

Class  
XII

Rama Mehta's  
**Inside the Haveli**  
(ENGLISH LITERATURE BOOK II)



BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION  
RAJASTHAN, AJMER

Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli

Class XII

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**CLASS XII**  
**(ENGLISH LITERATURE BOOK II)**



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## **TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Rama Mehta's**  
*Inside the Haveli*

**CLASS XII**  
**(English Literature Book II)**

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## SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**Rama Mehta's**  
*Inside the Haveli*

**CLASS XII**  
**(English Literature Book II)**

**Convener :**

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## PREFACE

A novel is a long narrative, normally in prose, of a book length that represents fictional characters and action in a form of sequential story with some degree of realism. Novel unlike short story is long enough to give more room to the characters and opens up innumerable dimensions and perspectives of individuals. When one looks at the history of Indian novel in English, one finds that Indian English literature has a relatively recent history of almost a century and a half old. In its early stages it was influenced by western novels. Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. The most notable Indian writers are Sake Dean Mahomat (1793), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), Raja Rao (1908-2006), Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941) R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) whose literary works throw light on the legacy of English in Indian writings. Writers like Anita Desai, Salman Rushdee, Arundhati Roy used the language to address specifically Indian concerns that revolved round questions of what it means to be modern and also how the novel could be used for anti-colonial activism. By 1980 Indian novels in English became a global phenomenon and among great literary scholars one is Rama Mehta whose novel *Inside the Haveli* is a modern classic that won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1979.

This is a fascinating novel in which Rama Mehta succeeds in conveying to the readers the feel of the princely era and the fading of old patterns of life. The novel has the warmth of traditions and it initiates reforms for women in terms of literacy and abolition of child marriage. It is an authentic sociological study written with effective naturalness. It offers its readers the best of both worlds; the traditional and the modern. The students while reading this novel will find that change does not bring any loss, rather the past as well as the present have their own beauty.

This novel consists of three sections. To provide a better and clearer understanding of the text, a glossary and some comprehensive questions are given at the end of each section. Students are also introduced to the author, plot, theme, symbols and characterization in the beginning of the book. This will prepare them for an intense reading of the story of a woman who plays an important role as an agent of change. To provide a better and clearer understanding of the text, a glossary and some comprehensive questions are given at the end of each section.

**Dr Sonu Shiva**

## SYLLABUS

### English Literature Book II Class XII

The Examination Scheme for the subject is as follows -

Paper	Time (Hrs.)	Marks for the Paper	Sessional	Total Marks
One	3-15	80	20	100

#### One Paper

**Time: 3.15 Hours**

**80 Marks**

Area of Learning	Marks
Reading	15
Writing	15
Grammar	10
Text book : <b>Prudence</b>	30
Fiction : <b>Inside the Haveli</b>	10

- |           |  |           |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Reading</b>   | <b>15</b> |
|           | (an unseen passage and poem)   |           |
| (a)       | One literary or discursive passage of about 400-500 words followed by short questions  | 08        |
| (b)       | A poem of about 15 lines followed by short questions to test interpretation and appreciation   | 07        |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Writing</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| (a)       | An <b>Essay</b> on argumentative/discursive/reflective or descriptive topic (150-200 words)<br>(Students should be taught all kinds of essays. Any one can be asked) | 08        |
| (b)       | A <b>Composition</b> such as an article, report, speech (150-200 words)<br>(Students should be taught all kinds of compositions. Any one can be asked)               | 07        |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Grammar</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| (a)       | Editing and error correction of words and sentences  | 05        |
| (b)       | Changing the narration of a given input  | 05        |

**4. Literary Terms 06**

Metaphysical Poetry, Impressionism, Stream of Consciousness, Interior Monologue, Anglo-Indian literature, Indo-Anglian literature (The two out of four terms are to be attempted) 2x3=6

**5. Texts for detailed study 24**

(a) **Two** out of three textual questions to be answered in 100 words each testing global comprehension, etc 6x2=12

(b) **Four** out of five textual questions to be answered in about 50 words each testing comprehension, characterisation, interpretation, etc 4x3=12

**6. Fiction 10**

(a) **One** out of two textual questions to be answered in about 60 words and/or each seeking comments, interpretation, etc 04

(b) **One** textual question in about 100 words to test evaluation and appreciation of characters, events, episodes and interpersonal relationships 06

**Books prescribed :**

**1. Prudence** - Published by Board of Secondary Education, Rajasthan, Ajmer

**2. Inside the Haveli (by Rama Mehta)** - eds and Published by Board of Secondary Education, Rajasthan, Ajmer

**1. Prudence (Text Book)-**

**(A) Short Stories - Introduction**

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Tomorrow                 | - Joseph Conrad        |
| 2. One Centimetre           | - Bi-Shu-Min           |
| 3. A Wedding in Brownsville | - Isaa Boshevis Singer |
| 4. Eveline                  | - James Joyee          |
| 5. A Cup of Tea             | - Katherine Mansfield  |
| 6. That Pagli               | - D.R. Sharma          |

**(B) Poetry - Introduction**

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. A Lecture Upon the Shadow | - John Donne            |
| 2. Poems by Milton           | - Wilfrid Wilson Gibson |
| (i) On Time                  |                         |
| (ii) On Shakespear 1630      |                         |

3. Poems by William Blake

(i) The Divine Image

(ii) The Human Abstract

4. Trees

- Emily Dicjinson

5. Time and Time Again

- A.K. Ramanujan

6. If

- Rudyard Kipling

7. Poems by Sri Aurobindo

(i) Transformation

(ii) The Tiger and the Deer

**(C) Non Fiction - Introduction**

1. The Mark on the Wall

- Virginia Woolf

2. Why the Novel Matters

- D. H. Lawrence

3. The Argumentative Indian

- Amartya Sen

4. On the Ignorance of the Learned

- William Hazlitt

5. The Exploits of Hanuman

- J.E.B. Gray

**(D) Drama - (Introduction)**

1. Broken Images

- Girish Karnad

2. How He lied to Her Husband

- G. B. Shaw

**Fiction (Book II)**

Inside the Havelli

- Rama Mehta



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## INTRODUCTION

### About the Author

Rama Mehta was born in Nainital in India in 1923. She had her education in Nainital and did her post graduation in Philosophy from Delhi University. She is the first woman to be appointed to the prestigious Indian Foreign Service. Rama Mehta was forced to resign her position as a diplomat when she married Jagat Mehta; himself a member of the diplomatic cadre. Later, she concentrated on sociology. She documented and identified many hidden and silent aspects of Indian family values and traditions. Her works include issues from the socio-political life, history, culture, rural life etc. These are the themes that several Indian English fiction writers have broadly taken up in their works. Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* is not an exception to these features. Her other works are *Ramu, A Story of India* (1966) and *The Life of Keshav* (1969). Mehta's critical essays include "The Western Educated Hindu Woman" (1970) and "The Hindu Divorced Woman" (1975). The principal theme of Rama Mehta's writing is the position of women in a tradition-bound but rapidly changing India. Just before her death in June 1978, Mehta completed her study of women in the Hindu nuclear family.

### Plot

The novel presents the saga of Geeta, an educated, lively and spontaneous Bombay girl, who enters the haveli as the bride of Ajay Singh. Geeta finds it hard to adjust and adapt herself to the rigorous and conventional ways of the haveli, in which women observed purdah. Geeta finds herself entrapped and encaged in a vast haveli, encircled all the time by women. She is condemned to a life of self-denial, isolation and utter distress, due to the fault finding nature of her mother-in-law and other women in the haveli. Geeta, being an independent new woman, initially struggles to maintain her individuality in the traditional world of the haveli but gradually starts to admire its traditions and accepts the warm affection of the people.

Geeta's progressive thoughts help to obtain two important approvals from the conservative family of her husband. These approvals are the right of the girl to education irrespective of her class and the right of the mother to have a say in the marriage of her daughter. This was to prevent child marriage which has a high approval of society. Geeta's

adaptability, compromise and forbearance help to resolve the conflict between tradition and modernity. The concern and care of her husband and relatives also help her to acquire this amalgamation. Geeta appreciates the life in the haveli, adjusts herself to it and becomes its mistress.

### **Theme**

The novel deals with the twin theme of silence and adjustment with the undercurrent of feminine and feminist sensibilities. Inside the Haveli is a beautiful framework of narration tenderness about an ancient and traditional way of life. It is an interesting account of a system that existed since feudal times. The theme of the novel is neither victory nor defeat. It balances the opposite ideas of modernity and tradition with harmony and understanding.

### **Autobiographical Element**

The novel is a skillful presentation of Rama Mehta's keen observation and her autobiography. Like Geeta she has been an open minded, western educated girl with her residence in Udaipur. She presents a vivid picture of a tradition-bound haveli in Udaipur named 'Jeewan Niwas' in which she herself had experienced the restricted and traditional atmosphere of Udaipur; the family home of Jagat Mehta. Geeta's journey of protest, gradual transformation and adjustment among the people and traditions of the haveli bears a lot of resemblance to Mehta's personal life. Rama Mehta presents her experience of Rajasthani culture and lifestyle through her characters.

### **Symbols and Symbolism**

The Haveli is a symbol of oppression that represents the silence of women. The rules of the haveli are as strict as the stones of the haveli that keep women within social boundaries. The haveli is designed in a way that the outer world is denied except occasional glimpses from behind the veil. The purdah though it appears to be a sign of respect, is a dual symbol of control and exclusion. The Haveli masks the inner emotions that show no dissatisfaction on the surface. The wall, that divides Udaipur into two halves, symbolizes tradition and modernity as the old and new cities.

### **Characterization**

It is a method the authors use to create images for the readers. It helps them to understand a character's personality and its effect on other characters. It consists of their physical appearance, actions, inner thoughts, reactions and speech. Rama Mehta focuses more on the sociological side of the characters rather than the psychological. Her characters behave according to the rules of the society and status. She presents the lives of her characters with meticulous care and excellence.

## Major Characters

**1. Geeta :** is the central character. The whole story revolves around Geeta. She is Ajay Singh's wife. She is an educated, lively and vivacious Bombay girl who is conscious of the traditions and customs of the haveli ; many of which she does not like. Initially there is an inner struggle, seen in her, against the traditions of the haveli, but gradually the love, care and concern she experiences, makes her appreciate and accept the life in the tradition – bound haveli. She adjusts herself to it and finally becomes its mistress.

**2. Ajay Singh :** is the only son of Bhagwat Singhji. He is educated and deputed as the Head of the Department of Physics in Udaipur University. He is a man of impressive personality who marries Geeta, a girl from a modern family of Bombay. Geeta is a companion to him and he too understands that the segregated way of life in the haveli is oppressive for her. He has great attachment with his parents and his birthplace. He is a strong man with a pure and simple heart.

**3. Bhagwat Singhji :** is the owner of the haveli 'Jeewan Niwas' and the son of Sangram Singhji who was a well-known minister in the court of Maharana of Udaipur. He is a man of dignity and faith. He is father of Ajay Singh and grandfather of Vijay and Vikram. He bears a deep understanding of progressive ideas around him and is the master and the decision making authority in the haveli.

**4. Kanwarani sa :** is Bhagwat Singhji's wife and Geeta's mother in law. She is the mistress of the haveli, who throughout her life preserves the glory, customs and traditions of the haveli. She is a strong woman of great understanding with a soft and motherly heart for every maid and their children. She loves Geeta and teaches her everything about the haveli.

## Minor Characters :

**1. Sangram Singhji :** He was the father of Bhagwat Singhji and grandfather of Ajay Singh. He was a minister in the court of the Rana of Udaipur and was considered a jewel in the court. His wife is Bhabha sa.

**2. Gopal Singhji :** is the brother of Kanwarani sa , who is ill and the reason is the dispute of property among his three sons. His sister solves the problem.

**3. Vijay Bai sa :** is the daughter of Ajay Singh and Geeta. She is a loving and caring child and dear to everyone in the haveli. Lakshmi's daughter Sita and she are good companions and play together.

**4. Nandu Bai Sa :** is Geeta's aunt-in-law and Bhagwat Singhji's sister. She visits

the haveli often.

**5. Kanta Bai sa :** is Bhagwat Singhji's widowed niece. She always appears in the novel with Nandu Bai sa and Manji.

**6. Manji Bai Sa :** is a close relative of Bhagwat Singhji.

**7. Pari :** is the oldest and the most senior maid in the haveli. She is hard working, tactful and devoted. She has served the haveli for forty five years and has established a special place for herself in the family. Everyone respects her. Geeta always touches her feet. She is the personal attendant of Kanwarani-sa and is seen involved in every affair of the haveli.

**8. Sarju** is a midwife who appears at the time of the birth of Lakshmi's daughter. She comes to the Haveli on auspicious occasions.

**9. Dhapu** is a maid for small tasks. She is Geeta's chief maid, her friend and guide. She tells her the etiquettes expected from a daughter in law in the haveli. Dhapu is small built , pretty, quite intelligent and clever. Geeta feels at ease with her.

**10. Khayli** is a cook. He is comparatively rich and lends money at high interest to other servants of the haveli. He is proud, strong hearted and intelligent.

**11. Lakshmi** is a maid servant. As she is unfairly accused of adultery by her husband, she flees from the conservative atmosphere of the haveli. Unfortunately, she ends up in a dangerous situation and is marked as an ill reputed woman.

**12. Gopi Bai,** Champa, Bhatiyani ji and Ganga Other maid servants to help in household works of the haveli.

**13. Arjun** is a fortune teller known as Bhopaji. He is a greedy man who by predicting everything shows as if he has some supernatural powers.

**14. Daulat Singhji** is a highly dignified noble man in Udaipur. He is the owner of the biggest haveli in the city. He keeps the haveli in very good condition. Daulat Singhji wants to marry his son Veer Singh to Geeta's daughter Vijay. His wife visits the haveli on many occasions.