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| **ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27**  **V SEMESTER EXAMINATION: DECEMBER 2022** |
| **JN 5218: INDIAN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM** |
| **Time: 2 ½ HOURS Max. Marks- 70**  **Instruction:**   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 word-limit.** 4. **This paper contains FIVE pages and THREE sections.** 5. **Read the following article by Janaki Nair, published in the Indian Express, on the 19th of September 2022 and answer the questions that follow.** |

“Can the one who drained a tank to build a house now fear the flood?” The Kannada poet Sarvagna had the prescience to ask this in a 17th-century vachana. Can we dream of a better Bengaluru without its tanks and tank beds? Or is that a contradiction in terms?

Among the excellent jokes generated by the recent watery debacle were the unintended ones. Why journey through Bengaluru’s challenging road network for Ganesha visarjan when the flood water obligingly came to the doorstep? Meanwhile, the government and its trusted spokespersons, including some leading architects, were at pains to point out that all of Bengaluru was not affected by the floods, and this was, anyway, an extreme climate event. Yet if this disaster should teach us anything, it is about dogged and growing inequalities. Year after year, areas like Eijipura and National Games Village in Koramangala face the brunt of the monsoon fury. Nothing is learned from these annual events because they are areas inhabited by the poor, or relatively less well-off.

For long, the rich and powerful took refuge behind the gated enclave. In what Mike Davis described so aptly as the “archisemiotics of class war”, it was planning itself that was on offer here, a retreat from the uncertainties and sensory assaults of democracy. That is, until the waters rose. Among those beleaguered techies interviewed at length on TV was a man who claimed to have walked down several floors with his wife to take water from his swimming pool up to his flat. Tough.

At least 26 of Bengaluru’s 28 MLAs have listed “business” or “real estate” as their sources of income, and they are among the richest in the country (according to the Association for Democratic Reforms). We have come a long way from the 1950s and 1960s when working-class housing was a key concern in city planning documents. We have travelled far away from the 1970s and 1980s, when M S Krishnan of the CPI represented working-class interests in the Mysore/Karnataka Legislative Assembly and donated all his personal funds to the party. We inhabit the moment when “claims” to the city by people like ‘Layout’ Krishnappa and M T B Nagaraj are rewarded with seats — and ministerships — in the Assembly. IT and BT uber allies but the bourgeoisie does not seem able to run this city.

Clearly, we cannot expect our political class to adhere to the first principle of town planning — inter-generational responsibility. Consider the most important feature of the elevated city of Bengaluru, which is not close to a natural water source — its human-made tanks. There has been a legendary link between the tank, the temple and the market garden in this city, from its very inception in the 16th century. This link is symbolically consecrated and remembered every April in the city’s most important civic festival — the Karaga. Yet, only mushrooming, illegal shrines and temples remain as a deformed element of that urban form. Sampangi “tank,” which the Karaga must visit at the start of the festivities, is a tiny symbolic waterhole.

Both market gardens and tanks/tank beds – valuable sponges and sinks of the city — have been relentlessly occupied: When by the poor, they are ruthlessly evacuated in favour of “layouts” for the richer citizen. The linguistic topos occasionally records that transition — some colonies are still called “tank bed” colonies — but otherwise, the memory of the large tanks, which have been converted into stadia, bus depots, tech parks, golf clubs and colonies has been erased.

Sustaining this link between the city and tank building – which was recognised even by the erstwhile princely Mysore government (though damming of the Arkavathi was also undertaken) — is another principle of town planning that has been buried in concrete. Since 1947, tank building and maintenance have been jettisoned in favour of pumping Cauvery water up to a height of 3,000 metres from nearly 100 km away. No amount of knowledge about the vital role played by tanks and tank-beds in sustaining the city — generated by NGOs, government-sponsored reports, citizens’ groups, scientists — has reoriented this bull-headed city-building.

So, not for want of knowledge was the city lost. What about the place of law? In courses on the history of the modern city, I have often asked students to reflect on an important question: Why is there such widespread disrespect for planning and building law in the Indian city? When “illegality” is the norm — indulged in not merely by the poor, but the rich and even the state — is there an alternative to the law as an instrument of socially-just and environmentally-sustainable city planning? Post hoc “regularisation” is, we well know, the way in which the Indian state compensates for its failures to build housing for the poor.

But the law is by no means toothless: Legal compliance is inflicted only on the poorest and the weakest in the city. Take Bengaluru. The poor are “legally” deprived of their water sources and places for bodily relief as middle-class residents assert their rights. They are denied entry by vigilant RWAs into parks that dot the city in homoeopathic doses. For fear of a Forest Department fine, taxpaying homeowners cannot trim or cut a tree even if it threatens their built structure.

Have we grown gigantic too fast? Premila Nesargi, a [BJP](https://indianexpress.com/about/bjp/) supporter, was among those who thundered on television that Bengaluru should not have been allowed to grow beyond the four pillars that Kempegowda had planted in the four quarters of the city. Our infrastructure stalwart, Nitin Gadkari, proposed “skybuses” as an answer to Bengaluru’s woes. And now the waterlogged companies on the Outer Ring Road demand a municipality of their own.

Dialling back to a time when one could fish in the Mud Tank at Langford Town, sail in Hesarghatta, or swim in Yediyur (all memories of my youth) is visiting Lala Land.

Or is it?

The best way for us to honour Kmpegowda, the founder of the city, is not to build a 108-foot statue at Devanahalli (which is, alas, underway). Let us instead revive the intertwined tank and market garden model in every locality, and may no person put it asunder. Let the map of Bengaluru sparkle once again with blue water bodies. Let us impose a heavy congestion tax on four-wheeler users in the city centre, as in most world metros. Let there be a 150 per cent tax on car ownership, as in Singapore. Let us build, (as London, the world’s oldest and most stable metropolises, has done during Covid), a dedicated cycle track throughout the city. Or introduce year-round “odd-even” usage of cars. Let us possibly introduce the Curitiba model of making buses the only mode of transportation, at least on some days of the week. And let us redeploy the fervour and zeal that destroys the “anti-national” residence or the slum to bulldoze residences and offices of the rich and the powerful who have violated the law.

I can hear the bourgeoisie shudder. But into this dream (dreams are still, fortunately, our own), let my city awake.

I**.A. Answer ALL of the following questions in** **150 words EACH (3x10=30)**

1. The writer says, “…it was planning itself that was on offer here, a retreat from the uncertainties and sensory assaults of democracy.” What does this mean? Explain in the context of this article and expand on the idea of what is implied here about city planning?

2. The writer poses the question, “Why is there such widespread disrespect for planning and building law in the Indian city?” Attempt an answer to the question.

3. What is the solution offered by the writer? Is it feasible?

**II. Read the following interview with economist Jean Drèze, and answer the questions that follow.**

Jean Drèze, a Belgian-born Indian economist, has been working on several development issues in India like hunger, famine and social inequality, for the past four decades.

He believes that the central responsibility of the Center and States is to ensure food and financial security to guest (migrant) workers.

Drèze, who is currently an honorary professor at the Delhi School of Economics and visiting professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University, suggested several measures like distributing food grains to the poor, strengthening the Public Distribution System and implementing employment guarantee schemes.

**Q. *After the lockdown, what is the extent of the consequent food crisis in India?***

Jean Drèze: The Public Distribution System (PDS) can prevent hunger to a large extent. The Center’s decision to double the quantity subsidized food grains for three months is a good move. But there are 50 crore people outside the PDS. Not all of them are poor but most of them are. The majority of them might fall below the poverty line amid this pandemic.

In Jharkhand, there are thousands of poor people without ration cards. It is difficult to quantify the extent of the food crisis but we are heading towards a critical juncture. In order to overcome it, all these families must be included under PDS. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has huge food stocks. The government must release these food grains immediately.

**Q. *Are the central and state governments taking necessary measures to ensure the safety of these workers?***

Jean Drèze: The Center can do a lot better by supporting the rehabilitation activities carried out by state governments. It should supply food stocks to the states and distribute food grains to non-ration cardholders also. Since the revenues have plummeted, central government must increase its financial aid to the states. The central and state governments should coordinate in order to provide employment opportunities under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. PDS, pensions and employment and social security schemes will help the poor to overcome the current crisis. Welfare activities like setting up public kitchens and transferring money to beneficiaries’ accounts will be helpful. Existing welfare schemes must be implemented more effectively.

**Q. *Has there been a food crisis so severe in modern Indian history?***

Jean Drèze: Prior to Independence, India witnessed the Bengal Famine, which was far worse than what we are seeing now. After that, there have been occasional instances of food shortages occurred as a result of famines. During 1966-67, we had the great drought in Bihar. Post-Independence, the current food crisis is the worst we have witnessed till now.

**Q. *What are the reasons behind the government’s inefficacy in dealing with the exodus of migrant workers?***

Jean Drèze: Usually, governments have a harsh attitude towards migrant workers. This time, the attitude was there for all of us to see on the TV and the Internet. Over the past few weeks, the Center and host states were cruel in their dealings with these workers. With no work, food or help from the government; these workers chose to walk thousands of kilometers to reach their homes. This mirrors our attitude towards the poor. Instead of helping them in this crisis, we have pushed them deeper into the abyss.

**Q. *Is India going to face a severe nutritional crisis?***

Jean Drèze: Certainly. India has the highest percentage of malnourished population. Most people have little to no protection from hunger despite the welfare schemes and PDS. Having a stomach full is not the only criterion for nutrition. Good nutrition includes proper dietary regime, clean food and water. The Indian poor have no access to any of these. The current lockdown has only increased their woes. Without financial assistance from the government, their situation can take a turn for the worse.

**Q. *In the coming days, should states focus more on migrant workers’ issues? Are any efforts underway?***

Jean Drèze: Poorer states, especially in Northeast India, need more assistance. They have been severely damaged. Companies have benefited from the cheap Northeastern labour but abandoned the workers in the face of crisis. Without support from the Center, these states cannot help their workers. In fact, the Center should take more responsibility in helping the guest workers.

**Q. *State governments expect a shortage of labour as workers who returned to their villages unlikely to come back anytime soon. What do you suggest?***

Jean Drèze: Guest workers will come back one day or the other. For some period, they may take up work close to their native places. Due to the surplus of labour in states in Bihar and Jharkhand, workers’ wages may see a drop. Industry owners may take undue advantage of this situation. We already saw some states making changes to labour laws by repealing laws that favour the workers. Lack of employment opportunities and food crisis have pushed the workers into dire circumstances, preventing them from speaking against the changed labour laws.

***Q. One of the flaws that has come out quite starkly in the wake of the virus spread is in the public health system in the country. What do you think needs to be done to put it back on track?***

I think the entire healthcare system needs to be rethought, it has been neglected for decades — that is a quite well-known issue. It is a very prioritised healthcare system, basically based on profit and also very poorly regulated and I think it is well understood in economics that the profit-driven healthcare system is very ineffective as well as being inequitable. Ideally, there should be no profit-making in the field of healthcare — that may not be easy to achieve — but I think the basic principle of the healthcare system should be what is called ‘universal healthcare’. In other words, everybody should have the right to healthcare in a situation of illness. This does not mean that private healthcare will disappear, some people may still prefer to use the private health facility that is available but it does mean that the system has to be planned for the public good and not for profit and that is where there is a real gap in India because the system is mostly profit-driven. Other countries have done it at a time when they were not much richer than India. In fact, Thailand, which has a very impressive healthcare system based on the principle of universal healthcare, put that system in place around 2001-02 when its per capita GDP was not much higher than it is in India today. So, if Thailand could do that 20 years ago, I think India could do something similar today.

***Q. Can you specify three major failures and three steps that need to be taken in the light of the experiences now and post the virus?***

Other than healthcare, I think, one of the big lessons of past development policies of India is the lack of attention to human resources through education, training, healthcare and social security. And one reason why Kerala is doing so much better than most other states at the moment is that it has developed human resources. So, it is much better equipped to face the crisis and involve people in fighting the virus.

Then comes social security. The fact that we have a PDS in place is helping us a great deal in this crisis to avoid hunger and starvation. And similarly, if we had a better-developed system of social security in general, including social security pensions, better functioning of the Employment Guarantee Act, maternity benefits and so on, it would have been much easier to go through this crisis and avoid the kind of humanitarian disaster that is happening at the moment with this lockdown.

**II.A. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in 200 words EACH. (2x15=30 Marks)**

4. Write a short report based on this interview. Include a headline to the news report.

5. Jean Drèze says, “one of the big lessons of past development policies of India is the lack of attention to human resources through education, training, healthcare and social security.” What is your understanding of this statement? Substantiate.

6. What is your understanding of the term, ‘guest worker’? Draw from the article and your own reading to answer the question.

**III. Write a pitch for a feature that expands the idea of development journalism beyond current understanding of such issues. How are you going to prepare for reporting and writing the same? (10 Marks) (150 WORDS)**

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