

Industrial revolution: How it effect Victorian literature in a progressive or adverse way

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to bring out the role of Industrial Revolution in Victorian Period Literature. This paper presents the progressive effects or adverse effect on Victorian Period Literature. It arise a question that how machines change the life of human being in either progressive or negative way? This paper suggests that literature of Victorian Period is also effect and supported by Industrial Revolution. This paper advocated that Industrial Revolution also bring out changes in various sectors of society. This research paper also refer that Industrial Revolution also effect faith, believe of people.

Keywords: Victorian literature, progressive or negative

Introduction

What is an Industrial Revolution and its status in 1897 Mark Twain was visiting London during the diamond jubilee celebration honoring the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria coming to the throne. British history is two thousand years old," Twain observed and yet in a good in many ways the world has moved further ahead since the Queen was born than it moved in all the rest of the two thousand put together." Twain's comment captures the sense of dizzying change that characterized the Victorian Period. It was a new golden age in the literature history of England. In words of A.C. Ward, "It was an age of faith and an age of doubt, an age of morality and hypocrisy of prosperity and poverty, of idealism and materialism of Progress and Decline, of splendor and squalor." The development of science led England to the Industrial Revolution which started about 1760 but the Revolution found its real climax only during Victorian Age. The Industrial Revolution in England is defined as an era where tremendous technological and economic progress in the late 18th and early 19th century. Ramsay Muir calls it a mighty but silent upheaval. It was the foundation for our modern world. The achievements of modern industry and science were celebrated at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park (1851). The primary authors of this generation Charles Kingsley, Frances Trollope, Charlotte Bronte, Herbert Sussman describes, as primarily middle class authors for middle class readers in a rapidly changing world. The English people knew no whether to accept this newly industrialized world as a necessary result of science, economy rate as well as decline of spirituality and living standards of working class in the society.

Role of Industrial Revolution in a Progressive Way

This paper proposes how Industrial Revolution ushered in an era of unprecedented prosperity. All the technology improvements propelled Britain's wealth and prosperity and gave people, especially the middle class, so many new opportunities. This progress induced so much excitement in the people of England and gave them a sense of pride and optimism. The literature of the Industrial Revolution includes essays, fiction and poetry that respond to the enormous growth of technology as well as the labor and demographic changes it

fostered. Industries production makes Britain the Workshop of the world' and the greatest trading nation on the globe. Having observed the adoption of such new technologies as the steam engine and the blast furnace, the Scottish intellectual Thomas Carlyle described this period as the Mechanical Age. Jobs all over the country sprouted, giving more opportunities to more people in more towns.

This paper suggests that Industrial Revolution supported the new discoveries of science. It also express that the use of machine saved time and energy and increased the number of times per hour a worker could perform the assigned task. An item could have been reproduced many times. Fanny Kemble was popular actress in the 1800's saw the progress as positive and supports Industrialization. In 'Record of a Girlhood', she states about the riding a steam locomotive;

You can't imagine how strange it seemed to be journeying on this, without any visible cause of progress other than the magical machine, with its flying white breath and rhythmical unvarying pace. I felt as if no fairy tale was ever half as wonderful as what I saw (p.491):3.

Again she writes, "...the motion is as smooth as possible, too. I could either have read or written...this sensation of flying was quite delightful, and strange...I had a perfect sense of security (p.491):4.

This vast improvement must have created such fervor in England. Another author Thomas Macaulay was attributes these improvements to the economic benefits of Industrialization. In 'Review of Southey's Colloquies', he writes, "history is full of the signs of this natural progress of society...we see the wealth of nations increasing, and all the arts of life approaching nearer and nearer to perfection (p.492)'5. Although Industrial Revolution had its downfalls, it gave the people of Britain a sense of hope and an optimistic future. This can see as he ends his review, "It is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope (p.493)"6. With the new economy brought by Industrialization, money allowed people to live on a grander scale. It also allowed the middle class and women to own items of luxury. It provided the foundation for modern capitalist society, proving overall how much of a progress the Industrial Revolution really was.

Role of Industrial Revolution in adverse way

This research paper also suggests the adverse effect of Industrial Revolution in Victorian Period also has terrible social effects: abject poverty, overcrowded dwellings, child labor, sexual exploitation, dirt and drunkenness. It converted the Merry England into a sooty and squalid England. Money values prevailed as a result of increased materialism of the age. Utilitarian and Laissez faire became the popular philosophy of the time. The Utilitarian emphasized the spiritual requirement of human being. Hundreds of thousands of workers had migrated to industrial towns, where they made up a new kind of working class. The institution of the factory came with many injustices including harsh working conditions, ruthless child labor, as well as smog and pollution. Kellow Chesney described the situation as follows:

Hideous slums, some of them acres wide, some no more than crannies of obscure misery, make up a substantial part of the metropolis...In big, once handsome houses, thirty or more people of all ages may inhabit a single room.⁷

The children of the streets were often orphans with no one to care for them. Charles Dickens wrote about these children in his novel *Oliver Twist* ^[7]. In this novel, Dickens condemns the comic but also the bitter effects of industrialization on the 19th century's England. The book attracts peoples' attention to various contemporary social evils, including the Poor's asylum where the poor have to work, child labor and the recruitment of children as criminals.

Dickens often depicted the exploitation and repression of the poor and condemned the public officials and institutions that not only allowed such abuses to exist, but flourished as a result. His most strident indictment of this condition is in *Hard Times* (1854) ^[8]. Dickens' only novel – length treatment of the Industrial working class. In this work he uses both vitriol and satire to illustrate how this marginalized social stratum was termed Hands by the factory owners. As J.W. Beach points out, Dickens in *Hard Times* ^[8] attacks the characteristics ideology of industrial England. *Hard Times* ^[8]. Shows Dickens' antagonism to both utilitarianism and Laissez Faire. It is a passionate attack upon the Victorian scientific and pragmatic education that prevalent in English school of that period. Gradgrind tells the school headmaster, in this life, we want nothing but facts, plant nothing else, and root out everything else...this is the principle on which I bring up my own children stick to the facts, sir.⁸

Mrs. Gaskell was also against utilitarianism and exposed the cruelty of the Industrial system. She portrayed the Victims of this new world with sympathy, but expressed fear that working class would someday rise to overthrow the economic system that had created them with such cruelty. She begins her writing career with the novel *Mary Barton* in order to portray the suffering of the working class and to give voice to Manchester's poor. In her novel, she shows the class conscious attitude of John Barton towards the mill owners. She portrays the conflict between rich and the poor. Mrs. Gaskell wanted that there would be a change of heart before any social change can become effective. Disraeli's novel *Sybil* also describes the conditions of England. There are aristocrats, industrialization, the rural poor, the working class etc. in the novel. It is a true social novel that highlights the division of England between the rich and the poor.

Other voices also testified powerfully to the extremities of working class existence in Industrial England. Mayhew in his

work *London Poor* describe the miserable life of the working classes of Victorian London. Poverty Knock, 19th century British folk song, catalogues the hardship of the weaver's job. William Booth's in *In Darkest England* compares the dense and gloomy urban slums to the equatorial forests of Africa. Thackeray in his *Magnum Opus, Vanity Fair*, attacked the rank materialism of the period. In her poem 'the Cry of the Children', Elizabeth Barrett Browning portrays the suffering of children in mines and factories. Friedrich Engel's 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' is a masterpiece of committed reportage and a classic of social history. He not only describes the horrors of Industrial growth, he also wants to do something about them. In 1848, he teams up with Karl Marx in the communist Manifesto and asserts that revolution is the necessary response to the inequality of Industrialist Capitalist society.

Mathew Arnold shows in poem *Dover Beach* ^[8]. How people suffered from spiritual hollowiness and insensitiveness in Victorian period. In the following lines ...neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain, he draws a very bleak and nihilistic view of the world he living in. He uses the sea as a symbol of this moral, religious and spiritual decline. He laments here the loss of religious faith in the Victorian Age. The receding waves in the sea are symbolic of the loss of moral values. He said that there is no joy, beauty or peace in a materialistic world in which there is nothing but pain. His poem *Dover Beach* ^[8]. Clearly brings out the impact of Industrial Revolution on people's mind. He writes:

The sea of faith
Was once, too, all the full, and round earth's shore.
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar.¹⁰

Conclusion

From the above discussion, an obvious conclusion that follows is that Industrial Revolution also affects the life and living standard of people in Victorian era. The literature of 1890's is characterized by self-conscious melancholy and aestheticism, but also the beginning of modernist movement.

References

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