



Q5. Summarise the concern in both nineteenth- century Europe and India about women reading novels. What does this suggest about how women were viewed ?

Answer: (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.

Q6. In what ways was the novel In colonial India useful for both the colonisers as well as the nationalists?

Answer: (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 marking 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 a 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.

Q7. 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.

Answer: (i) Novels like Indirabai and Indulekha were written by members of the upper castes, and were primarily about the uppercaste 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 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.

(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.'

Q8. Describe the ways in which the novels in India attempted to create a sense of pan- Indian belonging.

Answer: (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 a modern literature of the country that could produce a sense of national belonging and cultural equality with their colonial masters.

(ii) To protect values of India's tradition and culture: Many novelist 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 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.

***** END *****