

SEPTEMBER 2026

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Topic 1: SEMICON India 2026 & India's Semiconductor Ecosystem (GS Paper 3: Industrial Policy, Science & Technology, and Electronics Manufacturing)

- Event & Theme: SEMICON India 2026 was inaugurated at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, under the theme “Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem.”
- Growth Metrics in Electronics Sector:
 - Production Growth: Total domestic electronics production expanded exponentially from ₹1.9 lakh crore (2014-15) to ₹13.11 lakh crore (2025-26).
 - Export Growth: Electronics exports increased from ₹38,000 crore to ₹4.24 lakh crore.
 - Mobile Phone Manufacturing: Mobile phone production reached ₹6.27 lakh crore, with India manufacturing 99.2% of mobile phones used domestically and sustaining 2.5 million jobs in electronics manufacturing.
- Semicon India Programme:
 - Inception & Scale: Launched originally in 2021 with Semicon 1.0 having an outlay of ₹76,000 crore. Upgraded in 2026 to Semicon 2.0 with a significantly enlarged outlay of ₹1,27,500 crore.
 - Six Core Pillars: Focuses on chip design, semiconductor equipment and materials, fabrication facilities, advanced packaging, research & development (R&D), and talent development.
 - Approved Projects: 12 semiconductor projects have been approved across 6 states with investments exceeding ₹1.64 lakh crore, with 3 commercial fabrication facilities commencing production.
- Talent Building & Infrastructure:
 - Talent Target: Goal to train 85,000 skilled semiconductor engineers.
 - Chips to Startup (C2S) Programme: Deployed Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools across 320 academic institutions, training over 68,000 students.
 - Chip Tape-Outs: 75 academic institutions taped out 211 chips by April 2026, with 7 chips fabricated down to 12 nm nodes.
 - ChipIN Centre: Set up at C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) under C2S and Design Linked Incentive (DLI) schemes, providing chip design tools, fabrication access, and training to over 1 lakh engineers across 500+ organisations.

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- International Geopolitics:
 - India joined the Pax Silica coalition in 2026 to secure resilient global silicon supply chains, critical minerals, fabrication capacity, and AI hardware.

Topic 2: Widening the Social Security Net — EPFO Wage Ceiling Raised to ₹25,000

(GS Paper 3: Indian Economy, Resource Mobilization, and Social Security)

- Policy Announcement: The Union Cabinet approved raising the mandatory wage ceiling for subscribers of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per month, taking effect from 18 September 2026 (marked as Vishwakarma Puja).
- Context & Historical Gap:
 - The last revision occurred 12 years prior in September 2014, when the ceiling moved from ₹6,500 to ₹15,000.
 - Before this update, statutory minimum wages for unskilled workers in at least 7 major States/UTs had already exceeded the ₹15,000 threshold (e.g., Delhi at ₹17,800, Maharashtra at ₹17,000, Karnataka at ₹16,800, Haryana at ₹16,500, Gujarat at ₹16,000, Rajasthan at ₹15,500, and Uttarakhand at ₹15,220).
- Coverage Expansion & Schemes:
 - Pulls ~51 lakh additional salaried employees into statutory coverage, bringing total mandatory subscribers to over 8 crore workers.
 - Simultaneously widens coverage across three EPFO-administered schemes: Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme 1952, Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) 1995, and Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme (EDLI) 1976.
 - The ceiling applies to basic salary, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance.
- Contribution Mechanics & Budgetary Cost:
 - Contribution Rates: Mandatory statutory contribution is 12% by the employee and 12% by the employer.

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- Employer's Contribution Split: Out of the employer's 12%, 3.67% goes to EPF and 8.33% goes to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS).
- EPS Contribution Cap: The maximum monthly employer contribution to EPS rises from ₹1,250 to ₹2,080.
- Central Government Share: The Centre contributes 1.16% toward worker pension up to the wage ceiling, increasing annual central budgetary support by ₹1,089 crore (taking total central outgo to ₹11,339 crore per year).
- Average Increase: Total monthly EPF contribution per worker rises by approximately ₹600/month on average.
- EPFO Institutional Basics:
 - Functions under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
 - Applies to notified establishments employing 20 or more persons.
 - Steered by the tripartite Central Board of Trustees, representing the Centre, State governments, employers, and employees.

Topic 3: India Rejects Pakistan-China Joint Boundary Commission in PoK/Shaksgam

(GS Paper 2: India and its Neighborhood - Relations & Territorial Integrity)

- Diplomatic Rejection: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) formally rejected the Pakistan-China Boundary Joint Commission constituted following its first meeting in Islamabad.
- Legal & Territorial Stance:
 - India declared that the joint commission has no legal basis to deliberate on Indian territories under illegal foreign occupation.
 - Reaffirmed that the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of India, calling on Pakistan to immediately vacate all occupied areas.
 - India firmly maintains its non-recognition of the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, under which Pakistan unlawfully ceded ~5,180 sq km of the Shaksgam Valley (located north of Siachen) to China.

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- Provisional Clause: The 1963 agreement's own text explicitly notes that the boundary is provisional and subject to renegotiation once the Kashmir issue is resolved, proving both signatories acknowledged title was open.
- Strategic Linkage to CPEC & Siachen:
 - China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Flagship component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connecting Xinjiang to Gwadar port. India rejects CPEC because its alignment passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and refused to join the Belt and Road Forums.
 - Two-Front Threat: The Shaksgam Valley lies adjacent to the Siachen Glacier (held by Indian forces since Operation Meghdoot in April 1984). Chinese presence in Shaksgam physically links the Pakistan and China fronts into a single operational theatre in northern Ladakh.

Topic 4: Currency Conundrum & BRICS Local Currency Trade Settlement (GS Paper 2: Regional and Global Groupings - BRICS & International Trade)

- BRICS New Delhi Declaration:
 - Recorded incremental progress on local currency trade, promoting settlement in national currencies while respecting national priorities and stating there is "no one-size-fits-all approach".
 - Wording reflects reservations of members who resisted rigid group-wide frameworks.
- Local Currency Trade Settlement:
 - Definition: Invoicing and settling cross-border trade in the domestic currency of one of the trading partners rather than a third currency (like the US Dollar).
 - Mechanism: Operationalized in India by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in July 2022 through Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) held by foreign banks in India.
 - Current Reality: Rupee trade within BRICS is operational only with the UAE and Russia in limited volumes.
 - Russia's Rupee Surplus: Russia accumulated large non-spendable rupee balances in Vostro accounts due to a severe bilateral trade deficit driven by massive Indian crude oil imports.

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- Strategic Asymmetry & Yuan Dominance:
 - Policy Conflict: As an exporter, India prefers getting paid in US Dollars (to gain from rupee depreciation), but as an importer, India prefers paying in cheaper local currencies.
 - Yuan Threat: Because China accounts for ~two-thirds of all BRICS exports, any generalized group-wide settlement default turns into trade conducted in the Chinese Yuan, creating dependency on Beijing's financial infrastructure.
 - Local Currency vs. BRICS Currency: India cautiously supports bilateral local currency trade as a hedge, but vocal oppose a common BRICS currency. A shared currency would be dominated by China and trigger severe external costs, such as 100% tariff threats from the United States.

Topic 5: Pygmy Hog Conservation Milestone in Assam (GS Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Biodiversity)

- Species Overview:
 - Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*): Sole surviving species of the genus *Porcula* and the world's smallest wild suid (pig family).
 - Habitat: Strictly dependent on dense, tall alluvial floodplain grasslands for shelter, foraging, and breeding. Endemic exclusively to Assam's floodplains.
 - Conservation History: Believed extinct by the mid-20th century, rediscovered in 1971, leading to the formal establishment of the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme in 1995.
- Conservation Milestones & Status:
 - Captive breeding achieved a 32-fold increase in the pygmy hog population over the last three decades.
 - The only surviving natural wild population exists in the Panbari grasslands area of Manas National Park. Assam aims to raise the wild population to 300 by 2040 through grassland restoration.
- Ecological Role & Threats:
 - Indicator Species: Functions as a key indicator of floodplain grassland health. Protecting its habitat automatically safeguards co-existing

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endangered species like the Bengal florican, hispid hare, hog deer, and greater one-horned rhinoceros.

- Major Threats: Genetic bottlenecks from breeding a small founder stock, extreme disease vulnerability to African Swine Fever (outbreaks since 2020), unscientific dry-season grassland burning, woody encroachment, invasive plant species, and severe habitat fragmentation.
- Back2Basics — Manas National Park:
 - Located along the foothills of the Bhutan Himalayas on the Manas River (tributary of Brahmaputra).
 - Designations: UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve, and Biosphere Reserve.
 - Contiguity: Forms a continuous transboundary landscape with Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.

Topic 6: 150th Birth Anniversary of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (GS Paper 1: Modern Indian History - Personalities & Literature)

- Profile: Born on 15 September 1876 in Debanandapur, Bengal Presidency (Died 16 January 1938). Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid national tribute on his 150th birth anniversary.
- Literary Themes & Social Realism:
 - Social Realism: Portrayed social inequalities, poverty, caste distinctions, and the complexities of rural and semi-urban Bengali society.
 - Women's Emancipation: Female characters actively challenged orthodox social conventions. Confronted issues like widowhood, child marriage, patriarchy, and female autonomy, portraying women as moral agents.
 - Language & Accessibility: Used simple, colloquial Bengali, bridging the gap between elite literature and everyday readers.
- Major Literary Works & Relevance:
 - *Devdas*: Explores rigid social conventions, class hierarchy, and emotional conflict.
 - *Parineeta*: Focuses on gender, marriage dynamics, and social class.
 - *Biraj Bau*: Highlights the condition of women under patriarchal systems.
 - *Srikanta*: Examines individual freedom versus oppressive social norms.
 - *Charitraheen*: Exposes moral hypocrisy surrounding gender in society.

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- *Pather Dabi*: A famous political novel directly linked to anti-colonial nationalism and revolutionary freedom struggle politics.
- *Grihadaha*: Deals with marriage, human relationships, and social norms.

MCQS

Q1. With reference to the SEMICON India 2026 initiative and India's semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. Domestic production of electronics in India expanded from ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to over ₹13 lakh crore in 2025-26.
2. India currently manufactures over 99% of the mobile phones used domestically.

The Semicon 2.0 programme launched in 2026 carries a total financial outlay of ₹76,000 crore. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- [A] 1 and 2 only
[B] 2 and 3 only
[C] 1 and 3 only
3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding talent development and capacity building under the Chips to Startup (C2S) programme:

1. The ChipIN Centre has been established at the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to provide chip design tools and fabrication access.
2. Under C2S, Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools have been deployed across academic institutions, enabling chip tape-outs down to 12-nanometer nodes.

In 2026, India joined the Pax Silica coalition to secure critical mineral and semiconductor supply chains. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- [A] 1 only
[B] 1 and 2 only
[C] 2 and 3 only
3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

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Q3. The Union Cabinet approved raising the mandatory EPFO wage ceiling from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per month. In this context, consider the following statements:

1. The revised wage ceiling applies to basic salary, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance.
2. Out of the employer's 12% statutory contribution, 8.33% is allocated to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS).

Under the revised ₹25,000 wage ceiling, the maximum monthly employer contribution cap for the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) stands at ₹2,080. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- [A] 1 and 2 only
[B] 2 and 3 only
[C] 1 and 3 only
3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q4. With reference to the statutory framework governing the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), consider the following statements:

1. EPFO functions under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance.
2. The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 applies automatically to all notified establishments employing 10 or more persons.

EPFO is governed by the tripartite Central Board of Trustees comprising representatives of the Central Government, State Governments, employers, and employees. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- [A] 3 only
[B] 1 and 2 only
[C] 2 and 3 only
3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q5. In September 2026, India rejected the joint boundary commission constituted by Pakistan and China. What was the primary legal ground for India's objection?

- [A] The joint commission did not include representatives from the United Nations Security Council.

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[B] India holds that Pakistan has no sovereignty over Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, making any boundary agreement with China over occupied territories legally void.

[C] China failed to submit environmental impact assessments for the Shaksgam Valley.

[D] The 1963 agreement permanently transferred sovereignty of the Shaksgam Valley without providing any provisional clause.

Q6. Consider the following geographic and strategic features regarding the Shaksgam Valley:

1. Shaksgam Valley was handed over to China by Pakistan under the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement.
2. The valley lies directly to the north of the Siachen Glacier region.

Indian armed forces took control of the Siachen Glacier under Operation Meghdoot in April 1984. Which of the statements given above are correct?

[A] 1 and 2 only

[B] 2 and 3 only

[C] 1 and 3 only

3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q7. With reference to Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) introduced for local currency trade settlement, consider the following statements:

1. Special Rupee Vostro Accounts were operationalized by the Reserve Bank of India in July 2022.
2. A Vostro account is an account held by a foreign bank with a domestic bank in the domestic currency.

Settlement of trade in local currency automatically eliminates capital account convertibility restrictions. Which of the statements given above are correct?

[A] 1 and 2 only

[B] 2 and 3 only

[C] 1 and 3 only

3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q8. Regarding the BRICS New Delhi Declaration and international trade settlement, consider the following statements:

1. The New Delhi Declaration explicitly mandated a compulsory single common currency for all BRICS intra-grouping trade.

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2. China accounts for approximately two-thirds of total BRICS exports.

India supports bilateral local currency trade settlement as a financial hedge while opposing a common BRICS currency. Which of the statements given above are correct?

[A] 1 and 2 only

[B] 2 and 3 only

[C] 1 and 3 only

3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding the Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*):

1. It is the sole surviving species of its genus and the world's smallest wild suid.
2. Its surviving natural wild population is strictly confined to the alluvial floodplain grasslands of Assam.

It serves as an indicator species for the ecological health of tall alluvial grassland ecosystems. Which of the statements given above are correct?

[A] 1 and 2 only

[B] 2 and 3 only

[C] 1 and 3 only

3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q10. The last surviving natural wild population of the Pygmy Hog in India is found in which of the following protected areas?

[A] Kaziranga National Park

[B] Panbari grassland area of Manas National Park

[C] Keibul Lamjao National Park

[D] Namdapha National Park

Q11. Which of the following species share the alluvial grassland habitat with the Pygmy Hog and directly benefit from its conservation?

1. Bengal florican
2. Hispid hare
3. Greater one-horned rhinoceros

Lion-tailed macaque

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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- [A] 1 and 2 only
- [B] 1, 2, and 3 only
- [C] 3 and 4 only
- 4. [D] 1, 2, 3, and 4

Q12. Consider the following statements regarding Manas National Park:

1. It is located along the foothills of the Bhutan Himalayas on the Manas River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra.
2. It holds the triple designation of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Tiger Reserve, and a Biosphere Reserve.

It forms a transboundary conservation landscape contiguous with Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- [A] 1 and 2 only
- [B] 2 and 3 only
- [C] 1 and 3 only
- 3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Q13. Which of the following famous political novels written by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was associated with anti-colonial nationalism and revolutionary politics?

- [A] *Devdas*
- [B] *Parineeta*
- [C] *Pather Dabi*
- [D] *Charitraheen*

Q14. Match List-I (Literary Work) with List-II (Core Social Theme):

List-I (Literary Work)

List-II (Core Social Theme)

A. *Devdas*

1. Gender morality and social hypocrisy

B. *Biraj Bau*

2. Anti-colonial nationalism and revolutionary politics

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C. *Charitraheen*

3. Class hierarchy, social convention, and emotional conflict

D. *Pather Dabi*

4. Patriarchy and the condition of women

Select the correct code:

[A] A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2

[B] A-3, B-1, C-4, D-2

[C] A-2, B-4, C-1, D-3

[D] A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

Q15. With reference to Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's contribution to Indian literature and society, consider the following statements:

1. He wrote predominantly in complex, classical Sanskritized Bengali restricted to elite scholars.
2. His literary works frequently portrayed female characters who exercised moral agency and challenged orthodox social practices.

He was born in 1876 in Debanandapur in the Bengal Presidency. Which of the statements given above are correct?

[A] 1 and 2 only

[B] 2 and 3 only

[C] 1 and 3 only

3. [D] 1, 2, and 3

Detailed Explanations

- Q1 Explanation: [A]
 - Statement 1 is correct: Electronics production in India rose from ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹13.11 lakh crore in 2025-26.
 - Statement 2 is correct: India now manufactures 99.2% of the mobile phones used domestically.
 - Statement 3 is INCORRECT: Semicon 1.0 (launched in 2021) had a ₹76,000 crore outlay, whereas Semicon 2.0 (2026) carries an outlay of ₹1,27,500 crore.
- Q2 Explanation: [D]

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- Statement 1 is correct: The ChipIN Centre at C-DAC provides access to chip-design tools, fabrication, and training.
- Statement 2 is correct: Under C2S, EDA tools were supplied across 320 institutions, enabling 211 chip tape-outs including nodes down to 12 nm.
- Statement 3 is correct: India joined the Pax Silica coalition in 2026 to secure the global silicon supply chain.
- Q3 Explanation: [D]
 - Statement 1 is correct: The statutory EPFO ceiling applies to basic salary, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Out of the employer's 12% contribution, 3.67% goes to EPF and 8.33% goes to EPS.
 - Statement 3 is correct: With the wage ceiling raised to ₹25,000, the maximum monthly EPS contribution cap rises from ₹1,250 to ₹2,080.
- Q4 Explanation: [A]
 - Statement 1 is INCORRECT: EPFO functions under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, not the Ministry of Finance.
 - Statement 2 is INCORRECT: The EPF Act applies to notified establishments employing 20 or more persons, not 10.
 - Statement 3 is correct: EPFO is steered by the tripartite Central Board of Trustees representing Centre, States, employers, and employees.
- Q5 Explanation: [B]
 - Correct Option [B]: India's stated ground is that Pakistan has no legal sovereignty over Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and therefore lacks any legal capacity to transfer territory or establish a boundary commission.
- Q6 Explanation: [D]
 - Statement 1 is correct: Pakistan handed over ~5,180 sq km of Shaksgam Valley to China under the 1963 agreement.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Shaksgam Valley sits directly north of the Siachen Glacier sector.
 - Statement 3 is correct: Siachen Glacier has been held by Indian armed forces since Operation Meghdoot in April 1984.
- Q7 Explanation: [A]
 - Statement 1 is correct: RBI operationalized Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) in July 2022.
 - Statement 2 is correct: A Vostro account is an account held by a foreign bank in a domestic bank denominated in the domestic currency.

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- Statement 3 is INCORRECT: Settlement in local currency changes the unit of account but does not alter capital account convertibility rules.
- Q8 Explanation: [B]
 - Statement 1 is INCORRECT: The New Delhi Declaration rejected a "one-size-fits-all" framework and did not mandate a common currency.
 - Statement 2 is correct: China accounts for ~two-thirds of all BRICS exports.
 - Statement 3 is correct: India supports bilateral local currency trade as a hedge while opposing a common BRICS currency.
- Q9 Explanation: [D]
 - Statement 1 is correct: Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*) is the sole surviving species of genus *Porcula* and the world's smallest wild suid.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Its surviving distribution is confined exclusively to the alluvial floodplain grasslands of Assam.
 - Statement 3 is correct: It functions as an indicator species for grassland ecosystem health.
- Q10 Explanation: [B]
 - Correct Option [B]: The last surviving natural wild population of pygmy hogs sits in the Panbari grasslands area of Manas National Park.
- Q11 Explanation: [B]
 - Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct: Protecting alluvial grassland for pygmy hogs also protects the Bengal florican, hispid hare, hog deer, and greater one-horned rhinoceros.
 - Statement 4 is INCORRECT: The Lion-tailed macaque is endemic to the evergreen rainforests of the Western Ghats, not Assam's floodplains.
- Q12 Explanation: [D]
 - Statement 1 is correct: Located along the Bhutan foothills on the Manas River.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Holds designations as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve, and Biosphere Reserve.
 - Statement 3 is correct: Adjoins Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan forming a transboundary landscape.
- Q13 Explanation: [C]
 - Correct Option [C]: *Pather Dabi* is Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's famous political novel directly associated with anti-colonial nationalism and revolutionary politics.
- Q14 Explanation: [A]

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- A-3: *Devdas* deals with class hierarchy, social conventions, and emotional conflict.
- B-4: *Biraj Bau* highlights patriarchy and the condition of women.
- C-1: *Charitraheen* exposes gender morality and social hypocrisy.
- D-2: *Pather Dabi* focuses on anti-colonial nationalism and revolutionary politics.
- Q15 Explanation: [B]
 - Statement 1 is INCORRECT: Saratchandra wrote in simple, colloquial Bengali, not complex classical Sanskritized prose, making literature accessible to ordinary readers.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Female characters in his novels displayed moral agency and resisted restrictive social norms.
 - Statement 3 is correct: He was born on 15 September 1876 in Debanandapur, Bengal Presidency



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