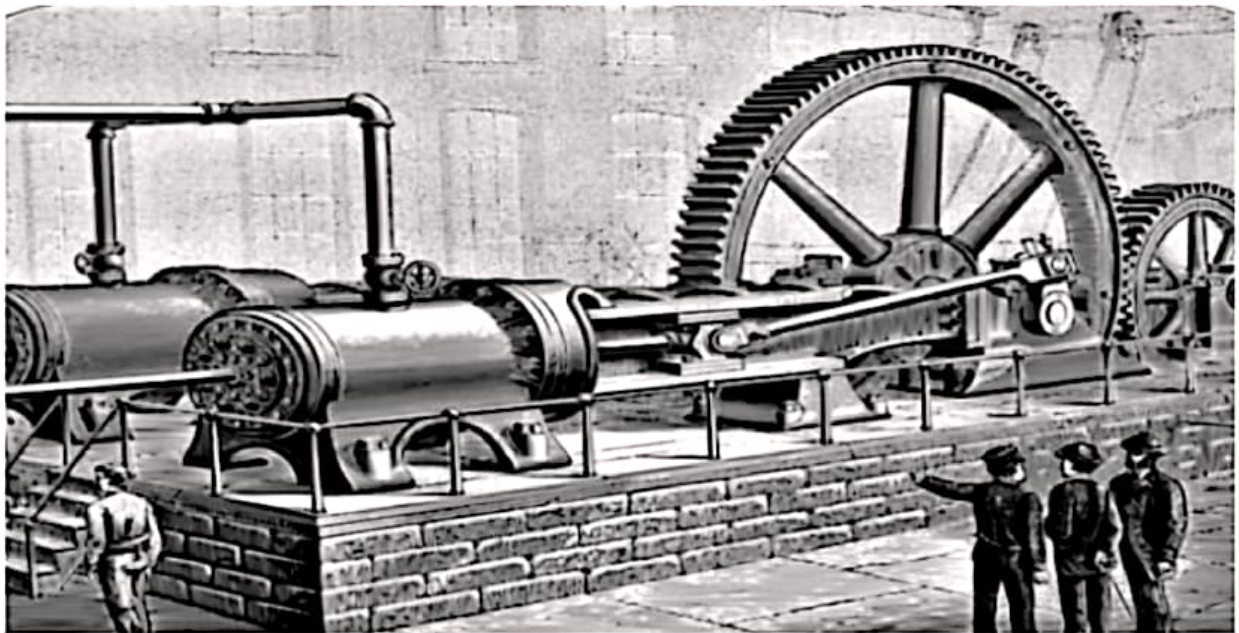# Social Life In The 19 th Century

Introduction :

 The 19th Century was one of Rapid development and change far swifter than in previous Centuries. During this period England Changed From a rural agricultural Country to an urban industrialised one. This involved massive dislocation and radically altered the nature of society. It took many years for both government and people to adjust to the New Conditions. Strictly speaking the Victorian era began in 1837 and ended with Queen Victoria's death in 1901, but the period Can be stretched to include the years both before and after these dates roughly from the Napoleonic wars until the out break of world War in 1914

*Society in the 19th Century

During the 19th century, life was transformed by the Industrial Revolution. At first, it caused many problems but in the late 19th century life became more comfortable for ordinary people. Meanwhile, Britain became the world's first urban society. By 1851 more than half the population lived in towns. The population of Britain boomed during the 1800s. In 1801 it was about 9 million. By 1901 it had risen to about 41 million. This was despite the fact that many people emigrated to North America and Australia to escape poverty. About 15 million people left Britain between 1815 and 1914

In 19th century Britain at least 80% of the population was working class. In order to be considered middle class, you had to have at least one servant. Most servants were female. Throughout the 19th century, 'service' was a major employer of women.

In the 19th century, families were much larger than today. That was partly because infant mortality was high. People had many children and accepted that not all of them would survive.

Religion was much more important in the 19th century than it is today.

*Work in the 19 th century

During the 1800s the factory system gradually replaced the system of people working in their own homes or in small workshops. In England, the textile industry was the first to be transformed. It employed many children. Unfortunately, when children worked in textile factories they often worked for more than 12 hours a day.

In the early 19th century parliament passed laws to restrict child labour. However, they all proved to be unenforceable. The first effective law was passed in 1833. It was effective because for the first time factory inspectors were appointed to make sure the law was being obeyed. The new law banned children under 9 from working in textile factories. It said that children aged 9 to 13 must not work for more than 12 hours a day or 48 hours a week. Children aged 13 to 18 must not work for more than 69 hours a week. Furthermore, nobody under 18 was allowed to work at night (from 8.30 pm to 5.30 am). Children aged 9 to 13 were to be given 2 hours of education a day.

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Houses in the 19th Century

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Well-off people lived in very comfortable houses in the 19th century. (Although their servants lived in cramped quarters, often in the attic). For the first time, furniture was mass-produced. That meant it was cheaper but unfortunately standards of design fell. To us, middle-class 19th-century homes would seem overcrowded with furniture, ornaments, and knick-knacks. However, only a small minority could afford this comfortable lifestyle.

In the early 19th century housing for the poor was often dreadful. Often they lived in 'back-to-backs'. These were houses of three (or sometimes only two) rooms, one of the top of the other. The houses were literally back-to-back. The back of one house joined with the back of another and they only had windows on one side. The bottom room was used as a living room and kitchen. The two rooms upstairs were used as bedrooms.

In the early 19th century only rich people had bathrooms. People did take baths but only a few people had actual rooms for washing. In the 1870s and 1880s, many middle-class people had bathrooms built. The water was heated by gas. Working-class people had a tin bath and washed in front of the kitchen range.

Food in the 19th Century

In the early 19th century most of the working class lived on plain food bread, butter, potatoes, and bacon. Butcher's meat was a luxury. However, food greatly improved in the late 19th century. Railways and steamships made it possible to import cheap grain from North America so bread became cheaper. Refrigeration made it possible to import cheap meat

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shoes. Others made boxes or lace at home.

*British Cities in the 19th Century

Living conditions in early 19th British century cities were often dreadful. However, there was one improvement. Gaslight was first used in 1807 in Pall Mall in London. Many cities introduced gas street lights in the 1820s. However early 19th century cities were dirty, unsanitary, and overcrowded. In them, the streets were very often unpaved and they were not cleaned. Rubbish was not collected and it was allowed to accumulate in piles in the streets. Since most of it was organic when it turned black and sticky it was used as fertilizer.

*Poverty in the 19th Century

At the end of the 19th century, more than 25%of the population of Britain was living at or below subsistence level. Surveys indicated that around 10% were very poor and could not afford even basic necessities such as enough nourishing food. Between 15% and 20% had just enough money to live on (provided they did not lose their job or have to take time off work through illness).

If you had no income at all you had to enter the workhouse. The workhouses were feared and hated by the poor. They were meant to be as unpleasant as possible to deter poor people from asking the state for help. However during the late 19th century workhouses gradually became more humane.

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By the end of the 19th century, most people were eating better food. Furthermore in the late 19th century canned food first became widely available. The rotary can opener was invented in 1870 by William Lyman. Furthermore, in the 1870s margarine, a cheap substitute for butter was invented. A man named Gail Borden patented condensed milk in 1856. John Meyerbeer patented evaporated milk in 1884.

Meanwhile, several new biscuits were invented in the 19th century including the Garibaldi (1861), the cream cracker (1885), and the Digestive (1892). The first chocolate bar was made in 1847. Milk chocolate was invented in 1875. The first recipe for potato crisps appeared in a book by Dr William Kitchener in 1817.

*Education in the 19th Century

In the early 19th century the churches provided schools for poor children. From 1833 the government provided them with grants. There were also dame schools. They were run by women who taught a little reading, writing, and arithmetic. However many dame schools were really a child-minding service.

In Britain, the state did not take responsibility for education until 1870. Foresters Education Act laid down that schools should be provided for all children. If there were not enough places in existing schools then board schools were built. In 1880 school was made compulsory for 5 to 10-year-olds. However, the school was not free, except for the poorest children until 1891 when fees were abolished. In 1893 the minimum age for leaving school was raised to 11. From 1899 children were required to go to school until they were 13.

Meanwhile, girls from upper-class families were taught by a governess. Boys were often sent to public schools like Eton. Middle-class boys went to grammar schools. Middle-class girls went to private schools where they were taught 'accomplishments' such as music and sewing.

*Games and leisure in the 19th Century

Several new sports and games were invented during the 19th century. Although a form of tennis was played since the Middle Ages lawn tennis was invented in 1873. Snooker was invented in India in 1875. Volleyball was invented in 1895.

*Transport and Communications in the 19th Century

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railway was from Liverpool to Manchester. It opened in 1830. In the 1840s there was a huge boom in building railways and most towns in Britain were connected. In the late 19th century many branch lines were built connecting many villages.

The first underground railway in Britain was built in London in 1863. Steam locomotives pulled the carriages. The first electric underground trains began running in London in 1890.

*Clothes in the 19th Century

In the 19th century, apart from cotton shirts, men's clothes consisted of three parts. In the 18th century, they wore knee-length breeches but in the 19th-century men wore trousers. They also wore waistcoats and coats.

In the early 19th century women wore light dresses. In the 1830s they had puffed sleeves. In the 1850s they wore frames of whalebone or steel wire called crinolines under their skirts. In the late 1860s, women began to wear a kind of half crinoline. The front of the skirt was flat but it bulged outwards at the back. This was called a bustle and it disappeared in the 1890s.

*Health and Medicine in the 19th-century

Medicine and surgery made great advances in the 19th century. Louis Pasteur 1822-1895 proved that disease was caused by microscopic organisms. He also invented a way of sterilizing liquids by heating them (called pasteurization). He also invented vaccination for anthrax (which killed many domestic animals) and for rabies. Immunization against diphtheria was invented in 1890. A vaccine for typhoid was invented in 1897.

Surgery was greatly improved by the discovery of anaesthetics. James Simpson began using chloroform for operations in 1847. In 1865 Joseph Lister discovered antiseptic surgery, which enabled surgeons to perform many more complicated operations. Rubber gloves were first used in surgery in 1890. Then in 1895 x-rays were discovered.