

1. A socio-ecologist is investigating how two distinct river basins, the Amazon and the Ganga-Brahmaputra (GBB), handle population demands. In the Amazon, the low population density practices a unique form of farming on small clearings of forest, primarily focused on staple foods like manioc, and the biggest threat is the irreversible loss of soil and biodiversity due to infrastructure development. In the GBB, the high population density is concentrated on the fertile plains, relying heavily on staple crops like paddy, but the health of their vital water source is directly threatened by the discharge of urban and industrial waste from several large cities. Considering the primary staple crops and the major environmental threats faced by the dense human settlements in these two contrasting regions, which statement makes the most accurate comparison?

- A) The Ganga-Brahmaputra Basin's staple crop, paddy, requires sufficient water and is primarily grown in areas with low rainfall, contrasting sharply with the Amazon's manioc which requires dry soil and is grown on mountainous terraces.
- B) The Amazon's major environmental threat is topsoil erosion resulting from the monsoon climate and permanent field cultivation by its high-density population, whereas the GBB's primary threat is the displacement of the Bengal Tiger from the delta by the construction of the Trans-Amazon highway.
- C) The GBB's human settlements are primarily concentrated in the inhospitable mountain areas, forcing inhabitants to rely on shifting cultivation and the forest for sustenance, while the Amazon's high population density is responsible for chemically poisoning the Susu dolphin.
- D) The Ganga-Brahmaputra Basin's human-induced challenge is largely a problem of point-source chemical pollution from high-density urban centers killing the indicator species ('Susu' dolphin), starkly different from the Amazon Basin's large-scale problem of non-point source land degradation and topsoil loss due to development and low-intensity, shifting agriculture.

2. A major national newspaper, known for its extensive business section, runs a front-page story on a lavish Fashion Week event, featuring high-profile celebrities and luxury brand advertisements. On page 10, a small, uncited article mentions in passing a government decision to temporarily halt construction of a new water purification plant outside the capital due to "unforeseen budget constraints." Water scarcity is a known, critical issue in the capital city. Which of the following conceptual critiques best explains the newspaper's choice to prioritize the Fashion Week story over the drinking water plant issue?

- A) The paper is exercising censorship, defined as the government's power to disallow certain stories, by removing the water plant story to avoid political conflict. This is the primary reason the media is not independent.
- B) The paper is engaging in an unbalanced report, meaning it has failed to discuss all points of view for a single story. The story on the Fashion Week should have included the perspective of people who cannot afford luxury clothing to be considered balanced.
- C) The paper is prioritizing local media issues over national ones, believing its readers are more interested in 'small' daily life concerns like fashion and entertainment, which is a key trait of independent journalism.
- D) The paper's close ties to business houses and their advertising needs mean it is economically driven to set the agenda by focusing on the Fashion Week (a popular platform for advertisers), resulting in a partial view that marginalizes the critical, yet less profitable, public interest issue of safe drinking water.

3. Historically, the prevailing social view in many societies held that women's primary and proper place was in the home (the private sphere), focused on domestic duties and childcare, while men belonged in the public sphere of work and politics. This led to certain occupations being officially or unofficially designated as unsuitable for women. Which of the following was historically the most common reason cited in the 19th century for discouraging or preventing women from entering certain professions like medicine, law, or engineering?

- A) Women lacked the necessary physical strength to operate the heavy machinery required in these burgeoning industrial professions.
- B) The professions were not deemed financially stable enough for women who were expected to manage household budgets.
- C) The rigorous university education required for these fields was viewed as being detrimental to women's reproductive health and their delicate mental state.
- D) These professions involved interactions with the public and required authority, which was seen as a threat to women's perceived modesty and the social order that confined them to the domestic sphere.

4. Imagine a teacher named Saint Ram who lived long ago. He started preaching that every single person—rich or poor, men or women, from any community—could directly connect with God. He said the only thing you needed was true love and devotion (Bhakti), which you could show by simply singing songs in your local language. Before Saint Ram, most people believed they had to go to a special Priest and perform expensive, complicated rituals inside a big, official temple to please God. What was the biggest and most challenging change that Saint Ram's simple message brought to the old religious system?

- A) It caused people to stop eating all types of food and only survive on milk.
- B) It made the price of the special ingredients used in the old rituals go up very high.
- C) It led to the construction of only small, temporary houses instead of large, permanent buildings.
- D) It proved that people did not need the Priest or the expensive rituals anymore to have a personal connection with God.

5. A powerful tribe, whose initial societal structure was relatively egalitarian, successfully established a large, centralized kingdom. The rise of this kingdom led to the tribe's society becoming increasingly stratified, with land grants being given to Brahmanas and the tribal chiefs seeking recognition as Rajputs. Eventually, this kingdom fell to an invading imperial power, which captured a massive amount of wealth, including valuable wild elephants. The transformation described above is most characteristic of which of the following tribal societies?

- A) The Ahom society, because they built a large state based on forced labor called paiks and initially adopted Hinduism.
- B) The Khokhar and Gakkhar tribes of Punjab, because their chiefs were made nobles (mansabdars) by Emperor Akbar, indicating a change in their social status.
- C) The Balochis of the north-west, as they were divided into many smaller clans and were only later subdued by the Mughals.
- D) The Gonds of Garha Katanga, due to their shift from an egalitarian society to a stratified, centralized kingdom with Brahmanical influence and wealth from elephants, which was later annexed by the Mughals.

6. The medieval Bhakti and Sufi movements radically altered the spiritual landscape of the subcontinent. These traditions challenged the "Idea of a Supreme

God" being accessible only through exclusive, hierarchical, and institutionalized means. Using the example of the Virashaivas of Karnataka (or another major Bhakti tradition like the saints of Maharashtra), critically evaluate how their teachings and practices provided a profound and structural challenge to the established socio-religious order.

[5 marks]