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Date: 16-4-19

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

**IV SEMESTER B.A/ B. Sc/ B.Com/ B.S.W**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: APRIL 2019**

**GE 414 - General English Regular**

**SUPPLEMENTARY CANDIDATES ONLY**

**ATTACH THE QUESTION PAPER WITH THE ANSWER BOOKLET**

**Time: 2 ½ Hours** **Max. Marks: 70**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. This paper is for NSA/PSA/SSA/ students opting for the Regular course, and for all B.Com students.
2. **Please mention REGULAR on your answer sheet.**
3. You are allowed to use a dictionary.
4. This paper contains **FOUR** printed pages.
5. You will lose marks for exceeding the word limit.

**I. Read the following excerpt from the article “Is social media polarising society (NO)?” by Om Routray, published in *The Hindu*.**

The trending story on Twitter recently was about a woman whose engagement ring fell into a drain in Times Square in New York, just hours after her boyfriend proposed to her. The police department put out a tweet, which went viral. In less than 22 hours, the couple was traced and the ring was returned.

Those who blame social media for all ills say that it has made it possible for divisive and fake news to travel faster. But this story wouldn’t have been possible if social media had an inherent bias towards evil. Nor would the #MeToo stories have found an outlet. There are many stories of lost children being found, dogs being adopted, and money being raised for various causes on social media. Still, people love to say that social media is mainly responsible for the violent, regressive society of 2018. It is true that social media was used to garner support for a man who burnt a Muslim man on video in Rajasthan, but it was the same social media that was also used to raise funds for the parents of a child who was gang-raped and murdered in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir. What does all of this say about social media? That it is only a tool.

## Only a medium

It’s easy to blame technology because it is the new element in an old equation. The printing press was seen as trouble by the Ottomans. The speed at which books could be printed and distributed aroused suspicion. Ironically, the first Greek printing house set up in 1627 printed a booklet targeting Jews. Books were only a medium, just like social media. Banning books and blaming social media are results of the same flawed logic.

If social media is divisive, what about television? Many won’t rage against TV because the content is supposedly more controlled while everyone is a content creator on social media. But how are the news channels of today any less hateful than the average troll on social media? According to the BI-2018 survey, the number of individuals with access to TV has gone up to 835 million; smartphone penetration in the country is at around 300 million. The number of daily active users on WhatsApp is 200 million; on Facebook it is 194 million; and on Twitter it is 7.83 million. By all accounts, social media in India is still a niche phenomenon.

## Debate about free speech

Currently, Facebook is being blamed for fuelling the ‘yellow vests’ unrest in France. Facebook Live videos, local events and constant updates turned unorganised outpouring into a national-level protest. Fake videos and images of violence were the tools that were used to incite protesters. But to blame social media for the unrest is as senseless as blaming pamphlets for the French Revolution.

Be it Facebook’s relevancy algorithm or Twitter’s recommended tweets, these platforms are designed to show you more of what you already engage with and thus increase your bias. While newer algorithms and artificial intelligence are being used to spot and stop fake news, the debate will continue about free speech. What is parody, what is humour and what is hate speech? Machine learning is in its infancy and we are a few years away from algorithms that can fight the evils of humanity. Aristotle\* said that the modes of persuasion are ethos, pathos and logos. What if these three in a society are skewed? And, tell me, what social media was there back then?

(\*Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, suggested that any spoken or written communication intended to persuade contains three key rhetorical elements: logos, the logic and reasoning in the message; ethos, the character, credibility and trustworthiness of the communicator; and pathos, the emotional dimension used by the speaker to appeal to the audience’s emotions, build a common bond through a shared identity, and inspire action. The extent to which we draw on each appeal will depend upon the situation. To achieve our desired communication outcome we need to get the right mix of ethos, logos and pathos.)

**I. A. Answer the following questions based on your reading of the above passage in about 150 words. (2 x 10 = 20)**

1. How is the author using the twitter stories in the beginning of the article to present his arguments?
2. Why is the author ending the article with questions? What effect is it creating on you as a reader?

**I. B. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 200 words: (2x15=30)**

1. “Many won’t rage against TV because the content is supposedly more controlled while everyone is a content creator on social media.” Do you think there is a certain amount of control exercised on TV? From your TV viewing experience elaborate what is the nature of control exercised on TV?
2. As the General Assembly Elections of 2019 are approaching, is social media helping you make informed choices with regard to who you should be voting for? Elaborate.
3. Do you see a bias in the arguments presented by the author? Respond by writing an informed informal letter to the author.

**II. Read the following excerpt from the article “Who wants social media, asks Mr. Mathrubootham” by J. Mathrubootham, published in *The Hindu*.**

Respected Sir/Madam,

… So, two or three days back I came home in the evening after Seniors Intermediate Yoga. Suddenly my son came to me and said, “Appa, what nonsense you are doing, wasting time with yoga when only two days left for the election.” “What election,” I said. “Appa, you are living in your own world, are you aware of what is happening in our society? Housing Colony Residents Association election is day after tomorrow, campaign work is heating up like anything.”

“Oh my god, are you finally doing some responsible job, my son?” Suddenly feeling of fatherly pride started filling my heart. “Yes,” he said, “I am in-charge of Social Media Cell for Dr. Shankaramenon’s campaign.” Fatherly pride turned into cyanide.

I asked my son to explain his job. He said he was going to use all social media things to create a tremendous popularity wave for Dr. Shankaramenon within the residents of our housing colony.

“What nonsense you are talking boy,” I said. “In whole colony there are 100 flats. Out of this, 20 or 30 flats are full-time empty because owners are out of station. Remaining there are 70 flats, but 15 or 20 are rental fellows who don’t have vote. Which means maximum you have to talk to some 40 or 50 flats. Why you are doing all this internet drama, just go and talk to 50 flats. Five minutes each means within half a day you can campaign for Dr. Shankaramenon.”

My son said, “Appa, you are living in 2018 or 1018?” (If this was 1018, I would have sold you and bought a cow or five jackfruit or something useful, I said. He ignored.) Instead he gave one *mankibaat*. Nowadays nobody does any campaigning face to face, it seems. All that is out of fashion. Elections and all are full internet and technology, he said. For instance, Mrs. Kanakavalli on seventh floor is a member of Bobby Deol Fan Group on Facebook. So instead of just sending a message to vote for Dr. Shankaramenon my son also attached a photo of the doctor holding CD of Soldier film.

“Appa,” he said, “this is the latest digital targeted election strategy campaign technology, you will never understand.”

Election happened this morning. Dr. Shankaramenon got two votes and came last. Immediately after the Housing Colony Residents Association meeting I went home to have some social media with my son. But today apparently he is working from out of home.

Yours in paternal exasperation,

J. Mathrubootham

**II. A. Answer the following questions based on the above passage in about 150 words. (2 x 10 = 20)**

1. From the two voices in the letter, what perspectives do you gather of election campaigns today? Give examples from the passage.
2. What does “Bobby Deol Fan Group”, mentioned in the passage stand for in the larger context of election campaigns? Elaborate using examples.