

BACHELOR OF ARTS EXAMINATION, 2023

(2nd Year, 2nd Semester)

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

[Doing Ethnographies]

Time : Two Hours

Full Marks : 30

Answer *either* in English *or* in Bengali.

Figures in the margin indicate full marks.

Answer any *two* of the following questions : 2×15=30

1. What are the important ethnographic lessons that one learns from Evans Pritchard's study of the witchcraft among the Azande? Elaborate. 15
2. Among the anthropological monographs taught in your class, which one would you identify as a classic instance in building rapport with the people it wants to study? Give reasons for your answer. 15
3. Describe how something as inanimate as purdah or veil provides an animated account of social relationships in Katy Gardner's ethnography in Sylhet. 15
4. Read the following passage.

“My ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented.

They were from what is now Bangladesh, and their village was on the shore of the Padma River, one of the mightiest waterways in the land. The story, as my father told it, was

[Turn over

this: one day in the mid-1850s the great river suddenly changed course drowning the village; only a few of the inhabitants managed to escape to a higher ground. It was this catastrophe that had unmoored our forebears; in its wake they began to move westward and did not stop until the year 1856, when they settled once again on the banks of a river, the Ganges, in Bihar.

I first heard this story on a nostalgic family trip as we were journeying down the Padma River in steamboat. I was a child then, and as I looked into those swirling waters I imagine the great storm, with coconut palms bending over backward until their fronds lashed the ground; I envisioned women and children racing through howling winds as the waters rose behind them. I thought of ancestors sitting huddled on an outcrop looking on as their dwellings were washed away.

To this day, when I think of the circumstances that had shaped my life, I remember the elemental force that untethered my ancestors from their homeland and launched them on the series of journeys that preceded, and made possible, my own travels. When I look into my past the river seems to meet my eyes, staring back as if to ask, Do you recognize me, wherever you are?

...The most important element of the word recognition thus lies in its first syllable, which hurks back to something

prior, an already existing awareness that makes possible the passage from ignorance to knowledge: a moment of recognition occurs when a prior awareness flashes before us, effecting an instant change in our understanding of that which is beheld.

...This, I imagine, was what my forbears experienced on that day when the river rose up to claim their village: they awoke to the recognition of a presence that had moulded their lives to the point where they had come to take it as much for granted as the air they breathe. But, of course air too can come to life with sudden and deadly violence – as it did in the Congo in 1988, when a great cloud of carbon dioxide burst forth from Lake Nyos and rolled into the surrounding villages, killing 1700 people and an untold number of animals. But more often it does so with a quite insistence – as the inhabitants of New Delhi and Beijing know all too well – when inflamed lungs and sinues prove once again that there is no difference between the without and the within; between using and being used.”

(Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, 2016)

Does the above passage make you think of ‘nature’ differently? Does it help you recall any incident in your life when nature awakens you to the possibility of rediscovering your life? Illustrate your answer. 8+7=15