STELLA MARIS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) CHENNAI 600 086
(For candidates admitted during the academic year 2008–09)

SUBJECT CODE : EN/FC/WS33

B.A./ B.Sc./B.S.W DEGREE EXAMINATION, NOVEMBER 2009
THIRD SEMESTER

COURSE : FOUNDATION CORE – GROUP B
PAPER : WRITING AND SPEAKING SKILLS - I
TIME : 2 HOURS **MAX. MARKS : 50**

I. Write an essay on any ONE: **(1 x 10= 10 marks)**

a) My college campus
b) My neighbourhood
c) My favourite book

II. Recall and respond to any ONE topic: **(1 x 10= 10 marks)**

a) An unforgettable incident
b) A haunting dream
c) A memorable meeting

III. Write a report on any ONE: **(1 x 10= 10 marks)**

a) 'Mahatma' pens from Mont Blanc
b) Roads to be widened for easing traffic congestion
c) Stampede near temple

IV. Make notes on the following newspaper article: **(10 marks)**

The empowerment of the less privileged is today a national priority, across political parties and governments. In this context, a look at how Sree Narayana Guru addressed issues of socio-economic and cultural reforms for the less privileged in Kerala a century and a half ago will be relevant.

His empowerment programmes covered a sizeable deprived population in the Travancore, Kochi and Malabar provinces. His target groups were unorganised, mostly illiterate and without access rights to public places such as roads, markets, courts, temples, schools and even hospitals. In order to impose their supremacy, caste Hindus and rulers insisted that these sections follow separate dress and hair codes. Their status was that of slaves and bonded labourers. They were traded like commodities by landlords, even by governments and kings. When the British consolidated their power in India, the new rulers remained silent spectators of the social injustice. The marginalisation of the weaker sections enabled Christian missionaries to go ahead with mass conversions.

Sandwiched between the caste Hindu rulers and the tactful missionaries, the Guru sought to reach the unreached. It was a big task, for which he got no support from the ruling class. And, he had zero resources. He could, however, successfully address the subject without hurting the feelings of the rulers. He neither expected nor asked for help. He was confident in the strength of the poor. He awakened the hidden strength in them.

Following his own strategy, he could win the people's faith and formulate a series of projects and programmes for them. He could also successfully implement them with the help of their leaders, although they had had no earlier experience in such tasks. He focussed on organisation, education, thrift, savings, investments, venture capital, trade and commerce, skill development and institution-building. He minimised wasteful expenditure on family and social functions, improved personal and neighbourhood hygiene, addressed issues of personal health care, and introduced good practices in family and in society.

He implemented these programmes successfully more than a century ago when there was poor access to transport, communication and resources, and no organisational support. The only driving force was the spirit to perform and cross hurdles. Yet the process of change resulted in a new confidence among the target group. They organised themselves, raised resources and volunteered their services for the reform process. The whole process survived for a couple of decades and slowly lost its spirit, yet left behind admirable and visible changes.

A comparison between what happened in terms of social changes then and what is happening now will throw light on the missing links in our current project formulation and delivery mechanism. India is an independent and growing nation. But it has a sizeable number of illiterate and poor people. Its poverty alleviation programmes are the largest of their kind with social instruments like Self Help Groups. Yet we continue to be less than efficient in eradicating poverty and empowering the less privileged.

We should then find the missing links. If it was possible for a social reformer more than a century ago, with an unfavourable support system, why are we failing to achieve our objectives as a mighty nation? Introspection and learning from our own success models should help. During the Guru Jayanti celebrations, those who hold in high regard such leaders and acknowledge their achievements, should address the subject and institutionalise the process.

Different forums can address this subject. A suitable mindset needs to be created first. Following social science research methodology, similar success stories in their respective contexts can be studied and documented. With the required changes, these tools can be further sharpened for need-based project formulation and implementation in local areas. Such methodology will be indigenous and therefore will have obvious advantages. It will reflect local aspirations and will therefore ensure peoples' participation. In the process, we should find out any missing links. It may be the much required energy, or some other factor. We should find out.

When the success stories are available right here, why are we shy to acknowledge our own strengths? We do not need new ideologies and strategies to remove poverty from our land. We should rather perfect our skills and export them to remove poverty from the face of the earth. Local change agents can address the subject. This is possible only when we find value in our own skills and resources and start taking pride in them. In the process we could enrich our culture and emerge as winners in terms of social reforms.

From the Prime Minister to the anganwadi teacher, an added spirit to find values in our own strength is the need. If Mahatma Gandhi could ignite it for freedom and the Guru could generate zeal for the deprived in Kerala, why cannot this mighty nation fulfil its national priorities? We should pool our energies and enable others to optimise performance. That will bring forth the awaited glow, and our villages and towns will blossom with life.

V. Summarise the newspaper article: (10 marks)

Little has indeed changed for the survivors of the Gujarat carnage of 2002, as they continue to negotiate survival amidst fear and hate, despite the passage of more than seven years and a major change of regime in New Delhi.

We believe that reconciliation and healing are impossible from a position of social surrender, humiliation and fear to which the minority community is being forced to succumb as a re-engineered way of life. The battle for justice is a necessary precondition (but by no means a sufficient condition) for reconciliation. The struggle for justice for the survivors of the 2002 massacre in Gujarat has no doubt to be fought in the courts, judicial and human rights commissions, the parliament and legislature. But most importantly of all, it has to be fought by the people themselves, in the places they live and work, and in their hearts and minds. This is above all a combat against manufactured fear and hate. It is a struggle for equal rights before the law, regardless of one's faith, caste, class or gender. It is a battle against forgetting.

But for the possibility of reconciliation to be achieved through legal justice, what is important is not just that the end of justice under the law be accomplished. What is even more significant is the means by which the struggle for legal justice is waged. Indeed even if it transpires that the end of legal justice is not ultimately secured, by mass, community based and ethically bounded legal action, the process of mass non-violent democratic struggle for legal justice may itself beat a pathway that leads towards genuine, more egalitarian negotiations for a peaceful shared future.

In the quest of appropriate means to achieve the ends of legal justice in ways that pave a pathway for authentic reconciliation, it was natural for us to look towards the theory and practice of one of the modern world's greatest and most resolute campaigners for justice, Mahatma Gandhi. He never tired of reminding those who fought for justice with him that in any struggle for peace and justice, it is imperative that the means deployed in the struggle should be fully compatible with its goals. Resistance for a more just, humane and genuinely democratic society cannot be built by means that are themselves unjust, inhuman and undemocratic. Brutal methods inevitably will produce brutalised outcomes. No amount of direct or structural violence justifies retaliatory violence. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Darkness can never drive out darkness. Only light can do that". Gandhi said more directly, "Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surfaces as well as the depth of hatred". Or that "Retaliation is counter–poison, and poison breeds more poison. The nectar of love alone can destroy the poison of hate".

The idea that hate can only be conquered by love indeed has ancient roots. Buddha had said, "Not by hate is hate defeated; hate is quenched by love. This is the eternal law". The duty to resist injustice is also articulated in different luminous ways by many diverse traditions. Prophet Muhammad, for instance, prescribed, "Whoever from amongst you sees an injustice, then he should rectify it using his hand, if he is unable to, then by his tongue, if he is unable to, then by his heart, i.e. at least consider it to be a wrong…"

Gandhi found the conviction for non-violent people's resistance for justice in an instrument which he termed 'satyagrah', literally truth-force, or people's resistance for truth. Gandhi fashioned the instrument of 'satyagrah' as a mode of ethical, non-violent mass resistance against unjust laws and legal regimes. In his words, "Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the State becomes lawless or, which is the same thing, corrupt". It is important to

note that in his hands, civil disobedience was an intensely ethical tool: "Disobedience to be civil has to be open and nonviolent." For him, it meant the "capacity for unlimited suffering without the intoxicating excitement of killing".

There are many inspiring examples of resort to variations of satyagrah in contemporary Indian social movements, such as those for ecological democracy, gender, tribal and dalit rights, rights to information, food and work, and labour rights. There are several unjust laws in India, such as those related to preventive detention, deployment of security forces against civilian populations, laws that criminalise begging and custodialise vulnerable groups, laws that compromise the rights of women and sexual minorities, and statutes for the compulsory acquisition of private lands, to name only a few. But at the same time, the statute books are strewn with progressive and just legislation that is rarely operationalised, including for land reforms, the bans on bonded labour and untouchability, the outlawing of demeaning practices like carrying human excreta on the head, restrictions on tribal land alienation and usurious money-lending, minimum wages, rights of inter-state migrants, the ban on dowry, the rights of survivors of domestic violence and entitlements of persons with disabilities. Often the State itself violates its own progressive laws, and through that the rights of oppressed populations, with complete impunity.

In formal democratic regimes where the letter of laws frequently uphold justice, although in practice rights are openly violated in the mode of their implementation by State authorities, we are also confronted with a different mutation of lawlessness and wilful disobedience of just laws not by the people but by the State! And therefore related but distinct instruments of democratic peaceful resistance from satyagrah or mass civil disobedience need to be fashioned and widely deployed in these circumstances.

These require the developing of new instruments of civic resistance. One of these that we propose is the idea we have called 'Nyayagrah', or a people's campaign for legal justice and protection, for peaceful action to use the law and democratic instruments to secure justice. Satyagrah was a form of mass resistance to unjust laws. Nyayagrah (literally 'justice-force' or people's resistance for justice) is proposed as mass campaigns not to disobey unjust laws, but instead to hold the State accountable to actually enforce rather than disobey its own just laws, and to uphold rights guaranteed by the country's Constitution and laws, and by international covenants. It may involve access also to courts, but this is not mandatory because courts themselves may be part of the process by which rights are withheld and violated with impunity.

The larger lesson is that it is often assumed that there are mainly only two binary opposed options available to people who suffer from enormous settled structural forms of injustice, particularly when States themselves abet or actively perpetrate the injustice or denials of rights. One of these is to submit passively to the injustice, either with angry or humiliating resignation, or by making peace with it and possibly finding ways of individual escape, for oneself or one's family. Opposed to this is the possibility of violent resistance, through armed struggle, guerrilla warfare or terrorist violence. However, the admittedly still contested international regime of rights supported by laws and progressive Constitutions in many countries, has combined with deepened democratic cultures and practice, has greatly enlarged spaces for many forms of resolute people's peaceful resistance. These may be by forms of civil disobedience and non-cooperation in cases where laws and regimes are unjust and illegitimate, and by many forms of peaceful mobilisation and legal activism for explicating rights and making them judiciable, and for making recalcitrant States accountable for the enforcement of just laws and the legal rights of oppressed women and men, boys and girls.

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