed women dedicated the most of their time away from home, while older children assumed maternal responsibilities. Nevertheless, certain women experienced increased leisure time as a result of manufacturing mechanization. They were interested. Marlene Leggett examines the role of women during the Industrial Revolution. The economic transformations initiated by the industrial revolution in Britain during the 1780s were a more crucial element than political ideology or excessive idealism (Fogel, 2013). The industrial revolution supplanted human and animal power with machinery, rendering the steam engine a symbol of the age and consolidating labor previously conducted in familial settings on farms or workshops into factories. Entrepreneurs, both male and female, increasingly found themselves reliant on wages. Industrial capitalists integrated with the proprietary and mercantile class, with their interests increasingly influencing political decisions and economic policies (Blig, 2007, p. 46).

Many working families saw these developments as harmful and difficult. For many skilled artisans, mechanization meant unemployment, the need for new training, relocation, or both. In some families, both husband and wife worked. Some were also forced to work for wages that women traditionally did at home. In fact, as agricultural capitalism grew, home industries expanded in rural areas of England and became the only reliable source of income for families in the face of widespread and impossible unemployment. It was predicted by men. In the long run, the industrial revolution preserved some traditional features of women's work. However, some young, single white women gained new opportunities by working in factories and becoming independent. However, a greater number of women chose to work in familiar and stable domestic roles within their families. Most women continued to work in traditional women's jobs, which traditionally paid less than men, and many who had rebellious talents were limited by their lack of economic independence or married and raised families. The industrial revolution had a significant impact on the lives of married women. However, considering their superior position, these effects seem fleeting. The industrial revolution broke the connection between housework and upheld the notion that women should take care of the family. It made it difficult for married women to continue working productively. Previously, working-class women played a significant role in the family economy. They were looking for ways to continue contributing to their family's survival. Upper- and middle-class women in pre-Industrial Revolution Europe often worked alongside their husbands, stepping in to manage and provide for large families as the production of goods moved outside the home. They adapted themselves to higher standards of housekeeping. They became informed consumers (Michel, 1993). Middle-class women appeared to benefit from the rise in servants and the decline in the birth rate. The family life ideology made the home a safe place to shelter from the male world's economic and political competition. It could not fill the vacant role of economic interventionist for women. Conversely, women's traditional job opportunities were limited and their wages were lower. Many preferred to have a salaried husband who could support his family.

At that time, the wages of male workers were also low, but as women faced additional discrimination throughout history, they suffered several times. In his book *A Look at the History of the World*, Jawaharlal Nehru addressed this issue, a brief excerpt of which appears here. "Hunger finally forced the unemployed workers to seek refuge in the factories and get work for themselves, but the employers remained unresponsive." They

did not show their womb. Of course, they would refer to them for work, but they would only pay them and never die. The unfortunate and dark workers were unable to lose their lives in the factory and destroy the essence of their lives there. Even women and children toiled for long hours in unhealthy and suffocating workshops, only to eventually leave due to exhaustion and illness and ultimately perish. The men also toiled tirelessly in the shadowy depths of the coal mines, often going without a glimpse of daylight for several months. However, we shouldn't presume that the employers' ruthlessness solely caused all these issues. Most of them weren't intentionally cruel; rather, the fault lay with the economic system. Employers wanted to develop and prosper their own businesses and subjugate world markets in distant countries; for this, they had to do anything (Nehru JL, 1959)

The separation between home and work for middle-class women resulted in further segregation of gender roles and participation in a culture that belonged more exclusively to women (Ayub, 2018) (Raina, 2019). The 19th century saw the industrial revolution transform Western Europe, particularly England. It began with the introduction of power-based machines in England and Scotland's textile industries in the second half of the 18th century. This technological change brought new employment opportunities, as well as new challenges for workers, especially women. However, with the advent of factories, male capitalists saw the opportunity to exploit the cheap and controllable labor force of women. Male capitalists began to use language to justify the exploitation of women as factory workers, arguing that offering women jobs in factories would promote gender equality. They claimed that they empower women by providing job opportunities. And they help them to find independence from men.

This is how the industrial revolution and mass production opened women's feet to the field of employment outside the home. Over time, due to the growing need of industries for cheap female labor, working outside the home became an inevitable culture and necessity for western women. These words masked the harsh realities of factory work for women. Often, women received half or less compensation than men for comparable work. They worked long hours, sometimes up to 14 hours a day, but mostly in dangerous and unhealthy conditions, and faced physical and sexual harassment by male supervisors and employers. They were not even able to comment on their working conditions or wages (Palmer, 2004). They were still expected to keep their household duties at home.

One of the prominent consequences of the industrial revolution for women was the increase in the number of women's roles, as they were required to perform the roles of reproduction, motherhood, and wife and housewife simultaneously. Performing multiple roles simultaneously affects each other, which not only causes physical and mental fatigue for women but also has a negative effect on their work.

The topic under discussion can relate to the roles and conflicts of theory, science, and business. Typically, society expects working women to have a spouse, children, and engage in regular work. He adeptly handles his professional responsibilities, ensuring that neither his personal issues nor his roles suffer. Performing all these roles at the same time not only causes physical and mental fatigue but also makes you pleased because of your professionalism. People around the world view him as their role model. A study shows that cultural, economic, and administrative structures are valuable and change their lives whenever and wherever they are (Shafiq, 2018).

In such a situation, some women resisted this exploitation by organizing strikes, protests, petitions, and publications. They

wanted better pay, shorter working hours, safer working conditions, and more respect from their employers. The Industrial Revolution brought significant changes for women in England. It redefined their role at home and opened up new opportunities for them, including receiving wages for working outside the home. However, male capitalists exposed women to new forms of exploitation and oppression, using the slogans of women's rights to justify their profit-oriented agendas. The industrial revolution and industrialization process have significantly transformed the family institution, altering its structure, function, and internal relationships. People consider the family to be the most significant economic center, and they closely associate work with the family. Both men and women left their homes to go to work. This process was characterized by a conflict between work and family obligations. However, female historians hold a particular perspective regarding the impact of the industrial revolution on women's status. Alice Clark pessimistically argued that when capitalism arrived in 17th-century England, it had a negative impact on women's status because they lost their economic importance. They were busy farming. The home served as the primary hub for production, with women playing a crucial role in overseeing farms, initiating various businesses, and establishing properties. For example, they produced milk and cheese. They planted vegetables and fruits and made yarn from flax and wool. They sewed clothes and nursed the sick. Performing these economic roles gave them a kind of equality with men. However, as capitalism expanded, the division of labor increased, and men took over paid work outside the home. The expansion of capitalism limited the role of women to unpaid household tasks, confining middle-class women to a domestic life and taking care of servants. The industrial revolution compelled low-class women to undertake jobs that paid poorly. Therefore, the industrial revolution had a negative effect on powerful women. But in a more positive interpretation, capitalism created conditions for the liberation of women.

### Consequences of the Industrial Revolution

With the emergence of the factory system, the human way of life underwent fundamental changes that were reflected in the structure of society. People began to flow from small agricultural villages to cities. Countless workers emerged, stripped of their property and literacy, struggling to make ends meet. Working in factories, the industrial revolution significantly contributed to the rise and expansion of urbanization, transforming cities into the primary hubs for population accumulation. Housing was scarce, and working women were usually employed all day in factories. Family life and normal moral principles disappeared. The industrial revolution had devastating consequences for society (Ghafari, 2013). Prior to the industrial revolution in England, agriculture significantly contributed to the economies of both the world and England. Small workshops used hand labor and simple machines to produce industrial products in small quantities. Usually, animals, humans, wind, and water provided the driving force and energy source for the workshops. Horses turned the oil presses to extract the oil seeds. Mills used water, and ships used wind as a driving force. In addition to animals, water, and wind, the industrial revolution also employed humans as an inexpensive physical force. The industrial revolution brought with it new devices and energy sources. Many of these machines operated not only with water, wind, and human power, but also with steam. Because of this, the industry grew tremendously. One of the other consequences of the industrial revolution was the widespread urbanization and systematic migration from villages to cities, which changed the way of life. Big factories needed new ways to organize manpower. Worker dormitories were formed. In many cases,

children worked alongside their parents as workers. The child blossomed into a unique and remarkable phenomenon. New social classes, such as engineers and specialists, who received high salaries, formed the structure. These new conditions changed the social and economic order, as well as the military and political structure in the world under the influence of the industrial revolution.

Feminist anthropologists began to defend women's legal equality with men after the industrial revolution, coinciding with the widespread entry of women into economic fields (Fakuhi, 2008) a consequence that this article discusses. This article cannot fully address this issue. Some countries that were at the forefront of the industrial revolution became great powers of the world, and others gained strategic importance. In general, the following is one of the important consequences of the industrial revolution.

- The collapse of colonialism and the rise of exploiters.
- Mass production of goods and cheap labor (women and children)
- The increase of European capitalism and the increase of raw materials
- More power and prosperity - improving the condition of workers
- Increasing energy and expanding communication
- Women's access to their rights and financial independence
- The Black End of Slavery (Fogel, 2013)

### Conclusion

This research clearly demonstrates that the middle-class women's movement to separate work from domestic responsibilities resulted in a more pronounced division of gender roles and increased participation in a culture predominantly linked to women. The 19th-century Industrial Revolution profoundly altered Western Europe, especially England. The emergence of new technology has introduced both challenges and opportunities for workers, especially women. However, as factories developed, male businessmen recognized an opportunity to exploit women's inexpensive and regulated labor force. Capitalists used women as a rationale for the exploitation of female factory workers, contending that their employment in such environments would promote gender equality. They said that offering employment possibilities strengthens women. They also aid women in attaining autonomy from men. The industrial revolution and mass manufacturing facilitated women's entry into the workforce beyond the domestic sphere. Over time, the growing demand for inexpensive female labor in businesses became women's employment outside the home an unavoidable cultural norm and necessity. The examination of this article indicates that the industrial revolution, on one hand, facilitated economic progress for women; they were able to engage in wage labor outside the home, attain financial independence and self-sufficiency, and exert some control over their own financial expenditures. Conversely, this revolution engendered a cultural fortification that established a diversity of positions for women, encompassing their functions as mothers, wives, and homemakers both domestically and in the workforce for remuneration. This revolution has yielded both beneficial and detrimental effects on women's lives.

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