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**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE**

**V SEMESTER B.A. (EJP) -OPTIONAL ENGLISH**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2021**

**(Examination conducted in March 2022)**

**OE 5318 - South Asian Literature I**

**Time: 2.5 hours Max marks: 70 marks**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. **This paper has 3 pages and 3 sections**
2. **You are allowed to use a dictionary**
3. **All questions in section 1 and 2 are Compulsory.**
4. **Section 3 has a choice.**

I. Read the following article and answer all the questions. (3X15= 45 marks)

Political polarization is growing in South and Southeast Asia—one part of a troubling global trend. From long-established democracies like India to newer ones like Indonesia, deep-seated sociopolitical divisions have become increasingly inflamed in recent years, fueling democratic erosion and societal discord. New political and economic strains caused by the coronavirus pandemic are only reinforcing this worrisome trend.

The roots of polarization in South and Southeast Asian democracies run deep, usually dating back to at least the first half of the twentieth century and their formation as modern nation-states. Divisions also tend to be anchored in one or more of three powerful types of societal fissures: ethnic, religious, or ideological. These findings underscore how fundamental political divides are and how hard they are to bridge.

The roots of polarization in South and Southeast Asian democracies run deep.

Troublingly, long-standing divides have burst to the forefront of political life in many parts of South and Southeast Asia over the past two decades. In India, the Hindu right’s stunning success in the 2014 and 2019 elections has intensified polarization over the role of Hindu nationalism in sociopolitical life. In Indonesia, fierce competition between Islamist and more pluralist forces since 2014 has sharply divided the country. In Thailand, polarization over the legitimacy of monarchical rule and existing social hierarchies erupted after 2001, leading to years of clashing street protests and two military coups.

The drivers behind this wave of polarization are potent and diverse. As in other regions, political leaders often play a critical role in intensifying divisions, not just by employing polarizing rhetoric but more fundamentally by seeking radical changes to the status quo. Opposition forces, too, can escalate polarization by weaponizing mass protests or reciprocating with divisive tactics. Yet political leadership is just one factor amplifying divisions. Deeper, structural forces—including sociopolitical mobilization around religion, the Global War on Terrorism, economic transformation, the design of political systems, and changes involving traditional and social media—have undergirded the rise of polarization across South and Southeast Asia.

The consequences of polarization, from executive abuse of power to the politicization of the military, pose distinct risks for all institutions in a democracy. What is more, political conflicts often reverberate throughout society, fueling intolerance toward and even violence against minority groups. In some countries, these negative effects have proven significant enough to shatter the constitutional order: Polarization culminated in democratic breakdowns in Thailand and a twenty-six-year civil war in Sri Lanka. In other places, such as India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, the democratic erosion caused by harsh political conflict is not yet so serious, but the warning signs are disquieting.

Despite these adverse trends, domestic and transnational actors have responded with efforts to counteract or at least limit the problem. Divisive leaders have at times performed an about-face; opposition politicians have built diverse coalitions; and civil society groups have launched initiatives to reform the media landscape, foster dialogue, and bridge divides. They should limit objectives and lengthen timelines, develop in-depth local expertise, focus on systemic changes that foster sociopolitical inclusion, and purposefully cultivate credibility across the political divide.

Attempted remedies have failed thus far to overcome the powerful forces behind rising polarization, but these initial shortcomings should not be cause for resignation. Domestic and transnational actors will need to learn from the limitations of previous efforts and think systematically about countering polarization if they are to come to grips with the gravity of the challenge it presents.

1. The essay claims the “ roots of polarization in South and Southeast Asian democracies run deep, usually dating back to at least the first half of the twentieth century and their formation as modern nation-states.” How has the formation of the “modern nation- state” contributed to the polarization of the South Asian democracies? Use references from the theoretical texts you have studied this semester to analyse your argument.
2. The essay also argues that “executive abuse of power to the politicization of the military, pose distinct risks for all institutions in a democracy”. Refer to a text you have encountered this semester to discuss how this rise of dictatorial leadership threatens the human and cultural heterogeneity of South Asia.
3. The essay points out that the problems of the South Asia is not only limited to political leadership but also “sociopolitical mobilization around religion, the Global War on Terrorism, economic transformation…” etc. Discuss how the forces of capitalism and global war on terrorism have played out in the context of South Asia with reference to specific texts you have read this semester.

II. Read the following poem and answer the following questions.(1X15=15 marks)

The roof comes down on Maruti's head.

Nobody seems to mind.

Least of all Maruti himself

May be he likes a temple better this way.

A mongrel bitch has found a place

for herself and her puppies

in the heart of the ruin.

May be she likes a temple better this way.

The bitch looks at you guardedly

Past a doorway cluttered with broken tiles.

The pariah puppies tumble over her.

May be they like a temple better this way.

The black eared puppy has gone a little too far.

A tile clicks under its foot.

It's enough to strike terror in the heart

of a dung beetle

and send him running for cover

to the safety of the broken collection box

that never did get a chance to get out

from under the crushing weight of the roof beam.

No more a place of worship this place

is nothing less than the house of god.

Identify the poet and the poetry collection. What is the general tone and theme of the poem? Which parts of the poem help you to arrive at this conclusion? What does the last two lines stand for? Which other text you read this semester plays with the idea of religion in a similar manner.

**III. Answer any ONE of the following questions:( 1X10=10 marks)**

1. Pick one film text from your syllabus and discuss how it manages to capture the human within the grand narratives of religion, region or nation.
2. Pick one text from a neighbouring South Asian country that posits the interplay of religious, political and regional intolerance.