# Mill the subjection of women

## Unlocking the Chains: A Millennial's Perspective on "The Subjection of Women"

It’s 2023, and the internet is overflowing with feminist discourse. But amidst the memes and hashtags, a foundational text on the topic, John Stuart Mill’s "The Subjection of Women," often gets overlooked. This classic, penned in the 19th century, isn't just dusty history; it’s a powerful lens for understanding the ongoing struggle for gender equality. As a content creator who navigates the digital landscape, I find Mill's work surprisingly relevant to the modern world. We’re bombarded with messages about women's roles, from unrealistic beauty standards to career expectations that feel strangely confined. Mill's exploration of these societal constructs – and the crippling effects of enforced subservience – resonates deeply.

## Beyond the Patriarchy: Examining the Root of the Issue

Mill argues that the "subjection of women" is not a natural phenomenon, but a product of social conditioning. He dissects the prevalent belief that women are inherently inferior, highlighting the dangerous consequences of limiting their potential. His analysis goes beyond the obvious: the denial of education, the restrictions on women's participation in public life, and the limitations placed on their economic independence. He digs into the psychological damage inflicted by these limitations, arguing that they result in stunted intellectual development and a distorted sense of self. **Let's look at a stark example:** Mill points out that even seemingly “gentle” traditions, like the expectation of women to be submissive and passive, are harmful. He asserts that these expectations hinder women’s ability to cultivate critical thinking and leadership skills. **But it's not just about women:** Mill understands that a society where half its population is actively discouraged from reaching its full potential is inherently flawed. He argues that by stifling women, we also deprive ourselves of a wealth of talent and innovation.

## Mill's Vision: A World Where Women Flourish

Mill envisions a world where women are not confined by societal expectations. He advocates for equal access to education, economic opportunities, and participation in public life. He believes that this equality will not only benefit women but also elevate society as a whole. Think about it this way: A society where women are free to contribute their unique talents and perspectives is a richer, more innovative society. It’s a society where everyone can thrive, regardless of their gender. Mill's vision isn't just a utopian dream; it's a roadmap for progress. His work challenges us to re-examine our assumptions and fight for a more just and equitable world.

## Modern-Day Echoes: From Gender Pay Gap to Representation in STEM

While Mill's writing is rooted in the 19th century, its themes resonate powerfully in our modern world. The fight for equal pay, the struggle for greater representation in STEM fields, and the push for gender equality in leadership roles – all reflect the continued need for societal change. **Take the gender pay gap:** This persistent issue is a stark reminder of the economic inequality that women continue to face. Mill’s arguments about the economic power of women and their ability to contribute significantly to society remain as relevant as ever. Representation in STEM fields is another key issue: The underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is not simply a matter of opportunity; it's a reflection of ingrained biases and societal expectations. Mill’s analysis of the limiting effects of social conditioning on women’s intellectual development offers a compelling framework for understanding this challenge.

## Reimagining the Future: Content Creation and the Millennial Perspective

As a content creator, I find Mill's work especially relevant to the digital age. We have a platform to amplify voices, challenge the status quo, and spark meaningful conversations about gender equality. **Here's how I see this playing out:** • **Creating content that champions diverse perspectives:** By showcasing women's stories, celebrating their accomplishments, and highlighting their unique contributions, we can actively dismantle harmful stereotypes. • **Promoting critical thinking and challenging gender norms:** Engaging in conversations about gender roles, dismantling the "damsel in distress" trope, and highlighting the power of women's voices are all crucial steps towards a more equitable future. • *Using our platforms to advocate for systemic change:* We can use our reach to educate, raise awareness, and support organizations that are working to achieve gender equality in all its forms.

## FAQs for the Millennial Feminist

**1. Why is "The Subjection of Women" still relevant in the 21st century?** While significant progress has been made towards gender equality, Mill's arguments highlight that the struggle is far from over. His work provides a framework for understanding the ongoing challenges, including the gender pay gap, limited representation in leadership, and the enduring impact of societal expectations on women's lives. 2. How does Mill's analysis connect to contemporary issues like the MeToo movement? Mill's critique of societal structures that perpetuate male dominance and encourage the objectification of women resonates deeply with the MeToo movement. The movement highlights the systemic nature of sexual harassment and assault, exposing the power dynamics that allow for such abuses to occur. 3. What are the benefits of achieving true gender equality? Gender equality benefits everyone: • **Economic Growth:** A more equitable society unleashes the full potential of its workforce, leading to greater economic productivity and innovation. • *Social Progress:* Gender equality fosters a more just and compassionate society, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed and contribute. • Individual Fulfillment: When women are free to pursue their passions and aspirations, they can live more fulfilling lives, contributing positively to their families and communities. *4. How can I use Mill's ideas to be a more effective advocate for gender equality?* Mill's work offers a powerful framework for advocacy. By understanding the historical context of gender inequality, the psychological impact of societal expectations, and the benefits of achieving equality, we can become more effective champions for change. *5. What role does technology play in promoting gender equality?* Technology can be a powerful tool for promoting gender equality. From social media platforms that amplify women's voices to educational resources that empower girls, technology can be used to challenge harmful stereotypes, create opportunities, and foster a more just and equitable world.

## The Final Word: Moving Forward

Mill's "The Subjection of Women" isn't just a historical text; it's a call to action. As we navigate the complexities of the digital age, his work serves as a guide for creating a world where all genders have equal opportunity to thrive. Let's use our platforms, our voices, and our creativity to build a future that embodies Mill's vision of a society where women are truly free to be themselves.

# Unraveling the Threads: Mill, the Subjection of Women, and the Dawn of Equality

John Stuart Mill, a name that resonates deeply within the annals of philosophical and political thought, is perhaps best known for his groundbreaking work, "On the Subjection of Women." Published in 1869, this treatise was a bold and radical declaration for its time, challenging deeply entrenched societal norms that had relegated women to a secondary, often subservient, status for centuries. Mill's arguments were not merely abstract intellectual exercises; they were a passionate plea for justice, equality, and the full realization of human potential, regardless of gender.

The very title of his work, "On the Subjection of Women," is a stark indictment. It doesn't shy away from the reality of women's lives, acknowledging the pervasive and systematic nature of their oppression. Mill's brilliance lay in his ability to dissect the foundations of this subjugation, tracing its roots not to inherent biological differences, but to social conditioning, legal frameworks, and the pervasive influence of custom. He argued that what was perceived as women's natural disposition was, in fact, a product of their upbringing and their limited opportunities.

In an era where the idea of women's suffrage was considered scandalous by many, and their roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere, Mill dared to envision a society where women were free to participate fully in public life, to pursue education, to engage in professions, and to have an equal say in governance. His work wasn't just a theoretical exploration; it was a powerful call to action, igniting a spark that would fuel the burgeoning feminist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

# The Societal Architecture of Female Subordination

Mill meticulously dismantled the prevailing arguments used to justify the subjection of women. He challenged the notion that women were intellectually or morally inferior to men, attributing such perceptions to the lack of adequate education and the stifling environment in which they were raised. For Mill, the argument was simple: how could one accurately assess the capabilities of a group of people when they were systematically denied the very opportunities that would allow those capabilities to flourish?

## The Tyranny of Custom and Tradition

One of Mill's central arguments revolved around the immense power of custom and tradition. He recognized that societal norms, even those seemingly benign, could act as powerful instruments of oppression. The "subjection of women" was not a matter of overt, conscious malevolence for many, but rather the ingrained acceptance of a status quo that had been perpetuated through generations. Mill argued that these customs, passed down unquestioned, created a self-perpetuating cycle of inequality.

He observed that the education of girls was typically geared towards domesticity and pleasing men, rather than intellectual development or independent thought. This limited their aspirations and reinforced the idea that their primary role was that of a wife and mother. The skills they acquired were instrumental in maintaining a household, not in navigating the complexities of the public sphere. Mill pointed out the hypocrisy of expecting women to excel in areas where they had been systematically disadvantaged.

## The Legal Shackles of Inequality

Beyond custom, Mill addressed the legal frameworks that cemented women's subordinate position. In his time, married women had few legal rights. Their property often became their husband's upon marriage, and they had little recourse in cases of abuse or mistreatment. Divorce laws were punitive and disproportionately favored men. Mill saw these legal structures as a tangible manifestation of societal attitudes, reinforcing the idea that women were possessions rather than independent individuals.

He advocated for legal reforms that would grant women greater autonomy, including the right to own property, to control their earnings, and to seek divorce on equal terms. His vision extended to the political arena, where he argued passionately for women's suffrage. The exclusion of women from the political process, he contended, meant that their voices were not heard, and their needs were not adequately addressed in the laws that governed them.

# The Utilitarian Calculus of Equality

Mill's philosophical underpinnings for advocating women's equality were rooted in utilitarianism. This ethical framework, which he championed alongside Jeremy Bentham, posits that the best action is the one that maximizes overall happiness or utility. From this perspective, the subjection of women was not only unjust but also a significant impediment to the collective

well-being of society.

## Unlocking Human Potential for Collective Good

Mill argued that by denying half of the population the opportunity to develop their talents and contribute fully to society, humanity was essentially handicapping itself. He believed that women, given the same educational and professional opportunities as men, possessed the same intellectual and creative capacities. Their exclusion meant a loss of potential innovation, progress, and societal advancement.

Furthermore, Mill understood that the well-being of individuals was intrinsically linked to the well-being of society. When women were unfulfilled, uneducated, and confined to limited roles, it not only harmed them but also had a detrimental effect on their families and communities. A society that nurtured the talents of all its members, regardless of gender, was a more prosperous, enlightened, and ultimately happier society.

## The Harmful Effects of Unchecked Male Dominance

Mill also pointed out the detrimental effects of unchecked male dominance on men themselves. He argued that the power dynamics inherent in the patriarchal system could lead to the development of negative character traits in men, such as arrogance, selfishness, and a sense of entitlement. By perpetuating inequality, society was, in essence, fostering less virtuous individuals.

He believed that genuine human relationships, whether familial or social, thrive on mutual respect and equality. The master-servant dynamic, he argued, was inherently corrupting for both parties. When women were seen as subordinates, it warped the nature of relationships, preventing men from experiencing the full richness of partnership and companionship.

# The Enduring Legacy and the Ongoing Struggle for Gender Equality

John Stuart Mill's "On the Subjection of Women" was a seismic event in the history of social and political thought. It provided a powerful intellectual framework for the nascent feminist movement, offering clear arguments against gender-based discrimination and advocating for radical social change. His work, though written over a century ago, remains remarkably relevant today as we continue to grapple with issues of gender inequality, women's rights, and the pursuit of a truly equitable society.

## Women's Suffrage and Beyond

Mill's advocacy for women's suffrage was a pivotal moment. While he did not live to see its widespread implementation, his arguments laid the groundwork for the suffrage movements that eventually succeeded in granting women the right to vote in many countries. This was a monumental step, a recognition that women were citizens with a right to participate in the political life of their nations.

However, Mill would likely have recognized that the struggle for gender equality extends far beyond the ballot box. While legal and political rights are crucial, the deep-seated attitudinal changes and the dismantling of societal norms that perpetuate gender bias are ongoing battles. Issues such as the gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, the persistence of gender-based violence, and the unequal distribution of domestic labor are all continuations of the "subjection of women" that Mill so eloquently described.

## Contemporary Echoes and the Path Forward

The keywords and concepts explored by Mill – social conditioning, custom, legal rights, education, human potential, and equality – remain central to contemporary discussions about gender. Movements like #MeToo, and ongoing advocacy for reproductive rights, equal pay, and an end to gender-based discrimination, all draw upon the intellectual heritage that Mill

helped to forge. His insights into the psychological and social mechanisms of oppression continue to inform our understanding of the challenges women face today.

The journey towards full gender equality is a long and complex one, but Mill's profound and courageous work serves as a constant reminder of the importance of questioning established norms, advocating for justice, and striving for a world where every individual, regardless of gender, has the freedom and opportunity to reach their full potential. His legacy encourages us to continue unraveling the threads of inequality, to challenge the "subjection of women" in all its forms, and to build a more just and equitable future for all.

The milling of subjection of women is a profound and complex theme that interrogates the historical and ongoing dynamics through which women's roles, agency, and autonomy have been shaped, often constrained, within social, cultural, and institutional frameworks. At its core, this concept invites a critical examination of how systems—both overt and subtle—have functioned to subordinate women's status, limiting their access to power, voice, and self-determination. Rather than a mere historical relic, this subject remains deeply relevant in contemporary discourse, informing movements for gender equality and human rights.

## Understanding the Concept of Subjection in a Gendered Context

**The term subjection, in relation to women, refers not only to direct oppression but also to the pervasive, often invisible mechanisms that reinforce gender hierarchies. Historically, such subjection was institutionalized through laws, religious doctrines, and cultural norms that defined women's roles primarily in domestic or supportive capacities, excluding them from formal education, political participation, and economic independence. Over time, these structures evolved but did not disappear; instead, they adapted to new societal forms, embedding themselves in subtle expectations, discriminatory practices, and systemic inequities that persist across diverse cultures and economies. This layered subjection manifests in various ways—through restricted labor rights, unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership, and societal pressures that shape behavior and self-perception. Recognizing this multifaceted subjection is essential for dismantling barriers**

**and fostering environments where women can fully exercise their rights and potentials.**

## Key Insights from Historical and Social Perspectives

**Historical analysis reveals how subjection of women has been justified through ideology, tradition, and pseudo-scientific claims, legitimizing exclusion and control. From medieval legal codes to 19th-century gender norms, such frameworks were designed to preserve male dominance and maintain social order. Yet, these structures were never absolute—women resisted, adapted, and challenged their constraints in countless ways, from grassroots activism to quiet acts of defiance. Modern scholarship underscores that subjection is not simply a relic of the past but a dynamic process sustained by intersecting forces including patriarchy, capitalism, and cultural narratives. It intersects with race, class, and geography, producing varied experiences of oppression and resilience. Understanding these intersections is crucial for developing inclusive strategies that address the diverse realities women face globally.**

## Applications and Real-World Implications

**In practice, the subjection of women influences every domain of life. In the workplace, it appears as wage gaps, glass ceilings, and biases in hiring and promotion. In education, disparities in access and encouragement limit opportunities for intellectual and professional growth. Socially, gendered expectations shape identities, relationships, and self-worth,**

**often pressuring women to conform to narrow ideals. These patterns are not limited to developing regions; they persist even in high-income countries and developed societies, revealing the deep-rooted nature of gendered subjection. Recognizing these patterns allows policymakers, educators, and community leaders to design targeted interventions—such as gender-sensitive policies, inclusive curricula, and support systems—that challenge inequity and promote empowerment.**

## Benefits of Challenging Subjection and Moving Toward Equity

**Addressing the subjection of women yields profound benefits for individuals and societies alike. When women gain full agency—over their bodies, education, and economic futures—families thrive, innovation flourishes, and communities grow stronger. Gender equity is linked to improved health outcomes, higher economic productivity, and more stable governance. Empowering women dismantles cycles of poverty and inequality, creating ripple effects that uplift entire generations. Moreover, inclusive societies that value diverse voices foster creativity, resilience, and social cohesion. By dismantling subjection, we unlock the full potential of half the population, paving the way for a more just and prosperous world.**

## Future Outlook: Advancing Gender Justice Beyond Subjection

**The future of gender relations hinges on sustained, collective action to transform systems of subjection into structures of**

**equity. Emerging movements, digital activism, and global policy frameworks are amplifying women's voices and demanding accountability. Education, media representation, and inclusive leadership are key levers for change, helping to reshape cultural narratives and institutional practices. Looking ahead, the focus must expand beyond mere equality to embrace justice—ensuring that women not only have equal access but also meaningful influence in shaping societies. Technological advancements, policy innovation, and grassroots organizing offer powerful tools to accelerate this transformation. Ultimately, moving beyond subjection requires a shared commitment: recognizing women's full humanity, respecting their rights, and building a world where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive without constraint or compromise.**

## The Lingering Shadow: Mill on the Subjection of Women and the Enduring Fight for Equality

**John Stuart Mill's seminal work, "On the Subjection of Women," published in 1869, remains a potent and remarkably prescient examination of gender inequality. While the legal landscape has dramatically shifted since its inception, the core arguments Mill so eloquently articulated concerning the societal and psychological impact of female subjugation continue to resonate. This article will delve into Mill's groundbreaking analysis, explore its historical context, and assess its enduring relevance in the ongoing struggle for women's liberation and gender equality.**

### Mill's Radical Critique: Challenging the Natural Order

**At the heart of Mill's argument lies a fierce rejection of the notion that the subordinate position of women in society was a matter of natural or inherent difference. He argued that the prevalent societal structures and customs, far from reflecting any innate disparity in capabilities, were the direct result of centuries of enforced dependency and a deliberate denial of opportunities. Mill challenged the prevailing "naturalness" of the domestic sphere for women and the public sphere for men, positing that these divisions were entirely artificial and detrimental to both sexes.**

**He meticulously dismantled the arguments used to justify female subjugation, often pointing to the logical fallacies and inconsistencies within them. For instance, the argument that women were less rational or capable of intellectual pursuits was, for Mill, a predictable outcome of their limited education and restricted experiences. He questioned why, if women were inherently suited to domesticity, they were not allowed to develop their talents and then freely choose their roles. The subjection of women, he argued, was a vestige of a more primitive social order, akin to slavery, where power imbalances dictated social roles rather than individual merit or choice.**

### The Tyranny of Custom and the Denial of Opportunity

**Mill placed significant emphasis on the "tyranny of custom" as a formidable barrier to women's advancement. This pervasive social conditioning, he argued, led individuals to accept the existing order as immutable and unquestionable, even when**

**it was demonstrably unjust. The ingrained belief that women's primary role was that of wife and mother, coupled with the societal disapproval of any deviation from this norm, created a powerful disincentive for women to pursue education, professions, or any form of public life. This lack of opportunity, in turn, reinforced the very beliefs that justified their confinement.**

**His analysis highlighted how this denial of opportunity not only limited women's potential but also stunted the progress of society as a whole. By excluding half of its population from contributing their full intellectual and creative capacities, society was deliberately handicapping itself. Mill's call for equal access to education and professions was not merely a plea for individual fairness but a pragmatic argument for societal advancement. He envisioned a world where talent, not gender, determined one's opportunities and contributions.**

### The Psychological Impact of Subordination

**Beyond the material and legal disadvantages, Mill keenly understood the profound psychological toll that prolonged subjection took on women. He described how the constant expectation of dependence and deference could foster habits of subservience, a lack of self-reliance, and a diminished sense of personal agency. This psychological conditioning, he argued, could even manifest as a perceived lack of ambition or intellectual curiosity, which was then ironically used as evidence of their inherent inferiority.**

**Mill also explored the insidious ways in which this**

**psychological subjugation could be perpetuated within the family unit. The power imbalance in marriage, where the husband held legal and social authority, created an environment ripe for emotional manipulation and the erosion of a wife's self-esteem. He recognized that true emancipation required not just legal reforms but also a fundamental shift in the internalized beliefs and expectations that governed human relationships. His work foreshadowed later feminist analyses of patriarchy and its subtle, yet deeply damaging, effects on women's mental well-being.**

### The Case for Legal and Political Equality

**Central to Mill's argument was the demand for full legal and political equality for women. He advocated for women's suffrage, arguing that without the right to vote, women were effectively voiceless in the laws that governed their lives. He saw the exclusion of women from the political arena as a fundamental injustice and a direct consequence of their subordinate status. The right to vote, for Mill, was not just a symbolic gesture but a crucial tool for women to advocate for their own interests and challenge oppressive laws.**

**Furthermore, Mill championed women's right to own property, control their earnings, and pursue any profession they chose. He believed that economic independence was a vital prerequisite for true freedom and that women should not be legally or socially bound to rely on men for their financial security. His advocacy for these rights was a direct challenge to the prevailing legal frameworks that treated married women as extensions of their husbands, stripping them of**

**individual legal identity and autonomy.**

### Historical Context: A Victorian Maverick

**"On the Subjection of Women" emerged from a specific historical context: Victorian England, a society grappling with the burgeoning industrial revolution and evolving social norms. While the era saw some advancements for women, particularly in philanthropic and charitable work, the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures remained largely unchallenged. Mill, influenced by his wife Harriet Taylor Mill, was an outlier in his radical views on gender equality. His work was controversial, met with both praise and outrage, and contributed significantly to the nascent women's suffrage movement.**

**It's crucial to acknowledge that Mill's perspective, while revolutionary for his time, was not without its limitations. His focus was primarily on the experiences of middle- and upper-class white women, and his understanding of intersectionality—how gender intersects with race, class, and other social identities—was nascent at best. Nonetheless, his foundational arguments laid the groundwork for subsequent feminist thought and activism.**

### Enduring Relevance: Mill's Echoes in the 21st Century

**Despite the significant progress made since Mill's time, the echoes of his analysis of female subjection are still palpable in the 21st century. While legal barriers to education and employment have largely been dismantled in many parts of the world, subtle and overt forms of discrimination persist.**

**The gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and the prevalence of gender-based violence are all manifestations of the enduring legacy of patriarchal structures that Mill so powerfully critiqued.**

**The psychological impact he described also remains relevant. Societal pressures and expectations continue to shape women's self-perceptions and limit their aspirations. Concepts like the "imposter syndrome" and the scrutiny women face in public life can be seen as modern iterations of the internalized oppression Mill identified. The ongoing debates surrounding gender roles, consent, and bodily autonomy demonstrate that the fight for true equality, as envisioned by Mill, is far from over. The quest for women's liberation continues to be a vital social justice issue, drawing inspiration from the foundational arguments laid out by this Victorian intellectual.**

### Looking Forward: Continuing the Conversation

**John Stuart Mill's "On the Subjection of Women" serves as a powerful reminder that the fight for gender equality is a long and complex struggle. His intellectual courage in challenging deeply ingrained social norms and his incisive analysis of the mechanisms of oppression continue to inform contemporary feminist discourse. As we navigate the complexities of modern society, Mill's insights offer a valuable framework for understanding persistent inequalities and for continuing the vital work of dismantling patriarchal structures. The pursuit of a society where women are not subjected but are free to flourish in all aspects of life remains a central aspiration, a**

**testament to the enduring power of Mill's radical vision and the ongoing commitment to gender parity.**

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## Questions & Answers About mill the subjection of women

| No | Question | Answer |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What are the core arguments presented by radical feminists regarding the 'subjection of women'? | Radical feminists argue that the subjection of women is rooted in patriarchy, a system where men hold power and privilege. They posit that this power imbalance is maintained through social, economic, and political structures, leading to the oppression of women in various forms, including sexual exploitation and violence. |
| 2 | How has the concept of 'intersectionality' challenged or expanded the understanding of women's subjection? | Intersectionality highlights that women's experiences of subjection are not uniform. It emphasizes how race, class, sexual orientation, disability, and other social identities intersect, creating unique forms of oppression for women who belong to multiple marginalized groups. This moves beyond a singular focus on gender. |
| 3 | What role does media representation play in perpetuating or dismantling the subjection of women? | Media can perpetuate subjection by reinforcing harmful stereotypes, objectifying women, and normalizing violence against them. Conversely, diverse and empowering media representation can challenge these norms, offer positive role models, and contribute to a broader societal shift away from women's subjugation. |
| 4 | Beyond legal reforms, what are some effective strategies for addressing the deep-seated cultural roots of women's subjection? | Effective strategies include comprehensive feminist education from a young age, challenging gendered norms in family and community settings, promoting male allyship, and fostering critical media literacy to deconstruct harmful narratives. Shifting cultural attitudes is as crucial as legislative changes. |
| 5 | How do economic disparities contribute to the ongoing subjection of women globally? | Economic disparities, such as the gender pay gap, unequal access to education and resources, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, significantly contribute to women's subjection. These factors limit women's autonomy, financial independence, and power within households and society. |
| 6 | What does the term 'internalized oppression' mean in the context of women's subjection, and how can it be overcome? | Internalized oppression refers to women accepting and perpetuating the negative stereotypes and limitations imposed on them by patriarchal society. Overcoming it involves critical self-reflection, feminist consciousness-raising, building self-esteem, and challenging self-limiting beliefs through education and supportive communities. |

mill the subjection of women history, feminist critique of women's subjugation, historical oppression of women in industrial mills, women's rights and labor exploitation, mill labor and gender inequality, subjection of women in early industrial society, mill communities and gender hierarchy, oppression of women in 19th century factories, reforming women's rights in industrial mills, mill systems and female subordination

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