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**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE- 27**

**END SEMESTER EXAMINATION- II SEMESTER BCA/BVC APRIL 2020**

**GE 214 GENERAL ENGLISH - MEDIA, CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY (MCT)**

**Time: 2 1/2 hours Max marks: 70**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

**1 .This paper contains six printed sides.**

**2. This paper contains two sections for MCT A & MCT B, answer questions from your section only.**

**3. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits.**

**4. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.**

**MCT –A: Online Lives in Web 2.0**

**I. Read the following article titled *WhatsApp, India? How an app insinuated itself into our lives* by Anita Nair published in The Hindu.**

*The alarm rings. It sounds like birds twittering, the morning chorus from the trees and skies, but it is nevertheless an alarm and if I don’t shut it up, it will twitter again in five minutes. Soon all the reminders set on my phone will tell me what my day will be like. Sometimes my nights too. It is 5.30 in the morning and already the world is rushing into my life demanding time, attention, wit, wisdom and a good morning.*

If you were to ask me what made the last decade nothing like what India had known before, it is WhatsApp. Not technology. Nor even smartphones. All that was inevitable. Technology has only one trajectory: a forward surge. That it would take the world with it was bound to happen.

What made it seamless was an app that insinuated itself into our lives with the insidious stealth of a snake crawling in through a drain hole. One day you were sending text messages or emailing each other and then suddenly there was a messaging service that told you if the person you were chatting to was online, whether they had read your messages or were pretending not to have seen them. The double blue tick gave you the power of righteous indignation. It gave you emojis to show how you felt in case words weren’t adequate. And most importantly, was free. (That it cost you via data usage somehow failed to register.) You didn’t need a Blackberry or an iPhone. A plain old Android did the trick and WhatsApp changed Indians forever.

At first, it was the prelude to Tinder and Grindr. You met someone. You exchanged numbers and then you checked if they were on WhatsApp. Later you sent them a hello or a good morning. The geek, the wallflower and the socially inept came into their own. Quips and witticisms, emojis declaring love, kisses and hugs punctuated what once was the comma and full stop’s realm. Where once you waited for the postman to ring the bell or for the trill of the telephone or even the gentle ping of the text message, WhatsApp announced itself with a descending tonal register that in a strange way felt like your intestines descending into the knees. In those early days, e-commerce and work groups had not colonized this messaging service. This was a parallel universe you retreated to every few minutes where you shared the minutiae of your life with a near stranger and received as much if not more in return.

Sample this:

X: Had bf?

Y: Not yet. Did you? What did you eat?

X: Puri aloo… I love puri-aloo

Y: OMG. So do I

X: You know, right from when you said hello, I felt this connection with you [hug emoji]

Y: [heart emoji]

It wasn’t conspicuous, so parents, siblings, spouses or colleagues didn’t intrude or realise what was going on. It was like having a secret friend who was tuned to your every thought and need. You could say what you wanted without flushing in embarrassment or worry about being judged. Relationships and friendships between the unlikeliest of people flourished. And all you had to do was ghost someone to end it. The persistent kind could be muted or blocked. Relationship management had hit a new milestone.

Then family, school and work groups crept into what was once just a personal space. It became a great leveller, decimating hierarchies. As voice notes, voice and video calls were enabled, the messaging service became a political tool. WhatsApp had turned into a petri dish where bigots emerged and spat venom. Soon, it became the most effective way to propagate news, most of which was doctored, and to spread baseless rumours that had far-reaching consequences. And like a forest fire, there was no controlling it. So much so that election campaigns played out on WhatsApp. The irony was that each person sharing fake news thought they were doing their contacts a service by sharing it with them.

For centuries, tantrics have been trying to teach the world how to awaken their kundalini. Suddenly, it seemed that all it took was a WhatsApp message to do so. The energy slowly slithered higher up the spine, letting us take control. WhatsApp taught us to make our phones into an extension of ourselves. We were no longer daunted by technology. We had figured out it was there to do our bidding.

*It’s 6.30 a.m. I open WhatsApp. I send Ali, a coconut-picker, who lives 500 km away, a message to drop by at my parents’ home. An e-commerce site sends me a ticket. An editor forwards an event photo. I share my location with a friend visiting from another city. I send bank transfer details of a payment made to a vendor. Half a dozen people have already said good morning to me. And so have I.*

*BTW, I still haven’t got out of bed or said good morning to my living, breathing family all under the same roof as me.*

**I.A. Answer the following questions in 150 words each: (4x10=40)**

1. What is the difference between the geek, the wallflower and the socially inept?

‘The geek, the wallflower and the socially inept came into their own.’ What do you think the author means by this?

2. How has the arrival of WhatsApp transformed your relationship with family and friends? If you are somebody who does not use WhatsApp, do you feel like you have lost out on something?

3. Do you agree that WhatsApp removes barriers and democratizes voices? Have you witnessed or heard about a WhatsApp fight? What was it like?

4. The geek, the wallflower and the socially inept are words the author uses to describe people. If you were to categorize people you have encountered on WhatsApp, what would they be? Justify your labels.

**II. Read this report carried out by Deccan Chronicle in 2017 about the Mexican earthquake:**

Trapped under tons of rubble and in complete darkness, Diana Pacheco’s hopes were fading fast for making it out alive from a collapsed office building after a huge earthquake in Mexico City, despite rescuers’ frantic attempts to reach her.

Then the trapped woman had a great stroke of luck: a series of short messages she had written and sent to her husband some 16 hours earlier lit up his phone screen.

“My love”

“The ceiling fell”

“We’re trapped”

“I love you”

“I love you a lot”

“We’re on the fourth floor”

“Near the emergency stairway”

“There’s four of us,” read the WhatsApp messages, which finally reached her husband Juan Jesus Garcia on Wednesday at 5:34 a.m.

Garcia, 33, an Uber driver, had been waiting, often in tears, beside the collapsed building all night and immediately ran over to rescue workers.

“It was like a miracle because I was the only one who got the message and since I was there with the rescue workers I talked to them and they could locate her,” said Garcia.

The messages on Garcia’s phone, seen by Reuters shortly after they were received on Wednesday, could have been delayed due to erratic cell phone coverage in parts of Mexico City after the quake, or the fact that Pacheco’s phone signal was blocked by the tons of concrete that kept her trapped in the collapsed building.

When asked whether WhatsApp messages can be delivered hours after they were sent in an area without good cellphone coverage, a spokeswoman for the company confirmed it is possible.

Pacheco, a recruiter for a human resources and accounting firm, said she sent the messages shortly after the 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck at 1:14 p.m. on Tuesday.

“Those messages helped them know more or less where we were located,” Pacheco said on Friday from her hospital bed, her voice weak.

Using the information to pinpoint their location, rescuers freed Pacheco, 30, and the three other survivors shortly after 6 a.m. on Wednesday.

Rescue operations were still underway on Friday at the building, where Pacheco says there were some 60 people on her floor alone at the time of the quake.

“I think there are people (alive) there because we had oxygen, air was coming in,” she said.

Despite having bruises all over her body and wearing a neck brace, Pacheco was generally in good health.

She said she tried to send WhatsApp and text messages to other people from under the building, as well as make phone calls and post on Facebook, but only the messages to her husband got through.

She said when the building fell, the force of two floors above collapsing violently knocked her down, but a wall of concrete stopped just short of crushing her and three of her coworkers. They found themselves huddled together in a cramped space.

They screamed out every time they heard voices from outside the building.

“We heard them (rescue workers) when they asked us to yell or make noise, but regardless of how much we yelled they couldn’t hear us,” Pacheco said.

**II.A. Answer the following questions in 150 words each: (3x10=30)**

1. Have you come across or heard of similar instances where technology has intervened and saved the day?

2. The above passage is an example of how technology was the savior. Do you think you can trust technology? Do you see any problems coming from such dependence?

3. Do you see a difference in the tone of the first and second passage? Compare and contrast.

**MCT – B: Writing a Personal History for Technology**

**I. Read the following article titled *How to Be a ‘Woman Programmer’* by Ellen Ullman published in New York Times.**

I was an ordinary computer programmer. I wrote code that ran at the levels between flashy human interfaces and the deep cores of operating systems, like the role of altos in a chorus, who provide the structure without your taking much notice of their melodic lines. I made realistic schedules and met my deadlines. Those were decent accomplishments.

But none of it qualified me as extraordinary in the great programmer scheme of things. What seems to have distinguished me is the fact that I was a “woman programmer.” The questions I am often asked about my career tend to concentrate not on how one learns to code but how a woman does.

Let me separate the two words and begin with what it means to become a programmer.

The first requirement for programming is a passion for the work, a deep need to probe the mysterious space between human thoughts and what a machine can understand; between human desires and how machines might satisfy them.

The second requirement is a high tolerance for failure. Programming is the art of algorithm design and the craft of debugging errant code. In the words of the great John Backus, inventor of the Fortran programming language: “You need the willingness to fail all the time. You have to generate many ideas and then you have to work very hard only to discover that they don’t work. And you keep doing that over and over until you find one that does work.”

Now to the “woman” question.

I broke into the ranks of computing in the early 1980s, when women were just starting to poke their shoulder pads through crowds of men. There was no legal protection against “hostile environments for women.” I endured a client — a sweaty man with pendulous earlobes — who stroked my back as I worked to fix his system. At any moment I expected him to snap my bra. I considered installing a small software bomb but understood, right then, what was more important to me than revenge: the desire to create good systems.

I had a boss who said flatly, “I hate to hire all you girls but you’re too damned smart.” By “all” he meant three but, at the time, it was rare to find even one woman in a well-placed technical position. At a meeting, he kept interrupting me to say, “Gee, you sure have pretty hair.” By then I realized he was teaching me a great deal about computing. It would be a complicated professional relationship, in which his occasional need for male dominance would surface.

Over the 20 years that followed, I found that being a woman put me at one remove from the general society of programmers. I resented that distance, but I liked to think that it was in some way fortunate — that my standing back gave me a clearer view of our profession and its effects on society at large.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women comprise 29.4 percent of people working in “Computer and Software,” a subcategory of “Commercial Equipment.” Since this broad (and vague) designation might include everyone from system designers to office assistants, it tells us nothing about the participation of women at the deeper technical and theoretical levels. By “deeper” I mean computer science, hardware and software engineering, the creation of operating systems and deep algorithms — in short, the levels at which the future of technology is being defined.

I touched those fundamental levels as a software engineer but never plumbed their depths. Yet I could see that, at the deeper reaches, it was as if some plague had specialized in the killing of females. I looked around and wondered, “Where are all the other women?” We women found ourselves nearly alone, outsiders in a culture that was sometimes boyishly puerile, sometimes rigorously hierarchical, occasionally friendly and welcoming. This strange illness meanwhile left the female survivors with an odd glow that made them too visible, scrutinized too closely, held to higher standards. It placed upon them the terrible burden of being not only good but the best.

Women today face a new, more virile and virulent sexism. The definition of success has somehow become running your own start-up. And venture capitalists decide who will get funding, who will get a chance for that success. Venture capitalists are all but explicit in their search: they want a couple of guys who can write an app over a weekend.

If hired by start-ups, younger women find themselves sorely underrepresented. One woman told me that in her growing, 24-person company there were four women, which is “considered a good ratio.” And, as always, our ranks thin at the deeper technical levels. We get stalled at marketing and customer support, writing scripts for Web pages. Yet coding, looking into the algorithmic depths, getting close to the machine, is the driver of technology; and technology, in turn, is driving fundamental changes in personal, social and political life.

The question is how we react to this great prejudice against women. The rule of law and social activism certainly are crucial. But no matter how strong the social structure, there is always that cheek-slapped moment when you are alone with the anti-woman prejudice: the joke, the leer, the disregard, the invisibility, the inescapable fact that the moment you walk through the door you are seen as lesser, no matter what your credentials.

I have no guidance for women who want to rise through the ranks into technical management. I have led a peripatetic life, moving on when a project was done or the next thing intrigued me.

And I am not advising younger women (or any woman) to tough it out. You can lash back, which I have done too often and which has rarely served me well. You can quit and look for other jobs, which is sometimes a very good idea.

But the prejudice will follow you. What will save you is tacking into the love of the work, into the desire that brought you there in the first place. This creates a suspension of time, opens a spacious room of your own in which you can walk around and consider your response. Staring prejudice in the face imposes a cruel discipline: to structure your anger, to achieve a certain dignity, an angry dignity.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in 200 words each: (4x15=60)**

1. What is the grievance that Ellen Ullman’s expresses here? Do you think it is justified?

2. ‘What will save you is tacking into the love of the work...’ Do you agree with this statement made by Ullman? Do you see any problems with it?

3. Glass ceiling refers to an unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities. Is the article talking about this? What more do you see in the article?

4. Is it better to fight back or avoid confrontation in situations of sexual harassment? What has your experience taught you?

**II. Answer the following in 5-8 sentences each: (2x5=10)**

1. What app would you definitely find on a man’s phone? Why?

2. What app would you definitely find on a woman’s phone? Why?