INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2026-27)
CLASS – XI
QB- ADVENTURE

Plot Summary

- **The Trigger:** Professor Gaitonde, while traveling by train from Pune to Bombay, contemplates a major historical "what-if": *What would have happened if the Marathas had won the Third Battle of Panipat instead of losing to Ahmad Shah Abdali?* While thinking about this and reading historical texts (Bhausahebanchi Bakhar), he meets with a truck accident and slips into a state of unconsciousness/transition.
- **The Alternate Reality:** When he wakes up or moves through this experience, he finds himself in a parallel world where history took a different turn:
    - The Marathas won the Battle of Panipat because a stray bullet missed their leader, Vishwasrao, keeping the army's morale high.
    - Because of this victory, the Marathas established supremacy in northern India and prevented the British from colonizing the country in the usual manner.
    - Bombay looks different—the East India Company is restricted, and the city operates as a self-reliant, democratic Indian society.
- **The Library and Azad Maidan:** Gaitonde visits the Asiatic Society library in Bombay to read history books and discovers this alternate version of facts. Later, at Azad Maidan, he absentmindedly sits in a lecture's empty presidential chair, leading an angry crowd to physically eject him.
- **Return and Scientific Explanation:** After waking up in our real timeline (having survived the accident), Gaitonde discusses his bizarre experience with his friend Rajendra Deshpande. Rajendra rationalizes the event using two modern scientific concepts:

Catastrophe Theory: A small, critical turning point in a system can dramatically shift the entire outcome.

Quantum Theory (Lack of Determinism): Subatomic particles can exist in multiple states simultaneously, implying that parallel or alternate universes can coexist, and Gaitonde's mind briefly jumped into one of them during his trauma.

<u>Main Characters</u>

- **Professor Gangadharpant Gaitonde**: A history professor who is curious, academic, and gets into a truck accident that triggers a transition into a parallel reality.
- **Rajendra Deshpande**: Professor Gaitonde's pragmatic friend and scientist who uses physics and math to explain the strange experience.

Key Events

- **The Starting Thought**: Professor Gaitonde is preparing a presidential address about what Indian history would look like if the Marathas had won the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761.
- **The Accident**: After colliding with a truck, he loses consciousness and slips into a parallel universe.
- **The Alternate Reality (Mumbai/Pune)**:
    - He arrives in a different Bombay where the East India Company is not ruling supreme and British influence is minimal.
    - He visits a library (Asiatic Society) and reads an alternate version of history (an encyclopedia/Bakhar) stating that Vishwasrao survived the bullet at Panipat, changing the outcome of the battle.
    - He faces a hostile crowd when he tries to sit in the chair of the president at a lecture in Azad Maidan (because in this timeline, lectures without a chair are allowed or traditions differ).
- **The Proof**: Before waking up from his daze, he accidentally pockets a torn page from the alternate Bakhar book as physical proof of his parallel journey.

Scientific Explanations

- **Catastrophe Theory**: Rajendra explains that a sudden, dramatic shift or bifurcation can happen in systems based on minor tipping points (like a small event in history branching into a new reality).
- **Quantum Theory (Many-Worlds Interpretation)**: Reality is not single-sided; multiple coexisting worlds can exist simultaneously, and an observer may transition between them under specific mental or physical stress.

Core Themes

- **History vs. Reality**: How a single turning point can completely rewrite the destiny of a nation.
- **Science and Imagination**: A blend of historical speculation with modern quantum physics.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. Who was Professor Gaitonde? What was his plan upon reaching Bombay?
Answer: Professor Gangadharpant Gaitonde was a prominent and well-known historian who had authored five volumes on Indian history. He was traveling to Bombay to visit a large library (the Town Hall library) to peruse historical books and *Bakhars* (historical chronicles). His goal was to understand the precise point at which Indian history took a different turn and investigate how the present state of affairs came to be.

Q2. What strange thing did Professor Gaitonde notice when he arrived at Victoria Terminus Station in Bombay?

Answer: When he emerged from the station, he noticed the building was remarkably clean and bore signs of British ownership, like the words "Greater Bombay Metropolitan Railway" and a miniature Union Jack painted on train carriages. Most shockingly, he faced the imposing headquarters of the East India Company. In his real timeline, the East India Company had wound up shortly after the Revolt of 1857, so seeing it flourishing in the present day deeply confused him.

Q3. How did the history books in the Town Hall library differ from the real history Professor Gaitonde knew?
Answer: In the library, the five volumes he looked at recorded history normally up to the death of Aurangzeb. However, the description of the Third Battle of Panipat in the *Bakhars* was entirely different. In this alternate version, the Marathas won the battle because a bullet narrowly missed their leader, Vishwasrao. This victory boosted their morale, established their supremacy, and stopped the East India Company from taking over India.

Q4. What came as the biggest personal blow or shock to Professor Gaitonde during his walk through Bombay?
Answer: After witnessing historical anomalies, he decided to look for his son, Mr. Vinay Gaitonde, at the Forbes office on Home Street. To his absolute shock, the English receptionist searched through the employee directory, staff lists, and branch registries but could find nobody by that name. This made him realize that in this alternate reality, his son did not even exist.

Q5. What happened to Professor Gaitonde at the Azad Maidan meeting?
Answer: At Azad Maidan, a lecture was going on where an empty chair was kept on the stage for the president. Being a veteran of presiding over hundreds of meetings, the Professor could not tolerate the sight of an empty presidential chair and walked up to occupy it. The crowd, which was tired of uninteresting presidential speeches and only wanted to hear the speaker, fiercely protested. When Gaitonde refused to leave, the hostile mob showered him with tomatoes and eggs, and eventually pushed him off the stage. He vanished from that reality right after this physical altercation.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q6. How did Rajendra Deshpande use Catastrophe Theory and Quantum Theory to explain Professor Gaitonde's experience?
Answer: When Gaitonde returned to his original world, his scientist friend Rajendra Deshpande analyzed the experience through two scientific concepts:

- **Catastrophe Theory:** Rajendra explained that the Battle of Panipat was a critical turning point where history could have gone either way. In the real world, the bullet hit Vishwasrao, killing him, causing the Marathas to lose morale and lose the battle. In the alternate reality, the bullet missed him. This tiny variation caused a "catastrophic" shift, completely altering the course of Indian history.
- **Quantum Theory & Lack of Determinism:** Rajendra stated that under quantum physics, matter can exist in multiple states or alternate realities simultaneously. At the moment of Gaitonde's truck accident, he was deep in thought about the Battle of Panipat and catastrophe theory. The collision caused his neurons to trigger a

transition, causing his consciousness to slip from his own reality into a co-existing parallel reality in the exact same present time.

1. Assertion (A): Professor Gangadharpant Gaitonde experienced an alternate version of history where the Marathas won the Battle of Panipat.
Reason (R): He was hit by a truck while his conscious mind was deeply preoccupied with contemplating the course of history if the Marathas had not lost the battle.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
C. A is true but R is false.
D. A is false but R is true.

2. Assertion (A): In the alternate reality experienced by Gangadharpant, the Marathas emerged victorious against Ahmad Shah Abdali in the Battle of Panipat.
Reason (R): Vishwasrao was killed by a bullet shot during the critical phase of the battle in that alternate reality.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

3. Assertion (A): Rajendra Deshpande used Catastrophe Theory to explain how Gangadharpant crossed over to a parallel world.
Reason (R): Catastrophe Theory deals exclusively with subatomic quantum particles and has no application to macroscopic historical transitions.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

4. Assertion (A): According to Quantum Theory, reality is absolute, and only one unique history can ever exist in the universe without any alternate possibilities.
Reason (R): Quantum mechanics allows for alternative states and parallel worlds where different outcomes of the same event can exist simultaneously.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

5. Assertion (A): Gangadharpant found the Forbes building instead of the East India Company headquarters at the place he expected when arriving in Bombay.
Reason (R): The East India Company had already established its commercial presence in Bombay during the late eighteenth century.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

6. Assertion (A): Gangadharpant took the historical book *Bhausahebanchi Bakhar* from the library to check the account of the Battle of Panipat.
Reason (R): The book contained the account confirming the Maratha defeat, which starkly contrasted with his memory of Vishwasrao surviving.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

7. Assertion (A): Gangadharpant was assaulted and humiliated by the audience at Azad Maidan.
Reason (R): He occupied the vacant presidential chair on the lecture platform without the audience's permission.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

8. Assertion (A): Rajendra Deshpande completely dismissed Gangadharpant's experience as a hallucination caused by psychological stress.
Reason (R): Rajendra used scientific principles of quantum mechanics and catastrophe theory to explain how the transition into a parallel universe could genuinely occur.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true but R is false.

D. A is false but R is true.

Extract 1

"As the train stopped at Sarhad, Khan Sahib spoke to Gaitonde. 'The British Raj begins from here, Professor. You will need to show your passport.' 'And what about you, Khan Sahib? Where are you going?' Gaitonde asked. 'I am going to Peshawar,' Khan Sahib replied."

Questions:

1. **Where does this conversation take place?**
2. **Why does Khan Sahib mention that the British Raj begins at Sarhad?**
3. **What is unusual about Professor Gaitonde having to show a passport?**
4. **Find a word from the extract that means the same as 'a line separating two countries'.**

Answers:

1. This conversation takes place on a train just as it reaches a station named **Sarhad**, while Professor Gaitonde is traveling to Bombay. [1]
2. In this alternate timeline, the British Empire did not rule the whole of India. Their territory was **restricted to certain zones**, and Sarhad marked the border entering British-administered territory. [1, 2]
3. It is unusual because in the real India Professor Gaitonde belonged to, Bombay and Pune were part of the same independent nation, requiring **no passport or border checks** to travel between them.
4. **Sarhad** (which translates to border/frontier).

Extract 2

"He knew that the East India Company had been wound up shortly after the events of 1857. Yet, here it was, not only alive but flourishing. So, history had taken a different turn..." [1]

Questions:

1. **Who is 'He' in the above lines?**
2. **What reality of history did the character know regarding the East India Company?**
3. **What did he see that shocked him?**
4. **What does the phrase "wound up" mean in this context?** [1]

Answers:

1. 'He' refers to **Professor Gangadharpant Gaitonde**, a historian.
2. He knew that historically, the East India Company was **dissolved (wound up) right after the Revolt of 1857** when the British Crown took direct control of India.
3. He saw the **East India House**, the headquarters of the East India Company, standing tall, active, and flourishing in Bombay.
4. In this context, "wound up" means **closed down, dissolved, or liquidated**. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Extract 3

"Up to this period history was as he knew it. The change evidently had occurred in the last volume. Reading volume five from both ends inwards, Gangadharpant finally converged on the precise moment where history had taken a different turn."

Questions:

1. **Where is Gangadharpant while reading these volumes?**
2. **Who wrote the five volumes of history books he is reading?**
3. **What was the precise moment where history took a different turn?**
4. **What does the word 'converged' mean?**

Answers:

1. Gangadharpant is inside the **Town Hall Library** in Bombay.
2. The five volumes were written by **Gangadharpant Gaitonde himself** in his original timeline.
3. The precise moment was the **Third Battle of Panipat**, where instead of losing, the Marathas won the battle because a bullet missed the young heir, Vishwasrao.
4. 'Converged' means **came together** or met at a specific point.

Extract 4

"You neither travelled to the past nor the future. You were in the present experiencing a different world."

Questions:

1. **Who is the speaker of these words and to whom are they spoken?**
2. **How does the speaker explain this strange experience scientifically?**
3. **What triggered the listener to jump into this 'different world'?**
4. **Name the two major scientific theories discussed in this chapter.**

Answers:

1. These words are spoken by **Rajendra Deshpande** to **Professor Gaitonde**.
2. Rajendra explains it through quantum mechanics and the **lack of determinism**, suggesting that multiple parallel realities can exist simultaneously at the same time.
3. The transition was triggered because at the exact microsecond Professor Gaitonde was hit by a truck, his neurons were **intensely contemplating the Battle of Panipat** and Catastrophe Theory.
4. The two theories are **Catastrophe Theory** and **Quantum Theory (Lack of Determinism)**.

Extract 5

"But Gangadharpant had no eyes for the stand. He was looking at the platform... and he stared at the presidential chair. The chair was empty."

Questions:

1. **Where is Gangadharpant standing at this point in the story?**
2. **Why was the presidential chair intentionally left empty?**
3. **What did Gangadharpant do next that angered the crowd?**
4. **What was the ultimate consequence of this event for Gangadharpant?**

Answers:

1. He is at a public meeting at **Azad Maidan** in Bombay.
2. In this alternate India, people had abolished the old custom of having a president chair a meeting; they believed the **speaker alone sufficed**, so the chair was kept symbolically empty.
3. Gangadharpant, accustomed to the old tradition, went up to the stage and **occupied the empty presidential chair** to address the audience.
4. The hostile crowd threw items at him and **physically ejected him from the stage**, which jolted his subconscious mind and brought him out of his coma back into his real world.