

The paper is focused on studying the traditional concept of woman in view of its conflict with the gradually enforced demands of women within the feminist movement. The main demands of women on their way to coequality were the right to higher education, free choice of occupation, and unsegregated legal status. As they struggle for their rights, the traditional concept of woman, which places her in a role of domesticity, is used as a strong instrument against their wishes. A woman is only supposed to be a wife, mother and a housewife and she is considered incapable of and unfit to gain any other position in society.

The concept of unequal status of a woman particularly governed middle class life, depicting a specific glamour in the role of an ideal woman and family life. Social changes brought up by industrial revolution and upheavals in demographic equilibrium where the percentage of women alarmingly outnumbered that of men confronted society with the task of increasing quantity of women left without possibility of subsistence, either by occupation or marrying a male- provider.

Hostility toward the new claims of women was based on men's fear of competition and an unwillingness to share heretofore exclusively men's domains of power; the higher education system, the labor market and the right to vote. It found its instrument of resistance in the traditional concept of woman. The flourishing of the feminist movement in the Czech countries was slower than in the west, did not have the initial claim on equal human rights, and under the influence of joint concern for national interests within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy women did not take an explicitly opposing position. They pressed their demands as they became necessary. The most severe battle arose in reference to admitting women to university studies at the end of the century.

After they were permitted to enter Medical School in 1900 the old concept lost its power.