

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) CHENNAI 600 086

(For candidates admitted during the academic year 2008–09)

SUBJECT CODE: EN/FC/RL13

**B.A./ B.Sc./ B.S.W. DEGREE EXAMINATION, NOVEMBER 2008
FIRST SEMESTER**

**COURSE : FOUNDATION CORE – GROUP B
PAPER : READING AND LISTENING SKILLS I
TIME : 2 HOURS**

MAX. MARKS: 50

SECTION – A

I Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. (15 marks)

How Many Working Class Families Have Been Rendered Destitute in the Town of the Great Shopping Mall? - The Class War in Gurgaon (from The Hindu, July 2005)

By P. SAINATH

The northern Indian state of Haryana in which Gurgaon is a town is known for the ruthlessness and barbarity of its police. It is also needless to say that it is seen as a popular investment destination by multinational corporations. The Japanese multinational corporation, Honda recently threw out lots of workers in Gurgaon. In reaction to this, when protests by workers boiled up, the Honda Corporation sacked some protest leaders. The workers took out a legal, lawful protest march which was set upon by the police with incredible ferocity. Only, this time it happened on the highway and very close to New Delhi, the capital city. So there was "live" coverage of the violence for two days. The same Gurgaon is also famous for its Great Mall, a symbol of the emerging 'new' India, much touted by the New York Times and other newspapers.

The scenes from Gurgaon gave us more than just a picture of one labour protest, police brutality or corporate tyranny. It presented us a microcosm of the new and old Indias. Different rules and realities for different classes of society.

A horribly oppressed wife, so runs the old American joke, slapped her husband in despair. The man punched her over 30 times, till she lay battered and he was exhausted by the effort. Then, panting, he told her: "Now we're even." That's right. Both sides were violent, weren't they?

That's pretty much the both-sides-did-it line, now in vogue to describe the brutality in Haryana. Months of being denied their rights, the ruthless cutting of their jobs, the despair of the workers, count for little. The breaking of the nation's laws, the torment of the sacked workers, their wives and children count for less. Context counts for nothing at all. History begins with the televised violence of two days. Not with the hidden violence of years.

Even those 48 hours are instructive. On the one hand, hundreds thrashed mercilessly by the police. Some still being clubbed as they lay bleeding on the ground. Hundreds missing. Lathis [hard wooden stick carried by Indian policemen, often metal-tipped], teargas, water canons and other action from the police. One woman sick with anxiety, swinging a stick at them - shown *ad nauseum* on every channel. That, and some stone-throwers targeting cops in bullet-proof vests, neatly symbolised the match-up. Yup, both sides were violent.

The Haryana police lived up to their history. At the best of times, this force would not win a prize in any human rights competition. (Unless the only other contestants were Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and the Punjab police. The race might then be close.) This is the state of Jhajar, where five Dalits were lynched by a mob. Their crime: they were suspected of killing a cow. The Haryana police swung into action as only they could, filing cases against those they suspected of cow slaughter. Then too, only nationwide outrage saw matters go further. Then too, the site was close enough to the capital city for the media to take notice.

Yet the present violence in Haryana speaks of newer things as well. There was something quite symbolic about Gurgaon being the venue of the protests. About "old" Gurgaon being the scene of bloodshed and mayhem, while "new" Gurgaon with its bustling, happy, mall culture, saw business as usual. Gurgaon's mall has won the attention of media the world over. Many well-known papers, notably, the *New York Times*, have added lustre to its legend.

On Tuesday, one television channel was smart enough to see the contrast. The clearly better-off (and for now unaffected) having their hot dogs and coleslaw in the Mall, while the plebs battled the cops at the barricades in "old" Gurgaon. In that is a parable of an old and new India as well.

This time, much of the media got the picture, but many of them missed the point. Two channels at least, told us the police were showing "maximum" and "extreme" restraint. This against a background (reported by the same channels) of hundreds missing. Of injured persons being frogmarched from hospital to lock-ups. And of frightened people searching for their relatives. This, too, alongside visuals of police battering unarmed people lying helpless on the ground. I guess that's the maximum restraint the Haryana police are capable of, anyway.

The second day's violence was reportedly sparked off when frantic members of the public who turned up at the civil hospital could not find their relatives. Some of these seem to have been whisked away by police to be charged with the previous day's violence. That inflamed matters. Note that some non-involved citizens of "old" Gurgaon got quickly involved. What they had seen angered them. And anyway, their anger had other causes, too. Oddly, those pushing the "both-sides-were-violent" line seek no action against the police. Both sides were violent, right? How come one side faces no punishment?

Gurgaon was about the police and administration increasingly acting as enforcement agents of big corporations. In Haryana, Honda did not even have to come into the picture till things went awfully wrong. The police and administration were there to act on its behalf. Had this incident

occurred in Japan, where Honda has large unions to deal with, some of its top brass would have been seeking new employment. Here, they've just begun to talk about giving back some of the workers their jobs.

Japan's Ambassador to India says this episode might prove bad for our image as an investment destination. Gee! I'm sure that warning will send all those terrified women searching for their relatives scurrying back to their homes in shame. What's a few breadwinners when the image of India as an investment destination is at stake? That mindset too, is symbolic of the new India. Remember those editorial writers whose horror over the pogroms in Gujarat was roused not so much by the misery of the victims as by the damage to India's image as an investment destination? They're back.

It's not all about Honda, either. Haryana has seen many brutal actions against workers in the past decade. In 1996, over 18,000 workers struck work across that State for 80 days. They were not seeking a paisa extra in wages or benefits. They had a single demand. They wanted their wages paid on time. They sometimes went months without getting paid.

In response, the Government sacked 6,000 of them. Close to 700 women found themselves jailed for up to 70 days under the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA). This had not happened even during the Emergency. Successive governments in Haryana have allowed companies to ride roughshod over workers' rights. And though quite a few of new India's elite may not know it, trade unions are still legal in the country. For now, anyway. It would be worth looking at how much media coverage there has been of workers' problems here. (Or anywhere else.) In what depth have the often illegal practices of managements been covered? How many working class families have been rendered destitute in the town of the Great Mall?

How many channels or big newspapers even have full-time correspondents on the labour beat? That too in a country where just the job seekers at the employment exchanges almost equal the population of South Africa?

In Mumbai, the Mall itself has been built on the retrenched future of the workers. On mill lands and on work they've been cheated of. And laws have been stretched or changed. You can open a bowling alley and evade the rules by dubbing it "a workers' recreation centre." You can see both new and old India cheek by jowl here.

The streets of Gurgaon gave us a glimpse of something larger than a single protest. Bigger than a portrait of the Haryana police. Greater than Honda. Far more complex than the "image of India" as an investment destination. It presented us a microcosm of the new and old Indias. Of private cities and gated communities. Of different realities for different classes of society. Of ever-growing inequality. Of the malls of the few and the chawls (run-down tenements where usually working class people live) of the many.

(P. Sainath is the rural affairs editor of The Hindu and the author of Everybody Loves a Good Drought.)

1. Identify the central idea in the text and rewrite it in your own words. (2)
2. What is the relevance of the “old American joke” to the Gurgaon crisis? (2)
3. Besides Gurgaon, is there any other instance mentioned by the writer to show us media at times acts irresponsibly? (2)
4. Using the Gurgaon crisis, how does P.Sainath indicate the coexistence of old and new Indias? (2)
5. What do you think about the response of Honda and Japan to the crisis? (2)
6. Find a word from the passage that is closest in meaning to: (1)
 - a) publicised / promoted
 - b) a miniature representation
7. Find an antonym from the passage for (one for (a) and one for (b)): (1)
 - a) quiet and orderly
 - b) opulent and secure
8. When the writer says, “many well known newspapers, notably the New York Times, have added lustre to its legend”, he means: (1)
 - a) well known newspapers have clearly indicated the culture of police violence in Haryana
 - b) the media channels were smart enough to see the contrast between “old” and “new” Gurgaon
 - c) media has been waxing eloquent about Gurgaon’s much celebrated malls
 - d) Gurgaon’s malls represent a “new” India
9. In the passage, “top brass” means: (1)
 - a) the Japanese protest leaders
 - b) the high ranking officials of Honda
 - c) the most important Japanese police officers
 - d) the high ranking Japanese politicians
10. In the context of the passage, explain the phrase, “cheek by jowl.” (1)

II Identify the main idea in each of the following passages and rewrite it in your own words. (5 x 2 = 10)

1. In *The Golden Bough*, his classic catalogue of mythologies, Sir James George Frazer extensively documents the significance of trees in world religion. His chapters on tree spirits roam from Northern Europe to the Eastern Seaboard of what is now the United States to the islands of the Pacific. Despite the lack of contact among these regions, the veneration of trees united them. The woods that covered large areas of Europe and North America, in particular, were difficult to penetrate and dangerous to cross. It was not a great mental leap for people to see the trees that populated them as embodiments of the natural forces that governed their lives.

2. The map of Punjab looked as if it had been dipped in blood. It was October 2005. I was looking at this map in a booklet called *Missing: Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India*. It gave a very graphic view of the deteriorating Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the country. The CSR is calculated as the number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group. Since more boys than girls are born the world over under normal circumstances, there should normally be 950 girls to every thousand boys in the below-6 age group. Anything below this indicates some kind of anti-female intervention. That is just a genteel way of saying they are being killed either before or soon after they are born. The places which had a CSR of below 800 were marked in red on this map. In the 2001 map, all of Punjab was either red or orange. Delhi stood out like an ugly red pimple. Like the man in the Usilampatti General Hospital, we produce our token girl children and say, “she is a girl, isn’t she?” Maybe by 2021, parts of the Indian map would have black holes to show where women had been eliminated altogether.
3. A book is banned. A painting is proscribed. A song is stifled. A voice is mutilated. A thought is suppressed. An opinion is gagged. Despots, dictators and democrats down the ages have indulged in this perverse pastime with varying degrees of skill and obsession. The game goes on in our own time as does the muffled protest of the creative artist, the enquiring mind, the searching soul. The moral of it is abundantly clear – conform and it is business as usual; defy and be condemned. The censors quite sincerely believe that people must never be exposed to the ‘dangerous’ and ‘immoral’ ideas of the non-conformist artist.
4. My father took an active interest in my mother’s wardrobe – in fact, he bought every single saree she possessed. She wore his favourite colours (blue, pink, green), and shunned those he didn’t approve of (yellow, purple). I don’t know how she felt about wearing only those colours that pleased her husband all through their marriage (a few months short of sixty years). But I do know that, without my realizing it, I’m following a similar pattern. I rarely wear something that Dé (my husband) does not like. For one, I trust his aesthetics and know his taste. For another, I believe it’s important that your partner enjoy the way you look. Unless, of course, the partner has ghastly or kinky taste. In which case, a line has to be drawn at the outset. And this goes both ways. There have been times when Dé has climbed out of a pair of trousers or changed his jacket after one long look from me.
5. During a discussion at a workshop of history teachers of Central schools from all over India, I was asked: “Why should history be taught from a perspective of peace (within a country)? Why shouldn’t it reflect the reality?” The question had arisen from the argument that the manner in which the freedom struggle is presented to children helps sustain the hostility one sees between India and Pakistan. The larger argument was that the lack of communication noticeable between the two countries is at least partly related to the rival perceptions of the past that schools promote among the young. In particular, the events leading to the partition are represented in the school texts used in the two countries in ways that do not encourage children to look at the past as past. Rather, the past becomes a resource for keeping misgivings and enmity alive. Instead of imparting respect for the past and a sense of curiosity about it, the teaching of history fosters a perpetual quarrel with the past in both countries.

SECTION – B

III. a. Read the news report and put the verbs into the most suitable form (5 x 1 = 5)

A woman _____ (take) to hospital after her car collided with a lorry near Adyar yesterday. She _____ (allow) to go home later after treatment. The road _____ (block) for an hour after the accident and the traffic had to _____ (divert). A police inspector said afterwards: “The woman was lucky. She could _____ (kill).”

b. Complete the text given below. Put the verbs in brackets into a suitable form of the past tense. (10 x 1 = 10)

Alex _____ (work) in the accounts department when I _____ (become) advertising manager at the firm. At first, I _____ (find) him to be very efficient, but after a while his work _____ (start) to deteriorate. He _____ (forever lose) important documents and _____ (make) excuses when there were delays. The final straw was when he _____ (spend) three weeks on a piece of work that should have taken only a day or so. By the time he _____ (finish), I _____ (feel) pretty annoyed and _____ (complain) to the managing director.

IV. Use a suitable form of the verb given in the brackets to complete the sentences.**(10 x 1 = 10)**

1. The result of this complicated lawsuit _____ (remain/remains) to be seen.
2. Neither fire nor flood _____ (is/are) ever likely to deter him.
3. The chairperson, together with her two young daughters, _____ (has/have) accepted our invitation.
4. This is one of those setbacks that really _____ (is/are) unavoidable.
5. The cabinet _____ (has/have) all been sworn to secrecy.
6. Bombay Blues, recently opened in Nungambakkam, _____ (sell/sells) good food.
7. Trains _____ (was/were) his obsession.
8. Each tribal woman, man and child _____ (was/were) given a compensation of Rs. 10,000.
9. Everyone _____ (has/ have) to complete the project before December.
10. Even good drivers _____ (find/finds) skidding an alarming experience.

