

10th Standard

Social Science-History

Print Culture and Modern World

Printing in the early days:

Invention of Printing Press had a very lasting effect on the social and cultural life of man. Print initially developed in East Asia and later developed through Europe and India. Before the era of print or invention of Printing Press, writing of books was purely manual affair. Books were handwritten and even illustrated. Calligraphy developed as an art during that era. Calligraphy means the art of beautiful and stylish writing.

Printed matter Chinese tradition.

Chinese were the first to have a system of recruitment of civil service personal through open examination. Printing remained confined to examination materials till around the 16th century. Trade information was circulated among the traders through printed materials. By 19th century mechanical printing press made its appearance in China.

The First Printing Press was invented in 1430s by Johann Gutenberg. Johann Gutenberg's Bible was the most beautiful books ever printed. Germany took the lead in revolutionizing printing all over Europe.

Features of handwritten manuscripts:

- They were copied on palm leaves or on handmade papers. Pages were beautifully illustrated.
- They were pressed between wooden covers or sewn together to ensure preservation.
- Manuscripts were available in vernacular languages. They were highly expensive and fragile. They could not be read easily as script was written in different styles. They were not widely used in everyday life.

Woodblock method became popular in Europe:

Production of handwritten manuscripts could not meet the ever increasing demand for books. Copying was an expensive, laborious and time consuming business. The manuscripts were fragile, awkward to handle and could not be carried around or read easily. By the early 15th century, woodblocks started being widely used in Europe to print textiles, playing cards and religious pictures with simple, brief texts.

Visual culture:

In the end of 19th century a new visual culture had started. With the increasing number of printing presses visual images could be easily reproduced in multiple copies. Painters like Raja Ravi Verma produced images for mass circulation. Cheap prints and calendars were brought even by the poor to decorate the walls of their houses.

Print popularized the ideas of the idea of the enlightenment thinkers:

- Collectively the writings of thinkers provided a critical commentary on tradition, superstition and despotism.
- Scholars and thinkers argued for the rule of reason rather than custom and demanded that everything to be judged through the application of reason and rationality.
- They attacked the sacred authority of the church and the despotic power of the state thus eroding the legitimacy of a social order based on tradition.
- The writing of Voltaire and Rousseau were read widely and those who read these books saw the world through new eyes, eyes that were questioning critical and rational

Development of reading mania in Europe:

A new forms of popular literature appeared to target new readers. There were ritual calendars along with ballads and folk tales. In England penny chapbooks were carried by petty peddlers known as chapmen and sold for a penny. In France these low priced books were called Bibliotheque Bleue as they were bound in cheap blue covers. Periodical presses developed to combine information on current affairs with entertainment. The idea of scientists and scholars had now become more accessible to the common people.

Impact of print on Indian women:

Writers started writing about the lives of women and this increased the number of women readers. Women writers began to write their own autobiographies.

They highlighted the condition of women, their ignorance and how they were forced to do hard domestic labor. A large section of Hindu writing was devoted to the education of women. In the early 20th century the journals written by women became very popular in which women's education, widowhood, widow remarriage were discussed.

Print culture created the conditions within which the French Revolution:

The print popularized the ideas of the enlightened thinkers who attacked the authority of the church and the despotic power of the state. The print created a new culture of dialogue and debate and the public become aware of reasoning. They recognized the need to question the existing ideas and beliefs. The literature of 1780s mocked the royalty and criticized their morality and the existing social order.

India and Print Culture:

Print culture came to India with the coming of Portuguese missionaries. Konkani was the first Indian language in which books were printed. The first Tamil book printed was printed in 1579 and Malayalam book in 1713. English printing in India commenced with the publication of Bengal Gazette in 1780. Printed tracts played a very significant role in the spread of social reform movement in India.

The Vernacular Press Act:

- In 1878, the Vernacular Press Act was passed by the British Government to impose restrictions on vernacular press, which was responsible for spreading nationalist ideas.

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- The government started to keep a regular track of the vernacular newspapers and had extensive rights to censor reports and editorials in the vernacular press.
- When a report was judged as seditious, the newspaper was warned, and if the warning was ignored, the press was liable to be seized and the printing machinery confiscated.

