

**Elective Course in English**  
**UNDERSTANDING PROSE (BEGE – 105)**  
**Based on Blocks 1-7**

**Programme : BDP**  
**Course Code: BEGE-105/2016-17**  
**Maximum Marks: 100**

**Answer All Questions**

1. Comment on the dominant variety of prose (narrative, expository or descriptive) present in each of the following passages. Write a brief critical appreciation of each passage in about 250 words each:
  - a) We set out for the gallows. The warders marched on either side of the prisoner, with their rifles at the slope; two others marched close against him, gripping him by arm and shoulder, as though at once pushing and supporting him. The rest of us, magistrates and the like, followed behind. Suddenly, when we had gone ten yards, the procession stopped short without any order or warning. A dreadful thing had happened – a dog, come goodness knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog.
  - b) Symptoms of autism-related disorders are well-known: undeveloped social behavior and difficulties with social adaptation (upto complete isolation from the society); delayed or in some other way impaired cognition; severely limited interests – an autistic shows interest only towards a small part of the world around him or her, sometimes completely ignoring the rest of it; repetitive or ritual behavior; language abnormalities. At the same time, many autistic persons possess talents not commonly found in regular people: for example, they can be brilliant mathematicians, or have photographic memory. According to the statistics, one of 68 children has autism related symptoms, so the amount of autistic people around us is much higher than it could be possibly expected. However, even though some symptoms such as language difficulties, or social dysadaptation can intervene in normal social interactions, they do not necessarily prevent an autistic person from living a normal life, especially with the help of other people.
  - c) Today, the most technologically advanced skyscraper is the famous Burj Khalifa in Dubai. It is also the highest skyscraper in the world. Its exact height is 2,722 feet, or 829,8 meters, and it obviously can be seen from any point in Dubai. Burj Khalifa looks like a stalagmite, which usually has a shape of a cone. If you look at it from a distance, it will remind you of a gigantic sharp cone made of glass and steel. The most impressive aspect about Burj Khalifa is that it had been planned to be a “city within the city”; this means that inside the tower you can find parks, alleys, districts, fountains, and so on. The glass of the tower’s surface always shines, because it is washed every single day, and the concrete with which the tower is built, was invented specifically for Burj Khalifa. There are three entrances to the tower. At the foot of the skyscraper, there is a big artificial lake that measures up to 12 hectares. Inside, the building is as magnificent as it is from the outside. The interiors were projected by famous designers. The air inside Burj Khalifa is conditioned and flavored-it is said that the flavor was also designed exclusively for the tower. 57 elevators work 24/7 to transport visitors between floors.
2. Anton Chekhov’s short story “Misery” has the subtitle “to whom shall I tell my grief?” Discuss the significance of the two titles and how they relate to each other.

(10x3=30)

(10)

3. There are three major themes present in Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine*. Discuss each in details. (10)
4. Discuss how Bacon's essay "Of Great Place" reflects his practical wisdom. (10)
5. Identify the devices used by Lamb to provoke humour and laughter in his essay "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig". (10)
6. Analyse Bill Aitken's travelogue *Travels by a Lesser Line* in terms of theme and prose style. (10)
7. Discuss the biographical techniques employed by Boswell in his *Life of Johnson*. (10)
8. Write short notes on the following literary forms of prose:
  - a) Autobiography
  - b) Speeches.

(5+5=10)



# ASSIGNMENT SOLUTIONS GUIDE (2016-2017)

## B.E.G.E-105

### Understanding Prose

**Disclaimer/Special Note:** These are just the sample of the Answers/Solutions to some of the Questions given in the Assignments. These Sample Answers/Solutions are prepared by Private Teachers/Tutors/Authors for the help and guidance of the student to get an idea of how he/she can answer the Questions given in the Assignments. We do not claim 100% accuracy of these sample answers as these are based on the knowledge and capability of Private Teacher/Tutor. Sample answers may be seen as the Guide/Help for the reference to prepare the answers of the Questions given in the assignments. As these solutions and answers are prepared by the private teacher/tutor so the chances of error or mistake cannot be denied. Any Omission or Error is highly regretted though every care has been taken while preparing these Sample Answers/Solutions. Please consult your own Teacher/Tutor before you prepare a Particular Answer and for up-to-date and exact information, data and solution. Student should must read and refer the official study material provided by the university.

**Note: Answer all questions**

**Q. 1. Comment on the dominant variety of prose (narrative, expository or descriptive) present in each of the following passages. Write a brief critical appreciation of each passage in about 250 words each:**

(a) We set out for the gallows. The warders marched on either side of the prisoner, with their rifles at the slope; two others marched close against him, gripping him by arm and shoulder, as though at once pushing and supporting him. The rest of us, magistrates and the like, followed behind. Suddenly, when we had gone ten yards, the procession stopped short without any order or warning. A dreadful thing had happened – a dog, come goodness knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog.

**Ans. Dominant Variety:** This is the narrative prose taken from "A Hanging" written by George Orwell.

**Critical Appreciation:** The condemned man is given no name, nor is it explained what crime he has committed. For the British police who supervise his execution, the hanging is an unpleasant but routine piece of business. The narrator takes no active part in the hanging, and appears to be less experienced than his colleagues. As the prisoner is marched and handcuffed to the gallows he steps slightly aside to avoid treading in a puddle of rainwater; the narrator sees this, and reflects:

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realised what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we are alive. All the organs of his body were working - bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming - all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned - even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone - one mind less, one world less.

The sentence is carried out, and all concerned feel a sudden relief as they leave the scene where the dead man still hangs.

(b) Symptoms of autism-related disorders are well-known: undeveloped social behaviour and difficulties with social adaptation (upto complete isolation from the society); delayed or in some other way impaired cognition; severely limited interests—an autistic shows interest only towards a small part of the world

around him or her, sometimes completely ignoring the rest of it; repetitive or ritual behaviour; language abnormalities. At the same time, many autistic persons possess talents not commonly found in regular people: for example, they can be brilliant mathematicians, or have photographic memory. According to the statistics, one of 68 children has autism related symptoms, so the amount of autistic people around us is much higher than it could be possibly expected. However, even though some symptoms such as language difficulties, or social dysadaptation can intervene in normal social interactions, they do not necessarily prevent an autistic person from living a normal life, especially with the help of other people.

**Ans. Dominant Variety:** This is the descriptive prose in which writer is conveying the symptoms and disease of autism related disorders.

**Critical Appreciation:** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive and characteristic patterns of behaviour and difficulties with social communication and interaction. The symptoms are present from early childhood and affect daily functioning. Even as infants, children with ASD may seem different, especially when compared to other children their own age. They may become overly focused on certain objects, rarely make eye contact, and fail to engage in typical babbling with their parents. In other cases, children may develop normally until the second or even third year of life, but then start to withdraw and become indifferent to social engagement.

The severity of ASD can vary greatly and is based on the degree to which social communication, insistence of sameness of activities and surroundings, and repetitive patterns of behavior affect the daily functioning of the individual.

**(c) Today, the most technologically advanced skyscraper is the famous Burj Khalifa in Dubai. It is also the highest skyscraper in the world. Its exact height is 2,722 feet, or 829.8 metres, and it obviously can be seen from any point in Dubai. Burj Khalifa looks like a stalagmite, which usually has a shape of a cone. If you look at it from a distance, it will remind you of a gigantic sharp cone made of glass and steel. The most impressive aspect about Burj Khalifa is that it had been planned to be a “city within the city”; this means that inside the tower you can find parks, alleys, districts, fountains, and so on. The glass of the tower’s surface always shines, because it is washed every single day, and the concrete with which the tower is built, was invented specifically for Burj Khalifa. There are three entrances to the tower. At the foot of the skyscraper, there is a big artificial lake that measures up to 12 hectares. Inside, the building is as magnificent as it is from the outside. The interiors were projected by famous designers. The air inside Burj Khalifa is conditioned and flavored—it is said that the flavor was also designed exclusively for the tower. 57 elevators work 24/7 to transport visitors between floors.**

**Ans. Dominant Variety:** This is the descriptive prose in which writer is conveying about the world's most famous skyscraper Burj Khalifa.

**Critical Appreciation:** The skyscrapers are a dominant fixture of every major city in the world. Piercing the heavens, they are a testament to man’s mastery of the fundamental forces of nature and to our ravenous ambition. The current record holder is the Burj Khalifa, rising imperiously out of the sands of Dubai. The Burj Khalifa stands at a stunning 2,722 feet, rendering it nearly 700 feet taller than the second tallest structure in the world. That said, the structure’s symbolic place in the modern world is perhaps as noteworthy as its structural accomplishments.

The Burj Khalifa is an example of the architectural style called Neo-futurism. Embracing the aesthetics of machines, Neo-futurism celebrates humanity’s technological achievements by incorporating themes of technology into art, including architecture.

**Q. 2. Anton Chekhov’s short story “Misery” has the subtitle “to whom shall I tell my grief?” Discuss the significance of the two titles and how they relate to each other.**

**Ans.** The main title of the story refers to the misery of the protagonist, whose son has recently died, and he thinks that it was his time to die and not his young son. But his real misery is not that his son has died, his real misery is that he is not able to tell anyone about his misery, about the death of his son, how he died, when he died. He is not able to share his grief as no one is ready to listen to it. Everyone seems to be busy in their own life that they seem to have little time to listen to a cab driver’s misery, thus the subtitle—‘To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief?’

### **Discussion**

Chekhov tells us a story of the main character, penurious Iona Potapov. He, as a sledge driver, meets various types of people and spends most of his time with them. It may seem that Iona should not be lonely, as he is always surrounded with people. But when we read between the lines we can see the crying soul of Iona. Iona does not have

a wife, he just lost his son, and he is left with his horse and his soul is dancing with pain. Misery is preying on him from inside. His passengers are insincere to themselves and to Iona; this makes his pain even worse. "Do you hear you old plague? I'll make you smart. If one stands on ceremony with fellows like you one may as well walk. Do you hear, you old dragon? Or don't you care a hang what I say?". "Misery" faces loneliness as its main problem and indirectly asks us to be better, sincere and understanding people.

The author shows some serious problems to his readers. "Misery" explains a significance of moral principles. This story is about people that are satisfied in their lives, and who feel they are above other people. This story is about people who are not able to understand each other, and who do not know the significance of sympathy. "And Iona turns round to tell them how his son died, but at that point the hunchback gives a faint sigh and announces that, thank God! they have arrived at last". It feels like it is difficult for other people to understand his grief, for those that never had this feeling before. Iona does not lose this faith and still tries to find someone who will listen to him. He is childlike when he tries to see support and sensibility spark in people's eyes. Unfortunately, he bumps into a wall of incomprehension and indifference.

How often do we hear about indifference? We wonder in disgust, and we do not think it could be said about us. How often we forget about grievances we cause to our closest people. Sometimes so little is needed: to listen, to smile or just to say an amiable word, but sometimes that is all we need. It would not take too much effort for "Misery" characters to give just a little bit of kindness, gentleness and patience, so that Iona Potapov would feel better. We all need to shy away from our indifference to make our lives brighter.

A. Chekhov knows how to write simply about huge important things. That is what he did writing "Misery". There Chekhov faces the biggest perennial problem of mankind—inner communication, indifference for someone's loss and grief. The feeling of heaviness and melancholy stays in place while reading this short story. The main character of the story, Iona, is lost in a busy city, where everybody rushes without paying attention to someone who needs it most. "The little mare munches, listens, and breathes on her master's hands. Iona is carried away and tells her all about it". This fragment shows that Iona lost his faith in people, and he finds a warm heart that would understand his grief. Iona found a real friend his old mare, which always stays around.

Anton Chekhov is a great artist in words. He is able to convey his thoughts in this short story and to show a big picture of Iona's life. The author reveals a cruel atmosphere that surrounds Iona, "Big flakes of wet snow are whirling lazily about the street laps, which have just been lighted, and lying in a thin soft layer on roofs, horses' backs, shoulders, caps". It is not just dusk and snow; it is a symbol of emptiness, hopelessness and apathy. It allows us to understand how small the human being is in this cruel universe. Chekhov pictures the big city with heartless people, where inside the person could be alone. Four times Iona tried to start a conversation and all four times he tried to share his grief. He wants to talk about his loss about his sorrow. He even states, "It would be even better to talk to women. Though they are silly creatures, they blubber at the first word". No one was interested in his words. Iona could not let his grief out so his sorrow was getting bigger. "His misery is immense, beyond all bounds. If Iona's heart were to burst and his misery to flow out, it would flood the whole world, it seems, but yet it is not seen".

Chekhov is like a psychologist. He shows how big the sorrow could be and how lonely a human could get. This theme is relevant for all of us. We all rush through our lives without thinking of others. We rarely think that we all could get to a situation pictured in "Misery" by Anton Chekhov.

**Q. 3. There are three major themes present in Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine*. Discuss each in details.**

**Ans. Themes:** The novel has several themes which we can separate for our discussion and understanding. Some of them are the theme of human relationship, women's bonding, death and fear. One can see that the theme of death and agony is present throughout the novel. The theme of marriage concerns itself with the issue of women and goes into the realm of feminist discussion. The theme of human relationship is important at both physical and metaphysical levels as it makes the reader think about the relationship between man and woman.

**Feminism:** Feminism is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. In addition, feminism seeks to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. A feminist is a "person whose beliefs and behaviour are based on feminism."

The feminist perspective finds literature as a subtle device to weaken women. The novel is a sane post-mortem of several tragedies in the life of different women. It furnishes and mirrors authentic female experience, and the lives of women driven to the point of hysteria, escapist, sacrificial goats, and discusses the compulsions which compel them to silence, suicide or death while delivering a child.

Most of the time women are misunderstood and marginalized because of the power amassed by men, and they become instrumental in forcing women to silence. Women became the cause of subjugation and suffering. The novel studies the multiple misunderstandings among the women characters, especially between mothers and daughters, causing misery and unhappiness to several intimately related women in their families though the misunderstandings are cleared late, they eventually try to establish a kind of solidarity among themselves.

Deshpande creates women characters who struggle hard against the social setup to acquire an identity and individuality of their own. Her protagonists show a more realistic and mature approach than the protagonists of any others novelists. Like Deshpande's other Protagonists Urmil also has extra-marital attractions. She sees her attraction objectively, and do not allow herself to be bogged down by any feeling of guilt. She does not show any perceptible progress in terms of development of character.

She seems to withdraw from their family for a while analyze her circumstances objectively without any external aid or advice. Then she makes a compromise with her family. This shows that she in the view of the novelist tries to assert her individuality among the male society which hurt her very much. Deshpande admits: "I am a woman and I do write about women, and I'm going to say it loudly, I don't want to dissociate myself".

Her protagonists are strong. They refuse to sacrifice their individuality for the sake of upholding the traditional role models laid down by society for women. But they attempt to resolve their problems by a process of temporary withdrawal. They display a tangible development during the course of the novel. They go through a process of self-examination before they reach self-actualization.

Thus, Deshpande has been successful in creating strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength. Comparatively, they appear to be more life-like and more akin to the educated, middle-class, urban Indian woman of today. The novelist's greatness lies in the fact that her women characters seek and find harmony within the traditional social set up.

Women-centered narratives in her novels have led many interviewers to ask her as to what extent does she consider herself a feminist. Deshpande says: I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminist. And it was much later that I actually read books about it.

**Patriarchal Power:** *Binding Vine* is a special novel for it presents predominantly the woman's world; the presence of men is felt merely by the power they exercise over the women by wives and daughters. It is the women's world where they outshine men in terms of their clear perception of things around them, their course to cope with their surroundings and their ability to forge an alliance among themselves and learn to live. But in spite of all this, one feels the presence of men throughout the novel. Almost all the women in the novel suffer directly or indirectly due to men.

**Should Women Speak?:** Urmil is Shashi Deshpande's first protagonist who decides to fight another woman's battle. Urmil gets no support from her family members and when the hospital authorities decide to shift Kalpana to a suburban hospital, Urmil protests and decides to take the matter to the press, thinking that Kalpana might get justice.

Urmil succeeds in stopping the transfer of Kalpana to another hospital. Urmil's friend Vanna and Inni mother, at home, are unable to understand her deep involvement with the girl. Vanna goes a step ahead and warns Urmil—"It's none of our business".

Urmil never hinders from the oppositions, she pursues the case and eventually reopens the case. The police are asked to present their new investigations. With the help of her, friend Malcolm, she presents Kalpana's case in the press. This rape issue once again gains public attention and the Government orders a deep investigation.

Soon after, there is a demonstration of protest outside Kalpana's hospital. Women from all walks of life pour in, the picture of women being jostled and roughed up during the demonstration are all reported in papers.

The police investigation brings the rapist into light. The investigation finally opens up to find Sulu's husband Prabhakar, who had always lusted after Kalpana. This bitter truth shatters Sulu who immolates herself in guilty despair, leaving behind her, her grief-stricken sister, Shakutai. If marriage becomes only a means of security for people like Shakutai, Mira and Sulu, who are physically vulnerable, even within the secure structure of marriage.

Urmil learns from Shakutai that Sulu always lived in constant terror of being thrown out of her house because she cannot have children. And, along with this truth, Urmil learns that Indian women are subjected to domination by

their husbands. Urmila's mother tells her that it was her father and not she who had sent her away, for he did not trust his wife in matters relating to child care.

Urmila's father takes the decision of sending Urmi, the infant daughter, to his mother's place, because his wife Inni, in severe urgency, had left the infant Urmi under the care of a man servant. Inni pours out all the anguish of a helpless woman, who has nothing to do under the stern dictates of her husband, she says:

"He didn't say any thing to me, he just took you away... I begged him, Urmi, I cried, I promised but he wouldn't listen. Nothing could make him change his mind. You know your papa I didn't want you to be sent away to Ranidurg, believe me Urmi, I didn't want that, I wanted you with US, I never got used to the idea of your being in Ranidurg, I wanted you with me".

Irrespective of their social backgrounds, women at different levels are treated in the raw manner; it may be women from low class or the city bred, educated women like Urmila's mother, Inni, her friend Vanna, and her mother-in-law, Akka.

**The Theme of Love and Marriage:** Stories like this, which describe the fate of many women, who are forced stoically to accept marriage under the pressure of societal norms. To women, till now, marriage is the only goal in the life of a girl and the most difficult and hazardous task on earth is to find a groom. Looking into all the difficulties and necessities Akka willingly agrees to marry Kishore's father.

The lives in the slums are nothing but another tale of woe. Urmila's friendship with Shakutai gives her an opportunity to look into their lives. Shakutai's husband goes to Bombay in search of livelihood; he, for any reason, doesn't contact Shakutai. Hence, she is bored staying with her parents, hence goes to Bombay to join him. Since her husband has no fixed job, they are forced to stay in their relative's house. Life becomes quite humiliating.

Shakutai is now a mother of three children, the burden of the family is completely on her. In spite of doing all kinds of work to support her family, her husband leaves her and children for another woman. Bearing the burden of such a worthless husband and struggling all alone to provide good life for her children, she finds herself always pin-pointed out as if something in the family goes wrong, she is made responsible. She tells Urmila,

"What can you expect, they say, of a girl whose mother has left her husband? Imagine! He left me for another women, left me with there children to bring up."

Urmila understands that women like Shakutai, and Sulu are always haunted by the absence of security in their marriage. Sulu is an affectionate and good-natured person, always trying to help her sister Shakutai. Despite resistance from Kalpana, she takes over the responsibilities of bringing her up. She has an inclination for house keeping and decoration and this aspect in her goes unnoticed by her husband. There is the constant hidden fear in her, Shakutai tells Urmila about it after marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened. What if he doesn't like this, what if he wants that, what if he is angry with me, what if he throws me out...? No body should live like that, Urmila, so full of fears. What kind of life is it...?

The self-confidence of a normal girl can be shattered by the Indian institution of marriage system, which transforms Sulu into a fearful and nervous woman. Shanti Siva Raman says, "Urmi is different... wants to assert herself and not crawl before man".

One sees that Urmila does not display any radical attitude towards the institution of marriage. While talking to Dr. Bhasker, Urmila explains her clear-cut feeling on the system of marriage. Marriage is a necessity for women like Shakutai, because it means security, it provides safety from other men.

Though Urmila has married a man of her choice, it is far from satisfactory; Her life sees incompatibility and withdrawing nature of Kishore. Vanna seeing Urmila associated with Dr. Bhasker and advises her to be careful. Urmila thinks, "But how can Vanna, secure in the fortress of her marriage to Harish, understand, what it is like marriage with a man who flits into my life a few months in a year and flits out again, leaving nothing of himself behind? Often, after he has gone, I find myself in a frantic grappling for his image, as if in going he has taken that away as well".

Long separation from her husband provides an opportunity to Urmila to think of another relationship and there are a number of moments when she overcomes a longing for physical gratification. Dr. Bhasker's friendship provides ample opportunity to satisfy her urge. Dr. Bhasker has already declared his love to her. Though she longs for physical gratification and comes close to respond to Dr. Bhasker, she just holds back and think: "It's so much easier, so much simpler, to just think of virtue and chastity and being a good wife".

Happiness in marriage is always magical, but to her mother, a constant pre-occupation with her husband's feelings. Urmila rejects Dr. Bhasker's love and overtures for she longs to have the martial bliss. This strong decision was not taken firmly by Shashi Deshpande's other protagonists—like Jaya, Saru and Indu.

Urmila never dare to overstep the boundaries chalked out in the institution of marriage. It is doubtful whether this good virtue in Urmila will be ever appreciated by her husband or not but she loves her husband very much. She answers Dr. Bhasker's question, "I love my husband and therefore, I am an inviolate". In another context she says, "Yes I was honest when I told Vanna I am safe".

### **The Theme of Human Relationships**

The main urge for everybody is always to survive, to get on with the business of living, even if it comprises a daily routine that takes care of a hundred trifling matters, bringing an order and rhythm to it. She agrees with Mira, who says, "Just as the utter futility of living. Overwhelms me, I am terrified by the thought of dying, of ceasing to be".

The novel is quite notable as it introduces the concept of female bonding, the desire of one woman for female bonding, and helps another who is less fortunate. This is a positive development in Urmila, unlike the other protagonists of *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*, who are busy in solving their own battles and have strong feelings and strive for the want of sisterhood.

According to Urmila, women should have the courage to express themselves and expose the evils of the society fearlessly. She is indignant at their uncomplaining attitude in the name of family honour.

The need to express one's feeling and to be heard by the society is the urge for today's women. Urmila draws society's attention to her protest and sees less pain in attempting to change the societal roles and attitudes. At the end of the novel, Urmila is seen recollecting the bonds of love that provide the "spring of life" for human survival.

She believes that the things in the system are gradually improving not at a high speed, but at a slow pace, hence Urmila is not a rebel against the existing system.

Urmila not only fights her own battle, but also endeavours to help other women, the poor and the downtrodden. She believes strongly that women should have the courage to express themselves and expose the evils of the society, and that they be ready to fight for their rights. She is very much upset and troubled about those families, whose uncomplaining attitude of the victims in the name of family honour, Urmila is an independent undivided from the beginning with an identity of her own.

She draws the attention of the society to the inequality of sexes and there is less agony in attempting to change societal roles and attitudes. In spite of all this, she does not rebel against the established system, for she believes that the things are improving gradually but at a slow pace. But anyway the system was improving. The novel is a work that should be read as a projection of ideas as women's solidarity, female bonding and value of sisterhood in male dominated culture.

'Binding Vine' is a special novel for it presents predominantly the woman's world; the presence of men is felt merely by the power they exercise over the women by wives and daughters. It is the women's world where they outshine men in terms of their clear perception of things around them, their course to cope with their surroundings and their ability to forge an alliance among themselves and learn to live. Actually, they are unique individuals in their respective domains, may be a well to do family or a broken family front, voicing their displeasure and airing their views, so fighting against injustices inflicted, upon them by an oppressive patriarchal system.

They are assertive in their own way. They are aware of their limitations, and do have some misunderstanding about other women, especially the mothers about their daughters. *The Binding Vine* provides several instances. The title is significant because, mother and child are bound by *the Binding Vine* of love, now relationships are built, 'Vine' is also relevant, for it grows in all directions and has intricate network and that would not disengage from its tentacles. In this novel, the stories of Mira, Akka, Vanna, Inni, Shakutai, Sulumavashi and Kalpana touch Urmila as ripples and waves and disturb her poise. But, beyond their angrily pain and suffering, in their nameless moments of intimacy and bonding, she discovers the bountiful binding vine of love, 'springs of life', crescent hope, all add to overcome her own sense of loss and despair and to come out of all shades of misunderstandings.

In fact it is through Vanna's reminiscing about Mira that Urmila's healing process begins. Urmila gets Mira's poems out of the trunk, which had sat for decades in the attic, gathering dust, and starts reading them. It is while reading these poems written by a college going teenager Mira, by a Mira who was married off to a man whom she could not love, that Urmila realises the various facets of pain that many a woman has to bear. Very often silently. Mostly without having any option.



The healing process which begins by reading Mira's poems, continues when Urmi accidentally meets Shakutai in the hospital where Vanaa works as a medical social worker. Shakutai's eldest daughter Kalpana has been brought to the hospital after she was brutally beaten up and raped. Urmi feels compelled to help Shakutai, to listen to her, to keep her company. During the long wait in which Kalpana lies in coma, Urmi makes a bold, modern, and a very humanistic statement, in that she tries to convince Shakutai that it was not Kalpana who did anything wrong, it is not that she invited trouble upon herself by dressing up, by painting her lips and nails, but it is Kalpana who is terribly wronged. For a long time Urmi herself does not understand her need to come and sit with Shakutai, whose world is so very different from her own.

**Q. 4. Discuss how Bacon's essay "Of Great Place" reflects his practical wisdom.**

**Ans.** In his essay "Of Great Place" (first published in 1597) Francis Bacon observed that, "Men in Great Place, are thrice Servants: Servants of the Sovereign or State; Servants of Fame; and Servants of Businesses. So as they have no Freedom; neither in their Persons; nor in their Actions; nor in their Times. It is a strange desire, to seek Power, and to lose Liberty; Or to seek Power over others, and to lose Power over a Man's Self." In many ways, this volume confirms Bacon's assessment of the nature of power in the early modern period, although it is as preoccupied with the agency this afforded subordinates as the constraints encountered by those in authority. Complementing recent work that has both emphasized the reciprocal character of authority and sought to expand our appreciation of what constituted the political arena in early modern England, this collection explores the possibilities available to the relatively weak for shaping the terms of their subordination within a multidimensional web of relationships.

Bacon's essays revolve around topics of perennial human interest like truth, religion, friendship, revenge, envy, love, nobility etc.

Bacon suggests that once people attain high post they are no longer free rather they become servant to their masters. In spite of becoming relaxed they become more tense because of fear of losing their reputation, which they want to maintain always. They lose their freedom also for the duties they have now become responsible for.

The great contribution of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) to the development of English prose can hardly be overlooked or denied. He was the first scientific philosopher to write English in a clear, lucid and terse style. Though he borrowed the form of the essay from Montaigne, he adapted it to suit his own purpose and to his natural ability of writing. His essays are considered a whiff of a fresh air in the heavy and pompous essays written in Elizabethan age.

Bacon's Essays enjoy a great charm and appeal for readers thanks to their many merits or qualities such as wisdom, marvelous diction, captivating style of writing, huge variety of subjects, pragmatic approach, sensuousness, wealth of metaphor and analogy and the dispersed meditations of Bacon, whose sharp wit, worldly wisdom and practical approach towards things made his essays unsurpassable and masterpieces of English literature. What makes Bacon's Essays a unique is compact and epigrammatic style of writing. Bacon was unsurpassable in bringing his great thoughts in nutshell. He had a great and impressive mastery over the art of saying maximum in minimum words.

An aphorism is a short, pithy and a concise statement of a principle and truth while an epigram is a terse, sage, or witty often a paradoxical saying. Bacon has aptly and effectively demonstrated his singular ability to express himself aphoristically and epigrammatically in his writings. His essays are replete with aphorisms. Many sentences in his essays are like proverbs, which can be quoted to give weight to the arguments. Almost every sentence in his essays is pregnant with meaning. His utterances are thoughtful, insightful, lively, witty and meaningful to the core. Only a person of high caliber like Bacon can develop a remarkable style of terseness and condensation. Following are some of the sentences from his essays, which depict vociferously his wonderful epigrammatic style of writing:

"Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age and old men's nurses." (Of Marriage and Single Life).

"The rising unto place is labourious, and by pains men come to greater pains." (Of Great Place)

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." (Of Studies).

"Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability." (Of Studies)

"Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them." (Of Studies)

"Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." (Of Studies)

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice." (Of Revenge)

"Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark." (Of Fear)

“Virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.” (Of adversity).

These sentences from his essays are but a few glaring examples of Bacon’s terse, pithy and epigrammatic style of writing, which speak volumes of his great talent and wisdom. A reader feels inexpressible delight in reading his essays and feels wiser and more enlightened after reading the pearls of wisdom in the essays of Bacon. His essays, beyond doubt, are great literary work in English literature.

**Q. 5. Identify the devices used by Lamb to provoke humour and laughter in his essay “A Dissertation upon Roast Pig”.**

**Ans.** Charles Lamb is a highly acclaimed essayist of the eighteenth century. Although he tried his hand on other forms of literature such as poetry and drama as well, his status as an essayist has by far exceeded that of his other ventures. The eighteenth century experienced the French Revolution that not only left a deep impact on the politics but also a profound effect on literature. This new literature was so distinctive compared to its predecessor that it began to be associated with Romanticism, an accelerating movement of the time. This age is predominantly known for breaking class boundaries, stressing not only on form but also the content, an inherent reverence to nature in any form, an outburst of emotions and imagination, and exoticism. Charles Lamb incorporated all of these elements optimally in his essays, the product of which generated a universal quality.

*A Dissertation upon Roast Pig* is an essay on the discovery of how man acquired the taste of roasted pigs which according to Lamb is sited in an old Chinese manuscript. Returning from the manuscript to the present world, he talks of the insensitivity in the whipping of pigs. However, the rationale behind this behaviour is also given; it might provide pleasure and hence, can also be practiced. The essay is full of humour and one may not be able to find any tinges of pathos or agony.

Lamb makes use of various devices to evoke humour in the essay. One of these devices is exaggeration. He is able to make the readers laugh by exaggerating the absurdity of the situation. His essays are rich alike in wit, humour, and fun. Hallward and Hill observe in the Introduction to their edition of the *Essays of Elia*: “The terms Wit, Humour and Fun are often confused but they are really different in meaning. The first is based on intellect, the second on insight and sympathy, the third on vigour and freshness of mind and body. Lamb’s writings show all the three qualities, but what most distinguishes him is Humour, for his sympathy is ever strong and active.” Humour in Lamb’s essays constitutes very like an atmosphere “with linked sweetness long drawn out.” Its Protean shapes range from frivolous puns, impish attempts at mystification, grotesque buffoonery, and Rabelaisian verbosity to the subtlest ironical stroke which pierces down to the very heart of life. J. B. Priestley observes in *English Humour*: “English humour at its deepest and tenderest seems in him [Lamb] incarnate. He did not merely create it, he lived in it. His humour is not an idle thing, but the white flower, plucked from a most dangerous nettle.”

As a humorist Lamb is unsurpassable in English prose. He is ever pleasing and charming, and never, not even once, does he grow tiresome. Edward Albert compares his humour to the ‘chiming of sweet bells’. Many examples of humorous exaggerations can easily be cited from his essays – *Poor Relation*, *Christ’s Hospital*, *The Convalescent* etc. The following lines from *Grace Before Meat* can be cited as an example of his humour: “when I have sat (a rarus hospes) at rich men’s tables, with the savory soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony (saying grace or prayer of thanksgiving) to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose a religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters”. In *All Fool’s Day* he requests Raymund “Go Master Raymund Lully, you look wise. Pray correct that error”. *A Dissertation Upon a Roast Pig* is in its entirety an essay of great humour. A freakish sense of humour was a part of his nature. Consider this joke: A lady once asked him, “Mr. Lamb, how do you like babies?” And he answered, “B-b-boiled, ma’am”. A superior in his office complained “You arrive late, Mr. Lamb”. “Wait and see how early I leave” was his answer.

**Prose Style:** Bacon wrote in a formal and aphoristic style; Addison in a satiric, scholarly, journalistic and humorous style. However, it is difficult to describe a typical Lamb style; it has a charm all its own. Rickett writes that “His style (of writing) is a mixture certainly of many styles, but a chemical, not a mechanical mixture”. Lamb’s hallmark is immense variety. The numerous essays he has written suggest this variety. He wrote in a chatty, gossipy manner. He could be reflective, fanciful, witty, grave and didactic. He was elevating and imaginative, playful and poetic, and finally a man of the world depending on the theme of his essay. Purely in terms of language, Lamb is a romanticist who brought to prose the finest qualities of romanticism.

A word, lastly, about Lamb's peculiar style which is all his own and yet not his, as he is a tremendous borrower. He was extremely influenced by some "old-world" writers like Fuller and Sir Thomas Browne. It is natural, then, that his style is archaic. His sentences are long and rambling, after the seventeenth-century fashion. He uses words many of which are obsolescent, if not obsolete. But though he "struts in borrowed plumes", these "borrowed plumes" seem to be all his own. Well does a critic say: "The blossoms are culled from other men's gardens, but their blending is all Lamb's own." Passing through Lamb's imagination they become something fresh and individual. His style is a mixture certainly of many styles, but a chemical not a mechanical mixture." His inspiration from old writers gives his style a romantic colouring which is certainly intensified by his vigorous imagination. Very like Wordsworth he throws a fanciful veil on the common objects of life and converts them into interesting and "romantic" shapes. His peculiar style is thus an asset in the process of "romanticising" everyday affairs and objects which otherwise would strike one with a strong feeling of ennui. He is certainly a romantic essayist. What is more, he is a poet.

In *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, Lamb refers to the reader while describing the cottage of Bo-bo in the beginning paragraph, "a sorry antediluvian make-shift of a building, you may think it." Hence, the essays are made interesting in keeping with the prevalent traditions and through this personal, interactive streak, have been made universal.

*A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, Elia remembers this one incident when he was young and her aunt had given her a cake and after thrusting it upon a beggar "the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure ..." Then there is the acceptance of the sagacity of the old when he says "Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims." It is in human nature to long for the past. Irrespective of how content a man must be at the present, the past seems more serene. At some point of time, especially in the old age, people have this longing for the active years of the past. This is something everyone can relate to and thus, even in this century can be relative.

Fantastical story on the origin of roast pig is related to an ancient Chinese manuscript, and by dealing with it like it is a scholarly piece of writing, he has actually tried to provide some authenticity to his word.

In *Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, antithesis is employed in the case of the pig that is being beaten or "whipped to death" so that their meat is made tender. This misery of the pig evokes a deep sympathy for the pig whose pain is almost likened to that of Christ. And yet, Lamb goes on to justify this very tradition and for "It might impart a gusto." In giving both sides of the argument, Lamb makes the applicability of his essays very wide. The ambivalence of Elia is also characteristic of any human mind. Man is prone to all sorts of uncertainties and there is a good chance that he will not reach a satisfactory conclusion. Thus, this side of human psychology has been prevalent forever, making Lamb's essays universal.

There is use of excessively sensual language in both the essays. This imprints the essay on the reader's mind since it not only provokes the mind but also stimulates the senses. The experience of reading these essays is in its own right a wholly sensuous experience. In Old China, the description of the pictures on the tea cups is very vivid, "the same lady ... is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river ..." In *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, the explanation of the roast as "crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, crackling," the aroma that "assailed his nostrils" and the "sorry antediluvian make-shift of a building" all stimulate the tongue, nose and eyes. The ability of these essays to evoke these senses even in this century proves the universality of the language and the approach used by Lamb.

**Q. 6. Analyse Bill Aitken's travelogue *Travels by a Lesser Line* in terms of theme and prose style.**

**Ans. Theme–Understanding the Text:** The extracts very well convey the writer's eye for the detail, his understanding the cultural difference between north and south. His fascination for steam engines is apparent from the text.

The theme of the text is basically the description of things that the writer sees during his journey. He sees that the railway station has been remodeled like a temple. He says, "tastefully so" which signifies that the architecture used for the temple has similar aesthetic appeal as the temple. Both temple and the railway station are situated at the shore and are surrounded by the sea.

There is a giant lance at the top of the tower of the temple which appears like the hour-hand of a clock. Aitken's graphic description of lance and its comparison to the hour-hand of the clock is worth appreciation. It is also a symbol of the mighty lance of Lord Murugan which in turns symbolizes strength and solidity.

While commenting on the cultural differences between North and South India, the writer refers to the verbal babbling between north Indian pilgrims and south Indian bus staff. This proves to be a good example of the cultural differences between the two groups. The north Indian travellers are not punctual while the south Indian are quite punctual and are always on time. Writer observes that the south Indian have far greater sense of hygiene than those of the north Indians. Also paying 25 paise to use the toilet appears as an extravagance to north Indians. The flip side is that the Tamilian driver does not mind spitting throughout the journey much to the consternation of travellers inside the bus. The travellers inside the bus are worried about their luggage put on the open roof of the bus while the bus staff take this lightly which further causes bickering between the two.

It is important to keep in mind that the author is not displaying any bias towards any of the group. His description is objective. What he presents is more of little foibles than serious flaws in the characters.

Another interesting thing in the text is the writer's fascination about steam engines. While talking about his fascination he says, "To make my day a steam engine lay..." Apart from being happy about the temple and railway station the author says that the day become happier because of the presence of steam engine in the station. The concluding chapter of the book is a tribute to the steam engine by the author for allowing him to travel through fourteen states in a single metre gauge line. The journey in the metre gauge has also been inexpensive compared to the broad gauge trains. For him the travelling through train has been a pleasant journey as he was able to appreciate the beauty of the land, listen to the talks by co-passengers, and enjoy the rhythmic motion of slow moving train.

**Prose Style:** Aitken uses narrative prose of simplicity and elegance to describe the journey he has undertaken in India. The description is so beautiful and graphic that every town, village and hillside becomes alive in front of our eyes. Aitken also uses descriptive prose style which is factual and also photographic. His style of writing is lucid and his use of language is unpretentious. It would not be an exaggeration if one says that it seems that he uses camera more than a pen in his description of places. One can also notice tinges of humour in his writing. While talking about differences in north Indians and South Indians we come across many things which force us to smile and sometimes laugh.

**Q. 7. Discuss the biographical techniques employed by Boswell in his *Life of Johnson*.**

**Ans.** We will now look at some of biographical techniques used by Boswell in the three sections we have read.

**Birth and Early Childhood:** Boswell's narration of Johnson's family background is worth noticing in this section. Boswell maintains that Johnson's father did not belong to a well-to-do family. Boswell says that the title of gentleman was "taken by those who could not boast of gentility". On the other hand we are told that Johnson's mother came from a well-known family of small landowners. No matter how full of praise Boswell is of Johnson but still he is Johnson biographer who wants the readers to go in to the life of Johnson therefore must stick to the truth, after all he is not a panegyrist. And also in this he was also following Johnson's percept. In Idler No. 84, Johnson wrote, "he that narrates the life of another .....shows his favourite at a distance, decorated and magnified like the ancient actors in their tragic dress and endeavours to hide the man that he may produce a hero!". That is what Boswell tried to do. He tried to project the man. The use of word 'nevr' refers to fact that Boswell put in lots of efforts, he conducted lots of interviews in order to arrive at certain facts of Johnson's life.

**Lord Chesterfield's Neglect:** Here again we see the pain that Boswell underwent in order to arrive at the true account of Johnson's life. He honestly narrates the story of how he got the copy of letter written by Johnson to Chesterfield. He also tells about what William Warburton, one of his eminent contemporaries, thought about Johnson.

Boswell's work is interesting not only because it gives true, honest and objective account of story but also because it draws inferences from the various events that has been described in the book. Boswell gives us an entire letter to read. This letter is so well drafted that it has memorized by many. Many historians hold the view that this letter marks the end of the patronage system in England.

**Johnson and Paoli:** One interesting aspect of Boswell's work is the way the reports, of meeting of Johnson with eminent people of his age or with people not so well know, have been presented. In the very first paragraph of the section Boswell gives us Johnson's view over language, infidelity, fear and courage. And in the very last paragraph Boswell presents us with Johnson's view on free will and predetermination.

**Q. 8. Write short notes on the following literary forms of prose:**

**(a) Autobiography**

**Ans.** An autobiography has the following features:

- (i) In autobiography, the writer attempts to reveal selected experiences of his/her own life in retrospect.

(ii) The picture presented in it is subjective.

(iii) It presents the events and impression of the past as recollected by the writer while writing the autobiography.

(iv) It cannot be a complete account of one's life as he has future to live in.

The autobiographies of Gandhiji and Nehruji are good examples of this form of autobiographies.

**(b) Speeches.**

**Ans.** Speeches are the oral form of communication or expression of thoughts. They are written in prose and are essentially addressed to an audience. Speeches always convey the personal point of view of the speaker. A good speech is not written with the aim to excite or rouse the audience, rather it is written with aim to inspire the audience and make them think on the same line on which the speaker wishes them to think.

