CHAPTER TWO

Victorian and Gentleman Masculinity

2.1. The Term ‘Victorian’:

The Victorian epoch was characterised by rapid transformation and developments in nearly every sphere, from advances in medical, technological and scientific knowledge to changes in population evolution and place. Over time, the England’s mood was deeply affected by this rapid change. This age started with a confidence and optimism leading to economic boom and prosperity.

The term ‘Victorian’ remains a living concept in social and political debates. However, its meaning is ambiguous: it is used to describe exploitation and class division, sexual repression, hypocrisy, values of hard work and self-help, moral certainties about family life, and a wide variety of arrangements intended to solve public problems.

The term ‘Victorian’ is not a static concept in English literature or in English society. It is related to Queen Victoria. This term is a historical term as well as a literary term. It is historical since it relates to a historical period, namely the Victorian period in England between 1837 and 1901. Also, it is literary since it relates to the literary works of writers, novelists, and poets of the Victorian period.

B. Seaman in her book, Victorian England: Aspects of English and Imperial History 1837-1901, argues that the word ‘Victorian’ is a deceptive word. She claims that ‘Victorianism’ as a concept has no clear-cut barrier neither beginning in 1837 nor ending in 1901. Victorianism can be seen from different factors historically, socially and literarily. This period has been shaped by the experiences of the pre-Victorian years. The ideas of Darwin, Tennyson and Goldstone led for a rapid change in that period. These figures were the leaders for social, literary and political change.

Sally Mitchell argues in her book, Daily Life in Victorian England, that in the political realm; the beginning of the Victorian age dated from the Reform Bill of 1832 rather than Queen Victoria’s accession in 1837. Great Britain was governed by a Parliament made up of an elected House of Commons and a House of Lords. In the early nineteenth century, only men who held property had their right to vote for representatives in the House of
Commons. Furthermore, the districts entitled to a seat in the Commons were based on old patterns of landholding. Some big manufacturing towns had no representative at all. In other places there were “rotten boroughs” with so few voters that one landowner could be sure his candidate would be seated in Parliament.

Social problems prevailed over the economic and political scene at the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign. The first movements for women’s rights started to form. Middle-class women sought serious education, rather than the painting, piano playing, social graces, and general knowledge that were usual in girls’ schools. They also began trying to extend the range of women’s employment. The girls of working-class and women supported themselves as household servants, factory workers, agricultural labourers, and garment workers, but virtually the only middle-class career that was open to women was a governess. Women reformers at the mid-century began looking for ways that women could be trained and employed in clerical work, bookkeeping, social welfare, typesetting, and other reasonably well-paid jobs.

As Mitchell claims that early Victorian era was not easy for most people. England turned from an agriculture economy into manufacturing. Many workers worked very hard, during that period for a living. In the first years of queen Victoria’s reign there were quick changes that came with the industrial revolution. People especially young men moved from the country to manufacturing cities where they could find jobs. The poor workers suffered a lot in these overcrowded manufacturing cities. The prices of food were very high. This led to what was known as ‘Hungry Forties’. These poor workers led a life of poverty. However, in 1840 middle-class women pursued serious gender roles in society like education rather than piano playing and painting. In the years of 1850s, England started to enjoy steadiness and richness. The Education Act created a government support for schools. Elementary education was available to every child in England.

The Victorian period was a time of quick change that saw the expansion of cities and explosion of industry that revolutionized life in Britain. This transformation was as also apparent in literature of the time. Victorian novel had witnessed such change. Women novelists started to portray what was going on during that period. At the beginning, they faced a great difficulty, not only because of the topics they were triggered into, but the Victorians and their world could not help the notion of female novelists. Virginia Woolf has stated different reasons for these difficulties before the Victorian female writers. She
argued that “the women novelist is nowadays sex-conscious; and the artist can no more be sex-conscious than sex inhabited”. She further added:

The woman writer was corrupted by an alien standard of art; and Emily Bronte or George Eliot, writing in the accepted masculine style of their times, wrote by that much the worse. Only an exceptional Jane Austen wrote entirely as a woman, so that with less genius than Emily Bronte she achieved greater success.3

Accordingly, the Victorian society had its impacts on the female novelists. The male dominance was always there even in the field of literature. Literature was not an exception. Women felt that they were totally oppressed by men. They felt that they have no option to marry and they were not given the same education that men got. Victorian society prevented women from making their own living. Therefore, they were totally dependent on men’s income. “Barred by law and custom from entering trades and professions by which they could support themselves, and restricted in the possession of property, woman had only one means of livelihood, that of marriage”.4 In order to be free as men in the Victorian era, women had to avoid and to rebel against society’s conventions and the rules made by men. Women struggled to get their equal rights with men. They fought at every aspect of life; politically, socially and in the field of education. Literature gave them a good chance to picture their dilemma during the Victorian period. Female novelists depicted life as it was mainly dominated by men. This thesis is discussing their viewpoint about men in the Victorian society and how they were humiliated and marginalised by men. These female novelists participated to get over the appropriate gender roles of men from various social classes over times. They reconstructed a new Victorian male gender identity. The present thesis is going to investigate this new identity presented by some female Victorian novelists, Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte.

2.2. Gender Roles in the Victorian Era:

The concept of gender in feminist and sociological studies became popular in the early period of the 1970s. Basically, gender explains the difference between men and women. Socially to differentiate between man and woman with regards to their behaviour towards each other. Therefore, gender is socially constructed to differentiate not the biological difference between men and women. The term ‘gender’ is also used to differentiate in performance between men and women which can be seen as “masculine”, or “feminine”. Most of the feminist writings focus on this aspect and claim that these differences are not biological but are social constructions of patriarchal society. Some social researchers argue
that the biological differences between men and women also result in their mental and physical differences. These researchers propose that men are physically and mentally superior to women which is globally proposed. The differences between males and females are socially constructed by the patriarchal system of society by which women are described as inferior to men. Therefore, women become subordinate and passive compared to men in the society. This is what was going on during the Victorian period.

Connell defines Gender as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes”. The Australian masculinist adds : “gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies and their continuity, and the many consequences of that ‘dealing’ in our personal lives and our collective fate”.\(^5\)

Judith Butler argues that “gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a ‘one’ who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today”.\(^6\) According to Judith Butler gender is seen as a performative. In other words, gender behaviour is a performance. The individual can be said to constitute him/herself by placing within language and convention. His or her behaviour creates gender identity. Butler to some extent argues that gender does not exist as an objective natural thing. Butler adds gender reality is performative which means that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. Gender, according to Butler, is not absolutely tied to material bodily truths but is solely and completely a social construction, a fiction, and one that is open to alteration and change. In brief, gender is a social construction. The mentality of the society makes one a man or a woman. When a man is born, the society gives priority to him over woman. This masculine perception is delivered from society to both men and women. Even women accept this social perception since childhood.

In her book *The Second Sex* the French social scholar Simone de Beauvoir says that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”.\(^7\) She clarifies that gender differences at any society make the man superior. This is because of his role as the bread winner. Being the bread winner gives him a position of power and the feeling of patriarchy in the society and family. Gender differences are set in hierarchal opposition such that women are inferior and men are superior. Women’s position is that of the “other” and women are the continual outsiders in all the matters of life whither in the east or in the west. All over the
world women are subordinate to men. The Arab world in the modern period is dominated by men. This is similar to the world of the Victorians. Male domination over women has a universal appeal. Civilization everywhere is masculine to its very depth.

Thus, gender can be defined as culturally specific patterns of behaviour, which can either, be actual or performative and are attached to the sexes. Gender is the socially constructed way of distinguishing between males and females. It is what we learn to be as male and female in the hands of our society. It is the socially constructed roles of men and women, boys and girls. The socially constructed gender roles differ from time to time and from one place to another. Before analysing the gender roles during the Victorian period, it is a must to pinpoint the nature of the term ‘Gender Roles’.

Gender roles are the socially determined tasks, behaviours and responsibilities for women and men. Gender roles based on socially perceived expectations of how women and men should act in the society. These roles may differ from place to place and over time. Although, women are usually expected to take care of the home and children while men function in the public place. Failure to conform to these roles is seen as deviance.

Gender roles are learned through gender socialization that begins shortly after birth and transmits culturally-shared benefits and values associated with masculinity and femininity. Throughout lifetime, there is a great deal of social stress to conform to educated gender roles. Individuals who do not behave to traditional gender stereotypes are judged as less likeable and attractive than individuals who display gender appropriate trait and behaviour.\(^8\)

The Victorian era saw such polarized gender roles that it can be examined according to the different roles given to men and women. This is more commonly known as the philosophy of separate spheres. The separate spheres philosophy holds that men were accomplished for reason, action, aggression, independence, and self-interest. This is related to the public sphere. Women were capable of having such qualities of femininity: emotion, obedience, submission, reliance, and selflessness. Such philosophy allowed men, to control mentally and intellectually, to dominate society, to be the dominating gender. They were viewed as rational, brave, and independent. Women, however, were dominated by their sexuality. They were expected to fall silently into the social container created by men. This is because they were regarded as irrational, sensitive, and dutiful during the Victorian period.
The women of the Victorian society had one main role in life. This role was to marry and take part in their husbands’ business and interests. Before marriage, they were learning housewife skills like weaving, cooking, washing, and cleaning, unless they were of a wealthy family. Wealthy families did not always learn these tasks because their maids primarily took care of the household tasks. Typically, women were also not allowed to get education or get knowledge outside of the home because it was a man’s sphere. Richard D. Altick, a critic, has stated that “a woman was inferior to a man in all ways except the unique one that counted most her femininity. Woman’s place was inside the home. This was on an absolute pedestal if one could be afforded, and emphatically not in the world of affairs”. The patriarchal society of the Victorian period did not permit women to behave and do similarly as men. Accordingly, women were given no more than the feminine duties of caring for the home and pursuing the outlets of feminine creativity.

Victorian men also anticipated that women had to possess feminine qualities as well as innocence; otherwise, they would not be potential for marriage. In his article, *Victorian Women Expected to be Idle and Ignorant*, Charles Petrie has explained what the Victorian man was looking for:

Innocence was what he demanded from the girls of his class. They must not only be innocent but also give the outward impression of being innocent. The White muslin that was typical of virginal purity, clothes many a heroine, with slight shades of blue and pink next in popularity. The masculine approval stamp was placed upon ignorance of the world, humbleness, lack of opinions, general defenselessness and weakness. In short, there was recognition of female inferiority to the male.

The expectations, that men gave women, caused them to prepare for marriage and did not give women any sort of liberty. Men’s expectations pressured women to be the ideal Victorian women whom society expected them to be. Women had to arrange themselves for what was to come of their lives and it determined their future. If women did not meet the Victorian male’s aspirations, they would end up spouseless. In the article, *Victorian Women Expected to Be Idle and Ignorant*, the critic Petrie has argued:

From babyhood all girls who were born above the level of poverty had the dream of a flourishing marriage before their eyes, for by that alone was it possible for a woman to rise in the world.

The officially permitted rights of married women of the Victorian period were similar to those of children. Women could not vote, sue, or own property. Also, they were seen as chaste and clean. Because of this view, women’s bodies were seen as temples that should
not be adorned with cosmetics nor used for such pleasing things as sex. They could not get a job unless it was that of a teacher or a governess. Unfortunately, the Victorian period stands for an inequality between men and women.

Robert Brannon, in his book, *The Male Sex Role: Our Culture’s Blueprint of Manhood*, has mentioned the elements of stereotypes roles of women and men. He argues that women’s cult of true womanhood consists of four components; piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. True women were naturally religious, true women were sexually uninterested. True women were weak, dependent and timid. True women’s domain was inside the home. However, the men’s sex role identity has four components; No sissy stuff (men are expected to distance themselves from anything feminine in quality), the Big wheel (men should be occupationally or financially successful), Sturdy oak (men should be confident and self-reliant) and Give ‘em hell (men should do what is necessary to ‘make it’- should be skillful).

During the Victorian period the notion of separate spheres reoccurred and changed totally the gender roles. These spheres were the private sphere or the domestic sphere, and the public sphere. Women were given the private and men were given the public sphere. It was thought that men were powerful and inventive and should thus be out in the work place – the public sphere. However, women held a vital role as a domestic controller keeping the home as a haven and rearing well-educated and socially aware children. The idea that women were to stay at home was a traditional concept in society.

The concept of separate spheres was not new to the Victorian period. It can be triggered to prehistoric times where men were seen as the hunters and women as the minders of the home. It is necessary to consider how the roles of gender changed in the Victorian period. Susan Kent argues that the most significant reasoning for the theory of separate spheres came due to the Industrial Revolution during the Victorian period. The industrial revolution made a considerable readjustment of family life. Men left the house, leaving their wives to look after the children and the home. Men controlled, by their intellectual strength, the society and became the governing sex. Women were dominated by their sexuality. Susan Kent has observed that “women were so exclusively identified by their sexual functions so 19th century socially came to regard them as ‘the sex’”. Men thought that women were unhappy with their positions as females because of their lack of a male’s sexual organs. This belief was supported by the arguments of Sigmund Freud.
The industrial revolution caused a division of the roles between the sexes. Moreover, there was a revival of the religion support of the separate spheres. Gender relations would find the correct balance of the public and the private spheres to create an ideal society. One of the reasons of the separate spheres was just part of the want to keep society in clear order and allowed for both males and females to understand their roles in society. The transformation of the Victorian society into the industrial society had profound consequences on the ways in which people are living. New kinds of work and new kinds of urban life prompted a change in the ways in which suitable male and female roles were perceived.

There was an overlapping between the private sphere and the public one. The private was for women whereas the public was for men. John Tosh in his book, *A Man’s Place* has recovered the public lives of Victorian women and the domestic lives of men. John Tosh has argued that “men operated at will in both spheres, that was the privileged”. Tosh adds: “throughout the nineteenth century – home was widely held to be a man’s place; not only in the sense of being his possession of his freedom; but also as the place where his deepest needs were met”. Women were also participating in the public sphere. The Victorian period, on the contrary, had witnessed a change in the gender roles. The industrial revolution had brought about a division of labour, leaving women at home, which was regarded as a haven from the busy and chaotic public sphere.

The concept of the separate spheres had its bad consequences on the field of the patriarchal relation between the masculine and the feminine. This separation had widened the gulf between men and women. Women were thought only as ‘an architect of the home’- the private sphere. This separation in the gender roles led to the subordination of the wives to their husbands and women were thought only as possessions of men. In fact, the idea of separate spheres led to women’s distress for changes of their social subordination. Women began to make known their dissatisfaction with the social constraints in the public sphere. The ideology of separate spheres made women incapable of work in the public realm. Women were classified as physically weaker, yet morally superior to men. The moral superiority of women was the best quality to make them feel to be apt to the domestic sphere.

Men’s and society define consistently women’s roles according to their separate spheres. The reproductive system can also be seen through what today would be considered the ‘weird’ sexual values of Victorians. To begin with, sex as a matter was not at all
discussed or mentioned. Girls could grow up into women and still did not know where children came from. Women’s bodies, hidden in long, voluminous clothes, were almost as much of a mystery to themselves as to men…‘Nice ladies no more thought of showing their legs than did nice chairs’. Sexuality and any related thing to it, opposed the accepted norms of purity. The sexuality of women is treated differently from that of men’s. Women’s sexuality is treated as a sin. Here, the patriarchy of the Victorian society is apparent.

The social role of women in the nineteenth century was surrounded by uncertainty and doubt; an ambivalence increasingly recognized by historians who have long since discarded the simplistic concept of the Victorian ‘Angel in the House’. Women started to have new roles in society like the role of a prostitute. This was the opposite of pure wife and mother, ‘the angel of the house’. Prostitution was being legalized during the Victorian period. This is because laws were designed to benefit men over women. Men justified these actions with their supremacy and women’s tolerance. Women were considered as either a men’s possession – an architect of their houses – or as a source of their sexual pleasure.

The Victorian women started to struggle against the patriarchal behaviour of men. They struggled politically, socially, and intellectually against the male dominance till they gained more rights such as to vote and participate work with men in the public sphere. More education was given to women. As a result women writers started to get recognition. They portrayed their dilemma in their novels as it will be discussed in detail in the present thesis.

2.3 Victorian Masculinity:

Victorian masculinity is based on the premise that the construction of male realization must be seen as historically specific. The concept of Victorian masculinity is a different one since it was influenced by various factors such as domesticity and gender roles. Some of these factors seem to be interrelated to one another. Males show a vast amount of pride, protectiveness over their wives. Victorian men either in the public sphere or private sphere felt superior over the women’s subordination. This is a dominant feature of the Victorian society. Despite the fact that England’s monarch was female, Victorian society was very much a patriarchy, and the cultural norms only allowed men to establish moral roles. As it often happens with literature, the social dilemmas of the Victorian period become manifest in literature. The instability of masculine power came to be a fundamental theme in many notable pieces of Victorian literature as in the nineteenth century novels. Victorian masculinity can be realised from two points of view; from men’s point of view and from
women’s point of view. Women’s point of view can be estimated as the Victorian man should be gentle in his behaviour and to deal with women with equality. Women’s position in society should be taken into the consideration of the Victorian man. Masculinity is performative as Judith Butler proclaims. The masculine behaviour should not neglect the feminine nature of woman in the Victorian era.

The concept of Victorian masculinity is a topic of interest in the field of social studies with an emphasis on gender studies as well as the literary studies in order to mirror the human and social changes all over the years. All these fields dovetail the concept of Victorian masculinity. Historically, it is tied to the Victorian period in the United Kingdom. The concept of Victorian masculinity is currently a matter of interest for researchers in the areas of literary criticism, history, sociology and religious studies. Those virtues that survive until modern age are of special interest mostly to all scholars; the dominant behaviour of the Western male over the Western female. The concept of Victorian masculinity nurtured during the nineteenth century which witnessed huge changes in both the behaviour and the thought of the Victorian men and women.

John Tosh in *A Man’s Place*, argues that education and society values instilled by the educators were important in the construction of the late Victorian masculinity. The purpose of sending a son of middle-class father to a public school might be prejudiced by the faith that the boy would acquire the patina of a gentleman during that period. Learning to rub shoulders with all sorts, to stand on one’s own feet, to have the guts to stand out against the crowd - these qualities were integral to manliness and they were not acquired at home.\(^\text{16}\)

Tosh further suggests that:

Domesticity and masculinity were not opposed as our received image of the Victorian period would suggest and that the domestic or the private sphere is integral to masculinity. A poor man may be a true gentleman in spirit and in daily life, if he does his work honestly, is upright, polite, temperate and courageous. A poor man who honestly is engaged in work duties with rich spirit is always superior to the rich man with a poor spirit.\(^\text{17}\)

John Tosh attempts to redefine the Victorian masculinity. He explains the gender roles of man as a father, a husband, or a boy in the family headed by the man during the Victorian era. Tosh explains the relationship between masculinity and the domestic is far more intricate than the early concept of separate spheres. He asserts that “home was central to
masculinity, as the place where the boy was disciplined by dependence and where the man attained full adult status as a householder.

Thus, John Tosh focuses on the interrelationship between the masculine identity and the role of the domestic to enhance such masculine identity. There is no separation between of the domestic and the man’s role in the society. However, domesticity is the domain of women, man finds his masculinity there.

In Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle Elaine Showalter discusses what the Victorian masculinity was. Showalter argues that “the nineteenth century had a cherished belief in the separate spheres of femininity and masculinity that amounted almost too religious faith”.18 Kelly Hurley states that during the Victorian period, “emotional tenderness and sentiment, seen as compatible with masculine activity and resolution in the earlier nineteenth century, were considered somewhat effeminate qualities by the century’s end, when physical grace, courage, pluck, and toughness were among the highest qualities of manhood”.19 Accordingly, Victorian masculinity entailed having certain rights that Victorian femininity was not granted. Men can work in a reputable occupation, travel through the city alone, and join ‘men-only’ clubs. Women faced one of the Victorian dictums, ‘no girls allowed’.

2.4. Victorian Gentleman:

The gentleman is an ideal that has been developed through history, with characteristics either added or lost. To become the one ‘gentleman’, we know today, men were influenced by different mentalities, countries and eras such as the Greeks, Romans in antiquity, and the Middle Ages ideals. The concept of a “Gentleman” during the 19th century was a complex one. However, it is necessary to analyse the Victorian ways of thinking especially their understanding of the concept of ‘gentleman’. Victorian people were not certain of the essence of the concept of the ‘gentleman’. This concept reached its finest moments in the Victorian period. Some Victorians were gentlemen by birth, whereas other people designated as gentlemen as a natural consequence of their growing wealth and influence.

The word ‘gentleman’ is one of the few words in the English language that has been the subject of continuous debate. Adopted into the language, in its etymological sense in
the nineteenth century the term ‘gentleman’ was used to mean a man related to “an ancient family. By the 19th century, the word has another meaning which it is easier to feel than to define. Adopted in English from Old French “gentilzhom” in its original signification the word ‘gentleman’ denotes a man belonging to a ‘gens’ or ‘stock’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term ‘gentleman’ as “a man of superior position in society, or having the habits of life indicative of this; often, one whose means enables him to live in easy circumstances without engaging in trade, a man of money and leisure”. 20 According to the *New English Dictionary*, in England the term was already used by the fourteenth century people to indicate that “A man in whom gentle birth is accompanied by appropriate qualities and behaviour; hence, in general, a man of chivalrous instinct and fine feelings”. 21

In Brad’s *The Compleat English Gentleman*, Karl Bulbring says in the introduction of this book: “it is curious to observe here that all the instances of medieval literature where the word ‘gentleman’ is used, it either directly refers to a man of gentle birth, or it is accompanied by an analysis of a true gentleman’s qualities”. 22

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1929) says that: “the word ‘gentleman’, used in the wider sense with which birth and circumstances have nothing to do, is necessary incapable of strict definition. For, ‘to behave like a gentleman’ may mean little or much, according to the person by whom the phrase is used; ‘to spend money like a gentleman’ may even be no great praise; but ‘to conduct a business like a gentleman’ implies a stand at least as high as that involved in the phrase *noblesse oblige*. 23 Thus, in such a case, a person of culture, character and good manners the word ‘gentleman’ has applied a gap in more than one foreign language”. 24

The notion of the gentleman was not only a social or class term. There was also a moral element inherent in the notion which made it difficult and vague even for the Victorians to define. Sir Walter Scott defines this notion of the gentleman repeatedly in his extremely influential Waverley Novels, and the code of the gentleman appears repeatedly in Victorian fiction. “The essence of a gentleman,” John Ruskin writes, “is what the word says, that he comes from a pure gens, or is perfectly bred. After that, gentleness and sympathy, or kind disposition and fine imagination come”. 25 Ruskin also suggests that Gentlemen have to learn that it is no part of their liability of pleasure to live on other people’s labour, but many ‘gentlemen’ did exactly that.
John Henry Newman, one of the most famous Victorian critics, has layered the description of the gentleman during the Victorian era in his book *The Idea of a University*. Newman suggests a list of characteristics of a gentleman: “a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, and candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life”. It is clear that he considered this catalogue admirable for the ideal gentleman. In great details he further illustrated the definition of a gentleman as:

> It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him. The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause ajar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast.\(^{26}\)

Newman’s descriptive definition appears an exemplary idealization of the British gentleman. He defines the gentleman in his relations and dealing with others. The gentleman, according to Newman, is unobtrusive. He concurs with their movements, he avoids “whatever may cause ajar or a jolt,” he abstains from slander and gossip. In the face of misfortunes he is submissive. In controversy he is clear-headed, forcible, decisive, and fair to his rivals. The Gentleman annihilates his soul for the sake of others. He is mostly humble and self-effacing. True gentleman is not a source of disturbance for other people of any social rank.

Newman argues that “The gentleman has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice”.\(^{27}\) Newman focuses on the praise of moral superiority which can be practised in the social atmosphere. Basically, Newman’s definition is built around the actual examples taken from everyday life inside the society. Newman aims at presenting the prominent factors that must rule the behaviour of the gentleman towards others and to feel a sense of equality with them neither superior nor inferior.\(^{28}\)

In 1583, Sir Thomas Smith offered a comprehensive overview of what a gentleman was. He explained that:

> For whosoever studieth the lawes of the realme, who studieth in the universities, who professeth the liberall sciences, and to be shorte, can live idly and without manual labour, and will beare the port, charge and countenaunce of a gentleman.\(^{29}\)

The definition of Smith is slightly different from that of the nineteenth century scholars. However, it has some relation to that of mid-Victorian England. He focuses on the social uprightness of the gentleman, which he has gained from his education. Sir Thomas Smith
also has focused on the significance of the ability of the gentleman to live idly without indulging himself into manual labour.

It must be remembered that there was never one ‘ideal’ concept of the gentleman, so far as the concept of gentleman is concerned. The rival construction of the gentleman can be divided into two categories; one based on the merit of birth, land and breeding; the other based on personal merit.

The gentleman does not necessarily and needlessly remind a doer of a mistake he may have committed against him at any time. He is forgetful of others’ mistakes, he can forget; and he strives for that nobleness of self and mildness of character which conveys sufficient power to let the past be but the past. Tolerance and forbearance are his main attributes.

Robin Gilmour, in his study of gentlemen in Victorian literature, attempts to place the concept of gentleman within the social structure of eighteenth- and nineteenth century Britain:

In the traditional social hierarchy, the gentleman ranked beneath the baronet, the knight and the squire, but above the yeoman; and between the gentry and the aristocracy, […] bound together by a common interest in the land and a similar way of life […] Moreover the rank of gentleman was the point of entry for those seeking to penetrate gentry society.

Accordingly, the gentry were constantly being filled up and energized by the arrival of new families from trade, finance, farming and other jobs. Historically, a gentleman belongs to the gentry which is one type of class hierarchy in the Victorian society. Nevertheless, Gilmour points out that all aristocrats were gentlemen, but a gentleman was not necessarily an aristocrat. Gentlemanliness developed a connotation of good character that made the label desirable to the higher ranks. However, prosperous middle-class members of Victorian era hoped to be called gentlemen and thus emphasised the word’s origin in the gentry. If the concept was based on morals rather than ancestry, the title was obtainable. Unlike in the aristocracy, membership in the gentry did not require a certain heritage. Robin Gilmour is of the opinion that the gentleman’s position inside the social hierarchy is between the middle class and the aristocracy. The gentleman was a moral distinction and not a social one. This is because a gentleman was thought to have good manners.

Robin Gilmour adds that masculinity was connected with the emerging definition of gentlemanliness. Gilmour explains that manliness is a basic Victorian idea. It signifies a new plainness and sincerity, a new sincerity in the realms of social affairs. Robin Gilmour
agrees that the Victorians were drawn to the idea of the gentleman and gentlemanliness partially as the outcome of the important highlighting on the morality of the ideal and true gentleman. Gilmour argues that it was this appeal of morality that led many of the notable Victorian novelists - including the female novelists - to support the popularity of the concept of the gentleman. Gilmour argues that Trollope, Dickens, and Thackeray [were] all rapt by the image of the gentleman. Moreover, gentleman’s relation leads to the real possibility for the morality in society. Thus, The Victorian people had a range of different understandings in regards to what composed a gentleman and a variety of definitions of the English gentleman have been proposed. Each stresses in varying degrees on the importance of the gentleman’s merits of birth, land, and breeding; personal privileges and morality.

Philip Mason also argues that the reputation of the gentleman was based upon the vagueness associated with the use of the term. One of the reasons why the concept of the ‘gentleman’ gained such reputation was that no one was really sure who was a gentleman and who was not. There were no fixed or agreed standards of what was called ‘gentleman’. Mason suggests that the term gentleman had “different meanings in different mouths and the same person would use it in different senses. But it did stand for an ideal of conduct that was widely admired and this was one of the ties that unified the nation”. Mason raises two valuable points; as he pinpoints it, the gentlemanly persona was admired, and useful as a means of uniting the English nation.

For Mason, the actual behaviour of the gentleman is of little importance. Popular perception is what comforts him. As previously stated, Mason believes that a degree of the popularity of the gentlemanly concept is the result of the inability to be sure of who exactly a gentleman is. Mason focuses on the society in which the gentleman lives. It is not the person himself who decides to be a gentleman. It is the nation or the society that comprehend the gentlemanly behaviour of the gentleman. Mason’s conception of the ‘gentleman’ is the opposite of Newman’s. Newman’s focus is on the persona of the gentleman and his gentlemanly behaviour. For me as a researcher, it is found that both the society and the persona of the gentleman who make the gentleman. The society has a great role in the perception of a gentleman since it is seen from his manners with other people in the society. Also, the gentleman places himself in the gentleman position through his behaviour.
James Eli Adams explains the concept of the gentleman differently. Adams claims that the idea of the gentleman is attuned with the concept of masculinity only if that masculinity is understood to represent a “strenuous psychic regimen, which could be affirmed outside the economic arena, but nonetheless would be embodied as a charismatic self-mastery akin to that of the daring yet disciplined entrepreneur”.

It is agreed that England during the Victorian period saw a more dramatic degree of change than any previous period. The Industrial Revolution led to a great fear of the erosion of masculine identity; many men wondered about the position they would take in this rapidly changing world. Adams believes that the gentleman serves the purpose of encouraging the idea and the ideal of ‘manhood,’ and strengthening the social status of men in Victorian society. Adams argues that the various masculine identities in the Victorian period are linked by an ascetic discipline which is an attribute of soldiers, priests, clergymen and gentlemen. This ascetic discipline is another form of masculinity. Adams adds that masculinity can be seen as alluring self-mastery similar to that of the business man which was a part of the manliness of men who were thought to be brave and self-disciplined. This is the pure gentleman. So, James Eli Adams finds that the true sense of gentlemanliness starts from within not from the outer atmosphere, namely the society.

As well as highlighting the significance of the concept of the gentleman in strengthening Victorian masculinity, Adams, as do many other researchers who employ literary sources to understand the Victorian gentleman, stresses the importance of the view of the gentleman as a moral ideal. Adams likens the concept of the gentleman to that of a secular sainthood because he is focusing on the moral side. The gentleman is rejoiced as a moral model open to all those who ascertain worthiness. Yet, the real gentleman is seen by the lack of self-consciousness. The aspiring gentleman is negating the self and focussing on the other. That is the real meaning of being a gentleman. However, many intellectuals explain the appeal of the gentleman in terms of the frankness of the notion to social climbers. Adams suggests that the fact of being ideal causes a big deal. This is because the term ‘gentleman’ remains socially inspiring. Thus, the real assertion of the ideal gentleman is the annihilation of one’s self.

To conclude, this is the construction of the concept of the gentleman with regards to some Victorian critics and social thinkers of that period. Victorian gentlemen are defined by their adherence to the ‘English’ morality tied to the sense of the Englishness that is
regarded as the very England’s ideal form of masculinity. So, the concept of the Gentleman is the best form of masculinity. The Victorian gentleman is revered especially because he is highly associated with being English, which implies a certain expression of masculinity. The Victorian novelists portrayed the concept of the gentleman as a more refined and emotionally controlled version of masculinity compared to the men of other masculinities like religious and effeminate masculinities. Thus, the concept of gentlemanliness is the most sophisticated form of masculinity. This is because it is the moral self-discipline of men anywhere.

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11 Petrie 180.
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Noblesse Oblige is the idea that people who belong to a high social class should behave in a kind and generous way towards people of a lower social class.

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Newman 211.

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This definition of the gentleman is typical to the traits of the characters of Darcy in Pride and Prejudice and Knightly in Emma. Both gentlemen do their best for their fellowmen and fellow women around them. Jane Austen may have thought about these features while she was constructing the plot of her novels to have new construction of gentlemanliness.

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Gilmour 3.

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The female novelists of the Victorian period, so far this thesis is concerned, are like Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte whom I am discussing their construction of the concept of a gentleman as viewed in their novels.