

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) CHENNAI 600 086  
(For candidates admitted during the academic year 2011 – 12 & thereafter)

SUBJECT CODE: 11EL/MC/SA64

B. A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, APRIL 2015  
BRANCH XII – ENGLISH  
SIXTH SEMESTER

COURSE : MAJOR – CORE  
PAPER : SOUTH ASIAN WRITING  
TIME : 3 HOURS

MAX. MARKS: 100

I. Analyse ONE of the following poems, with reference to the issues raised by the author. (1x15=15)

**Baldness**

By *K.G. Sankara Pillai* (India)

(Translated from Malayalam by K Sachidanandan)

- 1 The baldhead and the baldhead have  
little to hide from each other.  
They can easily reflect the past and the present  
in a glossy smile  
But today the poet hides a something from the poet,  
the traveller from the traveller,  
the neighbour from the neighbour.  
And India hides everything from China.  
The unpopular idol of Harishchandra in Ajanta  
blinds itself with the present  
at midnight.  
Everyone hides the trump-card,  
everyone carries a knife, a tusk.
  
- 2 The baldhead and the baldhead have  
little to hide from each other.  
But today when they meet in the theatre or the library  
they close half their eyes and ears,  
and half-tongued, ask:  
“O friend, when did you grow so bald?”  
“I don’t remember.”  
“Nor I.”  
The Law finds it hereditary,  
obviously the impudent bequest of an unwary father  
or grandfather;  
withered are the glories and the longings;  
severed are the moorings;  
withered, too, the crown, the horn, the feather, the flower.

In the town hall the philosopher discoursed:  
This is the hood of Nothingness,

the Absolute of birth and death,  
this Kafka, Camus, the Rock, the Wasteland, the cracked sky,  
Godot who never turns up,  
Genet's dark whistling,  
The Eternal Silence beyond the modulations of the Essence...  
The crow on the twig of the tree  
Night on the twig of the day  
Lonely island on the twig of the sea  
Look.  
The philosopher has hidden something  
Something he fears or hates.  
The Ganges soars down from the sky  
But the Siva waiting below is bald.

- 3 Brother,  
a crocodile preys on our brains  
and has us for sustenance  
Brother,  
cowardice never forbids a dog to bark.  
A dog's vision is never veiled:  
"Here is the thief, here the guest,  
here the postman, and here death."

One suffering no God on his back.  
My friends,  
These our mansions hold us rotting,  
leaving the truth unsaid,  
with not even a tail to inherit,  
with not even a hell to deliver us.  
We are not even dogs, brother;  
From our ceiling doves leave for trees,  
rats for burrows, cats for mysteries.

Farewell, farewell, to the local Helens,  
the seductive landscapes, the flinting gossips  
by the village wells.  
Farewell to the pompous lords in the secure mansions...

A volcano opens its eyes,  
somewhere in this expanse of silence.

- 4 My friend,  
Not the brideless return of the groom  
nor the shadeless sterile wall of the prison  
that chains the liberators  
nor the dawnless roof of the gallows,  
nor the charred floor of the burnt-out home,  
nor the arid anticipation of the skull that waits to explode.  
See, the beautiful people and the dandies

roaming the streets of this holy land are all baldheads,  
these fire-spitting eyes and brows.  
Don't you see the second head within the head?

**OR**

**The Grass is Really like Me**

By Kishwar Naheed

(Translated from Urdu by Rukhsana Ahmad)

The grass is also like me  
it has to unfurl underfoot to fulfil itself  
but what does its wetness manifest:  
a scorching sense of shame  
or the heat of emotion?

The grass is also like me  
As soon as it can raise its head  
the lawnmower  
obsessed with flattening it into velvet,  
mows it down again.  
How you strive and endeavour  
to level woman down too!  
But neither the earth's nor woman's  
desire to manifest life dies.  
Take my advice: the idea of making a footpath was a good one.

Those who cannot bear the scorching defeat of their courage  
are grafted on to the earth.  
That's how they make way for the mighty  
but they are merely straw not grass  
—the grass is really like me.

**II. Answer any THREE of the following in not less than 400 words each. (3x15=45)**

- a) Discuss the relevance of quotations from Camus's Nobel Prize acceptance speech in "Play of the Absurd".
- b) Explicate the following lines from Kazi Nasrul Islam's "Struggle":  
"Tearing off the crescent from sky, / Decorate your flag that is crimson red; / Let the seniles live longer / You offer your precious life, go ahead".
- c) "We never actually have serious conversations about anything for more than 20 seconds. So there's a beautiful superficiality to our relationship which sometimes gets covered up by all the genuine affection flowing back and forth".  
Elaborate with reference to Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography*.
- d) Briefly discuss the implications of dislocation alluded to in Jean Arasanayagam's "Passages".
- e) '*The Land of our Parents* draws our attention to the plight of the aged whose children have left for greener pastures abroad'. Elaborate.

**III. Answer any TWO of the following in not less than 750 words each. (2x20=40)**

- a) Discuss issues relating to the construction of ethnic identity with reference to South Asian Writing.
- b) Attempt a thematic analysis of Sunetra Rajakarunyaké's "SMS".
- c) Examine the portrayal of childhood in Kaiser Haq's "A Myth Reworked".
- d) Analyse the treatment of disillusionment in *Fire in the Monastery*.

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