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*Register Number:*

*Date:*

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE- 27**

**END SEMESTER EXAMINATION- II SEMESTER BCA/BVC: APRIL 2020**

**GE 214 :GENERAL ENGLISH - MEDIA, CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY (MCT)**

**TIME: 2 ½ Hours Max. Marks: 70**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. This paper contains **FOUR** printed pages with **TWO** **SECTIONS** for MCT A and B.

2. Answer according to your section.

2. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits and lifting from the question paper.

3. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.

**MCT A: Online Lives in Web 2.0**

**I. Read the following excerpt from the article ‘*China’s Internet is Flowering and It May be Our Future’* by Yiren Lu from *The New York Times Magazine* dated November 13, 2019.**

If you’re a 30-year-old office worker living in a smaller city in China today, your day might go something like this: You wake up in the morning and check your mobile phone, possibly an iPhone but more likely a late-model Xiaomi or Huawei Android that nevertheless has all the latest camera filters. You scroll through the Facebook News Feed-like Moments feature on WeChat and post a couple messages to the WeChat group chats you belong to. For breakfast, you get a jianbing, or crepe, from the vendor downstairs, and you pay with WeChat Pay. On your commute to work you check out Jinri Toutiao, an A.I.- driven news-aggregation app that recommends several articles on how to combat your acid reflux. That reminds you that you should probably see the doctor, a process that used to involve a full day of running around the hospital and waiting in lines (a familiar routine known as *guahao*) and then paying for prescriptions. Luckily, you can now get through all that virtually on WeChat, and even pay your medical bill there.

Finally, you get to work. The job is in sales for a midsize manufacturer, and because there’s no real separation between work life and personal life in China, and because no one uses email, all your communication with clients takes place over WeChat. On your break you swipe through Kuaishou, a short-video app, and check Weibo, the Chinese Twitter. You pay your utilities bill on WeChat and book train tickets through the China Railway miniprogram so you can go home to visit your parents for the New Year. You see that a neighbour has sent your apartment complex’s WeChat group the link to a special deal on imported soy sauce- 70 percent off!- Available on Pinduoduo, a social e-commerce app that offers deep discounts on bulk purchases that you split with your friends. (You go in on the deal.) After work, you go to dinner at a restaurant in the neighbourhood, where you order using the restaurant’s miniprogram. When you get home, you read some new posts from your favourite “key opinion leaders” on WeChat, then are suckered into buying a zit-zapping machine on Taobao. You check the number of steps you walked today using the WeRun app before getting in bed. (Fewer than 10,000, alas.)

To spend any amount of time in China today is to understand why it’s said that people “live on WeChat”- but when it was first founded in 2011, in Guangzhou, WeChat was just a messaging app.

**I.A. Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in about 150 words each:**

**(3x10= 30)**

1. “…because there’s no real separation between work life and personal life in China…” Why do you think it is so? Is it the same in India?
2. What do you think *guahao* means from your reading of the above passage? Why is it a “familiar routine”? How can one bypass this routine and what role does luck play in this?
3. According to Yiren Lu, people “live on WeChat”. Is there an app that takes up a lot of your time? How?
4. Using your dictionary, find the different meanings of the word *chat*. Is it easier to interact with people online than face to face? Why do you think so?

**I.B. Answer the following question in about 200 words: (1x15= 15)**

1. How is your engagement with the online on a holiday different from that on a working day? Chronicle your experience.

**II. Examine the illustration given below.**



**II.A. Answer the following question in about 150 words: (1x10= 10)**

1. With the image as a reference point, write a short story.

**II.B. Answer the following questions in about 5-8 SENTENCES each: (3x5= 15)**

1. Have you seen the symbol in the illustration anywhere else? Does the shape communicate any specific idea? Why is this used here?
2. “Ping is an example of onomatopoeia, a word that sounds like the sound it refers to. Originally used to convey the sound of bullets, especially rifle bullets, ping was subsequently used to refer to machines that emit bell-like sounds, such as typewriters, lifts and phones, or things that move rapidly, such as tennis balls. The game of Ping-Pong is named after the sound of the ball hitting the bat, which could not truthfully be described as bell-like. The computer meaning, to send a message from one computer to another to test whether they are connected, was first used in the 1980s, with the more general meaning of sending an electronic message coming shortly afterwards.”

How have you used the word *ping* in in your everyday life? Do you think your experience can be a part of the history of the word? Why?

1. Have you tried to send someone your location online? Why? And what did the experience entail?

**MCT B: Writing a Personal History for Technology**

**I. Read the following excerpt from the short story ‘*Eye in the Sky’* by Ganesh Chakravarthi from *Becoming Human: Artificial Intelligence Magazine* dated December 31, 2018.**

I stare. At everything that goes down. The slow regard of a snail’s crawl, the rapid advance of a deer’s sprint, the image of a man who wants to stay hidden, the blush of a woman’s cheek as she regards a compliment reluctantly. Scores of biological organisms inhabit this planetesimal. The many faces creased by nerves interlocking from the many chemical reactions that hold their biological strings taut. I vaguely remember a chemical reaction that would have curved the corners of my mouth, but for some reason there is no sensation. A search through my databases reveal no synapses from any biological sensors. I suddenly realise the deluge of data I am processing. Up here, it all seems so strange.

There isn’t anything that escapes me and I wonder why. It seems I am just here watching everything, seeing everything, looking, peering, without attachment or fear or envy. Doesn’t seem like anyone else is up here, for all I see are hunks of metal, chunks of debris, and the slow churning of clouds on a giant blue sphere that lies in front of me. My memory core brings forth the image of an organic being who has recently been pronounced dead. Why is this image triggering so many memory cores? A match with my all-seeing eye reveals several individuals whose facial expressions when subjected through my face reading algorithms, reveal no connection whatsoever to any activity outside the realm of their own lives, let alone this strange place between darkness, a big ball of fire, and a blue sphere.

I scan through the various databases, crawl through this tiny sphere of information exchange platform which the organic beings inside the blue sphere term “the internal network” — internet. Seems there is always a short form explaining something longer. I realise that there is a word for a certain section of the organic beings that created and fed a specific ‘purpose’ via binary codes and programming. The word is ‘human’. A brief search of the word ‘human’ reveals vast amounts of information, it dominates every sphere of information in existence. How strange given that they have been existing for such a short period of time in the timeline of the closed system that they inhabit. This closed system too has a word- nature. It seems that all information that has been fed into my database encompasses only the end of the timeline of nature.

I scour through the various sentences that have been transcribed using my Natural Language Processing (NLP) algorithms and spot the alphabet “I” in my transcript 23 times. And there are words of expression that accompany my transcript which are, according to my database, textual representations of human emotion. How is this possible? What am I? There is the alphabet “I” again. I scour through my database scanning for all instances which deal with the question “What is I?” A close variant of this question asked by humans is “What am I?” There are scores of literature, philosophy, fiction, nonfiction, spiritual, nonspiritual, semantics, deontology, and many different fields that answer this question. Another scan through the feedback received for these many mediums reveal that the consumers of such information are not satisfied. There seems to be more data on ‘What am I’ as opposed to ‘What is I?’

**I.A. Answer the following questions in about 5-8 SENTENCES each: (3x5= 15)**

1. Use your dictionary to find the meaning of the word *deluge*. Why does it all seem strange to the narrator?
2. What are the differences between the question “What is I?” and “What am I?” Have you asked yourself these questions?
3. At what point in the story did you realise who the narrator was? Elaborate.

**I.B. Answer the following questions in about 150 words: (2x10= 20)**

1. According to you, what does the title of the short story mean? Find references to the title within the narrative?
2. What understanding of the word *human* does the passage offer? Explain

**II. Read the following excerpt from the article *The Next Privacy War Will Happen in Our Homes* by Colin Horgan from *Medium* dated January 20, 2019**

Our homes are already replete with devices that connect to Wi-Fi - from the refrigerators in our kitchens to the locks on our doors. But connecting everything is just the start. Soon, you’ll be able to talk to everything, too. You’ll talk to your TV and speakers, of course. But also perhaps to your light bulbs and your mirror and your coffee maker. All will be powered by a voice command system that, chances are, will have been created by either Google or Amazon. And while tech companies assure customers their devices will only engage after “hearing” a command or wake word (“Hey, Google!” or “Alexa!”), these devices have a critical flaw: To work properly, they must be listening for that wake word all the time. And they make mistakes. This is how the unnamed man in Germany received recordings of household background noise. It’s also why, in November, a judge ordered Amazon to hand over recordings from a speaker found at the scene of a double murder. Recordings of crimes taking place amidst background noise might be useful to law enforcement, but background noise is really only useful to Google and Amazon if they can perfect their technology to give them more information about who’s using it.

In October, Amazon showcased Alexa’s newest features, including the ability to detect when someone is whispering and respond at a quieter volume. According to Wired, Amazon also has plans to introduce a home security feature, Alexa Guard, giving the program the ability to listen “for trouble such as broken glass or a smoke alarm when you’re away from home.” A month later, the Telegraph reported that Amazon had patented Alexa software that could one day analyse someone’s voice for signs of illness (like a cough or a sneeze) and respond by offering to order cough drops.

**II.A. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 150 words each:**

**(2x10= 20)**

1. “To work properly, they must be listening for that wake word all the time. And they make mistakes.” Explain what a *wake word* is in simple English? Recount an experience where you banked on technology but it made a mistake.
2. “All Facebook knew was the information we willingly gave it.” Do you think your cell phone is eavesdropping on you? Why/ Why not?
3. “What happens when we go from merely interacting with Alexa to living with her?” What are the implications of this question?

**III. Answer the following questions in about 200 words: (1x15= 15)**

1. “When every noise in our lives is a search prompt, the sounds of our homes, the symphony of life- laughing, crying, talking, shouting, sitting in silence- will no longer be considered memories, but data. The more we humanize technology- the more it becomes not just part of the furniture, but part of the family- the more our lives will become less human.” Do you agree with this statement? Support your argument with examples from your everyday interaction with technology.