

The Victorian Age

The Victorian Age was characterised by rapid change and developments in nearly every sphere - from advances in medical, scientific and technological knowledge to changes in population growth and location. Over time, this rapid transformation deeply affected the country's mood: an age that began with a confidence and optimism leading to economic boom and prosperity eventually gave way to uncertainty and doubt regarding Britain's place in the world. When looking at Victorian era characteristics, it is important to look at all aspects of Victorian Britain. That includes society, daily life, scientific progress and both positive and negative characteristics. The Victorian Era was considered as a **landmark period** in the history of the Great Britain. This period brought about the much-needed prosperity in the Great Britain. Hence, this period is also called as the Golden period in the British history.

Characteristics of Victorian Britain :

1- Britain becomes powerful and rich

The Victorian stands as a landmark for several reasons. First and foremost, it was during the same period that **England became the world's most powerful and richest countries** by ruling a quarter of the world's population thereby having the largest empire. Also, the **demand for goods** like food, clothes, and housing increased substantially as a consequence of the increase in population from 16 million to 37 million. The two major reasons for the same were: fertility rate which was due to the improved standard of living of the people as a result of which the number of women who could have children increased while mortality rate lowered as there was no epidemic and also because the health facilities got better.

2- Britain becomes industrialised

Another Victorian era characteristic was the industrialisation of Britain.

A number of factories sprawled up leading to vast improvements in the living as well as working standards of the people. This also resulted in the emergence of various towns. Apart from this, a lot of scientific inventions took place like the telephone invented by Alexander Graham Bell as well as the radio the radio.

3- Architecture, Art and Culture:

Culture, as well as architecture, flourished during this period. The Gothic Revival architecture was noteworthy resulting in the clash between Gothic and classical ideals. Additionally, in 1851, the Great Exhibition which displayed the best innovations of the 19th century was also organized which was the first of its kind. Photography also emerged during this period, the first photograph being that of Queen Victoria herself. She became the first monarch to be photographed. Music and cinema also became immensely popular during this period. Brass bands and The Bandstand became well known. Music recording during this time was an unusual concept. The usual picture was the sound of the brass band being played while people walked leisurely through parklands.

4- Scientific Progress:

Queen Victoria's regime witnessed the progress of science by leaps and bounds. Ether and chloroform started being used as anesthetics. These anesthetics were also used in cases of dentist treatments where there is a lot of pain involved. Apart from this, even antiseptics were introduced which were in the form of Carbolic acid (phenol). Additionally, telephone, telegraph, cars, and aircraft gave a boost to Britain's economy. Though this era is a landmark one for countless things, yet this era also witnessed the darker side of such a rapid progress.

Negative Consequences of The Era:

Poverty increased substantially since population increased which made a large number of skilled and unskilled people keeping their wages to a bare minimum. Also, **housing** became difficult thereby resulting in **overcrowding** and development of **slums**. Additionally, this era was also famous for the rising rate of **child labor** in mines and factories. From the tender ages of three, children were made to work for 16 hours a day.

Lastly, the Great Britain was also struck by The Great Social Evil which was none other than **prostitution**. Due to the economic hardships suffered, women started getting into this business. In London, particularly, it was reported that the age of the girls who entered this business was ranged from 15 to 22.

Thus, this period can be very aptly described as the most dynamic period in the history of Great Britain since on one hand, this period reaped the golden fruits of science and technology but on the other hand, this period also marked the birth of various social evils.

Victorian Literature:

Victorian Era literature is preceded by Romanticism and followed by Realism and thus seen as the link between Romanticism of the 18th century and the realism of the 20th century. It can be called as a fusion of Romantic and Realist style of writing. The novel as a genre rose to entertain the rising middle class and to depict the contemporary life in a changing society. Although the novel had been in development since the 18th century with the works of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Samuel Richardson and the others, it was in this period that the novel got mass acceptance and readership. Writers such as Charles Dickens with his well known novels **Hard Times** and **Oliver Twist** and the Bronte Sisters (Emily, Charlotte and Anne) were considered as major figures of the era since Victorian age saw a proliferation of women writers. The novel as a genre was initially seen as feminine literature and as the literacy rate among women increased, a new need for women writers catering to this segment was answered by these writers.