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## **SOCIAL NORMS VERSUS PERSONAL HAPPINESS IN VICTORIAN NOVELS**

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### **Abstract:**

The most important problem that an individual faces is the conflict between social norms and personal happiness. The Victorian era was realized to be the period that led to swift developments and changes in technology and population growth. It was reckoned as an era of prosperity and great political reforms. However, the era has been perceived to have been filled with numerous contradictions. This paper attempts to take an in-depth study of social norms versus personal happiness and how the conflict was faced at its peak. What all norms were set in the Victorian age that led people to adjust to their happiness are discussed here. To depict the problem faced by society, I have selected several novels to crystallize the concept. Literature is a reflection of society, and the writers are the ones who portray it. Few writers have introduced the real concept of the Victorian age into their novels, as has been discussed in this paper. The Victorian age was classified on the basis of social structure, which led to high levels of discrimination between upper- and lower-class people. Due to the industrial revolution, labor was needed, and for that reason, children were the victims of child labor. And the most focal point was the condition of women in regard to marriage, gender roles, and sexuality.

**Key Words** - Social Norms, Personal Happiness, Victorian Era, Social structure, Industrial Revolution, Child labor, Marriage, Sexuality

### **Introduction**

The Victorian era is an age of British history that extends over the sixty four-year reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901). It was one of the longest reigns in English history. Queen Victoria succeeded William the IV as monarch of Great Britain and Ireland in 1837. Several significant social and historical developments throughout this time period changed the country in numerous ways. The era is noted for its economic development, destitution, and exploitation. The wealth disparity widened, and the drive for material and commercial

success caused what looked to be a moral deterioration in society. Is this gap between rich and poor okay? Does this gap affect them personally?

After this, industrialization took place. Industries and factories grew rapidly during the Victorian age. Population grew briskly along with the demand for labour for industries. But how far is it correct to indulge children in factory work and also that of the lower class? Children of the rich class were sent for education, and children of the poor class were sent for factory work. It is the basis of class discrimination and inequality. Happiness is equal for every child, but why was it not considered in the Victorian era? The Victorian era was the epitome of moral conduct. Its emphasis on morals was one of the most significant characteristics of the time. But is it correct to put moral conduct over personal happiness? The social norms were formed to maintain the morality of the Victorian era, which somehow restricted the personal identity and role of an individual. They were subjected to a strict code of behaviour for women that outlined every part of their being, including the appropriate attire and social interactions. The majority of the time, women's roles was confined to the home as domestic angels. It displays conflict between social norms and the personal happiness of women. As women were constrained to their homes, their reliance on their fathers and husbands for financial support resulted in the commercialization of the institution of marriage.

Sexuality was one of the moral codes only followed by women. The purity of women was assured but not of men. Is it appropriate and justified that the woman was viewed as 'fallen' if she had sex with another guy in a marriage and a man having many partners was accepted?

#### Literature Review

Victorian literature is a fascinating topic. During the Victorian era, there were significant changes in social structure, including the rise of the middle class and the expansion of the British Empire. These changes were reflected in literature, with authors exploring themes such as social mobility, gender roles, and the impact of industrialization on society. Some notable Victorian authors include Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and the Bronte sisters. "**Victorian Literature and the changing social structure**" is a research paper by H.P Suma, Assistant Professor of English Government Autonomous College, Mandya that focuses on the various author of Victorian era and how those literature has reflected the variation in social structure. It shows the very rapid and sweeping changes that the age witnessed and complexity of social forces in the age at any given moment.

The Victorian period was known for its strict social norms and moral codes. The concept of "respectability" was highly valued, and individuals were expected to adhere to strict standards of behavior in order to maintain their social standing. This included strict codes of dress, speech, and behavior, as well as a strong emphasis on family values and religious piety. However, there were also many social issues during this time, such as poverty, inequality, and the treatment of women and children. "**Morality in Victorian period**" by Bin Xiao, school of foreign studies, Beijing Information Science & Technology

University, considers Matthew Arnold's belief in poetry's religious function. Matthew Arnold was a prominent literary figure in the Victorian era. He believed that the era was marked by a sense of cultural crisis, as traditional values and beliefs were being challenged by the rapid changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Arnold was critical of what he saw as the shallow materialism and lack of spiritual depth in Victorian society, and he advocated for a return to the values of classical civilization. However, he also recognized the importance of progress and modernity, and sought to reconcile these conflicting impulses in his work.

**“A critical exploration of the Moral values in Victorian British society as seen through Adam Bede by George Eliot”** by Alidou Razakou, Ibourahima Boro University of Parakou, Benin has criticized British citizens living conditions in ‘Adam Bede’ in its paper. In Adam Bede, George Eliot explores the themes of morality and ethics in a rural community in England. The novel portrays the struggles of the characters to maintain their moral values in the face of temptation and adversity. The protagonist, Adam Bede, is a hardworking and honest carpenter who is deeply committed to his moral principles. He is contrasted with his brother, Seth, who is more susceptible to temptation and struggles to maintain his moral values. The novel also explores the themes of forgiveness and redemption, as the characters learn to overcome their flaws and mistakes. Overall, Adam Bede is a powerful exploration of the complexities of morality and ethics in a changing world.

My research paper **“Social norms versus personal happiness in Victorian novels”** has not just showed the moral values of Victorian era instead analyzed the different aspects of morality & norms in depth and the adjustment people had to do with their happiness. Each social norm and injustice has been portrayed in this paper along with the novel of that time. I have considered social structure as one of the reason of the conflict between norms and happiness other than that industrialization impact on British society, child labor, gender bias, sexuality also been investigated by me.

### **Research Methodology**

This research paper explains the problem that people of Victorian era had to face in regard with social norms and adjustment with their personal happiness. Different aspects and every possible conflict have been analyzed in this paper. Foremost, Victorian era is understood with the help of internet, books, and various websites. Several novels are considered to have in depth societal concept such as social structure in “Oliver Twist” and “Jane Eyre”. The social structure depicted in the novel is that of Victorian England, which was characterized by a rigid class system. At the top of the social hierarchy were the wealthy aristocrats, followed by the middle class, and then the working class. The poor and destitute, like Oliver Twist, were at the bottom of the social ladder. The novel portrays the harsh realities of life for the poor in Victorian England, including poverty, crime, and exploitation. The workhouses, where Oliver is sent after being orphaned, were notorious for their harsh conditions and mistreatment of the poor. The criminal underworld, represented by characters like Fagin and Bill Sikes, was also a prominent feature of the social structure in the novel. Overall, the social structure in Oliver Twist reflects the stark inequalities and injustices of

Victorian England, and serves as a critique of the class system and the treatment of the poor. In *Jane Eyre* too, the main character, Jane, is a governess who is caught between the upper and lower classes, and she must navigate the complex social hierarchy in order to find her place in the world. The novel also portrays the harsh realities of life for the working class, and the injustices they faced in a society that valued wealth and status above all else.

Child labor is been depicted in ‘*David Copperfield*’. The novel depicts the harsh realities of child labor during the Victorian era in England. The protagonist, David Copperfield, is forced to work in a factory at a young age and experiences the physical and emotional tolls of child labor. The novel sheds light on the exploitation of children in the workforce and the need for reform.

*Hard Times* is a novel that explores the concept of utilitarianism, which is the belief that actions should be taken to maximize overall happiness or pleasure. In the novel, the character of Mr. Gradgrind is a strong advocate of utilitarianism and believes that emotions and imagination should be suppressed in favor of facts and practicality. However, the negative consequences of this philosophy are also explored, such as the emotional and psychological damage it causes to the characters.

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* draws attention towards sexuality and morality, particularly in relation to the protagonist Tess. The novel depicts Tess as a victim of societal expectations and double standards regarding sexuality, as well as the consequences of sexual assault and the societal stigma surrounding it.

Finally, *The Mill on the Floss* prospects the gender roles and expectations of the time period, particularly in regards to the main character, Maggie Tulliver. Maggie struggles to conform to the expectations placed on her as a woman, and the novel ultimately critiques the limitations placed on women in Victorian society.

Victorian people were victims of social norms and the individuals within the treatment of higher class displayed lower self esteem, lack of awareness, and lack of speech.

### **Social Norms**

When I speak of the social norms and conventions of the Victorian era, it must firstly be stated what these norms are-

Most of the decisions in our family are made by men because we belong to a patriarchal world. If a member of the family wants to pursue anything, he must be firstly discussed with the family and wait for the final decision. That decision making power rests in men. This ultimately gives an assumption that women have lesser value in society and families.

Thought of Schaller and Crandall fits appropriately here that states –“social norms are the expectations of how people should think, feel, and behave.”

Social norms are generally unspoken that shapes the expectations within a group of people that further act as reference for all. An example is the fact that an ideal wife is that who respect her husband’s authority. Both men and women base their behavior on this norm

and when it is not upheld, both are highly indulged into violence.

A well known German philosopher and sociologist, Karl Marx believes “the use of norms is to promote the creation of roles in society which then allows people of different levels of social class to function properly”.

So the norms are creating roles. If we have a look at Victorian age society , women are shown pure and quiet , no jobs assigned particularly , no rights for vote , on the other hand , men were shown as strong , brave , possessed all kinds of freedom ,run their business and many more. This depiction leads to expectations by other person that leads to formation of norms and finally the roles.

Sociologist Young says “social norms usually evolve without direct instruction through process of trial and error, experimentation and adaptation”. Some rituals in Victorian era are accepted and adapted without any stiff idea associated with it. One of the examples analogous to this thought of young’s is ideology of marriage, anyone with bright red hair and a florid complexion should marry someone with jet-black hair. The very corpulent should marry the thin and spare, and the body, wiry cold-blooded hearted, emotional type making an ideal couple match. Slowly and eventually this adaptation transformed into social norm.

### **Personal Happiness**

In this section of research paper the term personal happiness is defined by various authors, thinkers and website. Its importance will be maintained.

Although happiness is a basic and familiar concept, yet it is very perplexing to portray it through words. According to Lyubomirsky happiness is the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful and worthwhile.

Happiness can be felt by engaging in sports, spending time with family and friends, while reading or even in solitude. So, happiness is personal in nature. Personal happiness can have two sides of positive social impact as well as negative social impact. An example considered here will clear the concept further. A person is animal loving and taking care of them by any kind of initiative will excavate his personal happiness. He wants to enroll himself in an NGO that offers fellowship after getting devoted for animals. This NGO is meant for those who personally feel happy amongst animals. But parents are not in favor of this decision and putting boundation over his personal happiness.

In second case, a person derives pleasure by giving pain to others. He enjoys inflicting pain on others, seeing them hurt and committing sadist acts. So, here every other person is trying to stop that person, obstruct his personal happiness of hurting others. In the first case, the boundation is negative for a positive social cause whereas in second case it is positive for a negative social cause. It is depicted in a movie ‘spyder’ where a person suffers from a disease SPD- sadistic personality disorder, getting happy by giving pain.

According to positive psychology “self happiness” refers to a sense of happiness or

satisfaction with one's self. The other definition is "happiness is a thought of utmost satisfaction one feels, even though all odds are against us". So satisfaction plays important role in the framing of personal happiness.

Likewise happened in Victorian society, boundations were applied on personal happiness for two above mentioned causes women were not allowed for outdoor activities due to their safety amongst prudish society. Whereas, women were suppressed for writing down thoughts to maintain male dominancy in the society.

Mary Ann Evans despite her great intellectual capacity was obliged to use a pen name (George Eliot) for all her works to escape punishment from the established rules as women writers were not taken seriously.

Happiness depends on self and it comes from within.

Dalai Lama says – "Happiness is not something ready- made. It comes from your own actions"

Aristotle once said, "Happiness depends upon ourselves"

So from the two definitions , we can say that happiness is 'finding myself 'and one of the fine way for that is ,solitude .Solitude makes a person feel the emotions of yourself. It evokes the emotions that arises personal happiness after the attainment of 'finding inner self'.

### **Conflict Between Social Norms & Personal Happiness**

In this part of paper, the conflict between social norms and personal happiness is discussed. What all sacrifices, compromises were done in regard to societal balance. In Victorian era, the norms were constructed and followed by the public that restricted their role, their identity. Social role gave birth to social norms, but here social norms gave birth to social role by confining ones identity.

The Victorian period in Britain was dominated by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901)As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, men and women roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history. In earlier centuries it had been very normal for women to work alongside husbands and brothers in the family business. But as Victorian era progressed, men increasingly commuted to their place of work. Wives and daughters were left at home to see the domestic duties.

According to Victorians, the only way to have a more civilized nation is to invest on culture, progress and future. Sacrifice was needed to maintain culture. According to Van, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, WITCHER & Cox, "sacrifice is defined as giving up one's own interest in order to promote the well-being of a partner or a relationship. According to Killen and Turiel, sacrifice consists of providing a positive benefit for another individual by subordinating one's own personal goals and potentially accruing personal costs in the process. In addition, sacrifice can be defined as when someone puts aside his or her personal goals and interests in order to provide help.

So, Victorian values were valued much. Duty and hard work, respectability, authority, good manners, charity, chastity and prudery, family life, men and women, social

class, are the values that have to be maintained at any cost. Few elements are taken into consideration to explain the conflict further.

Firstly, social class – it include the upper class, middle class, and lower class. Those who were fortunate to be in upper class did not perform labor. Instead, they were landowners and hired lower class people to work for them. Middle class was expanded more because of the rapid growth of cities and economy. The middle class was divided into two categories, higher level and lower level. People from lower middle class worked for those in higher level as new industries such as railroads, banks and machines wanted more labor for the proper functioning of city. The working class consisted of unskilled laborers who worked in brutal conditions. They did not have access to clean water and food, education for children; they lived on the streets, and would have to walk far for work. Thomas says, many workers resorted to the use of drugs like opium and alcohol to cope with their hardships.

Women of underclass who were unskilled and could not get any jobs became prostitute in order to make a living. Parliament voted to pass the “contagious disease act” which allowed prostitution in military towns, but the women were forcibly checked for disease says Landow. The act was meant to protect the men from disease and they do not bother if the women are harmed. So, the social hierarchy was maintained by the compulsion of lower class people.

The second element is Inequality between men and women – Despite the lifestyle differences between rich and poor individuals from this period, upper class men and women also lived wholly different lives. The upper class Victorian boys attended the best schools but girls were not. Boys were taught about various professions and girls were taught how to sing, play piano, how to draw, that too in homes not any teaching institution. Men were regarded as creatures of ambition, independence, action, reason, and aggression. Women in contrast were viewed and treated as creatures of passivity, submission, weakness, dependence, and self sacrifice. Therefore, women were expected to marry, submit to their husbands, bear children, care for the home, and were not allowed to vote or sue own property of men. Wives became property to their husbands, giving them rights to what their bodies produced – sex, children, and domestic labor. Marriage gave right to men the “ownership” over women body.

The third element is Sexual repression –it was one of the main questions of the age. The word ‘leg’ was substituted with ‘limb’, erotica wasn’t forbidden as it lived in private letters or in magazines.

‘The pearl’ was a monthly magazine published by Oxford University Press in 1879. All the wordy examples of sexuality were mentioned in this magazine. Even by today’s standards it was a pornographic magazine, where erotic tales and drawings were published strongly devoted to sexuality and high society. The Victorian era is synonymous with social restraint. In this era, cursing or using swear words and any references to sexuality or anything

distasteful became taboo in “nice” society. People do not refer “breasts” or “legs” instead they use terms “white and dark meat”. The society was prudish and hypocrite, they show off morality in society but prostitution as a compulsion of women was not stopped to prove morality.

### **Social Class**

In this section of the research paper the social class in Victorian age is pictured with words of Oliver Twist novel by Charles Dickens and Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte. England’s Victorian society can be divided into upper class that had income from heritage, middle class those were white-collar workers and working class who were mostly physical laborers. The social classes can be differentiated by inequalities in such areas as wealth, power, life styles, education, authority, religion and culture. Even though all family members share common lifestyle then also equally affected by the demographic differences based on the occupational status of the head.

### **Social class structure in *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens**

In Victorian era, many aspiring novelists included social criticisms in their works. Charles Dickens is one such novelist who observed and judged the class system in his writing style. Throughout the novel, *Oliver Twist*, it is described the opinions of rich taking advantage of the poor. The novel’s plot occurs in nineteenth century England, during the industrial revolution. There was a growing divide between aristocracy, factory owners, and their employees as the industrial revolution advanced. The rapid advancements in science technology and even literature that led the Victorian to develop the contemporary concept of discovery are to blame for this disorderly situation. An aspect of the industrial revolution is social change as well as the advancement of science, technology and the economy. The industrial revolution is the period of quick development brought on by new developments in transportation and industrial technology. As a result this condition is depicted in *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. He discusses the state of the poor in Victorian society during the industrial revolution and how their lives are in stark contrast to those of the upper class who live prosperous lifestyle. Dickens has a very strong opinion towards the furcating among the social classes, partly because his early life and adulthood was influenced and figured by them. When he was at young age, his family had been put into debtor’s prison, which “he knew that even though it was bad, it was nothing compared to the workhouse infamy” (Richardson). After his family was released from debtor’s prison, they lived near a workhouse, where he described that “he was able to hear many unpleasant sounds at every hour and see unwanted sights” (Richardson). At the age of twenty five he began to write *Oliver Twist* as a protest against the parliament. The upper class in Dickens book assumes that the lower class is full of fraudsters and miscreants. Because of the way lower class is treated by the upper ones in terms of both emotionally and economically, many of them turn to thievery and destruction to gain some money. Dickens does not mention directly that Oliver is from the upper class. He maintains the ambiguity by referring Oliver’s heritage. Oliver has different expectations than other characters because Dickens reference towards Oliver heritage is vague. He was born into the lower class, workhouse, so people expect him to be an ungrateful and miscreant.

“Wrapped in the blanket *which had hitherto formed his only covering*, he might have been



the child of a nobleman of a beggar, it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society” ( Dickens)

The narrator challenges socioeconomic class preconceptions early on in the novel while describing newborn Oliver and argues that they are only social constructs. Oliver was covered in a blanket, so no one looking at him could tell whether his mother was wealthy or not, or whether she belonged to a higher social level. Although there is no distinguishing characteristics that would mark a child like Oliver as a pauper or a bastard both of these labels have an impact on Oliver’s prospects for the future and how society views him. In the novel Noah Claypole is introduced as being only slightly higher socially classed than Oliver. And yet, as the narrator explains in this passage, he immediately takes pleasure in picking on Oliver, the orphan, when they come into touch. Noah’s cruel behavior is probably a result of the teasing he endures at the hands of the shop guys, who make fun of him due to his lack of wealth and social standing. However, this hierarchy demonstrates how social class is inherently unfairly used to gauge a person’s character.

For instance, Mr. Bumble, the supervisor of the workhouse where Oliver was born and nurtured, threatened to have Oliver cursed, maligned, hanged, drawn, and quartered, starved, flogged in front of crowd and imprisoned him in darkness in solitary confinement. As an orphan boy, Oliver dared to ask for more food, Mr. Bumble believed that Oliver is ungrateful and threatens him with these punishments because of his low social class and low voice of justice.

Later on, Oliver was offered for sale as though he were livestock for slaughter. However, after much discussion, it was ultimately decided that Oliver would train under Mr. Sowerberry, a funeral director and coffin maker. After assuming Oliver’s class and status, characters other than Mr. Bumble also treat him brutally. Oliver was once apprenticed to Mr. Sowerberry, an undertaker, who gave him animal scraps intended for the dog, did not stop his other apprentice from teasing him, forced Oliver to sleep among the coffins, and later beat him because the “dangerous pauper” had insulted his wife. Mr. Sowerberry did not carry his own opinions about Oliver; instead he believed the opinions of his wife. He bifurcated Oliver as an oppressive lower class orphan. When everyone got to know about the heritage of Oliver, the other social class is been observed. Nancy needs to look the part of a respectable lady in order to visit the court to learn what happened to Oliver. No one could pay attention to Nancy’s questions if she were to appear in her usual outfit, which consists of a red gown, a made-up face, and messy hair. She can pose as Oliver’s sister and get information about him once she has the trappings of a woman of a higher status.

“Accordingly, with a clean white apron tied over her gown, and her curl –papers tucked under a straw bonnet both articles of dress being provided from the Jew's inexhaustible stock, Miss Nancy prepared to issue forth on her errand”.(Dickens)

Fagin, the head of the band of pickpockets, treated Oliver terribly as well until he

got to learn that Oliver is actually from the upper class. The irony is that when Oliver learns that he is from the upper class, the people who had previously treated him with contempt now want to get to know him better and turn into his best friends.

It is illustrated the superficial sentiments of the dominating classes in London in the novel by using expectations placed on Oliver given his various status. The shallow individuals or people who hid behind others are not liked by anyone.

### **Social structure in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

In the Victorian era, class was something you were born into, which led people to believe they were in a superior position to those from lower classes. The novel *Jane Eyre* examines a society that values social and economic achievement. Throughout the novel, Jane moves from a lower to middle to an upper class position, and other characters evaluate her according to her social class in the same way that she does.

She sees the social strata that society has imposed on us as a means of judging people's moral character, and she is perpetually looking for a way to escape the group she was compelled to join. Although, she still belongs to the working class, her manners and education are those of someone from the upper class. Jane views poverty as degrading, and her time spent at Gateshead with the Reeds prompted her to form a prejudice towards the upper class that will continue to influence her choices throughout the novel. At the end, she manages to climb up the social ladder because of her inheritance without Mr. Rochester's assistance and back, proving her worth. Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre* describes Jane's change of viewpoint on social status as a result of her experiences at Gateshead and her connection with Rochester. She switches from prioritizing wealth over character to judging others based on their personalities rather than their fortunes. John Reed uses his social standing to degrade Jane since he has been taught that those who are less fortunate do not have the same rights as those who are more fortunate. Mrs. Reeds' lady maid, Miss Abbott, encourages Jane by explaining where she fits into the society. These interactions help Jane grasp the significance of social class in that era's society.

"You have no business to take our books, you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma's expense". (Bronte) Jane is criticized by John Reed because of her family poor background. Jane, an orphan with no means of support, resides with the wealthy Reed family, who abuse her inhumanely. Jane comes to believe that the impoverished are subhuman since they beg on the streets and don't have decent clothing or food. She discovers that because they are in a lower social class than rich people, impoverished people are "dependent" and can't read the same book as them. Because Jane is lower in the social class than John, this quote also demonstrates his dominance over her. He ostracizes her on the grounds that they are from different socioeconomic classes. Jane's idea of social class was greatly influenced by Miss Abbot, another Gateshead resident; she gives Jane a bit of advice to stay in her own lane. "And you ought not to think of yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master

Reed, because Misses kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money and you will have none, it is your place to be humble, and try to make yourself agreeable to them". (Bronte)

Jane is given a brief speech by Miss Abbott on her status and her place in society. She tells her that because the Reed family is wealthy and she will never have any money. She is not on a par with the rest of them. She also tells her to "be humble" because she is poor. She was raised in a wealthy family, yet the Reed family treats and perceives her as the member of lower class. Jane learns a crucial lesson about her place in these socially constructed classes as a result, and this inspires her to work harder in life to catch up to the Reeds and be as "equal" as them.

Jane learns about the limitations of poverty, which makes her think that living with the wealthy, cruel, and negligent Reed family is better than being poor.

"I could not see how poor people had the means of being kind; and then to lean to speak like them, to adopt their manners, to be uneducated, to grow up like one of the poor women I saw sometimes nursing their children or washing their clothes at the cottage doors of the village of Gateshead : no, I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste". (Bronte) This demonstrates how Jane's perception of being poor was impacted by the Reeds. She is given a second chance at a better life without the Reeds, but she declines it because it would require her to live with poor people. Jane learns about the "unkind" and "uneducated" attitudes of the poor while living with the Reeds. When Jane observes a poor woman taking care of her children in the Victorian era- a time when typically servants were employed to do these tasks. She thinks that living like that is worse than living with an abusive family.

"Poverty looks grim to grown people; still more so to children: they have not much idea of industrious, working, respectable poverty; they think the world only as connected with ragged clothes, scanty food, fireless grates, rude manners, and debasing vices: poverty for me was synonymous with degradation."(Bronte)

Jane refuses to reside with her devoted but underprivileged relatives. She has been taught by the Reed family in Gateshead that "poverty" is invariably accompanied by evil and unpleasantness. Due to what the residents of Gateshead had taught her about poverty, she identifies it with "ragged clothes, scanty food, fireless grates, rude manners, and debasing vices". (Bronte)

She also links it to humiliation, a lack of respect for herself and a loss of dignity. However, she learns to evaluate people based on their characters instead of their social status. Jane's struggles with coming from middle –lower class background are brilliantly captured by Charlotte Bronte. Jane's desire to move up the social ladder becomes more apparent at Thornfield as she becomes closer to Rochester, despite the fact that they are from different social classes, although they begin with a rocky start. She says "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?" "And if God had gifted me with

some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave, as it is now for me to leave you". (Bronte)

Jane defends herself against Rochester by claiming that if she were wealthy and attractive, Rochester would find it more difficult to leave her. Before Jane became one herself, she used to assume that the poor were nasty and uneducated. Also, when Jane first meets Blanche Ingram who would soon become Rochester's finance, she starts to question her own social standing and value. Blanche is everything Jane ever envisioned herself to be – affluent and beautiful. As a result, Jane is forced to face the painful truth that her social standing prevents her from marrying Mr. Rochester.

Over the course of journey through Gateshead and Thornfield, Jane gains a better knowledge of social class. She eventually begins to evaluate people on the basis of their character rather than how much money they have. Jane held the view that poverty is a synonym for degradation.

### **Industrial Revolution And Child Labour**

Child labor refers to the use of children for any job that keeps them away from their childhood, interferes with their capacity to go to school, and is dangerous or immoral in terms of their mental, physical, social, or moral development.

The Victorian era is well known by the great advancement of the Industrial Revolution which had formally started in 1750 in England. It represents the most fundamental change to human life in recorded history. The Industrial Revolution created profound transitions in the British society at that time because the rise of London and other cities in Great Britain marked a change from a way of life centered on the land to a modern economy based on manufacturing and financial institution. As a result, the economy of that time was shifting from one agricultural to an industrial one. In addition to poverty, illness and social issues, the European society of that era suffered from the economic downturn that followed the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial revolution also gave rise to a practice known as child labor, which was one of its harshest social impacts. With more families, workhouses were built, and as the world's population grew, there were more children everywhere. Poor children living in workhouses were expected to start working by the age of six or seven, and factory owners found them useful because they were easy to discipline than adults and were cheap.

Due to the fact that children were suffering and their suffering was noticeable, the condition of poor children would become a focal point of social reform in 19<sup>th</sup> century. People's living circumstances therefore varied according to their social status. Children from poor families were typically not lucky and not able to attend school because they needed to work to support their family by earning money. Children were compelled to labor because of poverty.

In general, the conditions of children in Britain throughout the Victorian era were

hard, because the way children lived depend on the family they come from. Gorham says- “childhood had great symbolic importance, but many Victorians suffered from an uncertainty about the nature of childhood and the proper relationship of children to the structure of the family and the wider society”. If a child came from a poor family, he or she was forced to work from an early age in order to support the family. Poor children’s working condition was exceedingly difficult because they had to work for long hours in deplorable surroundings. In contrast to poor children, children from wealthy families were always in school and did not have to work. As a result, the Victorian era can be defined by the exploitation of children to aid in the development of the economy. These circumstances influenced many Victorian writers who attempted to portray a realistic image of their society during the industrial revolution. Charles Dickens was one of the writer whose much works contained the theme of poverty and its impact on children.

***David Copperfield – a portrayal of child labor***

Dickens uses the character of David Copperfield to highlight the issue of child labor in his work. After his mother’s death, his step father sees no reason to send him to school and as he wanted to get rid of him anyhow, he sends him to work at his own warehouse. “Murdstone and Grimby”. Another reason for putting children to work is to get rid of them and get them out of the way. The thought about child labor is extremely clear and showed when David says, “How can I so easily be thrown away at such an age”. (Copperfield) This is emphatic statement against child labor that demonstrates how ineffective and wasteful it is to send young children to work.

Furthermore, the children were forced to work in generally deplorable conditions. This is also conveyed in the novel, when David defines his job as a “It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats”(Copperfield) Because of heinous conditions children were subjected to, they frequently suffered not just physically but also mentally and psychic damage. These criticism are even intensified with sentences like, “No word can express the secret agony of my soul”.(Copperfield) It is clear and I wish to call attention to the lack of love and affection that the children had to deal with, and it’s the fact that many children during that time were not offered even the slightest hope of good life. Also, the use of ironical language used in this novel adds to the social issue portrayal- David is “informed”, he “discovers” and there is a boy with the “extraordinary name Mealy Potatoes”. So every sensible and selected word in this novel describes a highly emotional and desperate situation.

**Utilitarianism**

Victorian Britain underwent a great deal of change in the nineteenth century, much of which was influenced by the Industrial Revolution and the advent of industrial capitalism. The rise of industrial capitalism brought with it issues, such as how to handle worker unionization. What actions should be taken to address the severe income inequality and rising numbers of the impoverished and homeless? How ought criminals to be dealt with? Jeremy Bentham developed a utilitarianism theory that condensed morality into a few straightforward questions as the Industrial Revolution got underway in England. He articulated his beliefs and addressed some of the concerns raised above; particularly those

that had to do with prisons, in his work *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Additionally, he provided guidance on how to assess the morality of a government or individual action, again by answering a few straightforward questions. Bentham's fundamental argument—and ultimately the one for which he is most remembered—is that the government ought to take initiatives to raise utility. The "property in any object" that either produces "benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness" or prevents "mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness," according to Bentham, is what he refers to as "utility."

*An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, written in 1789, serves as the foundation for utilitarianism as a philosophy. Bentham starts off by delineating the ideas of advantages and disadvantages, which he bases on utility. Humans essentially base their decisions on the results; if a choice "augments...happiness," we will make it; if it "diminishes...happiness," we will avoid it. He also confuses happiness with pleasure and unhappiness with pain, as was already mentioned. The mere act of engaging in enjoyable activities while abstaining from unpleasant ones is moral behavior.

He describes the idea of asceticism as a counterpoint to the principle of utility. According to him, asceticism and utility are similar, but asceticism flips the notion that right behaviors are those that promote pleasure and wrong actions are those that cause pain. In asceticism, actions that increase pleasure are wrong, and those that increase pain are right. He argues that "moralists" have adopted this idea despite his apparent distaste for it because they believe it will enhance their reputation and honor among others. In essence, according to Bentham, a person can assess the worth of their deeds based on their "intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, and its remoteness." While certainty and remoteness can be understood without much explanation, intensity and duration can be. Bentham utilizes the 7 concept of land ownership as an illustration to explain these two concepts. The certainty or uncertainty of acquiring the land, as well as "the nearness or remoteness of the time...it is to come into possession", determine how much joy a person can derive from it. Therefore, remoteness appears to be a measure of how much an individual's life would be impacted by the land. Bentham concluded that the goal of government should be to improve the quality of life for its people.

#### **Utilitarianism in Charles Dickens novel *Hard Times***

Utilitarianism is the belief that humans act in ways that promote their own self-interest. It is based on facts and leaves little space for creativity. In *Hard Times*, Dickens gives three vivid illustrations of utilitarian logic. Mr. Thomas Gradgrind, one of the novel's primary characters, was the principal of a school in Coketown. He was a firm believer in utilitarianism and implanted it in the pupils at the school, as well as his own children, from a young age. Mr. Josiah Bounderby was likewise a utilitarian, but he was more concerned with the profit that could be made from it. Dickens adds a group of circus members who are the polar opposite of utilitarian to give a striking contrast to the notions of Mr. Bounderby and Mr. Gradgrind at the other end of the spectrum. The father of five children, Thomas Gradgrind Sr., has lived his life by the book and has never deviated from his conviction that

life is nothing more than facts and numbers. He has effectively introduced this philosophy into the Coketown school system and has attempted to do so with his own children. Educators regard youngsters as easy targets to fill with information. They did not consider, however, the children's need for fiction, poetry, and other fine arts that are utilized to develop children's minds.

One has to wonder what the tale would be like if Gradgrind didn't control the school. How can you entrust such power to a utilitarian man as Gradgrind? I enjoy how Dickens arranges the book to elicit obvious questions like these. Apart from Bitzer, who is pretty successful on paper but lacks the capacity as a person to deal with life's ordinary challenges, Dickens does not reveal much about the achievement of the other pupils at the school. Gradgrind's two oldest offspring, Tom and Louisa, demonstrate how this utilitarian approach failed spectacularly.

These children were never given the chance to think for themselves, to have joy in life, or to develop their imaginations. True, they are intelligent people, but they lack the street smarts required to live. Tom is a young man who revolts against his father's strictness and repetition and leaves home to work in Mr. Bounderby's bank. Tom, now that he is no longer under his father's protection, begins to drink and gamble heavily. To get out of a heavy gambling debt, he eventually robs a bank and is forced to depart the area. When Bitzer realizes Tom has looted the bank and apprehends him, Mr. Gradgrind begs him to let Tom go, reminding him of all the hard work he put in at school. Ironically, Bitzer responds, using the factuality tools he learnt at Gradgrinds School, that the school was paid for, but it is now over and he owes nothing more. Gradgrind's educational theory has backfired on him in the face, which I find incredibly amusing. I believe Dickens included this irony as a comedy technique, but also to demonstrate how ineffectual the utilitarian approach of teaching is. Louisa, unlike Tom, gets along well with her father. She even decides to marry Mr. Bounderby despite her dislike for him in order to please her father. She remains in her marriage to Bounderby and goes about her life routinely and factually until she is confronted with a predicament and panics. Mr. James Harthouse, a young, attractive man, is attracted to Louisa and draws her attraction to him deceptively.

She has no idea what to do because she has never had feelings of her own. Her father never allowed her to think for herself or even love someone. This is why Louisa becomes agitated and sobs in her father's lap. She has always been instructed on what are "right" and what to do, so even her father is baffled at this point. Mr. Gradgrind deviates from the utilitarian ideology for the first time in the entire book and demonstrates empathy for his daughter and her feelings. After seeing his theory blow up in his face multiple times, one must assume that he is starting to have second thoughts about it.

Another outstanding illustration of utilitarianism is Josiah Bounderby. He owns a factory and a bank, making him one of Coketown's wealthiest residents, although he is not particularly likeable. His utilitarian perspective is comparable to Gradgrinds' in that

factuality is the most crucial quality anyone can have.

Mr. Bounderby maintained his utilitarian beliefs throughout the narrative, which essentially said that only profit matters. Bounderby, who owns a bank and a factory, employs a large number of people yet shows them absolutely no regard. The factory workers are nothing more to him than "Hands," thus he refers to them as such. Bounderby frequently claims that all workers are seeking "venison, turtle soup, and a golden spoon," when in reality, all they are seeking are respectable working conditions and pay that is reasonable for the task they perform. He doesn't care about his workers as people; rather, he is interested on how much work they can accomplish each day that will put money in his pocket.

Blackpool was informed that it would be against English law for him to divorce his wife. Bounderby divorces his wife later on in the book. This demonstrates how social classes and privileges were largely determined by a person's level of wealth. Although this was undoubtedly unfair, the way the social classes were set up permitted the wealthy to look down on the less fortunate. In general, persons with poor educations lacked money, whereas those with good educations, like Bounderby and Gradgrind, were wealthy. People who understood the facts—utilitarian's—became successful, while others who did not were forced to work in the utilitarian's factories.

The circus performers could be characterized as utilitarianism's complete antithesis. This is the aspect of the book that most immediately comes to mind. The circus performers are straightforward, accepting individuals whose life's work is to make others laugh. They are shown by Dickens as an improvement above the "Hands" but still relatively at the bottom of the social ladder. Gradgrind, Bounderby, and other utilitarian's despise these individuals because they stand for all the things that utilitarianism despises, including love, creativity, and humor. The Gradgrinds welcomed Sissy Jupe, a circus performer's daughter, to live with them. She is a good example of the circus people since she possesses the innocence and free will that are absent in the lives of those around her. Even though it's usually too late for most of them, her goodness simply permeates everyone around her. People who avoided falling into the utilitarian trap were able to live blissfully and unrestrictedly, loving, laughing, and using their imaginations—which is how life should be lived. Dickens clearly had a strong idea about how life should be lived and did a fantastic job of portraying it.

One can really witness Mr. Thomas Gradgrind, the book's main character and a staunch advocate of utilitarianism, come to terms with its drawbacks and start to veer away from it. Maybe he now wishes he was in the circus as he watches his life crumble.

### **Family And Marriage**

The effects of ongoing industrialization had a significant impact on people's lives. The society at this time was shaped by the emergence of new social and moral norms as well as different job patterns. Since there is no denying that families interact with their social environments, they cannot be viewed as a separate unit. As a result, homes and families also suffered significant transformation. However, not all of England's citizens were equally



impacted because of the sharp social class divide that existed at the time, which created various conditions and opportunities for adjusting to the changes. Members of urban working-class and middle classes were more sensitive to outside influences. Families are frequently viewed as social force products. Even though marriage is a long-standing custom, in the decades before the Victorian era, the procedure for getting married in England underwent steady change. There weren't many guidelines regarding marriage for a very long time, let alone regarding how a legal union should be established.

Lawrence Stone writes, "In the Early Modern period, marriage was an engagement which could be undertaken in a bewildering variety of ways, and the mere definition of it is fraught with difficulties." Lawrence Stone is describing the condition of marriage in mediaeval England. He continues by stating that polygyny during this time was extremely typical due to "easy divorce and much concubinage." This was strongly prohibited by Catholic priests in England even if it was common. However, Anglo-Saxon pagans who had more relaxed ideas on marriage did not oppose the practice. For those who had property during this time, marriage was primarily a business deal "between two families concerning property exchange" and a "private contract" for those who did not. In an era when divorce and remarriage "was still widely practiced," a church ceremony was seen as a luxury that was out of reach for the majority of people.

Polygyny wasn't forbidden until the thirteenth century, when the Church was finally able "to take control of marriage law". However, there was still no one set manner to get married, therefore the process was still extremely difficult even in the sixteenth century. One approach was to establish a written agreement between the parents of the bride and groom that would specify an exchange of commodities or money, as was previously mentioned. Following this, there would be a number of additional procedures, including reading vows in front of witnesses, a church ceremony, a public reading "of banns in church, three times," and lastly "the sexual consummation." However, none of the actions taken following the formal contract were actually technically required to be regarded as legally binding. The marriage was regarded as valid in the eyes of the law if the contract was signed. A contract was not even required for many. The majority of the time, if an "exchange of promises before witnesses which was followed by cohabitation" occurred, then this would constitute a binding marriage. The Catholic Church did not require a priest to perform a wedding until the latter sixteenth century, following the Protestant Reformation. The cost of a church wedding led many in the Church to denounce elopements, yet many still decided to elope or have a private ceremony. A monk by the name of Gratian, who worked to explain and uphold specific marriage-related regulations for the Church in 1150, was one such figure. In some of these clarifications, it is stated that "clandestine marriages should not be made" and that "no one shall marry a wife without a public ceremony."

The institution of marriage underwent significant modifications as England entered the nineteenth century. By granting them more liberties and privileges within marriage, many of these reforms improved the lives of married women. The nineteenth century saw a

broad impact of the Victorian era's new improvements in women's rights in marriage. These developments had an impact on both public and private life and finally paved the way for women to gain the right to vote in the early 20th century. For Victorians, marriage took on greater significance as a cultural institution than it had for earlier generations, and alterations to this institution had an impact on how the Victorian era developed.

### **The ideal of Womanhood**

The ideology that allocated the private world to the woman and the public sphere of industry, commerce, and politics to the man had become largely accepted by the time the industrial period was well under way in Britain. Domesticity was promoted as a female domain in popular advice literature, domestic novels, as well as in the advertisement columns of magazines and newspapers. For many members of the professional and business classes, the growing physical barrier between the house and the workplace meant that these women lost contact with production and began to forge an identity purely within the domestic sphere. Women were given a moral obligation to their families, particularly their husbands, and to society at large through their responsibilities at home. However, as Frances Goodby's example demonstrates, the ideal woman at this time was not the feeble, passive being of romantic literature. Instead, she was a busy, competent, and honourable woman who found strength in her moral superiority and whose virtue was displayed through service to others. As a result, the idea of different realms, as it was practiced during the industrial era, did not involve slavish devotion to a set of prescribed principles. Instead, it was a way of life and a way of doing things founded on evangelical ideals such as the value of the family, the permanence of marriage, and the inherent moral goodness of women.

The home was seen as a refuge from the hectic and turbulent public worlds of politics and business, as well as the filthy world of the factory. Those who could afford it developed comfortable household interiors with rich textiles, heavy draperies, and fussy furniture that effectively cocooned the residents from the outside world. Domesticity was manifested in the middle-class household through servants, homely décor, pleasant furnishings, home entertainment, and clothing.

'The female body was dressed to emphasize a woman's separation from the world of work.' Women's clothing began to reflect their function. Women's clothing were more sexual in the nineteenth century, with crinolines, hoopskirts, and corsets that nipped in the waist and shoved out the breasts exaggerating the hips, buttocks, and breasts. The feminine body was adorned in a way that highlighted a woman's detachment from the world of work. Women became walking emblems of their social function - wife, mother, domestic manager - by wearing gowns that mimicked their interior decor. The trend for constraining corsets and voluminous skirts highlighted not just a woman's primary function, but also the physical limitations on her actions. It was difficult to move freely while wearing corsets that made breathing difficult and thick textiles that hampered movement. It's no surprise that those ladies who could afford to keep up with the latest clothes were prone to fainting, migraines, and hysteria.

When we look at 19th-century middle-class domestic life through the eyes of those

who lived it, it is evident that women actively shaped a culture that benefited their own interests. Domestic life was a cultural manifestation of the female world. Their clothing, etiquette, household furnishings, social activities, religious devotion, and philanthropic action all contributed to the creation of a cosmos in which women might assert their dominance. Only in prescriptive fiction can one find the bourgeois woman, who spends her days aimlessly cultivating her creative abilities, socializing with other women, and monitoring the servants. In reality, most middle-class women were involved in activities both within and outside the home.

'This created a supply of cheap labor in the form of married women ...'

Although the middle class has largely been depicted as the perfect Victorian woman, the home ideal was equally prevalent among the working classes. Working-class males started to demand home responsibilities for their wives while defending their own positions and pay scales. Working-class women started to demand these rights for themselves at the same time in order to maintain their place in the house. But in reality, these women's definitions of domesticity were quite different. Working-class women found themselves working at poorly paid occupations in their own houses but yet upholding the myth that women's sole responsibilities were domestic in nature since homework, or paid labor done in the home, was considered consistent with marriage and having children. As a result, home industry was able to grow during the 19th century, thanks in part to the domesticity movement. Married women were a source of inexpensive labor as a result, and it was their increased income that allowed the family to subsist.

The mother and her children were at the centre of the domestic ideal. The role of the mother had been idealized from the early 19th century. Motherhood had acquired symbolic significance and was no longer just a reproductive function. Many middle-class women saw motherhood and domestic life as a "sweet vocation," a replacement for women's productive roles. Domesticity and motherhood were portrayed as providing sufficient emotional happiness for women.

'The childless single woman was a figure to be pitied.'

Compared to their predecessors, middle-class women spend more time with their kids. They were more likely to breastfeed, play with, educate, and involve their children in daily household activities. By the middle of the 20th century, middle-class women who were giving birth "confined" to the home had discovered that they could only become truly womanly if they emotionally reacted to their newborns and formed bonds with them via breastfeeding and continual care. Being a mother was viewed as a confirmation of who they were. While being a mother was proof that she had entered the sphere of womanly virtue and female fulfillment, marriage represented a woman's maturity and respectability. A woman who chooses not to have children runs the risk of being seen as insufficient, unsuccessful, or abnormal in some other way. A married woman was expected to have children, and a childless single woman was despised. She was frequently urged to work with children as a nanny or governess, allegedly as compensation for her loss.

The message that motherhood was woman's highest achievement, though within marriage, never weakened through the course of the period. Motherhood was idealized during this time as the pinnacle of a woman's emotional and spiritual fulfillment. But at the same time, motherhood was turning into a social obligation, a state duty, and a full-time job that was difficult to juggle with paid work. And mothering changed from something that came naturally to something that needed to be learnt. Infant mortality rates were high in the new industrial cities like Manchester, Bradford, and Glasgow. Responsibility for the appalling death rate amongst infants was blamed on mothers. It was believed that infant deaths could be avoided if underprivileged mothers breastfed their children and received baby care instruction.

‘The ideal of true motherhood demanded women be constantly present for their children’ Although these issues were more challenging to address, they contributed just as much to the high infant death rate in industrial cities as did poor sanitation, contaminated water, overcrowding, and the prevalence of disease. The pressures of the job market were viewed as irreconcilable with the ideal of real motherhood, which required women to be continually present for their children. This indicated a dedication to domesticity. Working-class moms had to juggle the duties of childcare and putting food on the table, thus they were more likely to be accused of being careless and inattentive.

### **Doctrine of two spheres**

Another significant factor was the widely accepted theory of two spheres in industrial societies. A family's house was seen as the safe haven in the private sphere, whereas the public sphere was perceived as risky and corrupting. Accordingly, gender roles were divided. Men's job was moved from the home to the marketplace during the Industrial Revolution, where they were expected to keep up with production. Meanwhile women were responsible for reproduction and the social stability of the household. The so-called "cult of true womanhood" developed, endorsing piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as qualities of a respectable woman.

### **Sexuality**

A Victorian woman should be ethical, chaste, dignified, and humble. Etiquette and manners reinforced this goal. The decorum even went to the pretence that wearing underwear was never acknowledged (in fact, they were occasionally referred to as "unmentionables" in general). It was thought that any discussion of this subject would go off into inappropriate attention to anatomical details. In contrast to present traditions of open and continual discussion of anatomical details, one Victorian lady put it this way: "those are not things, my dear that we speak of; indeed, we try not even to think of them." The attempt to avoid acknowledging anatomical reality occasionally ended in humiliating failure. The Duchess of Manchester tripped over her large hoop skirt when she moved too quickly to manoeuvre over a stile in 1859, according to the Hon. Eleanor Stanley. The Duchess caught a hoop of her cage in it and went regularly head over heels, lighting on her feet with her cage and entire petticoats above, above her head. The other ladies hardly knew whether to feel grateful or not when they saw that she was wearing a pair of scarlet tartan knickerbockers, which were

visible to the Duc de Malakoff in particular and to the rest of the world in general.

Today, one would never be embarrassed by such an event. Nevertheless, men's entertainment, such as men's magazines and music hall skits, made great comedic material out of the topic of ladies' bloomers even though Victorians thought discussing women's undergarments in mixed company was unacceptable. Ladies' equestrian riding was a strenuous pastime that gained popularity among middle-class ladies as a form of relaxation. For this new market, numerous riding etiquette guides were released. As the debate surrounding bicycle riding held a direct parallel to the splay of legs in riding a horse similarly to a man, maintaining modesty while riding was essential for women. Women's riding pants and breeches were created for the purpose of preventing chafing, but they were nevertheless worn underneath dresses. In order to maintain standards of women's modesty, female helpers were engaged to aid with fittings as women's riding attire were made at the same tailors that made men's riding apparel.

In the Victorian era, women's physical exercise was a subject of debate at the highest levels of academic inquiry. Canadian doctors disagreed over whether it was appropriate for women to ride bicycles:

In 1896, a number of letters that appeared in the Dominion Medical Monthly and Ontario Medical Journal voiced worry that women riding bicycles would experience orgasms. Some medical professionals asked their colleagues to encourage women to avoid "modern dangers" and continue to engage in traditional leisure activities out of concern that they would unleash and breed a country of "over-sexed" ladies. However, not all medical colleagues agreed that cycling and orgasm were related, and this argument over women's leisure pursuits persisted far into the 20th century.

### **Victorian Morality and Sexuality**

Women were supposed to exclusively have sex with their husband. However, having many partners was acceptable for men; several spouses had protracted encounters with other women while their wives remained with them because divorce was not an option. A woman was viewed as "ruined" or "fallen" and was somehow thought to have breached the marriage if she had sex with another guy. There are numerous examples of women suffering severe consequences for deviating from moral expectations in Victorian literature and art. In writings by renowned authors like Tolstoy, Flaubert, or Thomas Hardy, adulteresses met terrible ends as contrast to the contemporary potential of happiness and fulfillment from adultery.

In the Victorian era, sexual interactions and issues were not openly and honestly acknowledged; instead, they were met with deception, embarrassment, and dread. According to a common perception, women's sexual cravings don't bother them all that much. Sexual experiences have negative effects on women and their families even if women's desires were always there. Limiting family numbers led in denying sexual appetites, unless a husband had demands that women were "contracted" to perform as wives. Many Victorians were

"factually uninformed and emotionally frozen about sexual matters." To discourage premarital sexual relations, the New Poor Law stipulated that "women bear financial responsibilities for out-of-wedlock pregnancies," which was a significant step towards equality. Women were declared legally and financially responsible for their illegitimate children in 1834. Sexual connections for women could not simply be about desire and feelings, this was a luxury reserved for men; the repercussions of sexual interactions for women took away women's physical desires.

**Sexual desire and its repression in *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy**

Men have mastered the art of harnessing nature, but they have yet to transcend it. Natural laws have a strong influence on human behavior, and these rules can be totally divergent to those of civilization. As a result, the conscientious human being is continuously in flux, being drawn by both primordial and civilized forces. Thomas Hardy portrays Tess Durbeyfield as a character under duress in *Tess of D'Urbervilles*. She and the men she loves are unable to find a happy medium between their animal lust and their civilized sensibilities and their collective incompetence eventually ruins her happiness.

Hardy demonstrates Tess' basic desires. She is the unique girl in the May Day procession with the deep red mouth, dynamic face, red ribbon, and ample endowment. Her body exudes sexuality. Hardy even sets Tess in settings that complement her sensuous, natural characteristics. She walks across a garden-

"Damp and rank with juicy grass, which sent up mists of pollen at a touch...upon her naked arms were sticky blights, which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her arms" (Hardy 56)

This passage's firm, rich description shrieks sex. The moisture and pollen are favorable to reproduction, the arms are exposed, and the stains on the trees happen to be snow-white---alluding to sperm. Through this scene, Hardy suggests Tess's ability to be sexually aroused, however this arousal may be subconscious, as she is unaware of her circumstances. The use of natural imagery demonstrates that Tess' lust came with her features---as a gift from nature. Tess's Sixth Standard education and Christian morality are merely shams, as she is unable to resist the biological drive to procreate. Tess's passion for Angel increase like the summer heat which shows the season's urge.

"A mid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the From Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization" (Hardy)

Tess is directly linked to the valley's bustling fertilization operations by the author. He demonstrates how nature compels Tess to seek Angel, just as nature compels two rivers in the same valley to eventually merge. Hardy also portrays Alec and Tess's attraction as natural. Alec serves Tess strawberries at their first meeting, and she consumes them in a "half-pleased, half-reluctant state". Alec also lavishes roses on Tess. Tess gladly embraces strawberries and roses as symbols of passion. Tess has animal tendencies that her more refined sensibilities cannot hope to repress, according to Hardy. This sense of impending doom pervades Hardy's description of The Chase-

“Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase...about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares.” (Hardy)

That is the source of the conflict. Tess can't reconcile her love for Alec and Angel with the social standards that require women to be physically and mentally pure. Tess thinks on her deeds and criticizes herself as she climbs up the lonely hills around Marlott shortly after her return from Trantridge. The sexual double standard also affects Tess. Angel obtains Tess' forgiveness for his liaison with a London lover on the night Angel and Tess arrive at the D'Urbervilles home. When Tess tells Angel of her own wrongdoing, Angel, ironically, is unable to find the same compassion within himself. The double standard derives from the Victorian era concept that virile young men should be given special consideration. Furthermore, guys were the ones who initiated sex. Women were meant to accept masculine desire passively. Angel, on the other hand, should be able to overcome these preconceptions. The irony of the confession moment stems from the disparity between what one expects of Angel and what he really accomplishes. An angel is a person who has abandoned Christianity in favor of humanism. Angel, in that case, would be expected to recognize morality as situational. Angel, on the other hand, follows a hard, dogmatic set of principles that is even harsher than those of his parents, whose “hearts went out of them at a bound towards extreme cases.” Angel's parents would feel sorry for Tess they would have seen her as someone to love and save. Thus, Angel's rejection of Tess is doubly ironic; he is neither true to his parents nor to himself.

Alec plays his role from the beginning, calling Tess “my beauty,” “my pretty girl,” and “my pretty coz” when they first meet. His behavior was not so astonishing because it is Tess's “luxuriance of aspect” that first leads Alec's eyes to “rivet themselves upon her”. He mainly perceives her physical features, for beauty makes sex more pleasurable. Alec fancies kissing Tess as she walks away. He is hardly restrained by social conventions such as marriage and foreplay. He wishes to physically possess Tess right then and there. The Chase's first great tragedy is caused by his inability to love Tess spiritually. He ruins Tess's spirit because he has no respect for it, even while he gives Tess bodily pleasure - pleasure that is ultimately hollow without fulfillment on a higher plane.

Angel is likewise predictable. When he sees Tess at the dining table, he exclaims, “What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!” (Hardy) Angel does not know Tess; he has in mind society's idealization of a virginal and pure woman, which he superimposes on Tess's physical shape. Tess's beauty has intrinsic value to him only insofar as it represents her purity, the true object of his spiritual love. Angel commits the reverse of rape after their marriage - the denial of sex, which is a major determinant of happiness in any marriage. When Tess tries to kiss Angel as he walks away from the D'Urbervilles estate for work, Angel shakes her off, and “Tess shrank into herself as if struck.” Angel's abstinence causes him to be unhappy. If Angel had physically loved Tess, even if it would have been vulgar by society's standards, their relationship would have likely endured because mutual lust would have kept them together. Angel, with the help of time, would have seen past her

affair with Alec and rediscovered his spiritual love for her. This reconciliation would not have been delayed until the very end of the novel, when it was too late. But, because Angel is as blind to physical love as Alec was to spiritual love, the two men condemn Tess to physical and spiritual oblivion.

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is mainly a novel about the fight between the natural yearning for sexual fulfillment and the social mandate of sexual suppression. Tess becomes a victim as a result of this conflict since she is unable to obey both her inherent impulse and her social upbringing. In a sense, Victorian civilization attempted to construct a dam to hold back the reservoir of fundamental human need. Hardy demonstrates in his penultimate novel that when the dam ruptures, a flood of repressed unhappiness is unleashed.

### **Gender Role**

The Victorians were equally rigid about gender norms as they were about class. In the Victorian era, men and women had well defined roles in society, which is hard to understand in modern times. They were expected to remain in their roles and carry them out wholeheartedly. I discuss the roles in this section that contribute in understanding the Victorian era's characters.

### **Pre-Victorian Gender Roles**

Many women work alongside their partners, despite the fact that traditionally, women have always been in charge of all aspects of childcare. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the majority of males were either agricultural laborers or tradesmen who worked from home, such as blacksmiths. In either case, their spouses and daughters were aware of what was happening in their professional lives and were able to provide support in addition to their domestic responsibilities. This help was provided in the form of bookkeeping, customer service assistance, delivery assistance, and cleanup assistance. Wives and kids would help bring in the crops in the fields, and on farms, they would help cultivate the vegetable patches and care for the animals. Everyone contributed to the "family business" by helping out.

### **The role of men in the Victorian era**

The primary breadwinner was the guy up to the middle of the 20th century. Men were supposed to labor all day, bringing in enough money to cover the rent, buy food, and other necessities. They were referred to as "bread winners" since men were the ones who had to work to pay for the daily bread, which was a staple aliment for all social levels. The Victorian age saw little change in this mentality. The man's responsibility as the family's breadwinner persisted. But he required some kind of education and training, which began when he was a small boy, to become that earner. His class determined this schooling. However, his schooling took precedence over that of his sister. The young man was expected to start working full-time as soon as he finished school. If he were of the working class, this would take place in a factory, farm, mine, etc. If he were of the middle class, it would take place in a bank, office, etc. If he belonged to a higher social level, he would assist his father in managing the family estate or enlist in the military, the navy, the church, etc. In any case, Victorian men and boys had access to education and training that was not available to women since it was believed that men should be the ones to make the daily life's thinking, planning,



and decision-making tasks.

### **The role of women in the Victorian era**

Motherhood was the ultimate zeal for women in the Victorian era. In the eyes of society, it was up there with having a good husband and a nice house. Women didn't need schooling to become "Angels of the House," they could achieve it without it. She needed to pick up skills like time management, cooking, and sewing. She also required social skills training so she could interact with the neighbors and the servants. Generally speaking, women learn how to be moms and wives from their own families. Victorians placed a high value on family, and because men spent the entire day at work, it was the woman's responsibility to keep the home and family together.

### **Gender role in *Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot**

Maggie Tulliver's family has always seen her as "contrary" and unladylike, even as a little child. She frequently speaks out of turn, reads excessively, and commits rebellious acts like chopping off her hair. Her actions are frequently compared poorly to those of Lucy Deane, her cousin and the epitome of Victorian womanhood. Lucy possesses the traits Victorian society values in its women: sweetness, obedience, and traditional beauty. As they mature, Maggie and Lucy have quite different experiences with becoming women. Maggie battles against the limitations placed on women's life and choices and as a result become a social outcast while Lucy adheres to the social expectations of her gender. The divergence in these two women's outcomes demonstrates that Victorian society had a tendency to both idealize women and harshly punish those who broke the accepted social and sexual order. While Maggie is shamed by her family for having unkempt hair or a filthy pinafore, Lucy is complimented as a child for the neatness of her clothes, hair, and appearance. This implies that women are valued for their outward beauty and capacity for social acceptance. Maggie's childhood also served as a continual reminder of her inferior status. She doesn't receive a rigorous education, in contrast to Tom, because she attends school to learn how to be a wife and mother. When she examines her brother's geometry textbook, Tom tells her that "girls can't do Euclid," and his professor Mr. Stelling says that women "couldn't go far into anything." Maggie exhibits a high level of intellectual ability, but because of her gender, many people believe she is unqualified for advanced study. Other, more covert methods also reveal Maggie's servitude to Tom. For instance, in a statement made by Mrs Tulliver, her mother, Maggie is told that Mrs Tulliver intends to give Tom her best tablecloths and leave Maggie with "the large check it never shows so well when the dishes are on it." Men are given preference and priority, even in minor domestic issues. However, as Mr. Wakem said, women in Maggie's situation are unable to establish a distinct identity from their family-- "we don't ask what a woman does—we ask whom she belongs to" (Eliot). The lawyer who fought the Tulliver family for ten years, Mr. Wakem, informs his son Philip that he cannot wed Maggie due to the family dispute. The fact that Maggie "belongs" to the male Tullivers renders her guilty purely by connection, regardless of what she really did during this struggle. Women's identities are absorbed into those of their husbands and families because they lack independent autonomy.

Maggie struggles with her lack of agency in the world as she matures into an adult.

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After the Tulliver family filed for bankruptcy, Tom joins a shipping company and starts to amass wealth. Maggie, on the other hand, is forced to stay at home, accept her situation, and watch helplessly as her life changes. Tom explains to Maggie when they are young that he is more powerful financially than she is simply because of his gender. "I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy. I always have half-sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas boxes, because I shall be a man, and you only have five-shilling pieces, because you're only a girl." (Eliot)

This slight difference in their allowances when they were young is a reflection of the greater financial imbalance between them as adults, which further restricts Maggie's freedom. Tom chastises Maggie for going against his orders by keeping her acquaintance with Philip Wakem a secret from him. She responds by pointing out that his influence over her life is based on his social standing: "because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world". (Eliot) Being unable to "do something" frustrates Maggie constantly since she feels as though it hinders her from helping her family or herself.

Maggie is enduring the full brunt of social scorn and separation from St. Ogg's society as a result of her failed elopement with Stephen Guest. She lives as a virtual outcast because she went beyond what is considered appropriate feminine behaviour. Leaving St. Ogg's with a man makes Maggie guilty, regardless of the fact that she didn't choose to leave with Stephen Guest, slept with him outside of marriage, or got married to him. The narrator draws attention to the hypocrisy of "respectable" society in these situations, - "If Miss Tulliver, after a few months of well-chosen travel, had returned as Mrs. Stephen Guest, with a post-marital trousseau, and all the advantages possessed even by the most unwelcome wife of an only son, public opinion, which at St. Ogg's, as elsewhere, always knew what to think, would have judged in strict consistency with those results". (Eliot) In other words, Maggie would have been welcomed in the community as the wife of one of the town's most influential residents if she had wed Stephen Guest after fleeing with him. She would have received retrospective validation from the marriage even though the "crime" was the same. The narrator notes that Victorian society has a propensity to either exalt or denigrate women. Lovers like to sit in a chair "a little above or a little below the one on which your goddess sits," (Eliot) the narrator explains that women are at once worshipped and then looked down upon. The lives of Lucy and Maggie are a test to this saying. Lucy is idealised as the "perfect" woman, future wife, and conventionally feminine woman. On the other hand, after eloping with Stephen Guest, the once-desirable Maggie is now seen with scorn as a "fallen woman". (Eliot)

Maggie doesn't fit well with the constrained expectations and responsibilities that Victorian society assigned to women because of her passion, intelligence, and unconventionality. She is unable to accept the passiveness that is required of women, and as a result of her acts of defiance against these norms, she becomes socially isolated. According to *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie's community's lack of options for women prevents her from experiencing sexual, intellectual, or creative fulfillment.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this section is to analyze the whole paper in brief. Victorian era was an epitome of social norms and due to this many point of conflict aroused too. During the Victorian era, the Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes in society, including the growth of factories and urbanization. This led to a significant increase in wealth for some, while others struggled to make ends meet. The wealthy elite had access to luxuries and opportunities that were not available to the working class, who often lived in cramped and unsanitary conditions. While some argued that this was simply the natural order of things, others recognized the need for social reform to address the growing inequality. Overall, the gap between rich and poor in the Victorian era was a complex issue with many factors at play.

The second conflict is child labor that was a common practice in the Victorian era, especially in factories and mines. Children as young as five or six were often employed to work long hours in dangerous conditions. While there were some efforts to regulate child labor, it was generally accepted as a necessary part of the economy at the time. However, there were also social reformers who advocated for the abolition of child labor and the protection of children's rights.

Also, in the Victorian era, moral conduct was highly valued and often prioritized over personal happiness. This was due to the influence of the Victorian moral code, which emphasized virtues such as self-discipline, hard work, and respectability. Many Victorians believed that personal happiness was secondary to fulfilling one's duties and obligations to society and family. This belief was reflected in the literature and art of the time, which often portrayed characters sacrificing their own happiness for the greater good. However, it's worth noting that not all Victorians adhered to this strict moral code, and there were certainly individuals who prioritized their own happiness above all else.

Finally, the concept of women was analyzed that it was common in the Victorian era to view women as fallen or morally inferior. This belief was rooted in the idea of the "angel in the house," where women were expected to be pure, submissive, and devoted to their husbands and families. Any deviation from this ideal was seen as a moral failing. This belief was reinforced by literature, art, and social norms of the time. However, there were also feminist movements and individuals who challenged these beliefs and advocated for women's rights and equality.

The conclusion is that individuals of Victorian age were struggler of survival, prisoners of social norms and martyrs of personal happiness.

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