

**St. Joseph’s College (Autonomous)**

**VI Semester BA JIP End Semester Examination — July - Aug 2022**

**JN 6319 - Journalism Elective – Sports Journalism**

Time allotted: 2½ hours Marks: 70

**Instructions**

* This paper is for **VI semester BA-JIP** students who have opted for **Sports Journalism**
* Please stick to the word-limits suggested.
* This paper contains **THREE** pages and **TWO** sections

**I. Read the below excerpt from an article by Preeti Zachariah published in the Live Mint:**

The warm-up drill has begun and beads of sweat have already appeared on the faces of the motley bunch of people twirling their kambu (staff). Other weapons lie in a large heap in one corner: more staffs (this is the primary weapon of the martial art); a large sword or vaal veechu; an unusual looking weapon composed of the horn of a black buck called madavu; an intimidating looking metal whip called surul vaal; and a pair of innocuous-looking slender bamboo sticks.

Pandian picks up the bamboo sticks and hands them to me. “The chedi kutchi is one of the most lethal weapons in the world," he says.

“The bamboo used to make this stick is different from the regular staff and the movements we employ when we brandish it completely fazes the opponent," the 50-year-old says with a laugh, and adds, “Only a privileged few will be taught how to wield this weapon, such is its potency."

**A brief history**

Silambam is an ancient martial art of Tamil Nadu. “I think it is one of the oldest martial arts in the world—it is over 5,000 years old," says Pandian. “It was put together by the sage Agastya Munivar; he is to martial arts what Patanjali is to yoga."

Silambam was such a powerful martial art that it was employed in warfare by most rulers of south India, adds Murugesan. “The soldiers of the Tamil ruler Veerapandiya Kattabomman used silambam to wage war against the British colonists," he says, adding that there was a ban on it by the end of the 18th century.

Yet, it was still practised in secret. “Natives practised silambam fighting using sugarcane stumps and when caught, pretended to eat them," writes Raj.

However, the ban, coupled with the introduction of firearms, did affect the combative nature of silambam greatly. What was used primarily as a fighting technique began to be seen more as a sport to prove one’s valour, almost like jallikattu (bull-taming). It also increasingly began to transform into a performance art; The Pongal festival in some parts of Tamil Nadu, for instance, often includes a silambam performance.

**The sport today**

“The staff is the very first weapon that is taught to a silambam practitioner and forms the basis for all other weapons and techniques," says Aishwarya Manivannan, an artist, designer and educator, has been learning the art for more than three-and-a-half years and has mastered many a weapon. She has won a series of medals at national and international levels. “The stick almost becomes an extension of oneself and a wide range of movements can be achieved with it."

During a tournament, the proximal and distal edges of the stick are covered with a red or blue foam roll: scoring takes place when the ends of the stick touch the other combatant on the permitted parts of the body (striking the face or the groin is prohibited).

Like boxing, both the combatants need to weigh approximately the same and are generally in the same age group and gender. Also, since it is a contact sport, participants are clad in protective gear, including a helmet with a face mask, a chest guard and an abdominal guard, over their jersey or vest.

Competitive silambam takes place on a circular, hard surface, which is 20-25ft in radius. The duration of a match is around three minutes, with a 30-second break in between two 90-second fights. There are three referees with counters to register the points, one umpire on the mat with a stick to conduct the combat and a timekeeper.

However, it is only recently that the martial art has entered the arena of competitive sport. “Silambam was originally taught in the typical guru-sishya tradition where students would train with their master for years. There was no specific levels that were set in format," says Manivannan.

Today, there are several organizations at the state, national and international levels regulating the sport, and the World Silambam Federation, founded on 17 August 2010 is one of them.

According to P. Selvaraj, co-founder and president of the World Silambam Federation, “We are a registered association but there is no recognition from the central government. Most of the recognition comes from outside the country like the TAFISA (The Association for International Sport for All), even Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)," he says, adding that the World Silambam Federation is approved and recognized by all these bodies.

But not by the central government. “There are too many martial art forms in India for the central government to take note of one form," says Selvaraj, ruefully. “Even though it is such an old art form, few people know about it."

The goal, chips in Selvaraj, should be the Olympics. “If wushu can go to the Olympics, why can’t we? All we need is a little support from the centre—a child needs to be patted on the back by its own parents before an outsider can appreciate it."

**Silambam for the stars**

Silambam is firmly entrenched in Kollywood—MGR, M.N. Nambiar and Jaishankar were all exponents and used it in their fight sequences in the 1950s; more recently, it has been used by Suriya in 7aum Arivu and Kamal Hassan in Thevar Magan.

In the 1964 Tamil film Padagotti, the legendary M.G. Ramachandran plays Manickam, the leader of a small fishing community, at war with a rival community in the same region. Star-crossed love, betrayal and drama aside, one of the most riveting spectacles in this movie is the sight of MGR wielding the kambu. “Any actor who watches that movie will want to do this," says E. Kumaravel, actor, scriptwriter and founder of theatre-group Magic Lantern.

**I A. Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in 100 - 150 words each. (3x10=30)**

1. “Only a privileged few will be taught how to wield this weapon” Why do you think there is this decision? Is it primarily based on how dangerous the weapon is?
2. Does the writing in the section on ‘Sport today’ help a reader who has never heard about the sport understand it better?
3. Why do you think the P. Zachariah brings in Tamil words? Does this hinder the reading experience or does it enhance it?
4. Besides waiting for ‘support from the centre’, what more do you think World Silambam Federation can do to bring Silambam to the fore?

**I B. Answer of the following question in 100 - 150 words. (1x10=10)**

1. Any actor who watches that movie will want to do this.’ How do you explain this sort of appeal? Based on sports films you watched this semester, did any film inspire you to pick up any of the games or routines shown?

**II. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in 150 - 200 words each. (2x15=30)**

1. What was the hardest part of organising a tournament in college? What did you learn from the experience? Were there any memories from them event that you fondly look back on?
2. Sporting heroes are often treated with veneration. What is the craziest thing you have heard fans do as a tribute their hero? Do you think such behaviour is acceptable?
3. This semester you read books by Ronojoy Sen and Ramachandra Guha. Pick either one and comment on their writing style. What details from their book did you really enjoy?