

Social History Chapter 8

Novels, Society and History

Q.1. Explain the following :

(a) Social changes in Britain which led to an increase in women readers.

(b) What actions of Robinson Crusoe make us see him as a typical coloniser ? Or “Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe made the readers feel that they were part of a superior community”. Support the statement. [CBSE 2013]

Or

What actions of Robinson Crusoe made him as a typical coloniser ? Explain. [CBSE 2013]

(c) After 1740, the readership of novels began to include poorer people.

(d) Novelists in colonial India wrote for a political cause.

Or

How does the novel Pariksha Guru reflect the inner and outer world of the newly emerging middle classes? [CBSE Sept. 2010]

Ans.

(a) Social changes in Britain which led to an increase in women readers were as mentioned below :

1. The middle classes became more prosperous in the eighteenth century. Women, therefore, got more leisure to read as well as write novels.
2. The subject-matter of many novels was women, their emotions and identities, their experiences and problems. Many novels were about domestic life- a theme about which women were allowed to speak with authority. The novels of Jane Austen give us a glimpse of the world of women in general rural society in Britain. These subjects increased their interests and led to increase in women readers.
3. Women drew upon their experience, wrote about family life and earned public recognition.
4. However when women began writing novels many people feared that they would neglect their traditional role as wives and mothers and homes would be in disorder.
5. By the nineteenth century, images of women reading silently, in the privacy of the room, became common in European paintings.

(b) The following actions of Robinson Crusoe make us see him as a typical colonizer:

1. He is an adventurer and slave trader.
2. He treats coloured people not as human beings equal to him, but as inferior creatures.
3. He rescues a 'native' and makes him his slave.
4. He does not ask for his name (native) but arrogantly gives him the name Friday.

But at the time, Crusoe's behaviour was right because colonialism was seen as natural.

Colonised people were seen as primitive and barbaric. Colonial rule was considered necessary to civilise them as white man's burden.

(c) In the beginning, novels were so costly that the poor could not buy. For example, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones (1749) was issued in six volumes priced at three shillings each – which was more than the income of a labourer in a week. But after 1740, the readership of novels began to include the poorer people due to the following reasons :

1. Circulating libraries were introduced in 1740.
2. Technological improvements in printing brought down the price of books.
3. Innovations in marketing led to an expansion in sales. For example, in France, publishers found that they could make super profits by hiring out novels by the hour.
4. The novel was one of the first mass-produced items to be sold.

(d) Leading novelists of the nineteenth century wrote for a cause as mentioned below :

1. Colonial rules regarding the contemporary culture of India as inferior. They depicted Indians as weak, divided and dependent on the British.
2. On the other hand, Indian novelists wrote to develop modern literature of the country that could produce a sense of national belonging and cultural equality with their Colonial masters.
3. Many novels produced a sense of Pan-Indian belonging. For example, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay's (1827-94) Anguriya Binimoy (1857) was written about Shivaji's battles against Aurangzeb and the way he escapes from prison. It

depicts him as nationalist fighting for the freedom of Hindus. Similarly, Bankim's, Anandmath (1882) is a novel about a secret Hindu militia that fights Muslims to establish a Hindu kingdom. This novel inspired many freedom fighters. Thus, the Indian novelists tried to produce a sense of national belonging and cultural equality with their colonial masters who considered the contemporary Indian culture as inferior. The historical novels imagined the nation to be full of adventure, heroism, romance, and sacrifice.

Q.2. Outline the changes in technology and society which led to an increase in the readers of the novel in the eighteenth century Europe. [CBSE Sept. 2013]

Ans.

The changes in technology and society which led to an increase in readers of the novel in eighteenth-century Europe were as follows :

1. Earlier manuscripts were handwritten and circulated among very few people. On the other hand, novels were being printed. Therefore novels were widely read and became popular very quickly.
2. Technological improvements in printing such as power-driven cylindrical press brought down the price of books. The novel was one of the first mass-produced items to be sold in Europe.
3. Big cities like London were growing rapidly and becoming connected to small towns and rural areas through print and improved communications. Novels produced a number of common interests among their scattered and varied readers.
4. New groups of lower-middle-class people, such as shopkeepers and clerks, traditional aristocratic and gentlemanly classes in England, and France formed new readership for novels.
5. In the eighteenth century, the middle-classes became more prosperous. Women got more leisure to read as well as write novels.

Q.3. Write a note on :

(a) Hie Oriya Novel

(b) Jane Austen's portrayal of women

(c) The picture of the new middle class which the novel Pariksha Guru portrays.

Ans. (a) The Oriya Novel : In 1877-78, Ramashankar Ray, a dramatist, began serialising the first Oriya novel Saudamani.

But he could not complete it. Within thirty years, however, Odisha produced a major novelist in Fakir Mohon Senapati (1843- 1918).

The title of his novel Chaa Maria Atha Guntha (1902) portrays six acres and thirty-two decimals of land. It announces a new kind of novel that will deal with the question of land and its possession. It is the story of Ramchandra Mangaraj, a landlord's manager, who cheats his idle and drunken master and then eyes the plot of fertile land owned by Bhagia and Shariya, a childless "weaver couple. Mangaraj fools this couple and puts them into his debt so that he can take over their land. This pathbreaking work showed that the novel could make rural issues an important part of urban Ans. preoccupations. In writing this, Fakir Mohon anticipated a host of writers .in Bengal and elsewhere.

(b) Jane Austen was an English novelist who gives us a glimpse of the world of women in the general rural society in the early 19th century. Her novels make us think about a society which encouraged women to look for 'good' marriages and find wealthy or propertied husbands. The first sentence of Jane Austen's (1775-1817) Pride and Prejudice states: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' This observation allows us to see the behaviour of the protagonists, who are preoccupied with marriage and money, as typifying Austen's society.

(c) Pariksha Guru reflects the inner and outer world of the newly emerging middle classes. The characters in the novel are caught in the difficulty of adapting to colonised society and at the same time, preserving their own cultural identity. The world of colonial modernity seems to be both frightening and irresistible to the characters. The novel clearly intends to teach the reader the 'right way' to live, and expects all 'sensible men' to be worldly-wise and practical, to remain rooted in the values of their own traditions and culture, and to live with, dignity and honour.

In the novel, we see the characters attempting to bridge two different worlds through their actions: they take to new agricultural technology, modernise trading practices, change the use of Indian language, making them capable to transmitting both Western sciences and Indian wisdom.

The young are urged to cultivate the 'healthy habit' of reading the newspapers. But the novel emphasises that all this must be achieved without sacrificing the traditional values of the middle-class household. With all its good intentions, Pariksha Guru could not win many readers, as it was perhaps too moralising in its style.

Q.4.Discuss some of the social changes in nineteenth-century Britain which Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens wrote about.

Ans.

Charles Dickens was the foremost English novelist of the Victorian era. He wrote about the terrible effects of industrialization on people's lives and characters. His novels Hard Times and Oliver Twist became world-famous,

(i) **Hard Times:** His novel *Hard Times* (1854) describes Coketown, a fictitious industrial town, as a grim place full of machinery, smoking chimneys, rivers polluted purple, and buildings that all looked the same. Here workers are known as 'hands', as if they had no identity other than as operators of machines. Dickens criticised not just the greed for profits but also the ideas that reduced human beings into simple instruments of production.

(ii) **Oliver Twist:** In other novels too, Dickens focused on the terrible conditions of urban life under industrial capitalism. His *Oliver Twist* (1838) is the tale of a poor orphan who lived in a world of petty criminals and beggars. Brought up in a cruel workhouse, Oliver was finally adopted by a wealthy man and lived happily ever after.

Q.5. Summarise the concern in both nineteenth-century Europe and India about women reading novels. What does this suggest about how women were viewed?

Ans. (i) When women began writing and reading novels, many people feared that they would now neglect the traditional role as wives and mothers, and homes would be in disorder.

(ii) It is not surprising that many men were suspicious of women writing novels or reading them. This suspicion cut across communities. Hannah Mullens, a Christian missionary and the author of *Karuna o Phulmonir Bibaran* (1852), reputedly the first novel in Bengali, tells her readers that she wrote in secret.

In the twentieth century, Sailabala Ghosh Jaya, a popular novelist, could only write because her husband protected her. As we have seen in the case of the south, women and girls were often discouraged from reading novels.

Q.6. In what ways was the novel in colonial India useful for both the colonisers as well as the nationalists?

Ans. (i) **Source of Information:** Colonial administrators found the 'vernacular' novels a valuable source of information on native life and customs. Such information was useful for them in governing Indian society, with its large and a variety of communities and castes. As outsiders, the British knew little about life inside Indian households. The novels in Indian languages often had descriptions of domestic life.

(ii) **Novels and colonialism:** The novel originated in Europe at a time when it was colonizing the rest of the world. The early novel contributed to colonialism by making the readers feel they were part of a superior community of fellow colonialists.

(iii) **The novel and nation making:** The history written by colonial historians tended to depict Indians as weak, divided, and dependent on the British. These histories could not satisfy the tastes of the new Indian administrators and intellectuals. Nor did the traditional Puranic stories of the past- peopled by gods and demons, filled with the

fantastic and the supernatural- seem convincing to those educated and working under the English system. Such minds wanted a new view of the past that would show that Indians could be independent-minded and had been so in history. The novel provided a solution. In it, the nation could be imagined in a past that also featured historical characters, places, events, and dates.

(iv) Novels and struggle for freedom: The imagined nation of the novel was so powerful that it could inspire actual political movements. Bankim's *Anandamath* (1882) is a novel about a secret Hindu militia that fights Muslims to establish the Hindu Kingdom. It was a novel that inspired many kinds of freedom fighters.

(v) Novels and common sharing novelists included: Various classes in the novel in such a way that they could be seen to belong to a shared world. Premchand's novels, for instance, are filled with all kinds of powerful characters drawn from all levels of society. In his novels, you meet aristocrats and landlords, middle-level peasants and landless labourers, middle-class professionals, and people from the margins of society. The women characters are strong individuals, especially those who come from the lower classes and are not modernised.

Q.7. Describe how the issue of caste was included in novels in India. By referring to any two novels, discuss the ways in which they tried to make readers think about the existing social issues.

Ans. (i) Novels like *Indirabai* and *Indulekha* were written by members of the upper castes and were primarily about the upper-caste characters. But all novels were not of this kind.

(ii) Potheri Kunjambu, a 'lower-caste' writer from north Kerala, wrote a novel called *Saraswativijayam* in 1892, mounting a strong blow on caste oppression. This novel shows a young man from an 'untouchable' caste, leaving his village to escape the cruelty of his Brahmin landlord. He converted himself to Christianity, obtained modern education, and returned as the judge in the local court. *Saraswativijayam* stressed the importance of education for the upliftment of the lower castes.

(iii) From the 1920s, in Bengal too a new kind of novel emerged that depicted the lives of peasants and 'low' castes. Advaita Malla Burmaris (1914-51) *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* (1956) is an epic about the Mallas, a community of fisherfolk who live off fishing in the river, Titash.

(iv) While novelists before Advaita Malla had featured 'low castes' as their main character, *Titash* is special because the author is himself a 'low caste'.

(v) The central character of Munshi Premchand's novel *Rangboomi*, Surdas is. a visually impaired beggar from a so-called 'untouchable caste.'

Q.8. Describe the ways in which the novels in India attempted to create a sense of pan- Indian belonging.

Ans.

(i) **To create a sense of equality:** Colonial rulers regarded the contemporary culture of India as inferior, On the other hand, Indian novelist wrote to develop modern literature of the country that could produce a sense of national belonging and cultural equality with their colonial masters.

(ii) **To protect the values of India's tradition and culture:** Many novelists like that of Srinivas Das had expressed their fear and anger about the intermingling of Indian and Western culture. The world of colonial modernity seems to be both frightening and irresistible to the characters. The novel tries to teach the reader the 'right way' to live and expects all 'sensible men' to be worldly-wise and practical, to remain rooted in the values of their own tradition and culture, and to live with dignity and honour.

(iii) **Women novelists:** But women did not remain mere readers of stories written by men; soon they also began to write novels. In some languages, the early creations of women were poems, essays or autobiographical pieces. In the early decades of the twentieth century, women in south India also began writing novels and short stories. A reason for the popularity of novels among women was that it allowed for a new conception of womanhood. Stories of love – which was a staple theme of many novels – showed women who could choose or refuse their partners and relationships. It showed women who could to some extent control their lives. Some women authors also wrote about women who changed the world of both men and women.

(iv) **Novels for low castes and peasants:** From the 1920s, in Bengal too a new kind of novel emerged that depicted the lives of peasants and 'low' castes. Advaita Malla Burman's (1914-51) *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* (1956) is an epic about the Mallas, a community of fisherfolk who live off fishing in the river Titash. The novel is about three generations of the Mallas, about their recurring tragedies, and the story of Ananta, a child born of parents who were tragically separated after their wedding night. Ananta leaves the community to get educated in the city. The novel describes the community life of the Mallas in great detail, their Holi and Kali Puja festivals, boat races, bhatiali songs, their relationships of friendship and animosity with the peasants, and the oppression of the upper castes.

(v) **The novel and nation making:** Many novelists wrote about Marathas and Rajputs. These novels produced a sense of a pan Indian belonging. The imagined nation of the novel was so powerful that it could inspire actual political movements. Bankim's *Anandamath* (1882) is a novel about a secret Hindu militia that fights Muslims to

establish a Hindu kingdom. It was a novel that inspired many kinds of freedom fighters.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which Hindi novel by Premchand tells the story of Indian peasantry through the characters of 'Hori' and his wife 'Dhanial'? [CBSE (CCE) 2011]

- (a) Godan
- (b) Gabon
- (c) Sewasadan
- (d) Rangbhoomi

2. Who wrote the 'Sultan's Dream'? [CBSE (CCE) 2011]

- (a) Rokeya Hossein
- (b) Premchand
- (c) Srinivas Das
- (d) Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

3. Which of the following books was written with adolescent girls in mind? [CBSE (CCE) 2011]

- (a) The Jungle Book
- (b) Ramona
- (c) Treasure Island
- (d) Robinson Crusoe

4. Which of the following novels was not written by Charles Dickens ?

- (a) Hard Times
- (b) Germinal
- (c) Oliver Twist
- (d) Pickwick Papers

5. Who is the pioneer of modern Hindi Literature ?

- (a) Bharatendu Harishchandra
- (b) Srinivas Das
- (c) Devaki Nandan Khatri
- (d) Munshi Premchand

6. Which of the following novels deals with caste oppression ?

- (a) Sultana's Dream
- (b) Indulekha
- (c) Saraswativijayam
- (d) Padmarag

7. Which was the first historical novel written in Bengali ?

- (a) Anandamath

- (b) Sultana's Dream
- (c) Durgeshnandini
- (d) Anguriya Binimoy

8. A novel written in the form of a series of letter is called

- (a) serialised novel
- (b) epistolary novel
- (c) autobiography
- (d) anthology

9. A format of novel in which the story is published in instalment is known as

- (a) epistolary novel
- (b) continuous novel
- (c) serialised novel
- (d) historical novel

10. Which of the following novels depicts the changes in rural society in England ?

- (a) Hard Times
- (b) Mayor of Casterbridge
- (c) Treasure Island
- (d) Oliver Twist

11. Novels of which of the following authors give us a glimpse of women of 19th century rural society in Britain ?

- (a) Charlotte Bronte
- (b) Jane Austen
- (c) Emily Bronte
- (d) Susan Coolidge

12. Which of the following novels displays a colonial attitude ?

- (a) Robinson Crusoe
- (b) Treasure Island
- (c) Jane Eyre
- (d) Hard Times

13. Which of the following is an example of early prose written in India in 7th century ?

- (a) Muktamala
- (b) Kadambari
- (c) Ramcharitmanas
- (d) Padmarag

14. Which of the following best explains the term “**dastan**” ?

- (a) Tradition of prose tales of adventure and heroism in Persian and Urdu
- (b) Long stories of love written in Hindi
- (c) Poem depicting nature written in Urdu
- (d) Tragic stories

15. The novel that generally reflected the inner and outer world of the newly emerging middle class

- (a) Chandrakanta
- (b) Pariksha Guru
- (c) Sewasadan
- (d) Godan

16. The novel that dealt mainly with the poor condition of women in society

- (a) Pariksha Guru
- (b) Chandrakanta
- (c) Sewasadan
- (d) Anandamath

17. The first proper modern novel was written by

- (a) Srinivas Das
- (b) Premchand
- (c) Devaki Nandan Khatri
- (d) Saratchandra

18. In Bengal what was meant by ‘**Kabirlarai**’ ?

- (a) Contest of archers
- (b) Contest of poets
- (c) Wrestling contests
- (d) Musical contest

19. The term “**Kissa-goi**” refers to

- (a) traditional art of storytelling
- (b) traditional art of writing poetry
- (c) traditional art of writing folktales
- (d) traditional art of recitation

20 The form of writing used to criticise the society in a clever and witty manner is called

- (a) tragedy
- (b) comedy
- (c) satire
- (d) anthology

21. Which of the following emphasized the need for reform of women related problems ?

- (a) Padmarag
- (b) Sultana's dream
- (c) Chandrakanta
- (d) Indulekha

22. Which of the following novels describe the community life of the fisher folks in detail ?

- (a) Titash Ekti Nadir Naarm
- (b) Rangbhoomi
- (c) Anguriya Binimoy
- (d) Durgeshnandini

23. Why is the writing of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer significant ?

- (a) His novels give details of everyday life of Muslim households.
- (b) He writes about communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims.
- (c) He writes about the need for reform of society.
- (d) He preached the need for satyagraha.

24. Why was the writings of Rokeya Hossein important ?

- (a) She wrote about the need for education.
- (b) She resisted against the caste system.
- (c) She focussed on the need for reform of the women's condition in society.
- (d) She inspired the people with nationalism.

25. Who among the following wrote '**Jungle book**' ?

- (a) R.L. Stevenson
- (b) Rudyard Kipling
- (c) G.A. Henty
- (d) Daniel Defoe

26. Which of the following is an epistolary novel ?

- (a) Pride and Prejudice
- (b) Pamela
- (c) Tom Jones
- (d) Germinal

27. '**Pamela**' was written by

- (a) Samuel Richardson
- (b) Henry Fielding
- (c) Thomas Hardy
- (d) Charles Dickens

28 Which of the following novels reflected the effects of industrialisation ?

- (a) Pickwick Papers
- (b) Pride and Prejudice
- (c) Hard Times
- (d) Treasure Island

29. Who is the author of Germinal ?

- (a) R.L. Stevenson
- (b) Jules Verne
- (c) Charles Dickens
- (d) Emile Zola

30 Mary Ann Evans is the real name of which of the following authors ?

- (a) Jane Austin
- (b) Thomas Hardy
- (c) George Eliot
- (d) R.L. Stevenson

31. The first Malayalam novel was

- (a) Padmarag
- (b) Muktamala
- (c) Indulekha
- (d) Chandrakanta

32. Which one of the following was the first novel written by BankimChandra

- (a) Anandamath
- (b) Durgeshnandini
- (c) Baikunther Will
- (d) Chandrakanta

33. The earliest novel written in Marathi is

- (a) Muktamala
- (b) Yamuna Paryatan
- (c) Indulekha
- (d) Manjughosha

ANSWERS

Multiple Choice Questions

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (d) | 8. (b) | 9. (c) | 10. (b) |
| 11. (b) | 12. (a) | 13. (b) | 14. (a) | 15. (b) | 16. (c) | 17. (a) | 18. (b) | 19. (a) | 20. (c) |
| 21. (a) | 22. (a) | 23. (a) | 24. (c) | 25. (b) | 26. (b) | 27. (a) | 28. (c) | 29. (d) | 30. (c) |
| 31. (c) | 32. (b) | 33. (b) | | | | | | | |