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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27
V SEMESTER EJP: WRITING FOR JOURNALISM & CREATIVE WRITING
JN5218: INDIAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY FOR DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM
SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS: NOVEMBER 2020

Time: 2^{1/2}hrs Max Marks- 70

Instructions:

1. This paper is meant for V semester students of BA-EJP course who have opted for the Development Journalism elective.
 2. You are allowed to use a dictionary.
 3. You will lose marks for exceeding the suggested word-limit.
 4. This paper contains THREE pages and THREE sections.
- I. Read the following article by Nandini Sundar published in 'The Wire' on 14 October and answer the questions that follow.

For the last two years, while driving from Delhi University in north Delhi to my home in the south, I find that if I miss the small unmarked turn on the left off a flyover to go to ITO, there is no way I can reach central Delhi without considerable backtracking. The government claims that the Pragati Maidan makeover that has blocked the road is for the public good, even if that claim has been contested, both by way of public petitions and legally. But whether or not it is indeed for the public good, can I assert that my rights as a commuter matter more than the project, especially since like many other projects, it is taking indefinite time? In a city that is increasingly bisected by flyovers, cyclists and pedestrians are routinely inconvenienced and blocked. Are they not commuters too? In the government's eyes, they may be c-class citizens who need not be factored in while making urban plans, but technically they are still equal citizens even if not equal commuters. But would the courts even entertain their petitions?

The judges pride themselves on trying, even if they failed, to find a solution (para 11) where the "rights of protesters were to be balanced by that of commuters" (para 16). The entire petition both before the high court and the Supreme Court is based on the rights of commuters who were ostensibly blocked by protesters at Shaheen Bagh, mobilising against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

The judges, no doubt, also pride themselves on their liberality in allowing that democracies must allow, and may even require dissent, before making it "unequivocally clear that public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied in such a manner and that too indefinitely. Democracy and dissent go hand in hand, but then the demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places." (para 17)

Given the range of issues and constituencies on any one day in any one city, this could potentially lead to massive traffic jams in the designated site, and dare one say, cause even more inconvenience to commuters. It would also mean that only organisations or political parties who

can hire buses and take commuters to designated spaces are effectively entitled to protest. In their attempts at sociological analysis of the Shaheen Bagh case, the judges tell us that the movement was leaderless and working at cross purposes, the women appear to have lost control over it, the 'huge periphery' of male bystanders and volunteers had a vested interest in the blockade continuing, and there was a 'general unwillingness' to move to an alternate site. All of these are common tropes when it comes to women's movements – how women are incapable of 'proper' organisation and leadership and are essentially being guided from behind by men. It is true, as a number of sociological studies on women's movements have shown, that women's movements tend to be less formal and less driven by leaders and personalities, and more centred on everyday concerns like price rise, wages, environmental loss. But these are advantages rather than problems.

In Shaheen Bagh and other anti-CAA sites occupied by women, citizenship is not some distant aspiration – it is the here and now of seeing their families turned into second class citizens, their children beaten up in universities. Women's protests depend significantly on being located around sites where they live or work, where they can go home easily to their families or bring their children to protest. In saying that dissenters cannot occupy public spaces, the honourable male judges are effectively saying that women must keep out of the public sphere. When a government does not listen to its citizens, when its judges block them out of the public sphere, then all they have is their voice of conscience. Our conscience will not allow us to hide in designated spaces when the country is being taken from us.

I.A. Answer the following questions in 100-150 words each. (3x10=30)

1. The writer calls this judgement a 'profoundly elitist'. Why is this a profoundly elitist judgment?
2. Why is the judgement particularly against women's rights to protest?
3. The judges observed, 'Democracy and dissent go hand in hand, but then the demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places' -- what do you think of this observation?

II. Read the following article by Priscilla Jebaraj and answer the questions that follow.

Farmers have taken to the streets, protesting against three Bills on agriculture market reforms that were passed by Parliament last week and will become laws once they are signed by the President. In Punjab and Haryana, bandhs were observed, with blocked roads and mass rallies. Opposition parties and farmers groups across the political spectrum have expressed concern that the laws could corporatize agriculture, threaten the current mandi network and State revenues and dilute the system of government procurement at guaranteed prices.

The Bills which aim to change the way agricultural produce is marketed, sold and stored across the country were initially issued in the form of ordinances in June. They were then passed by voice-vote in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha during the delayed monsoon session this month, despite vociferous Opposition protest. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, allows farmers to sell their harvest outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis without paying any State taxes or fees. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, facilitates contract farming and direct

marketing. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, deregulates the production, storage, movement and sale of several major foodstuffs.

Most of the slogans at the farmers' protests revolve around the need to protect MSPs, or minimum support prices, which they feel are threatened by the new laws. None of the laws directly impinges upon the MSP regime. However, most government procurement centres in Punjab, Haryana and a few other States are located within the notified APMC mandis. Farmers fear that encouraging tax-free private trade outside the APMC mandis will make these notified markets unviable, which could lead to a reduction in government procurement itself. Farmers are also demanding that MSPs be made universal, within mandis and outside, so that all buyers — government or private — will have to use these rates as a floor price below which sales cannot be made.

More than half of all government procurement of wheat and paddy in the last five years has taken place in Punjab and Haryana, according to Agriculture Ministry data. More than 85% of wheat and paddy grown in Punjab, and 75% in Haryana, is bought by the government at MSP rates. Farmers in these States fear that without MSPs, market prices will fall. These States are also most invested in the APMC system, with a strong mandi network, a well-oiled system of arthiyas or commission agents facilitating procurement, and link roads connecting most villages to the notified markets and allowing farmers to easily bring their produce for procurement. The Punjab government charges a 6% mandi tax (along with a 2.5% fee for handling central procurement) and earns an annual revenue of about ₹ 3,500 crore from these charges. One of the major concerns raised by regional political parties and non-BJP State governments is that agriculture falls in the State list, arguing that the Centre should not be making legislation on this subject at all. They are concerned about the loss of revenue from mandi taxes and fees, which currently range from 8.5% in Punjab to less than 1% in some States. The majority of agricultural marketing already happens outside the mandi network, with only 7,000 APMC markets operating across the country. Bihar, Kerala and Manipur do not follow the APMC system at all. However, most private buyers are currently small traders at local mandis. The removal of stock limits and facilitation of bulk purchase and storage through the amendment to the Essential Commodities Act could bring large corporate players into the agriculture space. Although they will bring much-needed investment, they could also skew the playing field, with small farmers unlikely to match them in bargaining power.

II.A. Answer the following questions in 150-200 words each. (2x15=30)

1. Write **TWO** pitches for a feature that looks at the impact of the 'new farm bills' on Indian farmers. Your pitch should include a headline, a list of sources and a paragraph on the scope of your feature.
2. The government thinks the new laws will provide farmers with more choice, with competition leading to better prices, as well as usher in a surge of private investment in agricultural marketing. Do you agree/disagree with the statement. Draw from your reading and classroom discussions to substantiate the argument.

III. Write a 100-150 word review of a documentary film on development/social justice issues that you have seen this semester. Include an explanation as to why filming a documentary on this issue is a good way to tell the story. (10 marks)
