

NOTE TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: The following exam was administered in 2014 for the first cohort of students entering the program.



Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar

VGEC Campus | Chandkheda - 382424 | Ahmedabad, India

MA in Society and Culture | Written Test | 8 March 2014

Time: 02.00 Hours | All questions carry equal marks | There is no negative marking

Passage A

TWENTIETH-CENTURY science, in all its aspects, was a superstructure built upon mathematics and upon the great expansion of scientific knowledge and new methods of investigation which took place in the century before 1914. Within the framework of thought provided by the 'big ideas' of Darwin and Einstein, the basic sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics developed rapidly. Through the subsidiary sciences, such as engineering and medicine, these advances exerted a powerful effect upon the life of the individual in society. The intensive quest for new knowledge through experiment and observation called for a degree of precision, a mastery of technique, a dedication to specialization which led to a further fragmentation of science. The frontiers of knowledge were pushed forward so fast and so far that it became increasingly difficult for a single mind, however capacious and flexible, to encompass more than a corner of the new fields brought under cultivation by the insatiable curiosity and enterprise of the human intellect. By mid century it was still not possible to see the wood for the trees, to assess the meaning of modern scientific thought in general philosophical terms.

Yet the whole impact of scientific ideas, experimental methods, and new technologies upon European civilization and culture was never more momentous. This civilization which had become so imbued with science and so dependent on technology was, for other reasons too, a civilization in crisis. The mobile, plastic age of speed, power, and incessant change was also an age of violence, war, revolution, and destruction of old values. There was a constant interplay

between the new forces which derived power from mineral energy and technology, and the new forces which derived power from economic and social organization, the manipulation of political controls and administrative machinery, and the surges of mass desires and passions. The totalitarian state was formidable precisely because it harnessed and monopolized both kinds of power, and its threat to science, culture, and civilization alike symbolized the crisis of contemporary Europe.

Since there was a crisis of civilization there was also a crisis of culture: and it was the variation in the attitude of the creative artist to science, to social needs, and to himself which most clearly revealed the nature of this cultural crisis. Finally, social thought and action themselves – the achievements of the generation after 1914 in discovering more about the operations of man within society – put at the disposal of mankind fresh means for overcoming the dislocations of crisis. It became possible to contrive more effective safeguards for the freedom and welfare of the individual in a scientific but turbulent order.

pp. 905-906; *Europe Since Napoleon*, David Thomson; Penguin Books
(1966)

1. ‘Fragmentation of science’ in the passage refers to:

- a) Breakdown of science.
- b) Dilution of science.
- c) Intensive study of various aspects of science.
- d) None of the above.

2. ‘New forces’ in the passage implies:

- a) Violence and wars.
- b) Misuse of power and exploitation.
- c) Scientific ideas and popular aspirations.
- d) None of the above.

3. How could mankind overcome the ‘dislocations of crisis’?

- a) By devising inclusive thought and action.
- b) Through violent rejection of the past.
- c) Through rejection of technology.
- d) All of the above.

4. According to the passage, there was no crisis of culture.

- a) True
- b) False

- c) Partially true
- d) Partially false

5. According to the author, what made the totalitarian state formidable?

- a) Its assurance of freedom and welfare of the individual
- b) Its promotion of science and technology
- c) Its promotion of a turbulent order
- d) None of the above

Passage B

All countries in the world have inequalities of various kinds. India, however, has a unique cocktail of lethal divisions and disparities. Few countries have to contend with such extreme inequalities in so many dimensions, including large economic inequalities as well as major disparities of class, caste and gender. Caste has a peculiar role in India that separates it out from the rest of the world. Many countries, to be sure, have had in the past (and to some extent even right now) caste like institutions that place people in confined boxes. But India seems to be quite unique both in terms of the centrality of caste hierarchies and in terms of their continuing hold in modern society (despite many great pieces of legislation outlawing any practice of caste discrimination). And caste stratification often reinforces class inequality, giving it a resilience that is harder to conquer. For example, caste divisions make it harder for the economically underprivileged to organize and bargain for a better deal. As B.R Ambedkar perceptively remarked, “...the caste system is not merely a division of labor. It is a division of *laborers*”.

Gender inequality, too, is exceptionally high in India, particularly in large parts of the northern and western regions, where the subjugation of women is fairly comprehensive. It is the mutual reinforcement of severe inequalities of different kinds that creates an extremely oppressive social system, where those at the bottom of these multiple layers of disadvantage live in conditions of extreme disempowerment. The force and effectiveness of women’s agency depend on a number of social influences of which the nature of family is a significant component. A family is a system of cooperation that has elements of congruent interest as well as divergent priorities. The divisions within the family can be seen as a combination of cooperation (everyone may benefit from living together) and conflict (the benefits and chores generated by living together can be divided in many different ways, and in this respect men and women may have competitive, rather than congruent interests.) Models of “cooperative conflicts” can be fruitfully used in explaining intra-family divisions.

In traditional arrangements, women tend to get a smaller share of benefits (for example, less favourable medical and educational attention) and a very larger share of chores (particularly in

the frequently unshared burden of housework and the care of children and old people). The perception of who is doing how much “productive” work, or who is “contributing” how much to the family’s prosperity, can be, in this context, very influential, even though the underlying “theory” regarding how contributions or productivity are to be assessed may be rarely discussed explicitly. Such interpretations of individual contributions and appropriate entitlements of women and men play a major role in the division of family’s joint benefits between them; and the circumstances that influence these perceptions of contributions and entitlements (such as women’s ability to earn an independent income, to work outside home, to own property) often have a crucial bearing on these divisions. The impact of greater empowerment and agency of women thus includes the correction of the inequities that blight the lives and wellbeing of women vis-à-vis men.

Drèze, J and Sen, A (2013): *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*. Chapter 8

6. Based on the passage above, which of the following is the argument of the authors?

- i. Gendered division of labor within a family is often influenced by bargaining power of men and women in the “productive” public spheres
- ii. Division of labor within the family is often marked by intra-household ambivalence in interests and motivations
- iii. Perceptions of individual contributions and appropriate entitlements within a family are often independent of the social narratives around gender
 - a) Both (i) and (iii)
 - b) Only (ii)
 - c) Both (i) & (ii)
 - d) Both (ii) and (iii)

7. The authors borrow a statement from B.R Ambedkar: “the caste system is not merely a division of labor. It is a division of laborers”. This statement implies that:

- i. Caste rigidities are often maintained by occupational hierarchies
- ii. Certain tasks are performed by certain types of laborers based on their specializations
- iii. In a stratified society, economic activities of laborers are often associated with their social class and background
 - a) Only (i)
 - b) Only (iii)
 - c) Both (i) and (ii)
 - d) Both (ii) and (iii)

8. In a survey (CSDS, 2006) of 315 editors and other leading members of the print and electronic media in Delhi, found that not one of them belonged to a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe. In fact about 85% belonged to a small group of upper castes (accounting for only 16% of India's population) and about half were Brahmins. This study supports Drèze and Sen's contention that:

- a) Inequality is embedded in the public culture
- b) Certain opportunities still remain an upper-caste monopoly
- c) Class and caste dimensions are often interlinked
- d) All the above

9. Based on the passage above, is it more likely that the authors will support/oppose caste-based or gender-based reservations?

- a) Support
- b) Oppose
- c) Neither oppose nor support
- d) Not enough information to answer

10. The central argument of the above passage was to highlight the:

- a) Caste hierarchies in India
- b) Intersectional nature of inequalities in India
- c) Persistent discrimination of the underprivileged in India
- d) Regional differences in the subjugation of women in India

Passage C

In A Free Man, Aman Sethi follows the lives of migrant labourers in Bara Tooti Chowk, a labour market in Delhi, a city in preparation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games and “splintering under the strain of fundamental urban reconfiguration...”. What had started out as a journalistic research project on an article for *The Hindu* about healthcare for homeless workers, grew into a book about the life of Mohammad Ashraf, one of the many itinerant labourers of India's thriving informal economy. Divided into four parts, the first part “Azadi” (Freedom) begins with his escape from Bihar. “Akelapan” (Solitude) deals with the worker's solitude that allows him freedom of movement but also makes him a stranger in every city. “Laawaris” (Without Kin) narrates Ashraf's decision to leave for Calcutta while the last part “Ajnabi” (Stranger) deals with Ashraf's search for a new life in Calcutta.

Read the following excerpt from Aman Sethi's *A Free Man: A True Story of Life and Death in Delhi*. WW Norton & Company, 2012 and attempt the questions that follow:

"The ideal job," Ashraf once said, as if elucidating a complex mathematical function, "has the perfect balance of *kamai* [earning]¹ and *azadi* [freedom]" Through the course of his life, a working man must experiment with as many combinations as he can before discovering the point where these counteracting forces offset each other to arrive at a solitary moment of serenity—a point when he is both free and fortunate. At that point, a man may be excused for rocking back and forth gently, tempting fate on both sides—reaching out for that tipping point, but sliding back before his fingers touch either side. Alas, it is bliss that few, like Ashraf, attain.

"*Kamai* is what makes work work. Without *kamai*, it is not work, it is a hobby. Some call it charity; others may call it exercise—but it certainly isn't a job. A job is something a man is paid to do—and his pay is his *kamai*. Many of us..." Ashraf paused to stand up and take in the tea-sipping *mazdoors* [labourers] and the gossiping *mistrys* [carpenters] in a smooth arc of his arm. "Many of us choose jobs only on the basis of their *kamai*. Six thousand rupees a month! A man could get rich with that kind of money! But they forget a crucial thing. What is that crucial thing?"

"Azadi, Aman bhai, Azadi", he continued without waiting for an answer. "Azadi is the freedom to tell the *maalik* [the master] off when you want to. The *maalik* owns our work. He does not own us. Every morning a hundred contractors come to Bara Tooti offering permanent jobs for six thousand rupees a month. But those **** wouldn't pay their mother six thousand rupees if she worked for them. On the first day, the contractor will give you two hundred rupees and say: 'Let no one say that contractor Aggarwal doesn't pay his workers.' On the second day he will do the same. But on the third day, he will give you only hundred rupees, and promise to pay you the rest later. By the end of the second week, he will pay you only a third of what he owes you. And by the end of the month, you will realize that contractor Aggarwal really does not pay his workers. But by now it is too late. You can't leave. He owes you three thousand rupees already. You are now... What are you now, Aman bhai?"

11. Who is the narrator in this passage?

- a) Ashraf
- b) Aman
- c) Only a
- d) Both a and b

12. What is the idea of bondage in this passage?

- a) A philosophical idea that suggests that one enters bondage through one's own will, by choosing 'kamai' over 'freedom'
- b) An existential idea that suggests that there may be no escaping such bondage

¹ All translations in parenthesis are ours.

- c) A historical materialist idea that illustrates the exploitation of the poor
- d) All of the above.

13. What is Aman's attitude towards Ashraf's concept of *azadi*/freedom?

- a) Dismissive
- b) Characterizes it as idealistic
- c) Projects it as ironic given the conditions of a mazdoor's existence
- d) In agreement but characterizes it as utopic.

14. How is work defined in this passage?

- a) As labour in exchange for its price
- b) As an expression of one's freedom
- c) As a balance between wages and freedom
- d) All of the above

15. The author's use of non-English (Hindi, Urdu) words in this narrative is intended to

- a) Suggest that this is not a work of fiction
- b) Convey that this is an ethnographic account
- c) To show that Aman is fluent in these languages
- d) All of the above.

Passage D

Our 1957 Madras survey introduced us to the problem of exporting homegrown concepts and methodologies to alien places, where, as we would say today, the "other" lives. As social scientists entered new research arenas and in the 1950s that meant nations newly liberated from colonial rule after World War II they brought with them the concepts and methodologies that had been developed in connection with political research at home. "I had a sense of mission," wrote Gabriel Almond, "in bringing to the study of foreign political systems the theoretical ferment and methodological innovation which had already gone far in transforming the field of American political studies."

Using Anglo-American concepts and methods in new research arenas was unavoidable. They were our tool kit, our means for entering complex and unfamiliar non- Western environments. Without concepts and methods we would not know where to look and what to look for. The question was, and still is, to what extent were those concepts and methods amenable to infiltration, adaptation, modification, and transformation by the forms of life and worldview of the alien other? To what extent were the tool kits we brought with us from the United States capable of bridging differences between civilizations, cultures, and worldviews between the Western observer and the non-Western observed?

Early in our research in India, Lloyd Rudolph and I coined the phrase "imperialism of categories." It was meant to designate the academic practice of imposing concepts on the other—the export of concepts as part of a hegemonic relationship. Categories crafted in a dominant socio-cultural environment are exported to a subordinate one. The imperialism of categories entails an unself-conscious parochialism of categories: scholars from a dominant culture, sometimes called the center, travel to a distant and lesser place, sometimes called the periphery, where they apply "universal" concepts.

The trouble is that the concepts have been fashioned out of the center's materials—in our case, out of Anglo-American clay. The title of one of Ashis Nandy's essays, "The Intimate Enemy," conveys the cultural violence associated with the imposition of alien categories. An alien culture is unwillingly ingested by the colonial, but can be neither fully absorbed nor regurgitated. It becomes part of his mentality, his way of thinking and judging. Categories are transferred from the setting in which they were fashioned without being reshaped to fit the new context.

Categories are also modes of creating and controlling. Foucault showed us how categories embedded in discursive formations, in speech forms, in instruments of sorting, registering, classifying, can function as quotidian modes of power. Ideal-typical dichotomies representing themselves as ways to analyze phenomena in systematic manner slip into stereotypes. The East is fatalist, says Max Weber; the West, agentic. The non-West conveys status by birth, says Talcott Parsons; the West, by achievement. The non-West is childlike, says John Stuart Mill; the West, mature. Dominant peoples use ideal types and stereotypes to control the dominated by ranking and creating cultural social registers.

Excerpt taken from:

‘The Imperialism of Categories: Situating Knowledge in a Globalizing World,’ Susanne Hoerber Rudolph, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Mar., 2005), pp. 5-14

16. What does the author mean when she states: “categories are also modes of creating and controlling”?

- a) Foucault created categories that helped in sorting and classifying complex societies.
- b) Conceptual categories have concrete real life consequences that manifest in unequal power relations between groups.
- c) Stereotypes help in understanding the practices of the alien ‘other’.
- d) The non-West is child-like, the West mature.

17. According to the argument in Ashis Nandy’s *Intimate Enemy*, the following is true:

- i) Imposition of alien categories leads to cultural violence.
- ii) The colonized internalize the alien culture, which then becomes a part of their way of seeing.
- iii) The Anglo-American experience is useful in predicting the future of developing societies.
 - a) Only (i).
 - b) Both (i) and (ii).

- c) All (i), (ii) and (iii).
- d) Only, (i) and (iii).

18. The 'East is fatalistic and the West is agentic' is an example of:

- a) A stereotype that is used to dominate marginalized cultures.
- b) A fact revealed by rigorous social science research.
- c) A dichotomy accurately depicted in the work of Max Weber
- d) The process of ranking and sorting which explains why the East and the West are so different.

19. What was problematic about the approach of Western social scientists in the 1950s seeking to study the non-West?

- a) They brought corrupt foreign ideas to non-Western societies.
- b) Their decision to study the non-west was inappropriate.
- c) They brought methodological tool kits from the United States and modified them to suit the local context.
- d) In their zeal to apply the research techniques used to study western societies, they failed to examine whether their methods were applicable to local conditions.

20. The practice of exporting homegrown concepts and methodologies to alien places leads to:

- a) A better understanding of the alien "other".
- b) The successful application of universal concepts everywhere.
- c) A hierarchical relationship between a dominant socio-cultural environment and a subordinate one.
- d) A genuine examination of stereotypes.

Passage E

Economic Growth and Undernutrition in India

Good nutrition during childhood is essential for health and survival. The prevalence (how often a condition occurs within a population) of undernutrition is particularly high in India. Here, almost half of children under the age of 3 are underweight. Although the prevalence of undernutrition in India is decreasing, progress is slow. Economic growth is widely regarded as an important pathway to reduce child undernutrition in India. Economic growth, the argument goes, will increase incomes, reduce poverty, and increase access to health services and nutrition. But some experts believe that better education for women and reduced household sizes might have a greater influence on child undernutrition than economic growth. In a study, researchers quantified the association between economic growth and child undernutrition in India by analyzing the relationship between changes in per capita income in individual Indian states and

the individual risk of undernutrition among children in India.

For their analyses, the researchers used data on >77,000 Indian children that were collected in the 1992–93, 1998–99, and 2005–06 National Family Health Surveys, which are nationally representative surveys. The researchers used eight statistical models to test whether the prevalence of underweight of a state was associated with per capita income at that state, in each of the three surveys. Because these models compared **state**-level undernutrition with **state**-level economic growth, they are called “ecological” models. These models assumed that the risk of undernutrition was the same for every child in a state. The authors also used ten “multilevel” statistical models to quantify the relationship between **state**-level growth and the **individual**-level risk of undernutrition. Multilevel models allow the authors to examine the association of one variable at the state-level with another variable at the individual-level. The multilevel models also took account of various other factors likely to affect undernutrition (for example, mother’s education and household wealth). In five of the ecological models, there was no statistically significant association between state economic growth and the state’s average level of child undernutrition (statistically significant associations are relationships that are unlikely to have arisen by chance). Similarly, in eight of the multilevel models, there was no statistical evidence for an association between economic growth and undernutrition.

These findings provide little statistical support for the widely held assumption that there is an association between the risk of child undernutrition and economic growth in India. By contrast, a previous multinational study that used data from 63 countries (including industrialized Western countries in addition to lower and middle-income countries) did find evidence that higher national economic growth is related to lower risk of child undernutrition. However, the multinational study was an ecological study focused on explaining between-country differences, while the goal of the multilevel Indian study was explaining within state differences over time.

The researchers suggest several reasons why there might not be a clear association between economic growth and undernutrition in India. For example, they suggest, economic growth in India might have only benefitted privileged sections of society. Whether this or an alternative explanation accounts for the lack of an association, it seems likely that further reductions in the prevalence of child undernutrition in India will require direct investment in health and health-related programs; expecting economic growth to automatically improve child undernutrition might not be a viable option after all.

21. The authors mention a multinational study which shows that higher levels of national economic growth across countries are related to lower levels of undernutrition. Comparing those results with the results of the Indian study, which of the following statement/s is/are true?

- (i) The results of the two studies appear contradictory.
- (ii) There is no contradiction at all.
- (iii) India is an unusual country that cannot be compared to higher income countries.
- (iv) Higher economic growth is related to lower rates of undernutrition across countries but state-level economic growth within India is not.

- a. Both (i) and (iii)
- b. Both (i) and (iv)
- c. Both (ii) and (iii)
- d. Both (ii) and (iv)

22. Which of the following is/are valid statement/s as per the passage?

- (i) Ecological models assess aspects of environments and ignore the variation within these environments.
- (ii) Multilevel models are able to test the association between maternity leave policies of companies and the performance of employees within those companies.
 - a. Only (i)
 - b. Only (ii)
 - c. Neither (i) nor (ii)
 - d. Both (i) and (ii)

23. According to the authors of the Indian study, direct investments in health and nutrition-related programs...

- (a) across all Indian states would most effectively reduce the prevalence of undernutrition.
- (b) across India in states with the lowest levels of economic growth would most effectively reduce the prevalence of undernutrition.
- (c) across India in states with greater levels of poverty would most effectively reduce the prevalence of undernutrition.
- (d) are not necessary because the current rapid rate of economic growth will naturally lead to substantial reductions in undernutrition as a result of increasing incomes, reducing poverty, and increasing access to health services and nutrition.

24. Which of the following is / are correct according to the Indian study?

- (i) Economic growth in India during the study period led to substantially lower levels of undernutrition in the country overall
- (ii) States with the highest levels of economic growth have lower levels of undernutrition
 - a. Only (i)
 - b. Only (ii)
 - c. Neither (i) nor (ii)
 - d. Both (i) and (ii)

25. Which of the following can be inferred from the Indian and multinational studies?

- (a) Economic growth is not related to undernutrition in India or other countries.
- (b) The relationship between economic growth and undernutrition might differ depending on whether you look within or across countries.

- (c) Developing and middle-income countries cannot be compared to industrialized countries.
 - (d) Economic growth in India might have only benefitted less privileged sections of society.
-