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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE
III SEMESTER BCA/ END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION November 2020
MEDIA, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY (MCT) – GE 318

Time: 2 ½ hours

Max marks: 70

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. This booklet contains 3 pages with 2 sections
2. Stick to the suggested word limits.
3. You will be penalised for plagiarism/copying lines from the passage.

Whose internet is it anyway?

I Read the following passage from Mint:

Literacy in the Internet age

Literacy is not an issue any more. As long as we have digital media tools and a verbal syntax, we are literate and educated. For all endangered languages, digital media could be a saviour and a means of bouncing back.

For centuries, those who could not read and write have been called illiterate and uneducated. Being an oral society, if we look at the parameters of functional literacy in India, we actually may have more than 40% of the population qualifying as illiterate. It means more than 500 million people in India are called illiterate just because they cannot read and write; these people do not know how to use the medium of paper and pen. Ironically, by declaring such a huge population illiterate, we have discarded the entire knowledge and wisdom of a big mass.

Come to think of it, writing is only a medium of communication, record and archiving, and it has certainly helped for centuries to pass on language, literature, history, heritage, culture and knowledge. However, for those several hundreds of languages across the world that never had a script and those that were only spoken, their generations passed on information and knowledge through verbal communication and suffered extinction, leading to the loss of history, heritage and culture of those languages and their speakers.

For example, Olekha is a non-script language in Bhutan, which is left with only one speaker who has a full command over the language. Her name is Choedron and she is 86 years old. Once Choedron is gone, Olekha will be a language of the past and so will its heritage and culture and history. Can using digital media and technological tools save this language? Similarly, less than five people speak Chaimal language in Tripura. Can we save this language, which is only spoken, by using digital tools?

According to a Wikipedia page on endangered languages in India, there are 196 such languages, all of which are obviously oral languages. Ironically, the Indian government does not even recognize the languages spoken by less than 10,000 people, and there are only 57 languages that are listed as spoken by more than 100,000 people, including 29 that are spoken by a million-plus population.

According to the People's Linguistic Survey of India, based on their nationwide survey in 2013, there are 780 languages in India, while 220 languages have disappeared in the past 50 years. The survey also warns that another 150 languages can vanish in the next 50 years. I see a clear indication that those languages that are only spoken and those that do not have a script have suffered the most.

On the other hand, through hundreds of villages that we work with, we have experienced and observed how people are learning about digital tools without being literate, without knowing a computer language and without knowing how to use the written medium.

My friend Paras Banjara, 32, who lives in Kumbhalgarh and hails from a nomadic community of Rajasthan, tells me that there are 32 types of denotified and nomadic communities and they all have their own language besides using a secret language within the community. Paras and his community share voice messages and use WhatsApp regularly to communicate with each other.

Paras and hundreds of thousands of such people speak languages that either do not have a script or when they do, the users may not know how to use the script, and have started using digital tools to communicate.

When it comes to the spoken word as a medium of communication, the masses are better placed in the 21st century information economy. Such people can use oral medium-based technology and tools such as social media, YouTube, Facebook, podcast, WhatsApp, Skype, voice and video message and so on. Suddenly, with the high penetration of mobile phones, we are realizing that we have a larger population that can share its knowledge and wisdom.

We are in an era where the written medium of communication is no more a parameter to define literacy. Non-script languages do not need a script to survive. They can be a means to communicate using oral medium-based technological tools and survive for years even if they do not survive physically. We are in an era where we can declare that literacy is not an issue any more as long as we have digital media tools.

I A Answer the following questions in 150 words each: [3x15=45]

1. How has your understanding of literacy changed after reading the passage? Do you agree with the idea that the internet is a space that empowers people who do not know how to read and write? Give reasons for your answers.
2. "Non-script languages do not need a script to survive". Do you think that digital media platforms have saved non-script languages from extinction? Substantiate based on your encounters with popular digital tools such as Google, WhatsApp or Wikipedia. Alternately, talk about a time when you used a digital tool like WhatsApp to talk/type in a language that you did not know how to write in.
3. Is the ability to use technology the same as the ability to use a language? Can both these skills be described by the same word 'literacy'? Discuss from personal experience.

II Read this excerpt from a longer piece titled The Handbook for being a smart, responsible internet user:

Navigating the Internet has become a stressful, disorienting and exhausting experience. This feeling of complete disillusionment and anger at the lack of intellect and respect online is what stirred me to write the Handbook for Being a Smart, Responsible Internet User. These are suggested questions to ask yourself before you post *anything* online.

- Do I know anything about what I'm speaking on?
- Am I sharing falsehoods?
- Am I actually mad about this thing everyone is mad about? (I.e. Am I thinking independently?)
- Am I getting my point across in the most effective manner?

II A. Answer the question below:

[5 marks]

4. Add three more pointers/questions to the above list on internet etiquette.

II B. Answer the following questions in about 120 words each: [2x10=20]

5. Have you ever found yourself explaining to people why they should not be sending forwards without verifying them? What direction did this conversation take? Alternately, have you ever been on the receiving end of such a conversation? Describe how you reacted to this.
6. Would including access to internet in the list of fundamental rights safeguard freedom of expression? Use examples from your reading and discussion to support your stance.
