

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27
B.A. ENGLISH – V SEMESTER
MID SEMESTER EXAMINATION: AUGUST 2019
OE 5315: SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURES - I

Time- 1 hr

Max Marks- 30 marks

I. Read the following essay from The Hindu called “The dangers of territorial nationalism and answer the following questions. (15X2=30marks)

Talking to the American political journalist, Norman Cousins, in 1961, Jawaharlal Nehru shared his idea of democracy: “I would say that democracy is not only political, not only economic, but something of the mind.” Nehru emphasised democracy as “a certain tolerance of others and even of others’ opinions... a certain contemplative tendency and a certain inquisitive search for truth.” Democracy for Nehru was akin to a political culture where a hundred opinions could bloom. Since the Narendra Modi government took power in 2014, the mind of democracy is under attack. There is intolerance towards differences. Democracy is facing political authoritarianism. The return of the Modi government at the Centre has tightened Hindutva’s grip on the political narrative.

Hindutva is no longer a political ideology of a political party. It is now an ideology of the Indian state. In 2015, when about 40 writers and artists returned their Sahitya Akademi awards in protest against the silence on the killing of writers by Hindu right-wing organisations, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley called it a “manufactured paper rebellion” by writers of “Left or [with] Nehruvian leaning.” The murder of writers was sidelined by an ideological allegation. The political tactic was to turn an issue of public morality into a friend-enemy discourse.

Nehru’s idea of India was defended by sections of India’s civil society rather than the Congress or other secular parties. A section of mainstream media dropped its ethics and peddled the government’s line. A handful of journalists braved legal, physical and verbal threats in order to ask the truth. When journalist Ravish Kumar asked Congress president Rahul Gandhi why he did not defend “Nehru’s legacy”, Mr. Gandhi skirted the question. Mr. Gandhi also spoke against hate, and for love, in his election campaign. But he was iffy in naming the real victims of hate politics. This weakened the counternarrative, and failed to bolster confidence in the electorate.

Has “the mind of India” (to borrow Nehru’s phrase) shifted to the right? If the mind has abandoned the spirit of democracy and fallen for territorial paranoia, then yes. In *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, the ideological guru of the Hindu right, M.S. Golwalkar, defined the nation as “hereditary territory”. Hindutva is a territorial project. Thinking is reduced to marking territory, an act of self-preservation. It promotes exclusionary laws, as seen in the move to implement the NRC nationwide. This will throw the lives of poor migrants into a legal quagmire. The detection, detention and deportation of “foreigners” will make people turn into stateless populations without rights.

According to Golwalkar, “Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindu language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her off-springs) complete the Nation concept.” India is imagined as mono-religious,

mono-cultural and mono-lingual. Golwalkar's options for minorities were either to "adopt" the majority culture "or to live at its mercy". When the Hindu vigilantes force Muslims to chant "Jai Shri Ram!" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai!", it isn't just perverse cultural pride that is involved, but the surplus pleasure of humiliating others.

Since 2014, India in the nationalist narrative is being imagined as a fortress being guarded against imagined enemies and hated political opponents and minorities. Ideological opponents are forced to fear every word and act of nonconformity. Muslims are killed or harmed on mere allegations of beef eating and cow slaughter. Territorial nationalism is a predatory idea that hunts for enemies.

1. What does the author mean by territorial nationalism? What essential difference do you see in the way Benedict Anderson and Partha Chatterjee theorise the nation?

2. The Hindu nationalist imagine India "as as mono-religious, mono-cultural and mono-lingual". Explain with two examples of the texts that you have read this semester how literary/cultural productions from the third world dispute this idea of the singular nation.