

Revision Notes

Class 10 History

Chapter 5 - Print Culture and The Modern World

More than 5,500 years ago, people started writing. However, it took time and effort to write manually or inscribe on materials like stone, leather, etc. So for a long time, ideas and knowledge were spread orally among the masses.

It was only after the invention of printing that ideas started to travel faster. Books, newspapers, historical documents, autobiographies, scientific documents, etc., contributed tremendously to the world's progress.

Your NCERT Class 10 Social Science History Chapter 5 talks about how printing technology came into being and how the print culture shaped society, ideas, and knowledge.

Printing In China:

- Although the Sumerian civilizations used some primary forms of printing, China is considered the birthplace of printing. Woodblock printing first originated in this country.
- In China, woodblock printing started from 594 AD onwards. And when the Tang Dynasty came to power in 618 AD, the emperors immensely helped in the progress of woodblock printing.

Printing In Japan:

- In Japan, the Chinese missionaries propagated the art of printing to spread Buddhism. This is how hand printing technology came to Japan from 768 AD onwards.
- Diamond Sutra is regarded as the earliest known printed Japanese book. This book is regarded as the world's oldest printed book. It was dated May 11, 868 AD.

Printing In Europe:

- As you have read previously, China supplied Silk materials to Europe. The route through which the traders of China met buyers of the West and vice versa is known as the Silk Route.
- It is through this same route the Chinese paper traveled to Europe. Before this, in Europe, Vellum or animal skin was used to write on. But it was expensive and catered only to the aristocrats.
- In 1295, printing was brought back to Italy by Marco Polo's knowledge but the cost of printing decreased as woodblock printing spread in Italy.

Gutenberg:

- The invention of woodblock could only help printing in a limited way. As the demand increased, the woodblock printing proved incapable of handling too much load. This is where Johannes Gutenberg came into the scene in the 15th century.

Gutenberg, who grew up in an agricultural estate, saw how the grapes and olives were pressed to extract the liquids. He became a goldsmith and used to create lead moulds to produce trinkets of his desired shape.

Gutenberg drew inspiration from the above two works and made the world's first printing press. He -

- Used moulds to make metals resembling the alphabet.
- Used a press similar to olive press to press the paper against the inked metal types.

There are reasons why Gutenberg's printing press is known as a revolutionary invention:

- The woodblocks were not moveable, and hence printing with them was inefficient.
- It took too much time to make the wooden block itself. Thirdly, the wooden blocks were not so durable. Gutenberg used metal as opposed to wooden blocks. These metal-made alphabets were moveable, so one can use the same set of alphabets to print various sentences.

- Gutenberg's printing press brought about the print revolution. Later in the 16th century, 200 million copies of printed books were in circulation.

The Print Revolution:

There was no internet, smartphones, or laptops in the 16th century. Books became the medium for spreading ideas and knowledge.

- More books came into the market when the cost of the books was reduced.
- A new reading public emerged who had to rely on oral methods earlier to get new ideas and knowledge.
- To make the books popular even to illiterate people, the printers heavily relied on illustrations that would attract these people. Then these books were read aloud so that the illiterate people could know what was written in the book.
- The Religious Implications the book talks about how the Church was against printing any and every idea under the sun. But let us go a little back in time -
- Vejas Liulevicius informs us that Gutenberg was a clever businessman. He approached the Roman Catholic Church to show how his printing press can propagate the teachings and instructions of the Church. So, in the beginning, the printing press and the Church were friends.
- It was only after the death of Gutenberg that the printing press started to be used by the Protestants like Martin Luther.
- The Roman Catholic Church later concluded that low-cost printed books would spread anti-Christian ideas and undermine the authority of the Church.

Readership Increased in the 17th and 18th Century:

- As literacy increased in the 17th and 18th century the number of readers skyrocketed. Many schools were set up. So the demand for children's books also increased.
- From this period onwards, we see that many different types of books started emerging. There were chapbooks - which were highly cheap books meant for poor people.

- Periodicals too came into existence during this time. Scientific documents started getting printed, and many other scientifically minded people got access to these documents. Similar was the case for philosophical and political books.

Revolution and Print:

- The printed books spread progressive ideas across Europe. Thanks to people like Voltaire and Rousseau, people started questioning. They started wondering if the emperors were divinely blessed.
- People learned to use reason and logic. They stopped believing what the kings or the Church said. The spread of revolutionary ideals is through books acted as a catalyst for the French Revolution and the later nationalistic revolutions.
- Yes, the Church also spread propaganda through printed books, but the people had already learned to take everything with a grain of salt.
- As time progressed, print technology became more advanced. Richard Hoe made the rotary printing press efficient. He employed four cylinders - one for the type and 3 fed the paper in the kind. This made printing 8000 sheets of paper per hour possible. Black and white print gave way to colored print.

Print In India:

- Before the print culture came to India, Indians leveraged manuscripts. These manuscripts were mainly made of palm leaves.
- The printing press was bought by the Portuguese Missionaries to India (Goa).
- The English printing press was late to emerge.
- Indians, too, started printing newspapers like the Bengal Gazette.
- Vernacular newspapers appeared, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Samvad Kamudi, Persian newspaper Shamsul Akhbar, Gujarati language newspaper Bombay Samachar.
- Here too, orthodox Hindu and Muslim leaders published propagandist materials.
- Holy religious texts like Ramcharit Manas came out in the printed form.

- Cartoons and caricatures in newspapers are not a modern phenomenon. From 1870 onwards, newspapers carried satirical cartoons.
- Women, too, were encouraged to read by their liberal fathers or husbands. In orthodox households, they secretly learned to read. Many books meant for women readers came up. However, some of these books were about women and not necessarily for women.
- Inexpensive, printed books catered to poor people.
- People like Jyotiba Phule, B.R Ambedkar published books on social issues.

Muffling the Print:

- During the initial years, the company silenced people like Hickey, who criticized the company's way of work. After the Sepoy Mutiny, the British started censoring the Indian newspapers and radical books.
- In 1878, the draconian Vernacular Press Act was passed that seriously undermined press freedom. The more the British tried to silence the nationalistic press, the more nationalistic newspapers and books came out.
- For example, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, during this time, wrote Kesari to voice the Indian Nationalist Movement.

Important Question and Answers

1. Why did people in Europe welcome the print culture?

Ans: ● The print culture helped in the spread of books that talked about revolutionary ideals. For example, Rousseau's Social Contract spoke about the radical view that the government could govern only after the consent of the governed.

- These kinds of revolutionary ideas were hitherto unforeseen. They forced people to think, use logic. They made people realise that there was nothing divine about the kings and queens of Europe.
- These books talked about liberty and equality for all. So the people of Europe welcomed the print culture because it aimed to attack dictatorship and monarchy.

2. Why were some people not happy with the easy availability of printed books?

Ans: ● The Church thought that the easy availability of cheap books would result in the proliferation of irreligious ideas that would result in the people not listening to the clergy's sermons.

- These cheap books were written in colloquial language. So the general people who did not know Latin could also read these books. This could undermine the authority of the Church.

- In India, the British were not happy with the printed books that propagated the idea of nationalism. So when Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote Kesari in support of the Punjabi nationalist, he was jailed.

3. Write a brief note on the Gutenberg Press.

Ans: ● As the wooden block printing technique came to Italy (and Europe), thanks to Marco Polo, many books were published, and people started buying more and more books. But the block printing technology could not handle so much demand. Gutenberg took inspiration from wine and olive press and lead mold.

- He created a movable type with the help of mold and employed the technique used in the olive press to print by pressing a paper against the metallic and movable type. Since the alphabets of the kind were movable, he could use the same type to print various sentences. And the metallic type was durable too.

- Gutenberg's printing press brought about a print revolution across the world. Other materials and books could be printed quickly. The printing press helped spread new ideas among the masses.

4. What was the theme of the earliest dated book, Diamond Sutra?

Ans: ● The Smithsonian Magazine informs us that the Diamond Sutra was a book containing Buddhist sacred texts. As the Diamond cuts through even the most complex materials, these Buddhist Sutras are meant to cut the curtain of illusion.

- The book, as Buddhahet explains, is all about the concept of ‘not dwelling’ or the attainment of Prajna Paramita.

5. How did the print and the oral culture intermingle?

Ans: ● After Gutenberg came up with the printing press in the 15th century, printed materials became quite popular. However, there were thousands upon thousands of illiterates during that time who could not read. So, to make the printed books appealing to them, the books incorporated many illustrations that resonated with them.

- Once they got interested in the books, the contents were read loudly to let them know what was written. Thus, the oral tradition helped propagate the print culture, and one complemented the other.