Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar

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MA in Society and Culture | Written Test | Feb 28, 2021

Time: 90 Minutes | All questions carry equal marks | There is no negative marking

Name: **Application No:**

Passage 1

The poster of Richa Chadha's upcoming movie, *Madam Chief Minister*, stands out for its cruelty in a world of political correctness. The movie apparently narrates the story of an "untouchable" woman, who becomes the chief minister of a state. The filmmakers decided to communicate their theme of a Dalit woman's success in the poster by depicting the protagonist holding a broom with the tagline "untouchable, unstoppable". The poster has aroused the indignation of many for amplifying a stereotypical portrayal of Dalit identity.

The cognitive structures of upper-caste filmmakers, unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, seem unable to think beyond a broom as a fundamental symbol of Dalit identity. The usage of the word "untouchable" in the poster hints not only at the moral bankruptcy of the overrepresented upper-caste folk in the showbusiness but reveals the marketing strategy as one that sells dehumanising words for profit.

The poster has only vindicated the premise of Rajesh Rajamani's The Discreet Charm of Savarnas, a satire on upper-caste prejudices against Dalits. In the short film, the characters embark on a desperate search for an actor who "looks like a Dalit" and, thus, fits into their imagination of a "Dalit". Rajamani's film calls out the deep-rooted, often normalised, caste prejudices and stereotypical attitudes against marginalised communities. By reducing Dalit identity to a broom, the makers of Madam Chief Minister prove Rajamani right.

The Dalit imagination of their own identity, undoubtedly, is different from how the upper castes perceive them. They seek their identities in the portrayal of gallantry, virtuousness, and sacrifices of Dalit leaders and assertive symbols of resistance. Badri Narayan's 2006 book, *Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India, Culture, Identity and Politics*, explored how Mayawati's image as a Dalit leader was built up by identifying her with a long line of historical women figures known for their valour, like Jhalkaribai, Udadevi, Mahaviridevi, Avantibai Lodhi and Pannadhai.

(Excerpt from *The Savarna Gaze: Why can't mainstream film makers imagine Dalits as people, not stereotypes?* Rehnamol Raveendran, *The Indian Express*, 11 Jan 2021).

1. Why is the author critical of the slogan in the poster, 'untouchable and unstoppable'?

      (a) Because untouchability is derogatory

      (b) Because it is reinforcing the existing caste hierarchies

      (c) Because it is reproducing and associating these terms with Dalit identity

      (d) Because the poster is targeted for upper-caste consumption

2. Why would one be critical of the image of the protagonist in the poster with a broom?

    (a) Because the actor playing the protagonist is an upper caste

    (b) Because it is dehumanizing

    (c) Because it is the objectifying Dalits

    (d) Because of a limited social imagination of Dalit symbolism

3. What is Rajamani's take or position on upper-caste prejudices in the movie *The Discreet Charm of Savarnas*?

    (a) The movie depicts upper-caste stereotyping of Dalits

    (b) The movie highlights unequal representation of dalits in Indian cinema

    (c) The movie popularizes caste hierarchies

    (d) Both (b) and (c) are correct.

4. How is Mayawati's image portrayed in Badri Narayan's book?

    (a) The book critiques a saviour complex, typical to the upper-caste imagination

    (b) Mayawati's image is built through the intersection of caste and gender

    (c) The book places Mayawati in the continuing legacy of other courageous women leaders

    (d) In the book, Mayawati's image is associated with sacrifices and virtues

5. In the excerpt, what is the author's principal suggestion for representation of caste in cinema?

(a) Caste deserves a more rigorous intellectual engagement with history

(b) Dalit identity should always be portrayed in terms of the political assertion

(c) Those who represent caste should be allied with Dalit political struggle

(d) Those who seek to represent must refer to published work on caste and identity

Passage 2

The notice informed them that it was a temporary matter: for five days their electricity would be cut off for one hour, beginning at eight P.M. . . .The work would affect only the houses on the quiet tree-lined street, within walking distance of a row of brick-faced stores and a trolley stop, where Shoba and Shukumar had lived for three years. "It's good of them to warn us," Shoba conceded after reading the notice aloud, more for her own benefit than Shukumar's. She let the strap of her leather satchel, plump with files, slip from her shoulders, and left it in the hallway as she walked into the kitchen. She wore a navy blue poplin raincoat over gray sweatpants and white sneakers, looking, at thirty-three, like the type of woman she'd once claimed she would never resemble . . .

 . . .   "Let's do that," she said suddenly.
"Do what?"
 "Say something to each other in the dark."
 "Like what? I don't know any jokes."
 "No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before.

. . . Somehow, without saying anything, it had turned into this. Into an exchange of confessions — the little ways they'd hurt or disappointed each other, and themselves.

The morning of the fifth night Shukumar found another notice from the electric company in the mailbox. The line had been repaired ahead of schedule, it said. He was disappointed . . . She came home at seven-thirty. "I suppose this is the end of our game," he said when he saw her reading the notice. She looked at him. "You can still light candles if you want." She hadn't been to the gym tonight. She wore a suit beneath the raincoat. Her makeup had been retouched recently. When she came downstairs they ate together. She didn't thank him or compliment him. They simply ate in a darkened room, in the glow of a beeswax candle. They had survived a difficult time . . .They sat together until the candle had nearly burned away. She shifted in her chair, and Shukumar thought that she was about to say something. But instead she blew out the candle, stood up, turned on the light switch, and sat down again.

 "Shouldn't we keep the lights off?" Shukumar asked. She set her plate aside and clasped her hands on the table. "I want you to see my face when I tell you this," she said gently . . .

"I've been looking for an apartment and I've found one," she said, narrowing her eyes on something, it seemed, behind his left shoulder. It was nobody's fault, she continued. They'd been through enough. She needed some time alone. She had money saved up for a security deposit. The apartment was on Beacon Hill, so she could walk to work. She had signed the lease that night before coming home.

She wouldn't look at him, but he stared at her. It was obvious that she'd rehearsed the lines. All this time she'd been looking for an apartment, testing the water pressure, asking a Realtor if heat and hot water were included in the rent. It sickened Shukumar, knowing that she had spent these past evenings preparing for a life without him. He was relieved and yet he was sickened. This was what she'd been trying to tell him for the past four evenings. This was the point of her game.

Now it was his turn to speak. There was something he'd sworn he would never tell her, and for six months he had done his best to block it from his mind. Before the ultrasound she had asked the doctor not to tell her the sex of their child, and Shukumar had agreed. She had wanted it to be a surprise . . .

"Our baby was a boy," he said. "His skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds. His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night."

Shoba looked at him now, her face contorted with sorrow . . . He had held him until a nurse knocked and took him away, and he promised himself that day that he would never tell Shoba, because he still loved her then, and it was the one thing in her life that she had wanted to be a surprise.

(Excerpt from "A Temporary Matter" by Jhumpa Lahiri)

6. Jhumpa Lahiri's writing style can best be described as

(a) Descriptive
(b) Circumlocutory
(c) Figurative
(d) Satirical

7. The title "A Temporary Matter" refers to

(a) The power cut
(b) The nature of Shoba and Sukumar's relationship
(c) Both a and b
(d) Shoba's decision to separate

8. Shoba and Sukumar's marriage can be best described as

(a) happy
(b) dysfunctional

(c) characterized by the lack of loyalty
(d) normal

9. For Shoba the game was

(a) a means of normalizing her relationship with Shukumar
(b) an exercise in unburdening herself
(c) a means of drawing out Shukumar's darkest secrets
(d) a pretext for announcing her decision to separate

10. Shukumar revealed the secret about their baby to Shoba

a) in a bid to inform her
b) because he loved her
c) in response to the shock of her revelation
d) to prepare themselves for the future

Passage 3

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.

[….] The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. Compared with Oriental studies or area studies, it is true that the term Orientalism is less preferred by specialists today, both because it is too vague and general and because it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth- century European colonialism. Nevertheless, books are written and congresses held with "the Orient" as their main focus, with the Orientalist in his new or old guise as their main authority. The point is that even if it does not survive as it once did, Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental.

Related to this academic tradition, whose fortunes, transmigrations, specializations, and transmissions are in part the subject of this study, is a more general meaning for Orientalism. Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus, a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists,

philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.

The interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism is a constant one, and since the late eighteenth century there has been a considerable, quite disciplined—perhaps even regulated—traffic between the two. Here I come to the third meaning of Orientalism, which is something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two. Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. …. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question.

(Excerpt from Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* pp 1-3)

11. According to the author, 'Orientalism' refers to

    (a) The Orient
    (b) A deliberate mis-reading of the Oriental world
    (c) A way of speaking about the Orient
    (d) None of the above

12. 'Orient', in the passage, has been imagined as
    (a) the Occident's 'other'
    (b) the sum total of the differences between the Orient and the Occident
    (c) a much detested figure
    (d) None of the above.

13. The 'Orient' in 'Orientalism' is

    (a) Purely imaginary
    (b) Grossly underrepresented
    (c) Blatantly misrepresented
    (d) Partially determined by the historical 'Orient' but mostly misconstrued

14. The author considers "Orientalism' as a discourse because of

(a) the systematic manner in which certain images of the Orient were circulated
(b) The way in which particular utterances about the Orient inhibited thought and action and thwarted deviant conceptualization of the Orient
(c) The coercive methods used by the Europeans to determine how the Orient was conceptualized
(d) Both a and b

15. What, according to you, was the principal factor in the emergence of "Orientalism"?

(a) European domination over the Orient
(b) Authoritative statements made about the Orient
(c) Re-imagining of the Orient
(d) Restructuring of the Orient

Passage 4

There is a general tendency to assume that every tribe has a language. Tribe and language are often used interchangeably in the discourse of the common people and in the literature dealing with the people of the North East. The reason is that many of the tribes' names that appeared in the writings of the colonial administrators are also the names by which their languages are known. For example, the Ao tribe speaks Ao, the Dimasa tribe speaks Dimasa, the Bodo tribe speaks Bodo, and so on. But, this correspondence is not true in all cases. There are many instances where the name of a tribe and its language do not particular tribe may speak different, mutually unintelligible languages, while on the other, people speaking mutually intelligible languages may belong to different tribes. For example, the people belonging to a tribe known as Thangkhul in Manipur speak different, mutually unintelligible languages, but call their tribe and their language Thangkhul. On the contrary, the Thadous, Pates, Vaipheis, Simtes and Zous speak mutually intelligible languages, but are separate tribes (Haokip 2011). Another example where a tribe and language do not correspond with each other comes from Arunachal Pradesh. Post and Burling (2017) report that the Koro and Hruso Aka people speak mutually unintelligible languages, but are understood as belonging to the same tribe, while the people of Padam and Mising tribes, which are separate tribes, can sometimes converse easily with each other. This creates a lot of confusion in the classification of languages of the North East because one-to-one correspondence between tribe and language is not always the case. The term "tribe" is a colonial construct and often has a pejorative connotation such as savage, uncivilised, wild, and so on.

North East is home to hundreds of languages belonging to the Indo–Aryan, Austro–Asiatic and Tibeto–Burman families. In addition to these major languages families, the North East is also home to the Tai languages which belong to the Tai-Kadai family spoken in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, as well as contact languages such as Nagamese in Nagaland and Arunachali Hindi in Arunachal Pradesh. Languages such as Assamese and Bengali, whose speakers number over a million, along with Nepali, Rajbongshi, and Bishnupriya belong to the Indo–Aryan family, while Khasi and Jaintia belong to the Austro–Asiatic family.

Over a period of time, various nomenclatures have been infused into the minds of the people and have gained wider acceptance. On account of the existing sociopolitical situation of the region, these nomenclatures appear quite frequently in the news for one reason or the other. In many parts of the North East, demands and strikes are often staged under the banner of various nomenclatures. Politicians and the like often exploit them to create a feeling of "us" versus the "other." Often their success depends on how well they are able to exploit nomenclature "politics" for their own political gains. Thus the narrative built around nomenclature in North East India, often gives the impression that persons grouped within a particular nomenclature are one homogeneous people. This misconceived notion of "oneness" when people say that certain communities are 'one people' has been contested to reveal that not all communities are one in terms of culture or language, which are often considered the strongest determinants for asserting oneness

16. Why are language names used to represent tribe names in Northeast India according to the author?

   (a) Colonial administrators showed that each tribe has a unique language
   (b) Colonial administrators picked up on the general usage of the tribe to name the tribe
   (c) Colonial administrators conflated the tribe name with the name of the language
   (d) Colonial administrators used the language name for the name of the tribe

17. Why is it linguistically incorrect according to the author to say the Thangkul tribe of Manipur speaks the "Thangkul" language?

   (a) Because different groups of people belonging to the same tribe speak mutually unintelligible varieties of what is called the same language.
   (b) Because different groups of people belonging to the same tribe speak mutually intelligible varieties of what is called the same language
   (c) Because different groups of people belonging to different tribes speak mutually intelligible varieties of what is called the same language
   (d) Because similar groups of people belonging to the same tribe speak mutually unintelligible varieties what are called different languages

18. What is the difference between the linguistic situation of the Koro /Hrusa Aka and the Padam/Mising according to the author?

(a) Koro and Hrusa Aka belong to the same tribe, while the Padam and Mising speak mutually unintelligible languages

(b) Padam and Mising belong to the same tribe, while Koro and Hrusa Aka speak mutually intelligible languages

(c) Padam and Mising speak mutually intelligible languages while Koro and Hrusa Aka belong to different tribes

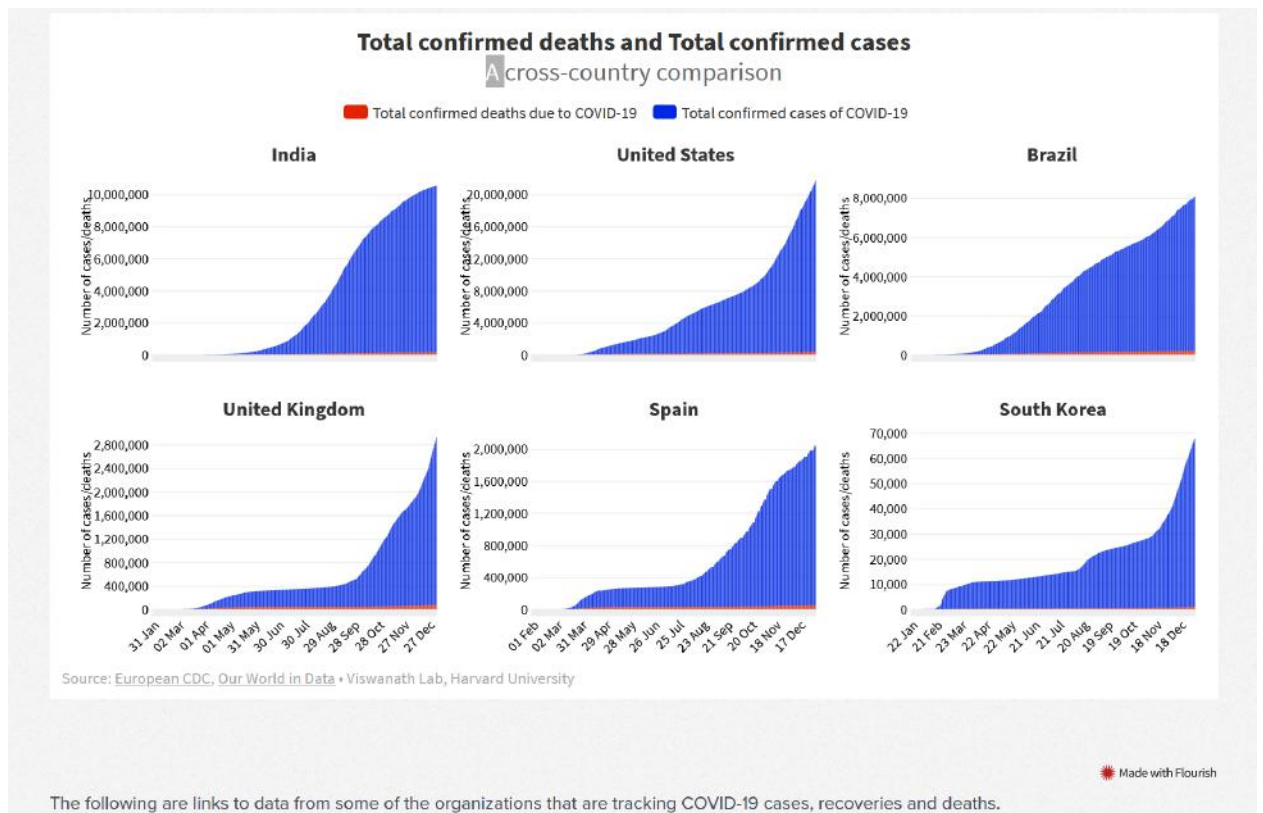(d) Padam and Mising speak mutually intelligible languages, while Koro and Hrusa Aka belong to the same tribe

19. What is the purpose of nomenclature politics according to the author

(a) The purpose is to establish identity between a tribe's name, language and cultural practices

(b) The purpose is to mobilize unity across diversity

(c) The purpose is to create a feeling of insider and outsider

(d) The purpose is to create allegiance to a political party or ideology

20. Which is NOT a language family represented in Northeast India?

(a) Nagamese

(b) AustroAsiatic

(c) Tibeto-Burman

(d) Tai-Kadai

21. Please review the graphs shown below (these are meant as an aid to a thought exercise and may not represent the true figures for COVID-19).

Total confirmed deaths and Total confirmed cases
A cross-country comparison

🟥 Total confirmed deaths due to COVID-19   🟦 Total confirmed cases of COVID-19

India | United States | Brazil
United Kingdom | Spain | South Korea

Source: European CDC, Our World in Data • Viswanath Lab, Harvard University

Made with Flourish

The following are links to data from some of the organizations that are tracking COVID-19 cases, recoveries and deaths.
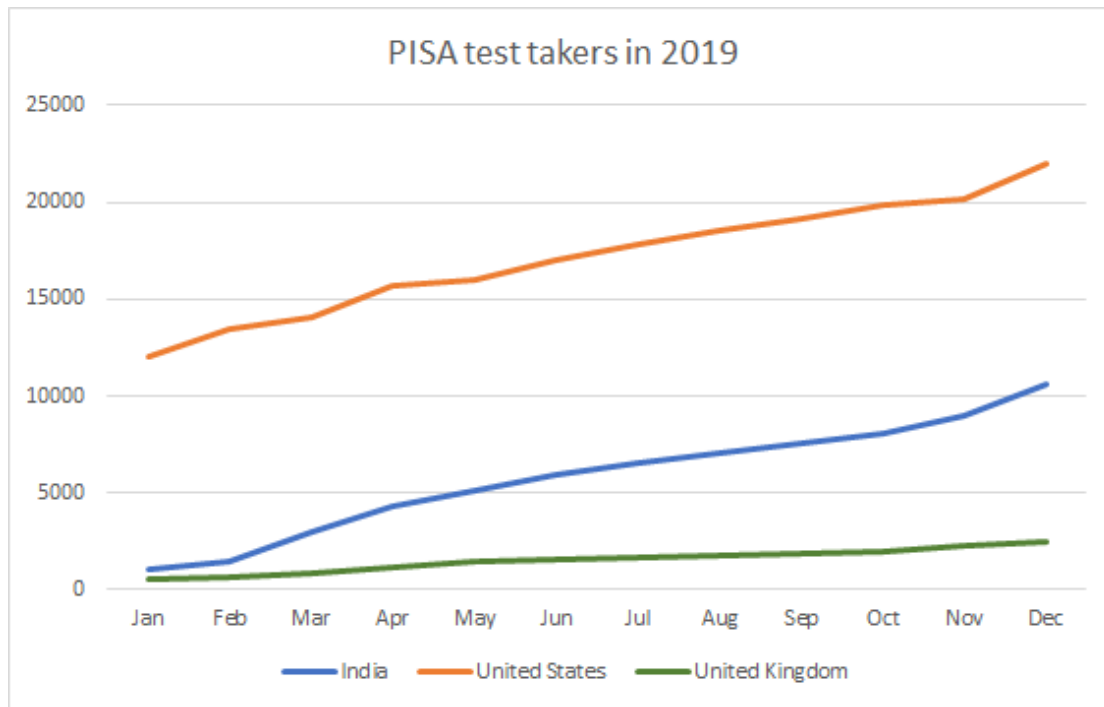
Please review the following interpretations of the graphs shown:

1. The United States had the worst spike in COVID-19 during the end of December.
2. The United Kingdom had a very small burden of case-load compared to India.
3. India is the only country that shows signs of a slowing spread of COVID-19.

(a) Statements 1, 2, and 3 are true.
(b) Statements 2 and 3 are true, but not 1.
(c) Statements 1 and 2 are true, the graph does not have data to evaluate 3.
(d) None of the above.

22. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has a standard test to evaluate the educational attainment of 15-year old students across several countries, following a standard examination protocol. This protocol mandates all aspects of the test administration and is the same across all participating countries. The graph below shows the number of test-takers in three countries in 2019.

PISA test takers in 2019

India, United States, United Kingdom

Based on the graphs above, which of the following interpretations about the current need for test administration resources (invigilators, classrooms, and so on) is most valid?
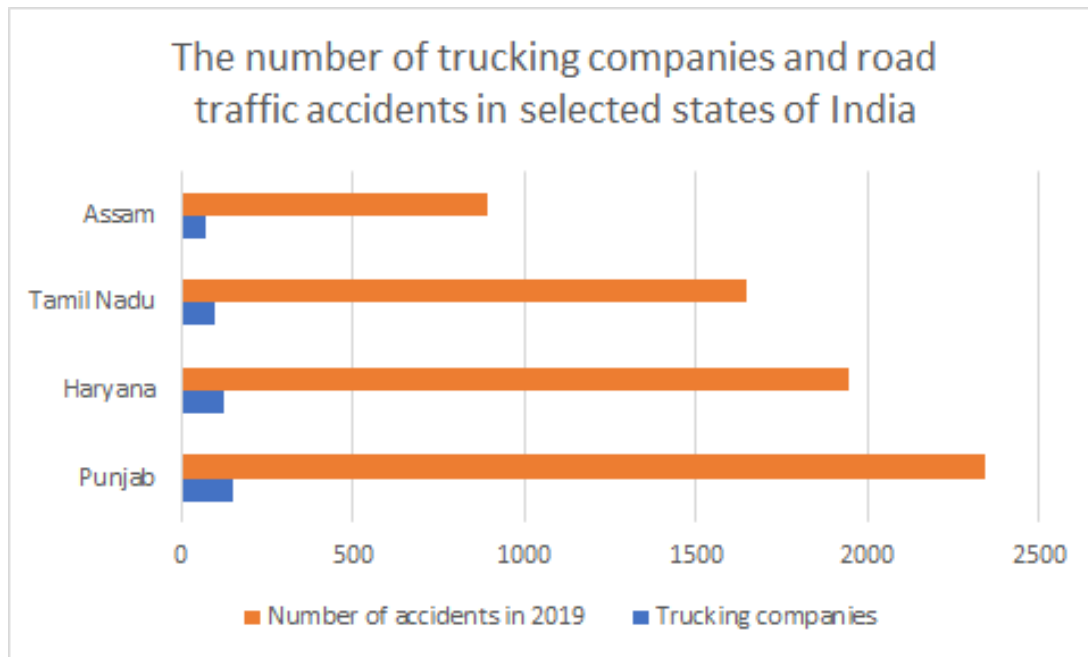
1. The resources that need to be mobilized are the maximum in the United States because of the number of test-takers.
2. The resources that need to be mobilized are the maximum in the United Kingdom because the number of test-takers is very high compared to its small population.
3. The resources that need to be mobilized are the maximum in India, because of the large number of test-takers spread over a big country.

(a). Conclusion 1 is true, but not 2 and 3.
(b). Conclusions 2 and 3 are true, but not 1.
(c). Conclusions 1 and 2 are true, we do not have data to evaluate 3.
(d). The data shown in the graphs are insufficient to come to a conclusion about which country may need the maximum resources.

23. As a part of assisting the HSS department at IIT Gandhinagar in the organization of a major conference, including arranging mementos for guest speakers, you have been tasked with purchasing four sandalwood *charkhas* at the local Khadi store. When you visit Gandhi Ashram to purchase these mementos, you discover that there are multiple stores selling the same sandalwood *charkha* (same size and quality) for the same price. However, each store is offering a different discount offer. Which of the following discount offers would allow you to save the maximum sum of money?

    a) Store 1: Double discount!! 20% discount plus an additional 12% off of that!
    b) Store 2: Bumper offer! Flat 30% off!
    c) Store 3: Special sale! Buy 2 get 1 free!
    d) Store 4: New Year's sale! Buy 3 get 1 free!

24. Please review the graph below.

The number of trucking companies and road traffic accidents in selected states of India

As per the graph above, which of the following is/are the most valid conclusion/s?

(a) States with a greater number of trucking companies report more accidents because speeding trucks are the main cause of a majority of road traffic accidents.

(b) States with a greater number of trucking companies report more accidents because their trucks are driven over long distances, which increases their risk of being involved in accidents.

(c) States with a greater number of trucking companies add a huge number of large vehicles to the overall traffic in those states, which increases the risk of accidents.

(d) All of the above.

25. Please review the table below which shows the previous performance statistics of four of IIT Gandhinagar's best cricket bowlers.

Bowler	Year	Number of matches	Runs per over	Balls per wicket
Chris	2015	12	5.3	32
	2016	15	4.8	24

	2017	16	9.2	47
	2018	20	11	79
Naveen	2015	7	3.6	22
	2016	15	10	24
	2017	5	5.5	20
	2018	8	8.8	21
Pradeep	2015	4	11	35
	2016	6	12	37
	2017	6	10.5	31
	2018	5	11.5	34
Aamir	2015	15	6.7	43
	2016	13	5.9	29
	2017	13	6.4	19
	2018	14	6.2	52

The Inter-IIT cricket team selectors are looking for bowlers with a predictable and consistent performance record. Whom are they most likely to select?

(a) Chris

(b) Naveen
(c) Pradeep
(d) Aamir