

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI

Second Semester (2017-18)

GS F243: Current Affairs

Mid Semester Test (Open Source)

Time: 90 minutes

8 March 2018

Max Marks: 60

Q.1 Give your views on each of the followings in about 50 words. (6x4)

- (a) Opposition alleging govt. for Neerav Modi's escape from the country.
- (b) Large number of police encounters in Yogi raj in UP.
- (c) BSP and SP forming alliance in UP.
- (d) Opposition parties not allowing parliament to function.

Q.2 Read the following news item carefully. Write your opinion in about 300 words on the issue discussed in this news item. (20)

Edu system should be changed: Mashelkar

Chaitanya Deshpande | TNN | Feb 20, 2018, 00:03 IST

Nashik: The 101st foundation day of Gokhale Education Society (GES) was celebrated on Monday on the premises of R H Sapat Engineering College on College Road. Former president of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Arun Nigawekar, scientists Raghunath Mashelkar and Anil Kakodkar, religious leader Swami Janardandas and a host of other personalities from the field of education attended the event named 'Shatakputi' (completion of centenary). In his keynote address Mashelkar called for major reforms in the education system. "The most powerful equation for educational scientists is 'education is equal to future'. Learning, doing and being are the three stages of education. Education should build future and create opportunities. There is need to change education system to meet the demands of future which will be driven by science and technology."

Mashelkar shared five 'mantras' – high aspirations, hard work, creating new opportunities, persistence and limitless goals – with the students. He was conferred with Dr M S Gosavi Excellence Award 2018 on the occasion.

Kakodkar spoke about the value-based learning. "There will be many changes due to advancement in science and technology. In this age of rapid changes, we must stick to our values," he said. He also appealed to educational institutions to accept the responsibility of educating students in rural areas.

In his address Nigawekar said there was a need of right to education for parents too as they are the true mentors of their children. "Education should create entrepreneurs and not job-seekers. Time has come for Indian youth to come out of the conventional job-seeker's attitude."

The honorary fellowship awards of the GES were given to Swami Janardanandji Maharaj from Uttarkashi and kirtankar Charudatta Aphale from Pune. Aphale and author Indrayani Sawkar also expressed their wishes on the occasion.

The GES was established on February 19, 1918, the third death anniversary of Gopal Krishana Gokhale. At present, the society works in three Nashik, Mumbai and Thane zones with 17 centres and 121 institutions. More than 1.25 lakh students are studying in GES institutions.

Deepti Deshpande, principal of the SMRK College, welcomed the guests. GES secretary M S Gosavi briefed the history of the society and also revealed its future plans.

The foundation stone for Gurudakshina Hall was laid by the dignitaries. More than 100 former students have decided to raise funds for the hall.

Q.3 Read the following article and write your views in about 200 words on the issue discussed here. (16)

The trouble with liberalism and other isms

Rajeev Bhargava

Ethical people should not have to always ask if they are living up to a core value identified with an 'ism'

Recently, an interesting debate ensued amongst eminent public intellectuals, sparked off by Harsh Mander's lament at the increasing invisibilisation of Indian Muslims in our public sphere. Since one indication of this disturbing trend, cited by Mander, was the advice from a politician that before entering the political arena, Muslims might as well jettison their skull caps and burqas, the contentious discussion centred on what a correct and consistent liberal position on this issue entailed. Ramachandra Guha claimed that this counsel was "forward-looking" because burqas in particular were "antediluvian", inviting unambiguous liberal opposition.

Mukul Kesavan and Apoorvanand claimed its oppressive symbolism should have no bearing on citizenship rights, that our political participation cannot depend on sartorial habits dictated by religious affiliation. Besides, a liberal offensive against religious orthodoxy must not rely on callous stereotypes about one another.

A little bit of both?

I do not wish to engage in this debate, though I must confess that on this issue my sympathies are more with Mander and Kesavan than with Guha. I am interested instead in foregrounding a potential problem plaguing such debates, particularly the assumption that all ideologies including

liberalism are tightly bound, self-contained systems containing principles or values wholly distinct from and in permanent rivalry with other ideological systems, say, communitarianism, socialism or conservatism. For instance, that liberalism dictates that freedom of individuals must override the demands of community, an article of faith for communitarians. Also, that liberals and communitarians can never intersect so that any apparent convergence is proof that one or the other ideologies has been grossly misinterpreted. How can someone, without contradiction, be both liberal and communitarian?

In fact, liberalism has no timeless, fixed content, an unchanging core. The different doctrines/principles that fall under the rubric 'liberalism' share only a family resemblance. Each of them is as different from the other as are members of a large extended family. Some liberalisms are single value doctrines (monists); others try to combine different values (pluralists); some single value liberalisms insist on liberty as the core value, others equality. Multi-value liberalisms give due place to both, and some even to community (fraternity). Some are out and out value-individualists, others combine them with values of community; some think that the hallmark of liberalism is toleration, for others it is individual autonomy; some, idolising a free market, demand that the state keep its role to the minimum, others demand state intervention for social welfare and justice. If there are many liberalisms, there invariably exist many ways of being liberal, and therefore no one course of action dictated by liberalism exists. The question what is required by liberalism has no single answer. Likewise, the answer to the question, what is to be done, cannot be extracted from a simple query about what liberalism or any other ism requires.

Secondly, the family of doctrines that fall under 'liberalism' exist in a field where they interact with contending ideological families, which they shape and are shaped by. This is partly why they evolve and have a history. In some historical contexts, some forms of liberalisms are difficult to distinguish from conservatism, and in others from socialism. A doctrine that fell under 'liberalism' in the past can today, for many liberals, fall outside. Most of these perspectives develop at some time under conditions of hostile competition but at other times through conversation and dialogue. Consider liberalism and communitarianism, or community-oriented religious pluralism. They are engaged in a continuous and frequently converging debate. When they mutually criticise each other, they also learn from and refine each other.

A rhetorical, antipodal approach blinds us to such convergence. Only if one believes that liberalism is complete as it is, can one dismiss religious or non-religious communitarianism. But doing so is to commit the mistake of treating a living tradition of thought as a dead dogma. When

one views them as rigid self-contained systems in mortal combat and search for total victory, one exaggerates differences between and disregards differences within communitarianism and liberalism.

Breaking boundaries

In short, many of these doctrines not only share a family resemblance but, to carry the metaphor further, sometimes marry each other, producing offsprings that sometimes resemble one parent and sometimes the other. Good thinkers, attempting to offer a solution to a problem, thinking self-reflectively through existing predicaments, do not bother to consult the fossilised handbook of a particular ideology to find out whether the proffered solution is dictated by it. Wise thinkers who contribute to a debate do not persistently cross-check to see if they are crossing an ideological frontier. They do not needlessly think through an ideological prism, and when they do, they allow dead ideology to do the thinking for them and become dogmatic gatekeepers of ideological fortresses.

It is bad practice to follow ideological diktats, to worry more about ideological consistency than about concrete issues at hand. Strangely, to do so is to fall into the trap of self-indulgent, expressivist politics (How am I expressed in politics?) rather than a politics of ethically sensitive engagement with complex situations involving others. Fruitful moral thinking is contextual and value-pragmatic. Moral integrity does not mean ideological consistency, nor being soft on one principle to accommodate another, a sign of moral opportunism. Real ethical lives dip into different ideological currents. Living ideological traditions are flexible, yielding the possibility of multiple morally legitimate practices. Ethical people should not have to always ask if they are living up to a core value identified with an 'ism'. Doing so often leads to moral blunders or outright stupidity.
