



**Institute of Development Studies Kolkata &
University of Calcutta**



Entrance test for PhD in Development Studies 2016

Time allowed: 2 hours

Full marks: 100

1. Please read the following excerpt and answer all the questions given below: (30)

What we observe depends on our position vis-à-vis the objects of observation. What we decide to believe depends is influenced by what we observe. How we decide to act relates to our beliefs. Positionally dependent observations, beliefs, and actions are central to our knowledge and practical reason. The nature of objectivity in epistemology, decision theory, and ethics has to take adequate note of the parametric dependence of observation and inference on the position of the observer.

One of the immediate implications of emphasising the positional perspective is to question the tradition of seeing objectivity in the form of invariance with respect to individual observers and their positions – a “view from nowhere”, as Thomas Nagel puts it in his illuminating study. “A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual’s makeup and position in the world, or on the character of the particular type of creature he is.” This way of seeing objectivity has some clear merit, and Nagel’s characterization focuses on an important aspect of the classical conception of objectivity. This conception of objectivity is, however, in some tension with the inescapable positionality of observations.

That tension is most direct and immediate in dealing with the objectivity of elementary observational claims. The subject matter of an objective assessment can well be the way an object appears from *specified* position of observation. What is observed can vary from position to position, but different people can conduct their respective observations from similar positions and make much the same observations. The positional parameters need not, of course, be only locational (or related to any spatial spacing), and can include any condition that (1) may influence observation, and (2) can apply parametrically to different persons. Different types of examples of positional parameters (in this broad sense) include: being myopic or color-blind or having normal eyesight; knowing or not knowing a specific language; having or not having knowledge of particular concepts; being able or not able to count. The objectivity of observations must be position-dependent characteristic: not a “view from nowhere”, but one “from a delineated somewhere.”

Position-dependent objectivity (“positional objectivity”, for short) is important in different contexts in different ways. The notion of “objective illusion”, used in Marxian philosophy, can be helpfully interpreted in terms of positional objectivity. An objective illusion, thus interpreted, is a positionally objective belief that is, in fact, mistaken. The concept invokes both (1) the idea of positionally objective belief, and (2) the diagnosis that this belief is, in

fact, mistaken. The positional observations are not simply subjective; indeed they have some claim to be objective within their own terms. Here illusion relates to beliefs that are formed on the basis of a limited class of positional observations. And these beliefs – false as they may be – could nevertheless have been derived objectively in the absence of access to other positional scrutiny, and in the absence of familiarity with related concepts and ideas. Here is an example. Among the Indian states, Kerala has by a large margin the longest life expectancy at birth, and professional medical assessment gives much evidence of Kerala's successful health transition. And yet Kerala also reports by far the highest rates of self-perceived morbidity. At the other end are states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with very low life expectancy, no evidence of any health transition, and yet astonishingly low rates of self-assessed morbidity. It would be odd to dismiss these self-assessed morbidity rates as simply accidental errors, or as results of individual subjectivism. The concept of objective illusion is helpful here. In Kerala there is a much greater awareness of possible illnesses and of the need to seek medical remedies. These very ideas and actions that help to reduce actual morbidity and mortality in Kerala also heighten the awareness of ailments.

- i. What does the author mean by positional objectivity?
- ii. Explain, with examples, what the author means by positional parameters.
- iii. Explain why positional observations are not 'subjective'.
- iv. Explain how "objective illusion" can help explain the self-reported morbidity differences between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.
- v. Explain how the author's conceptualisation of positional objectivity differs from Thomas Nagel's "view from nowhere"?

2. Write about 300 words on *any one* of the following:

(30)

- i. Basic education as a political issue
- ii. Means and end(s) of development
- iii. Right-based approach to development
- iv. Female work participation and gender division of labour

(Questions 3 and 4 carries 20 marks each)

3. The National Family Health Survey, Round 3 (2005-06) asked women if and when wife beating is justified. The following table lists the percentage of women (15-49 years) in India who agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for specific reasons, by background characteristics. Based on the table, state *true/ false/ cannot be ascertained without additional information*. Explain your answer in one or two sentences.

Women's Attitude toward Wife Beating

Background Characteristics	% who agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if:			
	She goes out without telling him	She neglects house or children	She argues with him	She shows disrespect for in-laws
Age				
15-19	25.7	32.7	28.6	39.1
20-24	26.7	33.6	28.4	39.5
25-29	28.9	34.0	30.0	40.0
30-39	31.1	36.0	31.5	41.3
40-49	31.9	36.8	32.7	42.7
Residence				
Rural	33.1	37.7	34.8	44.6
Urban	20.6	28.5	21.2	32.2
Employment (past 12 months)				
Employed	33.8	39.4	34.9	45.1
Not Employed	25.4	31.2	26.9	37.2

Source: NFHS-3 Report

- Of the given reasons, arguing with husband is believed by women to be the most justified reason for a husband beating his wife.
- Younger women are generally less likely than older women to believe that wife beating is justified.
- Compared to employed women, women who are not employed are generally more likely to believe that wife beating is justified.
- Compared to employed women in urban India, employed women in rural India are more likely to believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she disrespects her in-laws.

4. The following table, based on the National Sample Survey, Round 64 (2007-08), provides estimates of literacy in the Indian states. Based on the table, state true/ false/cannot be ascertained without additional information. Explain your answer in one or two sentences.

Literacy Rates (Percentage of Persons of Age 7 years and above) during 2007-08

State	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Person (Male & Female)	Female	Person (Male & Female)
Andhra Pradesh	48.5	57.5	72.4	79.5
Assam	76.6	82.7	90.0	93.3
Bihar	42.6	56.1	67.3	76.0
Chhattisgarh	57.4	68.1	79.8	86.1
Gujarat	56.0	68.1	79.5	86.5
Haryana	57.8	69.5	75.8	84.0
Himachal Pradesh	72.1	79.4	86.9	90.2
Jammu & Kashmir	53.8	65.0	71.5	79.8
Jharkhand	46.2	60.5	76.0	83.3
Karnataka	55.7	64.9	78.6	84.7
Kerala	91.1	93.2	94.2	96.1
Madhya Pradesh	54.2	66.0	76.2	83.3
Maharashtra	65.8	75.1	84.7	89.3
Odisha	57.1	65.6	77.5	85.6
Punjab	65.5	72.1	80.2	83.9
Rajasthan	40.1	56.4	69.2	79.7
Tamil Nadu	65.4	74.4	81.5	87.4
Uttaranchal	63.7	73.9	76.0	82.5
Uttar Pradesh	51.0	63.6	68.9	75.8
West Bengal	64.7	72.1	81.4	86.6
India	56.7	67.0	78.1	84.3

Source: NSS Report No. 532

- Literacy rates are lower in rural areas compared to urban areas in all the listed states.
- The number of literate females in rural Kerala is more than the number of literate females in rural Madhya Pradesh.
- The number of literate females in rural West Bengal is less than the number of literate females in urban West Bengal.
- Male literacy is more than female literacy in Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.