

PRINT CULTURE AND MODERN WORLD

Q.1. Give reasons

a) Woodblock print only came to Europe after 1295.

Woodblock print is believed to have developed in China around 6th century A.D. From China the technique of woodblock printing spread firstly to other East Asian countries like Japan and Korea. However it reached Europe only after 1295 for the following reasons:

- i) China was not having any extensive relation with Europe. China preferred the policy of isolation from the rest of the world during early modern times.
- ii) From Europe, only some merchants or Christian missionaries went to China for trade and Christianity purposes.
- iii) The most important merchant explorer of Europe was Marco Polo who explored China and learnt the art of woodblock print there. It was only after his return to Europe in 1295 that the art of woodblock printing was introduced to European countries.

b) Martin Luther was in favour of print and spoke out in praise of it.

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) was a German monk who encouraged the process of reformation in Christian religion. He was in favour of print because of the following reasons.

- i) Martin Luther initiated his reform movement against corrupt practices in Christianity by making effective use of print. For e.g. in 1517, he wrote “Ninety – five theses” mainly against the abuse of selling of indulgences by catholic priests.
- ii) It was the printing press, which allowed Luther’s message to spread so rapidly throughout Europe. For e.g. in 1518, some friends, of Luther widely copied the “Ninety – five theses” which made the controversy of abuse of indulgences public in Europe.
- iii) Luther’s German translation of New Testament in 1534, was reproduced in vast numbers, which provided an alternative and reformed form of Bible for the people.
- iv) Because of print, Luther’s writings were read widely which caused the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Europe.
- v) While the printing press was developed in Germany, which was homeland of Luther. It made him believe that the printed book was sent from heaven. He declared that print was the ultimate gift of God.

c) The Roman Catholic Church began keeping an index of prohibited books from the mid 16th century:

The Roman Catholic Church began keeping an index of prohibited books from mid 16th century, only to be abolished in 1966 because:

- i) During 16th century, many people came up with different interpretations of faith, which were seen as antireligious by the Roman Catholic Church. For e.g. Menocchio of Italy through his writing spread the interpretation that Jesus was nothing more than a human being. He sought to reduce religion to mere morality.
 - ii) The index was also created to restrict the spread of Protestantism in Europe, which challenged the authority of Roman Catholic Church.
 - iii) It was intended to defend the political privileges of the church. Because many writers began to challenge the taxing rights of the church.
 - iv) The writers and philosophers like Locke, David. Hume, Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Voltaire and others were placed on the index and the Church exercised strict control over publishers and booksellers.
- d) Gandhi said the fight for Swaraj is a fight for liberty of speech, liberty of the pen, and freedom of association:**

Although Swaraj literally means self-rule, however for Gandhi, Swaraj was a continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it was foreign or national. Gandhi declared that under Swaraj every individual should be his own ruler. Therefore Gandhi indicated that the liberty of speech, liberty of press and freedom of association are the main features of Swaraj. During colonial times British government put restrictions on all form of liberties. For e.g. in 1878, Vernacular Press Act was passed to curb the freedom of press in India. Similarly the freedom of association was threatened when Indian National Congress, a democratic association of people was declared illegal on many occasions. Therefore, Gandhi believed that the denial of these freedoms was not compatible with the idea of self rule of independence. Hence, the fight for swaraj was basically fight to ensure liberty of speech, press and association.

Q.2. Write short notes on:

a) The Gutenberg Press:

Johann Gutenberg (1395 – 1468) was a German blacksmith, goldsmith who developed the modern printing press, also known as Gutenberg press between 1436 and 1448. The model for his printing press was derived from the olive press. Gutenberg, since his childhood had seen wine and olive presses, which were intensively used in agricultural production of wine and olive oil. The first book that was printed by Gutenberg press was Bible. Gutenberg press remained the basic print technology over the next 300 years. Within the hundred years between 1450 and 1550, printing presses were set up in most countries of Europe, which set off the print revolution during 16th century onwards. Because of Gutenberg Press, books could now be produced much faster, so during 16th

C, some 200 million copies of printed books were made available in the market of Europe. For its advantages, Martin Luther hailed print as the almighty gift of God.

b) Erasmus's idea of the printed book:

Erasmus was a catholic reformer who criticized the corrupt practices in Christianity. Like other Christian reformers, Erasmus trusted the power of words and used his pen to attack the church abuses and to promote his philosophy of Christ. His important writings include "Praise of Folly" and "colloquies". However, Erasmus was highly critical of print because he believed that many books published were not merely unimportant but stupid, scandalous, irreligious and seditious. And because of these books, the quality of valuable publication was also threatened.

c) Vernacular Press Act:

The Act was passed in 1878 during the British Governor General Lord Lytton. The purpose of the act was to control the printing and circulation of seditious material which could produce disaffection against the British government in India. The act gave tyrannical powers to the govt. to censor reports and editorials in the vernacular languages. In case a report was found to be of seditious nature, the government was entitled to confiscate the printing machinery and impose fines on the printer. There were 35 vernacular papers in circulation at the time when Vernacular Press Act was passed.

Q.3. What did the spread of print culture in 19th century India mean to:

- a) Women:** The spread of print culture in 19th India brought about educational reform for women. On the one hand, there were liberal people who promoted education of women at home or sent them to schools. While there were conservatives Hindus who believed that education of women does not accommodate with their social set up. Among muslims also, there was a fear that education would corrupt women by exposing them to Urdu romance literature. It was against all these disadvantages that many female literary figures began to utilize print by writing in journals and by writing books. For e.g. Rashundari Devi wrote her autobiography 'Amar Jiban' in 1876. From among the muslim, Begun Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein was an important writer and social worker who struggled for gender equality by writing about it. Her book Sultana's Dream.

It was from 1870s, because of coming of print, there emerged a significant segment of women that became associated with journals where they discussed the issues of widowhood, widow remarriage and national mort.

- b)** The spread of print culture in 19th century India had many advantages for the poor. It made the availability of cheap books and establishment of public libraries possible, which provided the poor a good access to books. The print culture provided an effective means, through which the issues of caste discrimination began to be written about. For e.g. Jyotibha Phule who was from a 'low caste' wrote his book Gulamgiri in 1871, In

which he wrote about the injustice of the caste system. A number of popular journals pamphlets were brought out which criticized the ancient scriptures and envisioned a new future. In 1938, “Chhote Aur Bade Ka Sawal” was published by a mill worker of Kanpur, which showed that it was the caste that was responsible for the class exploitation of workers. By 1930s, Bangalore cotton mill workers set up libraries to educate themselves and to propagate the message of nationalism.

- c) As print played pivotal role in helping reformation in Christianity in Europe, like wise in India, it made the message of the reformers widespread and consequential. For e.g Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the first modern man of India and pioneer reformer of Bengal published Samab Kaumudi from 1821 which mainly editorialized the debate on the social evil of sati. The newspaper was published in Bengali to reach a wider audience. From 1822, two Persian news, a Gujrati newspaper also Began to be published. Among Muslims, from the fear of change of Muslim personal laws at the hands of British, the Deoband Seminary published thousands of fat was which explained the meanings of Islamic doctrines. Print did not only stimulate the publication of conflicting opinions, amongst communities, but it also connected communities and people in different parts of India.

Question 4:

Why did some people in eighteenth century Europe think that print culture would bring enlightenment and end despotism?

Ans. Some people in eighteenth-century Europe thought that print culture would bring enlightenment and end despotism because

1. There was a general conviction among the people in the 18th century that books were a means of spreading progress and enlightenment. Many believed that books could change the world, liberate society from despotism and tyranny and herald a time when reason and intellect would rule.
2. Print popularized the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers. Collectively, their writings provided a critical commentary on tradition, superstition and despotism. They argued for the rule of reason rather than custom and demanded that everything be judged through the application of reason and rationality.
3. Print created a new culture of dialogue and debate. All values, norms and institutions were re-evaluated and discussed by a public that had become aware of the power of reason and recognized

the need to question existing ideas and beliefs. Within this public culture, new ideas of social revolution came into being.

4. By the 1780s there was an outpouring of literature that mocked the royalty and criticized their morality. Questions began to be raised about the existing social order.

Question 5:

Why did some people fear the effect of easily available printed books? Choose one example from Europe and one from India?

Ans.

Print created the possibility of wide circulation of ideas and introduced a new world of debate and discussion. Even those who disagreed with established authorities could now print and circulate their ideas. This developed fear among some people. They became apprehensive of the effects that the easier access to the printed words and the wider circulation of books, could have on people's minds. It was feared that if there was no control over what was printed and read then rebellious and irreligious thoughts might spread. If that happened the authority of 'valuable' literature would be destroyed. Expressed by religious authorities and monarchs, as well as several writers and artists, this anxiety was the basis of widespread criticism of the new printed literature that had begun to circulate. For example, in 1517, the religious reformer Martin Luther wrote Ninety-five Theses criticizing many of the practices and rituals of the Roman Catholic immediately reproduced in vast numbers and read widely. This led to a division within the Church and to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In India, conservative Hindus believed that a literate girl would be widowed and Muslims feared that educated women would be corrupted by reading Urdu romances. Sometimes, rebel women defied such prohibitions.

Question 6:

What were the effects of the spread of print culture for poor people in nineteenth century India?

Ans. In the 19th century, with the spread of printed books, the interest in reading books also increased among the poor people. To fulfill their desire of reading, cheap small books were published and public libraries were set up for them by the rich.

The problems of the poor people began to be written and published.

- Gulamgiri of Jyotiba Phule exposed the ill-treatment to the low castes.
- Dr. Ambedkar and E V Ramaswamy Naicker wrote powerfully against untouchability.
- Choote Aur Bade Ka Sawal of kashibaba exposed the link between caste and class exploitation.
- Sudarshan Charkr published a collection called Sachchi Kavitaayan.

These books highlighted how poor people were exploited by the upper caste people. These books were read all over India. Efforts were made by the social reformers to improve the condition of poor workers through print.

Question 7:

Explain how print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India.

Print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India by providing easy access to nationalist ideals and ideas of freedom and equality to the masses. Social reformers could now print their opinions in newspapers, which sparked off public debates.

Print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India in the following ways.

1. Several newspapers, that began to be published in India, carried nationalist feelings; they reported on colonial misrule and encouraged nationalist activities.
2. Attempts to throttle nationalist criticism provoked militant protest. This in turn led to a renewed cycle to persecution and protests.
3. When Punjabi revolutionaries were deported in 1907, Balgangadhar Tilak wrote with great sympathy about them in his Kesari.
4. This led to his imprisonment in 1908, provoking in turn widespread protests all over India.