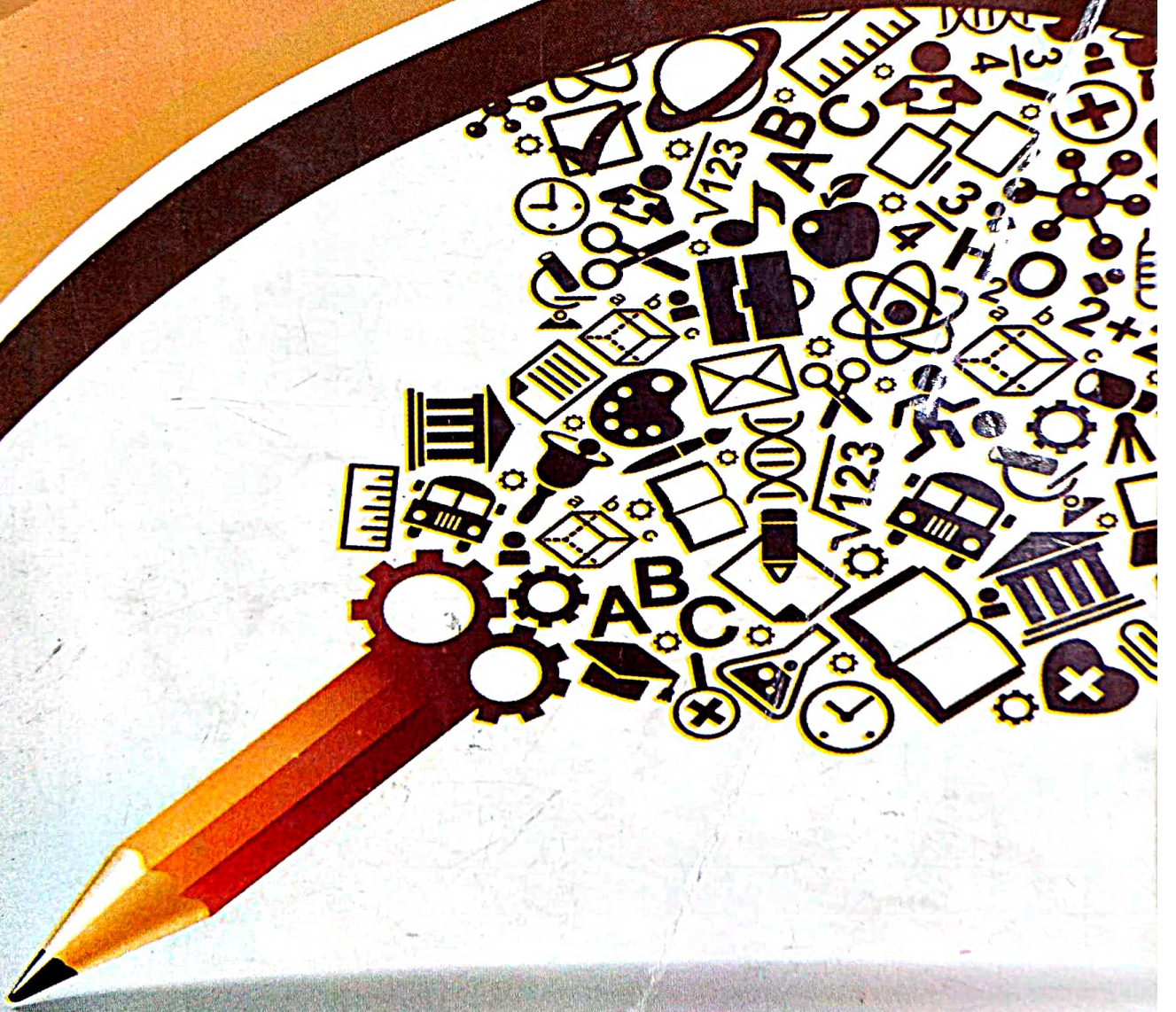


# STUDY OF PROSE



मध्यप्रदेश हिन्दी ग्रन्थ अकादमी, भोपाल



Deepika

# STUDY OF PROSE

(Theory & Practical)

For the Students of Second Year with  
English Literature - Major)

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# Unit- I

## EARLY PROSE WRITERS

### 1.1 Prose and Its Forms

The entire gamut of English Literature or literature of any language in general can be broadly divided into prose and verse. Poetry, which is written in verse form is usually more intense than prose, often more subtle and presents itself through different metres and rhyme-schemes which gives a broader scope for figures of speech, and establishes its metaphorical approach. The units of poetry contain the foot, the line, the verse and sometimes larger sections such as book, or canto. While studying a poem, we focus on basic metrical patterns or other patterns as assonance, internal rhyme or alliteration, refrains symmetries of logic and even musical accompaniment. Prose, on the other hand can be differentiated from verse or poetry on the same points mentioned above. Unlike poetry, the rhythm of prose depends on variation. Indeed, metrical lines and rhymes are considered a fault in prose. The units of prose are the word, the sentence (which may itself be a long one and can be analysed into phrases and clauses), then the paragraph and finally the larger unit such as the chapter or a treatise. The short story or essay may have no unit larger than the paragraph, or may be divisible into several sections where new arguments or matter are introduced; this depends on the details of the nature of the piece.

“If we study a piece of prose word by word, we shall be able to talk intelligently about the choice of vocabulary, if we then study it sentence by sentence we shall have a thorough grasp of its rhythm, grammatical structure, naturalness, suitability to the subject and clarity. If, then, we study the piece, if it is long enough, paragraph by paragraph, we may find out something new about rhythm and shall understand the logical sequence, narrative tension or whatever else may be the general purpose of the passage. If we are studying a large piece of prose such as a whole novel, we shall examine it chapter by chapter and so appreciate the whole structure of the story, or test coherence of the argument in an informative or persuasive book.”

When we study poetry, we focus on the emotion and imagination inherent in the poem. When we study prose, we focus on the functions of the prose which ultimately dictate the style of the writer which makes him unique and popular. In a generalized way we may briefly divided



prose into the following types according to its function:

**1. Narrative Prose:** Literature keeps itself alive in the minds of the readers through narratives which may be feigned or invented rather than be historically or factually true. In the modern times, these fictions have become synonymous with the novel. The story in a novel or in a short story makes it interesting in a variety of ways, from mere accumulation of exciting incident as in a thriller to the subtle and detailed portrayal of character and motive as in *Madam Bovary*, *War and Peace* or *Pride and Prejudice*. The narration of the story requires enormous range of techniques by the writer.

**2. Dramatic Prose:** A good deal of prose may be found in the drama. Important examples of entirely prose drama are the works of Congreve, Sheridan, Goldsmith, J.M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, Ibsen, Strindberg, J.B. Priestley and all modern commercial playwrights. Strictly realistic drama can be written only in prose. Dramatic prose uses the ordinary conversation in order to keep it close to life yet it also improves the real life which is the basic function of all fine arts.

**3. Contemplative Prose:** Any prose which is included under the title non-fiction is called contemplative prose. Non-fictional prose is a basket that bulges with variety; history, biography, autobiography, essays, translation, travelogue, literary-criticism, diary, journalism, oratory; all is included under the title essay.

Essay is a unit of non-fiction. While reading an essay one should never assume that what one is reading is "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". While writing the essay, the writer focuses on entertaining and informing the reader on a particular subject. He also persuades the reader to believe a certain idea or to act in a certain way. Thus, essay is a fairly short non-fictional prose-piece in which the author expresses his thoughts and feelings on any subject he chooses to discuss. It can indeed be 'anything'; the trivial, the absurd, the unpoetical, the solemn, the serious, the tropic, science, politics and sociology. A donkey, an onion, a postman, a computer, an election, a village sale, a piece of chalk, a bus queue, a biography, an autobiography, fantasy, sermon - anything can go into the essay.

Although the complexities of the present specialized world have widened the scope of the essay, resulting in various types, it is usually the familiar or personal essay which is regarded as the real kernel of this literary genre. W.H. Hudson seems to clinch the issue when he says, "The true essay is essentially personal. Like its verse analogue, the lyric, it belongs therefore to the literature of self-expression. Treatise and dissertation may be objective; the essay is subjective".

It is difficult to have a universally acceptable "classification" of essays. Among the terms that have been used usually essays are classified as:



moralizing, argumentative, aphoristic, descriptive, reflective, biographical, historical, social, political, periodical, didactic, scientific, editorial, whimsical, psychological, outdoor, nature, cosmic and personal. This list is formidable yet incomplete. However, we can divide essays into formal and informal types.

The Informal Essay, sometimes called the "true" essay includes moderately brief aphoristic essays like Bacon's, periodical essays like Addison's and Steele's and personal essays like Lamb's. Qualities which make an essay informal are: (1) The personal element: self-revelation, individual tastes and experiences (2) humour (3) graceful style (4) rambling structure (5) novelty of theme (6) freshness of form (7) freedom from stiffness and affectation and (8) incomplete treatment of topic.

In the formal Essay the writer puts emphasis on the subject being discussed and at times its particular meaning. Social purpose makes the essay formal. This formal essay includes argumentative-short and long treatises like the chapters in Carlyle's *Heroes and Heroworship* and Nirad Chaudhary's *To Live or Not to Live*. The features that mark the formal essays are (1) soberness or seriousness of purpose (2) dignity (3) logical organization and (4) length.

However, it should be noted that watertight compartmentalization cannot be made between formal and informal essays.

**4. Informative Prose:** There is much prose whose sole function is to communicate information. It includes school and college textbooks, scientific books, encyclopaedias, books of instruction in various arts and crafts, reports of many kinds, and all those newspaper reports and articles that are not misinformative. Such prose may be of considerable literary merit, as are many history books, or they may be of no literary interest whatever but still satisfactory for conveying information.

These four divisions give the main functions of prose writing. Occasionally a sentence is a unit in itself and is called a proverb or an epigram.





# Unit- 1

## 1.1

### RALPH WALDO EMERSON

#### Self-Reliance

“Ne te quaesiveris extra.”

“Man is his own star; and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man,  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late.  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.”

Epilogue to Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Honest Man’s Fortune*

Cast the bantling on the rocks,  
Suckle him with the she-wolf’s teat;  
Wintered with the hawk and fox,  
Power and speed be hands and feet.

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instil is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, — that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, — and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is, that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side.



## 1.2

## HENRY JAMES

## The Art of Fiction

I should not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks, necessarily wanting in any completeness, upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far, did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr. Walter Besant. Mr. Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution—the original form of his pamphlet—appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction and are not indifferent to such remarks as those who practise it may attempt to make about it. I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favourable association, and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr. Besant is sure to have excited. There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of storytelling.

It is a proof of life and curiosity—curiosity on the part of the brotherhood of novelists, as well as on the part of their readers. Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call *discutable*. It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison. I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that; it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel, as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word); and, evidently, if it is destined to suffer in any way for having lost its *naïveté* it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages. During the period, I have alluded to there was a comfortable, good-humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that this was the end of it. But within a year or two, for some reason or other, there have been signs of returning animation—the era of discussion would appear to have been to a certain extent opened. Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to



## 1.3

### CLEANTH BROOKS

#### Poetry is a way of Saying

Poetry is a kind of "saying." It is, however, a kind that many people, until they become well acquainted with it, feel is rather peculiar and even useless. They feel this way for two reasons: the "way of the saying" and the "nature of the said." As for the "way of the saying," the strongly marked rhythms, the frequent appearance of rhyme, and the figurative language may seem odd and distracting; and as for the "nature of the said," it generally contains neither a good, suspenseful story nor obviously useful information. Poetry, in short, may seem both unnatural and irrelevant.

Yet poetry has existed from the time of the emergence of the human race from shadowy prehistory and has survived, in one form or another, in every society since that time. When we realize this, we may be inclined to consider the possibility that poetry only seems unnatural and irrelevant. We may even decide, on reflection, that it does spring from deep human impulses and does fulfill human needs.

Let us look first at the way of the saying. Probably its most obvious feature is its strongly marked rhythm. Rhythm is, we know, the repetition in time of a perceptible pattern. The pattern may be visual, as in the flashing of a light or the advance and retreat of waves on the beach, or it may be a pattern of repetition not in time but in space—we sometimes even speak of the rhythmic elements in a scene or a painting. In poetry, however, we are characteristically concerned with aural (heard) rhythm, that of sound. Aural rhythm is most obvious and assertive in the ticking of a clock or a metronome, but we are commonly aware of many more vital rhythms around us—in the sound of insects on a summer night, in a pulse beat, in a human voice. In fact, the world we live in pulses with rhythms of all kinds—visual, aural, tactile: the procession of the seasons, the wax and wane of the moon, the pattern of tides, the migration of birds. The human body itself is a locus of rhythms: the beat of the heart, the inhalation and exhalation of breath, waking and sleeping, effort and rest, hunger and satiety.