

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2018

M.A. HISTORY

[Field of Study Codes—Ancient : ANCM (219)/
Medieval : MEDM (218)/Modern : MODM (217)]

Time Allowed : 3 hours

Maximum Marks : 100

Note : There are three Sections. Questions from all Sections must be attempted. Section—I is compulsory (carries 30 marks). Answer *any one* question from Section—II (carries 20 marks) and *any two* questions from Section—III (each question carries 25 marks) of which at least **one** question should be from the period of specialization (Ancient/Medieval/Modern).

Candidates must indicate their preferred choice of admission, e.g., Ancient, Medieval or Modern India on their answer-book's cover-sheet in bold letters.

SECTION—I

1. Read the passage given below carefully and answer the questions that follow in not more than 100 words each. All questions are compulsory. Use your own words and do not copy from the passage (30 marks) :

PASSAGE

The idea of an ecological frontier has been less developed for South Asia than it might have been. In its original form the frontier thesis, as first expounded more than a century ago by Frederick Jackson Turner for North America, seems to hold little relevance for modern history. In India, there was no advancing tide of European settlement and wholesale displacement of indigenes, as there was in North America, no comparable interaction between white man and 'wilderness', no pretense that a new spirit of democracy and self-reliance arose along *this* Indian frontier. But recent debates over the American frontier, in reappraising Turner, have given a more explicitly environmental twist to the story of European expansion in North America. Taking the Americas as a whole, it could be argued that there existed an advancing ecological (and not merely human) frontier, beginning with the West Indies in the 1490's and continuing in the remoter parts of Alaska and Amazonia to this day. This was a frontier most dramatically marked by forest clearance—whether for European farms in New England or for sugar estates in the West Indies—with all the attendant changes in climate, fauna, flora, and human land use, although the effects on America's grasslands could be no less radical.

Clearly, India never became 'neo-Europe', nor did it experience so radical a break in its ecological history as the Americas. The process of ecological change was clearly a protracted one, but at the start of the colonial era there remained many regions of India that were still heavily forested, were inhabited by tribal societies, and lay outside, or only partially integrated into, the main areas of political and military control. This included a large part of eastern central India. Here, between the forest on the one hand and the cultivated plains on the other lay an Indian version of an ecological frontier. In times of famine, war, and pestilence the forest/tribal area might creep into neighbouring plains, while at other times vigorous government, expanding cultivation and the pressures of land hunger might cause its partial contraction.

As the English East India Company extended its hold over the subcontinent in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, it acquired or (laid claim to) a number of environmentally less accessible and politically marginal territories. Many of these were inhabited by tribal peoples following a variety of agricultural practices, from swidden to settled cultivation, as well as hunting, fishing, and the collection of diverse forest products for consumption, sale, and exchange. In the course of their own expansionary careers, the Mughals and Marathas had also come into contact with these 'forest polities': they encountered many of the problems the British themselves were to face and, to some extent, employed similar solutions. But a period of warfare, famine, and epidemic disease from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries allowed the tribal/forest domains to regain something of their former extent. And yet, despite the environmental and administrative hazards, Company officials felt compelled to intervene because they saw the opportunity to tax forest land and produce; or because they regarded periodic raiding for cattle and grain as a threat to revenue and to law and order in the plains.

From about 1770 in the Jungle Mahals on the western borders of Bengal, from 1819 in Khandesh, and from the 1820's and 1830's in the hill tracts of the northern Sarkars in Madras, the British launched punitive raids against hill and jungle tribes, sometimes capturing, imprisoning or executing a hill Raja, or winning the promise of future obedience from 'refractory chiefs'. But, as soon became evident, hill and forest populations were protected in no small part by the terrain, vegetation, and diseases (or climate) of the regions they inhabited. One can see evidence of this for the hill tracts of Rampa and Gudem in Madras Presidency.

When Company troops were sent on a punitive expedition into the hills in 1846, their commander was soon reporting that "severe sickness paralyses every effort, disheartens the men, and fosters the preconceived belief of the superiority and valour of the insurgents". In Madras, the government was persuaded that military expeditions into the malarial hills and jungles were so costly and ineffective that it was more expedient to compromise with local chiefs, where these could be identified and drawn into negotiations. As the Madras Board of Revenue concluded at the close of this particular episode, "tracts such as that under consideration—wild and unproductive—and from which the character of the country and the climate must be difficult of management by the officers of government, are always best confided to the administration of their native chiefs".

There are a number of ways in which we might understand this colonial discourse on lawless forests and 'fever-stricken' tracts. It would be possible to examine the process by which the colonial authorities began to distinguish between India's different ecological zones, identifying certain types of landscapes and associated forms of vegetation, wildlife, and disease with certain kinds of human inhabitants, their ways of life, and cultural characteristics. The equation, evident as early as the 1780's, of uncultivated 'wastes' (or 'jungle') with lawlessness and primitiveness is particularly striking. As other forms of resistance to British rule were erased, India's tribals came to represent a kind of residual 'primitiveness' in contrast to the more 'civilized' and settled denizens of the cultivated plains. The growth of such perceptions of India's 'wildernesses' enhanced the sense (in middle class-Indian as well as colonial minds) of the India of the tribes and the forests as intrinsically different from the rest of the country, and so provided a basis for ideological pronouncements and administrative measures designed to subordinate, incorporate, and remodel tribal societies.

Questions :

- (a) Compare the use of the notion of an ecological frontier in North American and Indian history.
- (b) What were the common problems encountered by the Mughals, Marathas and the East India Company in ecologically less accessible territories?
- (c) What were the factors which could redraw the boundary between forests and cleared land, or between the hills and the plains?
- (d) Why did the East India Company feel compelled to intervene in "forest politics"?
- (e) How did the issue of disease shape the politics of the colonial encounter with the hill-chiefs of the Madras Presidency?
- (f) Why did 'tribal societies' come to be seen as intrinsically different from the rest of India?

SECTION—II

Answer **any one** question (20 marks)

- 2. How does biographical literature help in the reconstruction of history?
- 3. To what extent do official sources provide an objective narration of the past?
- 4. Do you agree with the statement that our understanding of the past is influenced by the present?
- 5. How do you assess a popular film that claims to be historical?

SECTION—III

Answer **any two** questions. At least **one** question should be from the period of specialization (Ancient/Medieval/Modern) opted for by the candidate (50 marks)

6. What changes in social, economic and political life can be suggested from the Rig Vedic to the later Vedic times?
7. Discuss the significance of Buddhism in the growth of state society in the Deccan and South India (c. 200 BCE–300 CE).
8. Do you agree with the view that the economy of the early medieval times was marked by 'urban decay' and 'monetary anaemia'?
9. What was the role of the local ruling groups in consolidating the power of the Mughal State?
10. Discuss the major ports, routes and merchandise involved in the maritime trade of medieval India.
11. Discuss the salient features of the debates on the eighteenth century in Indian history.
12. What were the global and local factors which allowed the East India Company to emerge as the paramount power in India?
13. Do you agree with the characterization of the Gandhian phase of the Indian National Movement as a period of mass mobilization? Give reasons for your answer.
14. What were the forms of inequality that existed in modern India? Were these addressed by the reform and political movements of the time?
15. Outline the historical debates about the degree of social and political changes brought about by the French Revolution.
16. Examine the causes and consequences of the Opium Wars, in terms of the growth of imperialist claims in Asia.
