**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE – 27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY-JUNE 2023**

**IV SEMESTER BSc/BCom/BBA/BA/BSW/BCA/BVC**

**L2 GE 422: GENERAL ENGLISH**This paper contains **FOUR** printed pages with **TWO** sections.

**Time- 2 hours Max Marks- 60**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits and lifting from the question paper.
2. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.

**I.Read the following excerpt from a story titled *We Had to Remove This Post* by Hannah Bervoets published in Granta:**

I didn’t talk to anyone else from our cohort. I wasn’t here to make friends, I told myself – after all, wasn’t that how things had gone south at my last job? Thanks to my having been so, shall we say, sociable, I was now stuck with a blocked credit card. The main reason I’d applied for a job at Hexa was because their hourly rate was twenty percent higher than at the call center I was working in at the time.

The ad hadn’t said much else – apart from a salary indication, it only offered a succinct job description: Hexa was looking for ‘quality assurance workers’ – I had to look up what that meant, but for twenty percent more pay I would have been happy to pick up garbage.

At the interview, which wasn’t particularly in depth, I was told that Hexa was just a subcontractor. In actuality, I would be ‘evaluating content’ for a large and powerful tech company whose name, they told me before I’d so much as touched a contract, I was not ever, under any circumstances, allowed to mention. I soon learned that this platform – your defendant – determined all of our rules, working hours, and guidelines. And all of the posts, images, and videos we’d be reviewing had been reported as ‘offensive’ by users or bots on this specific platform and its subsidiaries.

On the first day of our weeklong training, we, the October cohort, bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, and eager to please, did our very best not to mention this actual employer, until we discovered that our trainers, a guy and a girl who, they told us, had started out as moderators themselves – thereby suggesting, whether they meant to or not, that this kind of ascent was within the realm of possibility for all of us – both used the name of the platform freely. *The platform feels this,*they said, *The platform allows that,*and we soon began to understand that we were mainly supposed to maintain secrecy from the outside world. Here, in the office tower where Hexa was based, safely tucked away in a business park with its own bus stop, we were among equals, brethren in a secret society. This training was an initiation, a hazing ritual to make sure we were fit for admission. At least, that’s what I believed back then.

We were given two manuals that first day, one with the terms and conditions of the platform and one with the guidelines for moderators. We didn’t know at the time that those guidelines changed constantly and that the tome we received was already outdated when it was put into our hands. We weren’t allowed to take the manuals home with us, so we learned by doing. On the first day of training, a series of text-only posts appeared on our screens, and then, from day three, photos, videos, and livestreams. Each time, the question was: Is it okay to leave this up on the platform? And if not, *why*not? That last part was the trickiest. The platform doesn’t allow people to post things like ‘All Muslims are terrorists,’ because Muslims are a PC, a ‘protected category,’ just like women, gay people and, believe it or not, heterosexuals. ‘All terrorists are Muslims,’ on the other hand, *is*allowed, because terrorists are not a PC and besides, *Muslim*isn’t an offensive term. A video of someone flinging their cat out the window is only allowed if cruelty is not a motive; a photo of someone flinging their cat out the window is always allowed; a video of people kissing in bed is allowed as long as we don’t see any genitalia; male nipples are permitted at all times; a naked child can only be shown if the image pertains to a news story, unless it’s about the Holocaust; pictures of underage Holocaust victims with no clothes on are forbidden. A picture of a gun meets the standards, but not if the gun is being offered for sale. Death threats against a pedophile are allowed; death threats against a politician are not; a video of a religious zealot blowing themselves up in a daycare center should be removed, on the grounds that it’s terrorist propaganda, not because it depicts violence or child abuse. If we selected the wrong category, our assessment was considered incorrect, regardless of whether or not the post needed to be taken down. We reviewed two hundred posts a day that first week, and at the end of each day we were shown our accuracy scores. Hexa aimed for an accuracy score of 97 percent, and initially I was frustrated when I didn’t get above 85. Until I started sneaking peeks at Kyo’s screen. Kyo, who may have been ten years younger than me – the ballpoint doodles on his backpack told me he’d probably only just finished high school – often sat next to me, and his score was never over 75 percent, which was somewhat encouraging. But when Alice told me at the bus stop on day four that she’d correctly evaluated a whopping 98 percent of her ‘tickets,’ I decided to lay off the beer that night to see if I’d do any better the next day.

**I.A. Answer ANY FOUR out of the following questions in about 5-8 sentences each: (4x5=20)**

1.The candidates for the job were prohibited from mentioning the employers’ name. Why do you think the name of the actual employer is kept hidden? Who do you think is the actual employer?

2.Why does the writer say that “we were among equals” and calls their company a “secret society”?

3.The story lists multiple guidelines the moderators have to follow for reviewing the activity in the platform. Which among the guidelines did you find yourself disagreeing with? Why?

4.If you were to add to this list of items allowed and not allowed visibility on a platform, what would you add as a guideline? Why do you think it should or should not exist online?

5.Which among the posts flagged for review listed in the passage would you categorize as ‘offensive’? Give reasons.

**I.B. Answer ANY ONE out of the following in 200 words (1x15=15)**

6.Have you ever watched or seen something that offended you on the internet? Recount the experience in the form of a story in 200 words. Why do you think it enraged you?

OR

7. Do you think there should be review of one’s online activity by third-party platforms or anonymous bodies on the internet? Does it serve any purpose? What is your opinion? Elaborate.

**II. Read the poem below by the Malayali poet Ashalatha and answer the questions that follow:**

God noticed her while engaged in a lazy gaze.  
She was then writing something  
without anyone watching, shutting herself in a room.

Must be some anti-national literature!  
God thought, what does she think!  
That no one can see her when she  
Writes behind closed doors?

When he focused his observation camera  
her literature was revealed to him. Body Sea  
Sex Obscenity (if she had been a man, it was ok);   
moreover, Blasphemy Treason Anarchy, etc.

Now could she be a Maoist? God pondered with  
his sixth sense. How can one let her free without  
teaching her a lesson? She was immediately picked up.

Now, what she does is to sit in the Panopticon and  
do content writing about whatever God perceives day and night.

With that, the entire ruckus that was going on in the city ended.

**II.A.8.** What kind of a God do you see emerging in the poem? Does this God fit your ideas of a divine being? Explain in 5-8 sentences. **(1x5=5)**

**II.B.9.** A panopticon is a circular prison with cells arranged around a central well, from which prisoners could at all times be observed. The word has also been used to refer to ideas and institutions of surveillance.

How do you understand the usage of ‘panopticon’ in the poem? **(1x10=10)**

**II.B.10.** Look up the word ‘obscenity’. What does it mean? Why does the poet say “if she had been a man, it was ok”? Do you agree with this line? Argue your stance in 150 words with relevant examples.  **(1x10=10)**

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