



Women in History

Women have held a special place in the history of the world. Figures of the Earth mother from prehistory suggest that women held the power of life. Today, Lady Liberty suggests that women are the bearers of freedom. Yet women are also held as responsible for other aspects of life, such as Pandora opening a box or Eve giving an apple to Adam. Some have suggested that women have been left out of history because of the male attitude that women are delicate and limited in brain functions and that they are incapable of thinking of higher ideas. History is full of contradictions to this notion.

Queen Hatshepsut was a woman that ruled Egypt with a strong hand, and later Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria of England ruled, as did Tsarina Catherine the Great of Russia, who ruled modern Empires. Joan of Arc led the French armies to victory after victory, while Helen of Troy was held responsible for a 10-year war. There is plenty of evidence to show that women are equal to men in intellectual thinking, yet the myth continued.

During the time of the American and French revolutions, these were some of the comments on women:

*"Never get tied to a man
for when once you are yoked
'tis all a mere joke
of seeing your freedom again"*

~ Rebecca Shoemaker, July 20, 1783

"Feminine traits are called weaknesses. People joke about them; fools ridicule them; but reasonable persons see very well that those traits are just the tools for management of men, and for the use of men for female designs. The man is easy to fathom; but the woman does not reveal her secret, although she keeps another person's secret poorly (because of her loquacity).

~ Immanuel Kant, 1798

From an 1850 Philadelphia newspaper:

*"A woman is nobody's
A wife is everything
A pretty girl equal to 10,000 men and
A mother is, next to God, all powerful."*

The salons of France provided the intellectual environment for the Age of Reason. The Quaker women in North America were among the first to speak out against the institution of slavery. The 19th century saw women take active parts in social causes, abolitionist and temperance in particular, and utopian movements. During the 20th century, the suffrage and feminist movements demonstrated women's ability as equal partners in every aspect of life.

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