

## Comparing the Status and Position of Women in Victorian England and Modern Korean Society with a Focus on the Novel “Tess of the D'Urbervilles”

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### Abstract

*Among the many novels penned by Thomas Hardy, the novel "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" came into print in 1891. In this novel, Hardy portrays Tess who was born and raised in a rural middle-class family but ends up working as a laborer, trapped in a society where she is subjugated by the men's wealth, leading a life marked by loneliness and isolation. The novel presents the status of women, moral struggles, and the challenging fate that they must overcome. It highlights the powerlessness of women living in a structurally unreasonable social environment, forced to depend on the ever-changing twists of destiny. This story delves into the complexities of love between the genders, moral conflicts, and the societal criticism that must be confronted. By utilizing the life of the young woman Tess, it underscores the struggle for existence and elucidates the roles, expectations, and constraints imposed on gender during the Victorian era. This research paper aims to compare the roles of women in the Victorian era in Britain and woman in contemporary Korean society. The Victorian era featured rigid gender norms, confining women to prescribed roles. In contrast, modern Korean society blends tradition and modernity, empowering women to play vital roles and reshape societal norms. Our research explores the interplay of tradition and change, providing a comprehensive understanding of women's evolving roles in both historical and contemporary contexts. We will present our discussions regarding the enduring roles that women have faced in both periods. Furthermore, we aim to highlight the distinctive roles women are called upon to play while dealing with the swift transformations in contemporary Korean society, recognizing them as essential agents in the agents in advancing Korean society.*

**Keywords:** *Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Victorian England, Gender Equality, Korean Society, Women's Roles and Social Positions*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The societal roles, regardless of time and space, of women and positions of women have been subjects of ongoing discourse for a considerable duration. In the process of scrutinizing these aspects, it is consistently

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Manuscript Received: october. 15, 2023 / Revised: october. 30, 2023 / Accepted: November. 1, 2023

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valuable for us to engage in a thorough comparison of women's experiences across diverse eras and cultures. The primary objective of this academic paper is to meticulously dissect and analyze the social positions and roles of women, accomplishing this by conducting a comprehensive and nuanced comparative analysis of two unmistakably distinct contexts: the Victorian era in the United Kingdom and the modern-day society of Korea.

We have chosen to conduct our research with a particular focus on the novel, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," or "Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman", which was authored by Thomas Hardy, a renowned English novelist and poet celebrated for his significant contributions to literature during the 19th and early 20th centuries [1].

The novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", penned by the renowned English author Thomas Hardy, initially made its appearance in a censored and serialized version. This initial version was published by the well-known British illustrated newspaper, "The Graphic", marking its first public debut in 1891. The decision to serialize the novel was a common practice during this era, allowing for broader accessibility and anticipation among readership. This serialized format offered readers an episodic experience, where they would eagerly wait for each new installment to continue Tess's tragic journey.

However, due to societal norms and publishing standards of the time, certain aspects of Hardy's original manuscript were censored or altered to fit into what was considered appropriate content for mass consumption. Following its serialized run in "The Graphic", "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" was then prepared for release in book form. In order to meet the diverse reading preferences and market demands, the novel was segmented into three separate volumes, all of which were published in 1891 during its serialization [2].

Each volume provided a more detailed exploration of Tess's life and hardships, offering readers a chance to delve deeper into Hardy's world. It should be noted that dividing novels into multiple volumes was another common practice during this period. This allowed booksellers more flexibility with pricing options and also catered to readers who might not have been able or willing to purchase an entire novel at once. In 1892, just one year after its initial release as both a serialized publication and a three-volume set, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" experienced yet another transformation: it was published as a single-volume edition. This single-volume edition provided another option for consumers – those who preferred having the complete narrative arc contained within one binding could opt for this version.

Therefore, from its initial serialization in "The Graphic" newspaper through its multi-volume releases ending with a single volume edition - all within just two years - "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" underwent numerous transformations that reflected both publishing practices of Victorian England as well as market demands from various segments of readership.

## **2. CIRCUMSTANCES AND BACKGROUND OF THE ERA**

The social environment of the era in which the novel "Tess" was written is the Victorian era, which was the late 19th century. During this period, there were significant societal, economic, and cultural changes. The Victorian era was characterized by strict social norms that regulated women's roles, societal structures, and moral values. Socially, there was rapid industrialization and urbanization. The Industrial Revolution brought about a shift from rural areas to cities as factories and mechanized production methods were introduced. These changes had a profound impact on social structures and class relationships. Gender roles were clearly defined during this time. Women were expected to embody qualities such as purity, domesticity, obedience, and devotion and primarily engaged in activities within the domestic sphere. On the other hand, men held power

and status in public life. Moral values held great importance during this period as well. Pre-marital sexual purity for women was highly valued as it was closely tied to their worth. Deviating from these societal expectations could result in severe consequences. The novel "Tess" unfolds within this complex social context. It explores themes such as sexual morality, gender equality or inequality, class conflicts, fate versus free will, and individual choices while interacting with the values of the Victorian era. To fully understand the novel "Tess," it is essential to delve into the societal constraints faced by its characters and explore the author's criticisms embedded within the narrative.

This deep exploration allows us to grasp how the novel both reflects and challenges the values of the Victorian era. The novel "Tess" revolves around the story of its protagonist, Tess, and her experiences with societal constraints and moral pressures. She grapples with the expectations and limitations imposed on her as a woman, shedding light on the critical examination of the societal expectations and realities for women in the Victorian era. Moreover, the author, Thomas Hardy, used this work as a platform to critique the values of the Victorian era, exposing the inequalities and moral dualities prevalent during that time. His narrative delves into topics such as social class structures, ethical ambiguities, and the unforgiving nature of the world and its connection to humanity, challenging the idealized values of the Victorian era.

Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of "Tess", it is essential for us to perform an extensive, thorough, and detailed investigation of the novel's characters and the societal context within the novel while also considering the author's intentions and critical perspective, as it pertains to the reflection and critique of Victorian values.

Hardy's portrayal of the event gives rise to substantial uncertainty regarding whether Alec d'Urberville forcibly violates Tess or engages in seduction, and this enigmatic aspect has ignited an extensive and enduring debate among scholars and readers alike. Mary Jacobus is a prominent scholar in the field of literature and was indeed affiliated with Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, for a significant period. She served as a Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall from 1971 to 1980. In 1980 she moved to Cornell University, where she held the John Wendell Anderson Chair of English and Women's Studies. In 2000, she returned to the United Kingdom as an English Professor in the University of Cambridge, where she was also a Professorial Fellow of Churchill College [3]. In 2000, she returned to the UK (the United Kingdom, which includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), as an English Professor in the University of Cambridge, where she was also a Professorial Fellow of Churchill College [3].

Renowned for her expertise in Thomas Hardy's literature, Mary Jacobus offers a theory that the narrative's ambiguity might be attributed to external influences, including the expectations of publishers and the prevalent conservative sentiments of the era, often referred to as "Grundyism." This continuous discussion of the subject highlights the timeless significance and the enduring allure of Hardy's intricate storytelling. Hardy initiated the writing of "Tess" in 1888, dedicating his efforts to the manuscript until the autumn of 1891. He later, in 1911, gifted the hologram manuscript to the British Museum [4-6]. The novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" received a stage adaptation in 1897, and when it made its debut on March 2nd of that year, the production directed by Lorimer Stoddard achieved extraordinary success on Broadway. This groundbreaking performance not only captivated audiences but also propelled actress Minnie Maddern Fiske to new heights in her career, solidifying her reputation as a talented and influential performer. Simultaneously, on the very same date, a copyrighted performance took place at St. James's Theatre in London [7].

In 1902, the play was resurrected in America and later, in 1913, Adolph Zukor (1873-1976), Hungarian-American film producer, transformed it into a motion picture, featuring Mrs.

Minnie Maddern Fiske (1865-1932), a child prodigy American actress of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who performed her first show at the age of three, had the lead role, although no copies of the film exist. Meanwhile, in the UK (the United Kingdom, which includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), an adaptation titled "Tess," made its debut at the Grand Theatre in Blackpool on January 5, 1900 [8].

The dual success of these productions marked a significant milestone for both the novel's adaptation into theater and the recognition of Fiske's exceptional talent as an actress. The book "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" has been translated into Korean multiple times, and various translated editions exist. Our decision to center our research on this literary work serves as a strategic choice, as Hardy's literary prowess and the thematic richness of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" offer a fertile ground for in-depth exploration and analysis. This choice enables us to delve into the complexities and nuances of the text, providing an extensive platform for comprehensive research and analysis.

### **3. RESREARCH PURPOSE**

Our research goal of this academic paper is to dissect and analyze the social positions and roles of women in two distinct contexts: the Victorian era in the United Kingdom and modern-day Korean society. The study will focus on the famous full-length classical novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", which was penned by Thomas Hardy (2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928), an English novelist and poet. This novel offers a rich exploration of women's experiences in Victorian England.

Through a detailed examination of Hardy's work, researchers aim to illuminate how societal norms and expectations shape women's lives. They also seek to understand how these historical insights can shed light on contemporary issues related to gender roles, societal expectations, and gender equality in modern Korean society. The ultimate objective is to contribute valuable insights into both Hardy's storytelling techniques and its significance within its historical context while illuminating its relevance for contemporary readers.

In this research endeavor, we will thoroughly delve into the multifaceted layers of Hardy's masterpiece, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," meticulously uncovering the nuanced aspects of the narrative while drawing profound and insightful connections to the broader literary and historical context of the time. Our exploration will encompass a comprehensive analysis, ensuring a thorough examination of the intricate elements that contribute to the depth and significance of the work in question. In this research endeavor, we will thoroughly delve into the multifaceted layers of Hardy's masterpiece, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," meticulously uncovering the nuanced aspects of the narrative while drawing profound and insightful connections to the broader literary and historical context of the time. Our exploration will encompass a comprehensive analysis, ensuring a thorough examination of the intricate elements that contribute to the depth and significance of the work in question.

To expand upon our research, we will also explore the thematic underpinnings of the novel, examining how Hardy addresses issues such as class, gender, and morality in the context of the Victorian era. Additionally, we will delve into the characterization of Tess herself, delving into her complexity and the ways in which she embodies the struggles and aspirations of women during her time. Furthermore, our research will extend to an investigation of the critical reception of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" since its publication. We will scrutinize how the novel has been perceived over time, the controversies it has stirred, and the evolving interpretations by scholars and readers alike. Additionally, we will consider the author's own background and personal experiences, seeking to understand how these may have influenced his narrative choices and his commentary

on the society of his era. Incorporating these diverse facets into our analysis, we aim to provide a comprehensive and insightful examination of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," shedding light on its enduring relevance and its role in shaping the literary landscape of the Victorian era and beyond. This research endeavor will be a thorough and thought-provoking exploration, allowing us to gain a richer understanding of this literary masterpiece and its enduring significance. We will begin by examining Hardy's writing style, exploring his use of vivid imagery, poetic language, and symbolic motifs that enrich the storytelling experience. We will analyze how these literary techniques enhance our understanding of characters' emotions, motivations, and inner struggles.

Furthermore, we will delve into the social and cultural backdrop against which "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" unfolds. By studying Victorian society's values, norms, and expectations regarding gender roles, class distinctions, and sexual morality, we can gain insights into how these factors shape Tess's experiences and influence her choices throughout her journey. Additionally, our research will extend beyond Hardy's novel itself. We will explore critical reception at the time of publication as well as subsequent interpretations by scholars and literary critics. This analysis aims to shed light on how "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" has been perceived over time and its enduring impact on literature.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of this literary work's historical context, we will examine parallel events or social issues that influenced or mirrored Tess's story. This may include exploring topics such as women's rights movements in Victorian England or discussions surrounding sexual morality during that era. By undertaking this extensive investigation into "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," we aim to contribute valuable insights into both Hardy's masterful storytelling techniques and its significance within its historical context. Through our meticulous analysis and thoughtful exploration across various dimensions - from language to societal norms - we hope to deepen appreciation for this timeless classic while illuminating its relevance for contemporary readers.

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The female protagonist, Tess, was born and raised in a middle-class rural household but ends up becoming a laborer. She portrays the status of women, moral dilemmas, and the challenging destiny they face in a society where they are dependent on men's wealth. Her life reflects the isolation and loneliness she experiences while living in a structurally unfair social environment. Tess's life represents the helplessness of women who must rely on an inevitable change in fate in a society that is inherently irrational [9]. It also delves into profound themes of love between men and women, ethical dilemmas, and the critical societal critiques they inevitably encounter. In this comprehensive paper, we embark on an extensive exploration of the arduous challenges Tess faces in her quest for livelihood, and we undertake an intricate examination of the multifaceted roles, expectations, and constraints imposed by the Victorian era, particularly with regard to gender [10].

Our study is committed to unraveling the intricacies of Tess's journey, dissecting the complexities of her relationships, and offering a nuanced interpretation of the moral quandaries that define her world. Furthermore, we engage in a deep analysis of the societal critiques inherent in Hardy's work, shedding light on the broader socio-cultural landscape of the 19th and early 20th centuries. We aim to explore gender roles, social expectations, and the various situations of women and present the role that women, as important members of the changing modern Korean society, will play for the development of Korean society. The Victorian era imposed strict gender role norms for men and women and restricted women's rights, and these characteristics provide an important basis for characterizing modern society.

Throughout the previous century, spanning a hundred years of societal evolution and cultural transformation, the vital cause of gender equality, a cornerstone of our shared humanity, has been propelled forward by a relentless wave of determination, unwavering perseverance, and groundbreaking reform, forging a path toward a more just and equitable world. From our perspective, as we reflect on the historical tapestry of gender equality, it becomes increasingly evident that this remarkable and substantial progress, which has unfolded in complex layers, is woven into the very fabric of our existence, changing the narrative of our collective story and setting the stage for even more profound and enduring advancements in the decades to come. Nevertheless, societies worldwide continue to have a considerable presence of gender roles, meaning the combined behaviors, appearances, and attitudes that society expects and considers appropriate for an individual based on the individual's gender. Gender equality, often referred to as gender equity, sexual equality, equality of the sexes, or parity between the sexes, signifies a condition where individuals have equal and unrestricted access to resources and opportunities, irrespective of their gender. This encompasses financial involvement and the ability to make decisions, along with the recognition of diverse behaviors, ambitions, and requirements without any gender bias [11].

Our research paper delves into the multifaceted aspects of this evolving role. It highlights the need for equitable opportunities and gender-neutral policies that support women in their pursuit of personal growth and in driving the progress of their respective nations. Empowering women in this way not only benefits them individually but also enhances the overall socio-economic development of societies.

As we confront the various intricacies (or complications) of the twenty-first century, women's empowerment (or self-determination) becomes a cornerstone (or keystone) of progress, breaking down barriers (or impediments) that have historically held back half of the world's population.

This fresh perspective fosters inclusivity, diversity, and a more comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of our time.

Our research proposes an expanded role for women, one that encompasses their personal development and the advancement of the nations they contribute to. This role reflects the changing dynamics of the contemporary age and emphasizes the importance of empowering women as catalysts for progress and societal transformation.

In writing this paper, we relied on historical, cultural, academic, literary works, historical records, and sociological materials that illuminate the process through which women shape their lives. As is widely known, the novel, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", a representative Victorian novel, serves as a valuable reference for young women in 19th-century England to understand the process of life struggles, and portrays the lives of women who had to overcome prevailing gender inequality [12, 13].

This paper offers a comprehensive and extensive exploration of the multifaceted role of women in contemporary Korean society, charting the remarkable transformations that have unfolded in their social standing and the myriad challenges they have encountered, persist in facing, and are poised to confront in the foreseeable future. It embarks on a deep dive into the intricate dimensions of women's roles in Korea, scrutinizing the historical backdrop, cultural influences, and the repercussions of economic and political shifts on their status and opportunities.

Moreover, this paper casts a spotlight on the diverse facets of the obstacles women grapple with, encompassing gender disparity, workplace bias, and societal anticipations. It also dissects the endeavors undertaken by individuals, organizations, and governmental entities to tackle these matters and advance gender parity. Through the presentation of an exhaustive analysis of women's roles and lived experiences in contemporary Korean society, this paper endeavors to contribute to a more profound comprehension of the

intricate dynamics encircling gender in this rapidly evolving cultural milieu. Further, our objective is to meticulously examine and draw a parallel between the societal norms and behaviors in two distinct historical epochs. In doing so, we will thoroughly investigate matters related to women's rights and gender equality. Furthermore, we aim to illuminate not only the expected roles assigned to women but also the multifaceted roles fulfilled by society and government in supporting them. All of this inquiry will be conducted within the dynamic context of Korean society, which has established itself as an indispensable element in the rapidly evolving global community.

## **5. SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

In England, the Victorian era was ruled by Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Victoria, born as Alexandrina Victoria with a full name in 1819 and passed away in 1901, held the position of the Queen of the UK (the United Kingdom, which includes England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), Great Britain, and Ireland from June 20, 1837, until her death in 1901.

Her reign, which spanned 63 years and 216 days, exceeded the duration of any of her predecessors, and this era is commonly referred to as the Victorian era. This period witnessed significant transformations in industry, politics, science, and the military within the United Kingdom and was characterized by the extensive expansion of the British Empire [14]. During this time, Britain underwent significant social, economic, and political changes. The era was characterized by social conservatism, strict moral values, and a rigid class structure. Women were expected to conform to specific roles and behaviors, primarily as wives, mothers, and homemakers, and were primarily engaged in domestic work in accordance with strict societal expectations. They played a crucial role in maintaining family happiness. Stringent gender norms were imposed, distinct from those expected of men.

Phrases like "separate spheres" and the "domestic-public dichotomy", where dichotomy implies a division into two mutually exclusive or contradictory groups, are employed in order to illustrate (or demonstrate) a social phenomenon in contemporary (or modern) societies, where a practical division between the private, domestic sphere and the public, social sphere exists to varying degrees. The private sphere is frequently (or regularly), perceived as a counterpart or contrast to the public sphere [15].

By emphasizing the notion that the family was perceived as a distinct realm, isolated from the wider social framework, it established distinct roles and expectations for individuals based on their gender within this societal framework. This concept sustained the belief that men were predominantly accountable for participating in public endeavors, including employment, politics, and decision-making, while women were consigned to the "private sphere," which encompassed responsibilities associated with domestic tasks, child-rearing, and the upkeep of the household [16]. This prevailing paradigm reinforced the traditional division of labor and the associated gender roles, resulting in a profound impact on the dynamics of family and society alike [16].

This ideology was indeed prevalent during the Victorian era, dividing life into public and private realms, with males predominating (or exerting control over) the "public sphere" while females are restricted to (limited to) the private sphere.

This division not only reinforced traditional gender roles but also contributed to systemic gender inequalities by limiting women's opportunities for education, employment, and participation in public life. This division of roles and spheres was deeply ingrained in the social fabric and had far-reaching implications for gender dynamics, influencing not only family structures but also broader societal norms and expectations

regarding the capabilities and limitations of men and women.

This complex interplay between family and society was a central aspect of the prevailing cultural attitudes during that period, and it has been a subject of significant scholarly analysis and debate. Understanding the dynamics of the "separate spheres" ideology provides valuable insights into the historical context and the evolution of gender roles and relations in society [16-18].

We have identified how this ideology, deeply ingrained in the societal fabric, influenced family structures and broader societal norms, thus shaping expectations about the roles, capabilities, and limitations of men and women. The impact of these historical ideologies continues to be felt today, as they have shaped contemporary attitudes towards gender roles.

By studying these historical contexts, we can better understand how societal norms have been transformed throughout human history while continuing to exert influence on gender dynamics today.

The legal rights of Victorian women, particularly married women, were significantly limited in terms of property rights and access to education and employment. The social role expected of women was primarily marriage and loyal service to their families and husbands. During the Industrial Revolution, Victorian society transitioned from an agrarian-focused society to an industrial-focused one, leading to significant societal and national transformation.

This was a period when Christian thought held significance but also witnessed secularization due to a crisis of faith and the diversification of religious beliefs. The presence of free thought played a prominent role in driving the secularization movement. Free thinkers worked to challenge the gender-discriminatory Christian narratives that justified the subordination and oppression of women [19]. Hannah More (1745 –1833), an English religious writer and philanthropist, emphasized methods for analyzing educational literature to instill moral values and conservative principles in readers. Veronica Beechey (1946–2021), a feminist sociologist who critically examined the work of figures like More, analyzed that More's approach was intricate, and she acknowledged that Hannah More reinforced social class structures and gender norms while advocating for moral and educational improvement for the lower class, which, in turn, received various criticisms. The paper by Veronica Beechey supported the conservative context in which Hannah More had a significant impact on the lives and values of the working class during the 18th century. The paper analyzes Hannah More's efforts and the socio-political role she played [20].

Bonnie G. Smith (1940- ), a historian, introduced a groundbreaking concept, challenging traditional perspectives, which highlights how the advent of industrialization not only transformed economic dynamics but also restricted women to a more limited scope of production involvement. Smith's insights can provide valuable context for understanding how historical processes have shaped women's roles over time.

This pioneering idea has significantly (or deeply) formed our understanding of the historical effects of industrialization on both the economy and women's participation in production [21]. In her work, Bonnie G. Smith sheds light on the pivotal shift during the onset of industrialization, where women were marginalized from middle-class production activities, leading to a fundamental reconfiguration of gender roles within the economic sphere. In her groundbreaking research, Bonnie G. Smith illuminates the pivotal shift that occurred at the onset of industrialization. During this transformative period, women found themselves marginalized from middle-class production activities, resulting in a fundamental reconfiguration of gender roles within the economic sphere.



The work by Bonnie G. Smith has significantly contributed to our grasp of the significant transformations or changes that occurred during this span of time. Smith's innovative analysis underscores the profound implications of industrialization on women's participation in production processes. It delves into the intricate interplay between economic and social factors, illuminating how the dynamics of work and production have been reshaped over time, impacting women's opportunities and experiences in middle-class economic activities.

This transformative perspective challenges conventional historical narratives and provides a fresh lens through which to examine the evolving roles of women within the context of industrialization and its profound effects on their participation in production activities. Smith's work represents a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on gender, labor, and economic transformations, enriching our understanding of the multifaceted forces that have shaped the historical and contemporary landscape [22].

These concepts provided invaluable insights into the complex and multifaceted relationship among gender dynamics, economic structures, and political frameworks. They aimed to not only shed light on existing gender norms but also to propose a comprehensive framework that could transform and redefine traditional gender constructs. By delving deeper into the interplay between gender, economy, and politics, these ideas highlighted the interconnectedness of these domains and their profound impact on societal structures. They challenged conventional notions of gender roles and norms, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable approach to understanding and addressing gender-related issues within the contexts of economics and politics.

The examination of these concepts revealed the necessity of reevaluating traditional paradigms and promoting a more inclusive and progressive perspective on gender issues. Through this reevaluation, scholars and activists have aimed to create a more just and equitable society that recognizes and respects the diverse and evolving nature of gender identities and roles within the economic and political spheres [23, 24].

John Randall Gillis (1939 – 2021), an American historian, made a significant contribution by exploring the intricate relationship between gender and the concept of space and place, and how these factors influence individuals' experiences. In his work, Gillis not only examined the gendered dimensions of physical and conceptual spaces but also delved into the diverse roles and experiences of women across different spatial and temporal contexts. His pioneering research offered new perspectives on how traditional conceptions of space, place, and history can be reevaluated and reimagined [25].

## **6. WOMEN IN MODERN KOREAN SOCIETY**

As Korea has undergone a rapid process of modernization and substantial economic growth, it is evident that the roles and statuses of women have also experienced a significant transformation. When we consider the broader context of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, it becomes apparent that the social roles and positions of women within contemporary Korean society have evolved and shifted in diverse domains. This progression is notably reflected in the considerable expansion of women's rights, which now extend beyond what was traditionally recognized. Women today enjoy enhanced rights both within the domestic sphere and the professional realm, affording them increased opportunities and a more influential presence [26].

In the workplace, women have become actively involved in a broader spectrum of fields, thereby making substantial contributions to the economy. Furthermore, they have achieved higher levels of education, with university degrees becoming increasingly commonplace, and are assuming leadership roles in various sectors. Notably, women's roles are also evolving within family and societal relationships, resulting in a transformation of Korean society's expectations concerning family structures and role divisions [27].

This dynamic shift underscores the profound changes in Korean society as a whole. Through this research, we endeavor to shed light on the significant role that women, as integral constituents of a dynamic and evolving modern Korean society, are poised to assume in contributing to the advancement and transformation of the Korean social landscape. The Victorian era, with its rigidly enforced gender role norms for both men and women and its severe limitations on women's rights, serves as a crucial and insightful foundation for characterizing and understanding the complexities of contemporary society. By juxtaposing these historical and contemporary contexts, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the changing dynamics of society, with a particular emphasis on the pivotal role women are destined to play in shaping the future of Korean society. Meanwhile, Korea in the world is experiencing rapid changes.

Starting from an agricultural society, it has grown into a global economic powerhouse today.

Today, Korea is leading the world in various fields such as communication technology, the automobile industry, Korean pop (K-pop), the entertainment industry, and the semiconductor industry. Korea has also found success in diverse sectors, including food, weaponry, comics, and gaming, gaining substantial international popularity. Korean cuisine is known for its healthy and delicious offerings, with Korean restaurants scattered worldwide, earning love from a multitude of people. In the defense sector, companies like Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI), Hanwha, and Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO), a Korean multinational steel-making company, produce weapons and military equipment, achieving remarkable results in the global market. Furthermore, Korea has made significant strides in the global success of comics, animation, and video games. Beyond these domains, Korea has demonstrated international influence in areas like technology, the automotive industry, cosmetics, robotics engineering, and environmental technology. Korea collaborates with other nations to make a notable presence in the global market.

In the global context, Korea is currently undergoing swift and transformative shifts. It has evolved from its origins as an agrarian society to become a dominant force in the global economy today. Presently, Korea stands at the forefront of various industries, including but not limited to communication technology, the automotive sector, K-pop, entertainment, and the semiconductor industry, showcasing its remarkable prowess on the world stage. These substantial developments underscore Korea's remarkable journey and its pivotal role in influencing and shaping the dynamics of the contemporary global landscape. In the contemporary age, we introduce a fresh role for women, one that is essential for their personal growth and the advancement of the nation they are part of. Our research paper outlines a novel role that women must undertake for both their own progress and the progress of the nation in the present times. This paradigm shift signifies a significant departure from traditional gender roles and underscores the importance of women's contributions to society. Women, in the modern era, find themselves at the forefront of multifaceted responsibilities, ranging from careers and education to family life and community involvement. The role we propose encompasses not only their professional aspirations but also their vital roles as nurturers, educators, and leaders.

Through these various aspects, we discuss the changes, progress, and challenges faced by women in modern Korea. These transformations present significant tasks in shaping perceptions and expectations of women in Korean society. By exploring these multifaceted aspects, we undertake a comprehensive exploration of the multifarious changes, advancements, and obstacles experienced by women in contemporary Korea. These ongoing evolutions signify substantial undertakings in reshaping the societal perceptions and expectations concerning women in the specific cultural context of Korea. This in-depth analysis not only scrutinizes the dynamic shifts in women's roles and experiences but also delves into the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and social factors that contribute to this transformation. Consequently, the exploration of these multifaceted dimensions provides a rich tapestry of understanding for the contemporary challenges and

opportunities that women in Korea encounter, elucidating their evolving roles and influence on the broader society.

In modern Korean society, women are experiencing significant transformations and advancements in various aspects of life, mirroring the wider global trend towards gender equality and empowerment.

Educationally, there has been a notable shift. In the past, women in Korea were often limited in their access to education. Now, however, men and women alike have equal educational opportunities. This has led to a rise in highly educated women and opened doors for them into professional fields that were once predominantly male.

Economically too, the landscape is changing. Women's participation in Korea's economy has been on a steady incline. A growing number of women are working across diverse fields; many are launching their own businesses or securing leadership roles within existing organizations. That said, wage gaps persist and traditional gender roles still present challenges.

Politically speaking, Korean women are more active than ever before. The country is seeing an increase in female politicians with some playing key roles in policy-making processes. Social attitudes towards Korean women have also evolved rapidly over recent years. There's growing recognition of gender equality and diversity - particularly among younger generations who advocate for a more equitable culture.

However, despite these advances there remain significant challenges to be addressed - such as unequal distribution of household duties and childcare responsibilities; wage disparities; glass ceiling phenomena; ensuring safety from sexual violence or domestic abuse etc. Therefore, while progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in modern Korean society it's clear that substantial hurdles still need to be overcome for full gender parity.

## **7. WOMEN'S ROLES AND SOCIAL POSITIONS IN MODERN KOREAN SOCIETY**

Regarding women's roles and social status in modern Korean society, the issues of rights and discrimination are significant topics. Women's rights and discrimination, especially gender bias in the workplace, persist as concerns. However, the Korean government and women's organizations are making various efforts to address these issues. Awareness of women's rights and equality is gradually spreading in contemporary Korean society, with women emphasizing their rights more prominently [28]. Various aspects related to the changing roles and situations of women in Korean society are considered. These changes are also examined in light of historical, cultural, and social factors that have influenced them. The difficulties and opportunities women face as they strive for gender equality and self-development are discussed. The status of Korean women has evolved over time. In modern Korea, women are playing more active roles in the workplace. The number of female professionals is steadily increasing, and they are working diligently in various fields.

The discussion around the changing roles and situations of women in Korean society is a broad and multifaceted one, encompassing various aspects of societal life.

These transformations are not isolated incidents but are deeply interwoven with anthropological elements, sociocultural aspects, and societal elements that have influenced the experiences of women over time.

Historically, Korean society has been largely patriarchal; however, with the advent of modernization and globalization, significant shifts have occurred. These shifts reflect changes in societal norms, laws, and attitudes towards gender roles. The societal structure has evolved to accommodate these changes which also

reflect in the increased participation of women in different sectors. Simultaneously examining these historical factors allows us to better understand how past events and ideologies have contributed to present circumstances. For instance, Confucian values once heavily influenced Korean society's expectations for women's behavior; however, contemporary interpretations of such values now coexist with more progressive perspectives on gender equality.

Moreover, cultural influences cannot be underestimated when discussing the changing roles of women. Korean culture has experienced its own evolution over time - from traditional norms that prescribed certain roles for men and women to a more modern outlook that embraces diversity and individualism. This progress is a result of Korea's modernization and economic growth, with women playing a significant role in economic activities. Investment in women's education in Korea is on the rise, leading to more women obtaining university degrees and achieving higher levels of education. Thanks to education, women are becoming more competitive in the workplace. The roles of women are also changing within families and in social relationships. As household role divisions evolve, domestic and societal responsibilities between men and women are being distributed more equitably. Additionally, various family structures and lifestyles are being accepted, providing women with a broader range of choices. Through these aspects, we examine how the roles and status of women in modern Korean society are evolving, as well as the challenges they face. Understanding these developments and changes, we delve into the discussions surrounding the opportunities and difficulties experienced by women in Korean society.

## **8. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN KOREAN SOCIETY AND THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SOCIAL AND GOVERNMENT-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS**

As the social status of Korean women has steadily ascended over the years, breaking through long-standing barriers and shattering the glass ceiling that once constrained their opportunities, they have emerged as influential agents of change, assuming an ever-expanding and pivotal role in nurturing the continuous, positive evolution of Korean society. This transformation is not merely a reflection of individual achievements, but a testament to the resilience and collective efforts of women, who have tirelessly championed gender equality, dismantled traditional stereotypes, and paved the way for a more inclusive and diverse societal landscape. From leadership positions in business and politics to their contributions in education, healthcare, and the arts, Korean women's profound impact resonates throughout the intricate tapestry of their nation's progress, and it underscores their indispensable position in shaping a brighter, more equitable future for all. By promoting education and awareness, they can raise consciousness about gender discrimination issues within society and help more people support gender equality. Additionally, women can expand their leadership roles in various fields, represent their diverse opinions and perspectives, and ensure the voices of women are considered in societal decision-making, thereby increasing their influence on policies and laws.

They can foster gender equality in the workplace by enhancing career development, promotion opportunities, pay equity, protection against unfair dismissal, and prevention of harassment. Through women's networking, they can collaborate, support each other, and foster solidarity, while advocating for gender equality and activities to combat discrimination through policy engagement and the realization of rights within families. Gender roles refer to attitudes or perceptions regarding distinct roles based on gender. Research on the marriage views of unmarried women shows that there is a coexistence of arguments advocating maintaining traditional gender roles to preserve role separation according to gender and arguments emphasizing that gender roles should be equal [29].

By fulfilling these roles, women can provide substantial contributions towards the balanced growth and gender parity in Korean society. As the social status of Korean women continues to rise, there should be societal and national institutions established to support the ongoing roles that women should participate in for the healthy development of Korean society. These enduring roles serve a vital function in steering Korean society towards a fairer and more progressive direction. Primarily, it is imperative for the nation and society to bolster laws and policies promoting gender equality.

Robust gender equality laws and policies protect women's rights, prevent discrimination, and help expand wage parity and promotion opportunities in the workplace. These laws and policies play a pivotal role in establishing the foundation for realizing gender equality, representing a critical step in the ongoing journey towards a more equitable and just society. They constitute a multifaceted framework that not only addresses the pressing issues of gender discrimination but also encompasses a broader spectrum of societal and economic aspects. These legal measures encompass a diverse array of fields, which include, but are not confined to employment, education, healthcare, political representation, family dynamics, and cultural attitudes.

They seek to rectify historical imbalances and create a level playing field for individuals of all gender identities. In the realm of employment, these laws and policies promote fair and equal pay, eliminate workplace discrimination, and support women's participation in leadership roles across various industries. In education, they strive to guarantee that females enjoy equitable opportunities to access quality learning opportunities, thereby eradicating educational disparities.

Health policies address the specific needs of women, including reproductive health and maternal care, to guarantee comprehensive well-being. Furthermore, these regulations encourage and facilitate women's active involvement in politics, emphasizing the importance of diverse representation in decision-making bodies. Beyond these direct influences, the ripple effects of these laws and policies extend into our cultural and societal fabric. They challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive attitudes towards gender.

In sociology, the ripple effect can be observed in how social interactions (or interpersonal interactions) can influence circumstances that are indirectly connected to the first encounter, and in charitable endeavors wherein development can be shared and disseminated from the community to broaden its impact.

The implementation of this perception has been applied in the domain of computer science, particularly in software metrics, as a method for evaluating complexity [30].

Over time, they shape public opinion and foster a more tolerant and accepting society. The ongoing development and adaptation of these measures are integral to maintaining progress and ensuring that gender equality is not just an aspirational goal but a fundamental, unwavering aspect of our collective social conscience.

## **9. RESULTS**

The government should traditionally support programs that encourage women's participation in male-dominated fields. Additionally, starting gender equality education in schools can contribute to reducing gender-related biases. Strengthening policies to prevent workplace discrimination and harassment and promoting women's economic independence are equally important. This empowers women to balance home and work life while establishing their economic independence. Within the realm of politics, it is imperative to introduce policies aimed at bolstering women's involvement by enhancing support for and the election of

female candidates. This involves the implementation of measures that facilitate and encourage women's engagement in political processes and leadership roles. Such policies are designed to address existing gender disparities and to promote greater diversity and inclusivity in political representation. These policies encompass a variety of strategies, including providing financial support, mentoring, and training programs to equip female candidates with the skills and resources needed to run for public office successfully. Additionally, they can entail the establishment of quotas or affirmative action measures that guarantee a certain level of female representation in legislative bodies.

Furthermore, these policies should address the broader political culture by raising awareness about the paramount importance of gender diversity in decision-making processes and by actively challenging and dismantling deep-seated stereotypes or unconscious biases that may inadvertently impede women's trajectories in the political arena. By fostering a society where the voices and perspectives of women are not only acknowledged but also wholeheartedly embraced within the political sphere, the introduction of such progressive policies stands as a significant step toward a more inclusive, balanced, and equitable political landscape.

The introduction of these policies can significantly contribute to the creation of a political environment that fully recognizes and respects the valuable contributions of women, enabling the rich tapestry of diverse female perspectives to seamlessly integrate into the complex fabric of policy decision-making. Moreover, the amplification of women's voices and stories through the enhancement of media diversity represents another vital pillar of this multifaceted effort. In doing so, we can actively challenge the existing paradigms and narratives that may have perpetuated gender-based discrimination, making it imperative to undertake activities that combat and eradicate such biases.

Media outlets, through their influential platforms, have the power to either reinforce or redefine societal perceptions and expectations concerning the multifaceted roles and capabilities of women. Hence, the imperative to alter and accurately reflect the rich diversity of women's roles and experiences within the societal discourse becomes ever more pressing. These carefully crafted measures, in conjunction with forward-thinking policies, carry the potential to be instrumental in orchestrating a transformative shift within the fabric of Korean society. In earnest pursuit of gender equality and the unwavering safeguarding of women's rights, the implementation of these strategies represents a concerted, society-wide endeavor to systematically address and rectify gender disparities that have long persisted, ultimately paving the way for a more inclusive, just, and harmonious social environment.

By enacting and diligently enforcing these measures, we are taking a substantial and purposeful stride in the direction of attaining equality and safeguarding the rights of women, actively advocating for their advancement across every spectrum of life in Korea. These actions unmistakably signify our dedication to forging a future marked by greater fairness, one where gender ceases to be an impediment to individual potential and opportunities. It is clear that cultivating an atmosphere where women can actively contribute to the progress and equity of Korean society necessitates a collaborative endeavor involving both the government and society at large.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

Within this document, we have undertaken a comparative investigation that delves into the societal roles and standing of women during the Victorian era in the United Kingdom and the contemporary context of

Korean society. Our study aimed to shed light on the disparities and commonalities that exist in the roles and social positions of women during these two distinct timeframes. By undertaking our study, our goal is to offer a glimpse into the evolution of gender dynamics and women's status within society.

We have analyzed this through contents of the novel by Thomas Hardy, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles". Our objective was to draw parallels and distinctions in the roles and positions of women in these two historical and cultural contexts, shedding light on the evolution of women's roles and their continued challenges in society. By juxtaposing these two distinct periods, we worked to provide valuable insights into the changing dynamics of gender and society.

In our comprehensive study, we have meticulously delineated the multifaceted roles and pervasive limitations imposed on women in Victorian-era Britain, and meticulously contrasted them with the notable progress and formidable challenges faced by women in contemporary Korean society. Through this in-depth analysis, we have presented and scrutinized the myriad societal issues that women, across generations and cultural contexts, must tenaciously overcome and adeptly adapt to, thereby navigating the intricate labyrinth of gender disparities. Furthermore, our research has delved into the complex web of rights, privileges, and social status that women, whether in the hushed corridors of Victorian England or the bustling streets of modern Seoul, have carved for themselves over time. It is patently evident that women, regardless of historical epochs and geographical boundaries, necessitate unyielding determination, unswerving effort, and unwavering resilience to successfully fulfill the ever evolving and multifarious roles assigned to them within the intricate tapestry of society.

We have emphasized the necessity of establishing social and governmental institutions to support these efforts. The government should promote women's rights and gender equality, enhance women's economic independence, and facilitate political participation through the formulation of policies and institutional frameworks. These measures and institutions are anticipated to play a pivotal role in making gender equality and women's rights a tangible reality in Korean society.

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