



Block

# 4

## **DIARY, SPEECH, LETTERS, TRAVELOGUES**

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## BLOCK 4 INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to Block 4 of our course **Understanding Prose** (BEGE-141). This is the last Block of this course. In this Block we have taken up the genres of diary, speeches, letters and travelogues for study.

In **Unit 1** we have dealt with diary writing with special reference to the diary of Anne Frank. A **diary**, like an autobiography or a memoir, belongs to the autobiographical genre of writing. It is a literary form in which the writer maintains a regularly kept record of his or her own life and thoughts.

In **Unit 2** we have taken up a speech by a famous Canadian author Margaret Laurence entitled *My Final Hour*. A **speech** is a “continuous spoken utterance” or a “spoken communication or expression of thoughts in prose” addressed to an audience. It presents the personal viewpoint of the speaker in a convincing manner, on a subject that is of universal importance.

In **Unit 3** we have talked about another form of non-fictional prose – the **letter**. We have briefly touched upon the origin of letter writing in English literature and discussed it as a literary art. We have selected for detailed study a letter ‘The Quest of Man’ from *Glimpses of World History*, a book written by Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964).

And finally in **Unit 4** we have dealt with travelogue as a form of non-fictional prose. A **travelogue** is an account of travel and can be a short piece of writing, a book, a talk, a radio broadcast or a documentary film. The travel accounts chosen for your study form the last two chapters titled: ‘Last Resort in the South’ and ‘The Poetic Diction of Steam’ from the travel book *Travels by a Lesser Line* by Bill Aitken.

One of our aims through this course is to enable you to enjoy and appreciate forms of prose as works of art. If by the end of this course you have learnt to distinguish one form from another, we shall have every reason to believe that we have been successful in achieving our target.



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# UNIT 1 ANNE FRANK'S *THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL*

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## Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
  - 1.1.1 The Holocaust
- 1.2 Diary Writing as a Literary Form
- 1.3 Life of Anneliese Marie “Anne” Frank
- 1.4 Entries from Anne Frank’s *Diary*
  - 1.4.1 Text
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- 1.5 Discussion
- 1.6 Anne Frank’s *Diary* as a Literary Work
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Suggested Reading
- 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- comprehend the diary of a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl who lived in Holland under Nazi rule;
- outline the horrors of the Holocaust, the persecution of the Jews, and the trauma of the Second World War; and
- appreciate the art and craft of writing a diary.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The main intention of this Unit is to acquaint you with the literary form called diary, using the work of one of the greatest diary writers of all times - Anne Frank.

Anne Frank’s diary is a clandestine diary written in secret. Thus it is an example of the diary form used for providing an outlet for ideas, words and thoughts that would have been illegal or would have caused a scandal or even death for the writer had it been seized during the time of its writing.

Anne Frank was a Jewish girl born in Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Her diary reveals the trauma and agony of the Holocaust. Her diary, gifted to her on her thirteenth birthday, was named ‘Kitty’ by her and chronicles the events of her life from June 14, 1942 to August 1, 1944. These two years of her life, spent in hiding with her family in a ‘Secret Annexe’ in Amsterdam to escape Nazi persecution, also coincides with the height of World War II. Anne Frank died in a concentration camp after their hideout was discovered by the Gestapo in 1944. Friends found her diary in the attic of the hideout and it was published by her father Otto Frank under the title *The Diary of a Young Girl*-(1947).

Anne Frank's Diary is a remarkable book, a book that speaks truthfully about one of the most despicable chapters in human history - the Holocaust.

### 1.1.1 The Holocaust

Holocaust refers to the state-sponsored systematic killing of millions of Jewish people by Nazi Germany and its allies under the rule of Adolf Hitler during World War II (1939 - 45). The Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933 and from the very beginning, their policies were anti-Semitic (founded on hatred of the Jews). Under the Nazi rule the Jewish businesses were boycotted, Jews were dismissed from government services and finally they were also deprived of all citizenship rights. Synagogues were destroyed and Jews began to be hunted down, imprisoned in concentration camps or forced into ghettos. The early years of the World War II saw the victory of Germany and many parts of Europe came under Nazi rule. In all these places the Jews were systematically evacuated and killed or forced into slave labour under inhuman conditions. By the end of the Second World War, when the Allies defeated Germany nearly six million Jews had been killed by the Nazis.

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## 1.2 DIARY WRITING AS A LITERARY FORM

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A diary, like an autobiography or a memoir, belongs to the autobiographical genre of writing. It is a literary form in which the writer maintains a regularly kept record of his or her own life and thoughts. As a genre it has been practiced for over five hundred years. The name diary is derived from the Latin word 'dies' meaning 'days' which makes clear the 'day to day' nature of the writing. In a diary, to avoid the monotony of a monologue, the writer often invents a fictional addressee, a recipient of the words that are created. The phrase 'Dear Diary', or as Anne Frank's christening of her diary 'Kitty', helps the writer avoid the pain of writing in a vacuum. The diary as a narrative of events in a day by day chronological order, records truthfully the thoughts, hopes and emotions of the diarist which are often intensely personal and private. At its purest, diary writing is a form of self reflection, a therapeutic mediation of one's life not intended for public eyes. Thus the diaries help individuals, as in the case of Anne Frank, to cope with the stress and trauma in their lives. Yet diaries are also intended for posterity and have future readership in mind. Writers like Jonathan Swift and Samuel Pepys have used the diary form not only to comment upon the lives, but also as a means of describing and critically analyzing the society, culture and politics of their times.

The diary is also a valuable historical document of an individual life and gives the historian written evidence of the historical, social and political circumstances of a particular period. It helps to enhance our understanding of key periods in history. It is an individual's response to a public calamity and, as is typical of the genre, is an interesting mix of the 'literary' and 'non-literary', the public and private.

During times of great social unrest when public records may have been suppressed, altered or destroyed, the diary can be relied upon to provide a truthful account of the events as is the case with Anne Frank's diary. In chronicling the life of a Jewish family in hiding in Nazi-occupied Holland, it gives us a powerful record of social history that would have remained unknown otherwise.

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## 1.3 LIFE OF ANNELIESE MARIE “ANNE” FRANK

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Anne Frank (1929-1945) was born in Germany as the second daughter of Otto Heinrich Frank and Edith Hollander. Her sister's name was Margot Frank. In 1933, when Hitler's Nazi party won the election and anti-semitic demonstrations began taking place in Germany, Otto Frank moved with his family to Amsterdam and started business there. In 1940 Germany invaded the Netherlands and Jews began to be persecuted there too. The early references in Anne's diary depict the changes taking place under the German occupation. When a notice summoning Margot to the Nazi office was issued, Otto Frank and his family decided to move into a hiding place behind the company's premises which was called the “Secret Annexe”. On July 6, 1942, the family moved into the secret annexe. The hideout consisted of two small rooms with an adjoining toilet on the first level, a large and smaller room at the second level and an attic. The door to the secret rooms was covered with a bookshelf. Another family consisting of Mr and Mrs Van Dam and their sixteen year old son Peter, joined Anne's family of four. Later, a dentist called Albert Dusrl was also given shelter. They were supported and looked after by a group of local friends, Koophuis, Miep, Elli and Menk Van Senten. Thus this group of eight people started their life in the cramped quarters of a secret hideout. In the beginning Anne speaks of her pleasure at having people to talk to, but soon tensions develop within the group. Anne's relationship with her mother is much strained but she remains very close to her father. Soon there is a romance between Peter and Anne.

Anne's time is mostly occupied by reading and studying and writing her diary. She constantly dreams of going back to school. The pages of her diary reveal the feelings and beliefs, ambitions and hopes of a young girl. She continued to write with increasing hope and joy, never disheartened by fear or isolation, until the last entry of August 1, 1944.

On August 4, 1944, Anne and her family and friends were captured and sent off for interrogation at the Gestapo headquarters and later on to the concentration camps. Anne Frank died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp a few weeks before the British troops liberated it on April 15, 1945. Only Otto Frank survived and when he came across Anne's diary salvaged by his friends, he decided to publish it.

You shall now read a few entries taken from Anne Frank's Diary.

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## 1.4 ENTRIES FROM ANNE FRANK'S *DIARY*

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Anne Frank wrote in Dutch, and excerpts have been translated into English.

### 1.4.1 Text

**Saturday, 20 June, 1942.**

Dear Kitty,

I haven't written for a few days, because I wanted first of all to think about my diary. It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary; not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems to me that neither I - nor for that matter anyone else- will be interested in the **unbosomings** of a thirteen-year-old



school girl. Still, what does that matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart.

There is a saying that “paper is more patient than man”; it came back to me on one of my slightly melancholy days, while I sat chin in hand, feeling too bored and limp even to make up my mind whether to go out or stay at home. Yes, there is no doubt that paper is patient and as I don’t intend to show this cardboard-covered notebook, bearing the proud name of “diary”, to anyone, unless I find a real friend, boy or girl, probably nobody cares. And now I come to the root of the matter, the reason for my starting a diary: it is that I have no such real friend.

Let me put it more clearly, since no one will believe that a girl of thirteen feels herself quite alone in the world, nor is it so. I have darling parents and a sister of sixteen. I know about thirty people whom one might call friends - I have strings of boy friends, anxious to catch a glimpse of me and who, failing that, peep at me through mirrors in class. I have relations, aunts and uncles, who are darlings too, a good home, no - I don’t seem to lack anything. But it’s the same with all my friends, just fun and joking, nothing more. I can never bring myself to talk of anything outside the common round. We don’t seem to be able to get any closer, that is the root of the trouble. Perhaps I lack confidence, but anyway, there it is, a stubborn fact and I don’t seem to be able to do anything about it.

Hence, this diary, in order to enhance in my mind’s eye the picture of a friend for whom I have waited so long, I don’t want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary like most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Kitty. No one will grasp what I’m talking about if I begin my letters to Kitty just out of the blue, so albeit unwillingly, I will start by sketching in brief the story of my life.

My father was thirty-six when he married my mother, who was then twenty-five. My sister Margot was born in 1926 in Frankfort-on-Main, I followed on June 12, 1929, and, as we are Jewish, we **emigrated** to Holland in 1933, where my father was appointed Managing Director of Travies N.V. This firm is in close relationship with the firm of Kolen & Co, in the same building, of which my father is a Partner.

The rest of our family, however, felt the full impact of Hitler’s anti-Jewish laws, so life was filled with anxiety. In 1938 after the **pogroms**, my two uncles (my mother’s brothers) escaped to the U.S.A. My old grandmother came to us, she was then seventy-three. After May 1940 good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the arrival of the Germans, which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. Jews must wear a yellow star, Jews must hand in their bicycles, Jews are banned from trams and are forbidden to drive. Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o’clock and then only in shops which bear the placard “Jewish shop.” Jews must be indoors by eight o’clock and cannot even sit in their own gardens after that hour. Jews are forbidden to visit theatres, cinemas, and other places of entertainment. Jews may not take part in public sports. Swimming baths, tennis courts, hockey fields, and other sports grounds are all prohibited to them. Jews may not visit Christians. Jews must go to Jewish schools, and many more restrictions of a similar kind.

So we could not do this and were forbidden to do that. But life went on in spite of it all. Jopie used to say to me, "You're scared to do anything, because it may be forbidden." Our freedom was strictly limited. Yet things were still bearable.

Granny died in January 1942; no one will ever know how much she is present in my thoughts and how much I love her still.

In 1934 I went to school at the Montessori Kindergarten and continued there. It was at the end of the school year, I was in form 6B, when I had to say good-bye to Mrs. K. We both wept, it was very sad. In 1941 I went, with my sister Margot, to the Jewish Secondary School, she into the fourth form and I into the first.

So far everything is all right with the four of us and here I come to the present day.

**Friday, 9 October, 1942**

Dear Kitty,

I've only got **dismal** and depressing news for you today. Our many Jewish friends are being taken away by the dozen. These people are treated by the Gestapo without a shred of decency, being loaded into cattle trucks and sent to Westerbork, the big Jewish camp in Drente. Westerbork sounds terrible: only one washing cubicle for a hundred people and not nearly enough lavatories. There is no separate accommodation. Men, women, and children all sleep together. One hears of frightful immorality because of this, and a lot of the women, and even girls, who stay there any length of time are expecting babies.

It is impossible to escape; most of the people in the camp are branded as inmates by their shaven heads and many also by their Jewish appearance.

If it is as bad as this in Holland whatever will it be like in the distant and barbarous regions they are sent to? We assume that most of them are murdered. The English radio speaks of their being gassed.

Perhaps that is the quickest way to die. I feel terribly upset. I couldn't tear myself away while Miep told these dreadful stories, and she herself was equally wound up for that matter. Just recently for instance, a poor old crippled Jewess was sitting on her doorstep; she had been told to wait there by the Gestapo, who had gone to fetch a car to take her away. The poor old thing was terrified by the guns that were shooting at English planes overhead, and by the glaring beams of the searchlights. But Miep did not dare take her in; no one would undergo such a risk. The Germans strike without the slightest mercy. Elli too is very quiet: her boy friend has got to go to Germany. She is afraid that the airmen who fly over our homes will drop their bombs, often weighing a million kilos, on Dirk's head. Jokes such as "he's not likely to get a million" and "it only takes one bomb" are in rather bad taste. Dirk is certainly not the only one who has to go: trainload of boys leave daily. If they stop at a small station en route, sometimes some of them manage to get out unnoticed and escape, perhaps a few manage it. This, however, is not the end of my bad news. Have you ever heard of **hostages**? That's the latest thing in penalties for **sabotage**. Can you imagine anything so dreadful?

Prominent citizens, innocent people – are thrown into prison to await their fate. If the saboteur can't be traced, the Gestapo simply put about five hostages against

the wall. Announcements of their deaths appear in the paper frequently. These outrages are described as “fatal accidents”. Nice people, the Germans! To think that I was once one of them too! No, Hitler took away our nationality long ago. In fact, Germans and Jews are the greatest enemies in the world.

Yours, Anne

**Wednesday, 10 March, 1943**

Dear Kitty,

We had a short circuit last evening, and on top of that the guns kept banging away all the time. I still haven't got over my fear of everything connected with shooting and planes, and I creep into Daddy's bed nearly every night for comfort. I know it's very childish but you don't know what it is like. The A. A. Guns roar so loudly that you can't hear yourself speak. Mrs. Van Daan, the **fatalist**, was nearly crying, and said in a very timid little voice, “Oh, it is so unpleasant! Oh, they are shooting so hard”, by which she really means “I'm so frightened.”

It didn't seem nearly so bad by candlelight as in the dark. I was shivering, just as if I had a temperature, and begged Daddy to light the candle again. He was relentless, the light remained off. Suddenly there was a burst of machine-gun fire, and that is ten times worse than guns. Mummy jumped out of bed and, to Pim's annoyance, lit the candle. When he complained her answer was firm: “After all, Anne's not exactly a **veteran** soldier,” and that was the end of it.

Have I already told you about Mrs. Van Daan's other fears? I don't think so. If I am to keep you informed of all that happens in the “Secret Annexe”, you must know about this too. One night Mrs. Van Daan thought she heard burglars in the attic, she heard loud footsteps and was so frightened that she woke her husband. Just at that moment the burglars disappeared and the only sounds that Mr. Van Dam could hear were the heartbeats of the frightened fatalist herself. “Oh, Putti [Mr. Van Daan's nickname], they are sure to have taken the sausages and all our peas and beans. And Peter, I wonder if he is still safely in bed?” “They certainly won't have stolen Peter. Listen, don't worry and let me go to sleep.” But nothing came of that. Mrs. van Daan was far too nervous to sleep another wink. A few nights after that the whole Van Daan family was woken by ghostly sounds. Peter went up to the attic with a torch- and scamper-scamper! What do you think it was running away? A swarm of enormous rats! When we knew who the thieves were, we let Mouschi sleep in the attic and the uninvited guests didn't come back again; at least not during the night.

Peter went up to the loft a couple of evenings ago to fetch some old newspapers. He had to hold the trap door firmly to get down the steps. He put his hand down without looking.. . and went tumbling down the ladder from the sudden shock and pain. Without knowing it he had put his hand on a large rat, and it had bitten him hard. By the time he reached us, as white as a sheet and with his knees knocking, the blood had soaked through his pajamas. And no wonder; it's not very pleasant to stroke a large rat; and to get bitten into the bargain is really dreadful.

Yours, Anne

Sunday, 2 May, 1943

Anne Frank's: *The Diary of a Young Girl*

Dear Kitty,

If I just think of how we live here, I usually come to the conclusion that it is a paradise compared with how other Jews who are not in hiding must be living. Even so, later on, when everything is normal again, I shall be amazed to think that we, who were so **spick and span** at home, should have sunk to such a low level. By this I mean that our manners have declined. For instance, ever since we have been here, we have had one oilcloth on our table which, owing to so much use, is not one of the cleanest. Admittedly I often try to clean it with a dirty dishcloth, which is more hole than cloth. The table doesn't do us much credit either, in spite of hard scrubbing. The Van Daans have been sleeping on the same flannelette sheet the whole winter, one can't wash it here because the soap powder we get on the ration isn't sufficient, and besides it's not good enough. Daddy goes about in frayed trousers and his tie is beginning to show signs of wear too. Mummy's **corsets** have split today and are too old to be repaired, while Margot goes about in a brassiere two sizes too small for her.

Mummy and Margot have managed the whole winter with three vests between them, and mine are so small that they don't even reach my tummy.

Certainly, these are all things which can be overcome. Still, I sometimes realize with a shock: "How are we, now going about in worn-out things, from my pants down to Daddy's shaving brush, ever going to get back to our pre-war standards?"

They were banging away so much last night that four times I gathered all my belongings together. Today I have packed a suitcase with the most necessary things for an escape. But Mummy quite rightly says: "Where will you escape to?" The whole of Holland is being punished for the strikes which have been going on in many parts of the country. Therefore, a state of **siege** has been declared and everyone gets one butter coupon less. What naughty little children!

Yours, Anne

Tuesday, 4 April, 1944

Dear Kitty,

For a long time I haven't had any idea of what I was working for any more, the end of the war is so terribly far away. So unreal, like a fairy tale. If the war isn't over by September I shan't go to school any more, because I don't want to be two years behind. Peter filled my days, nothing but Peter dreams and thoughts until Saturday, when I felt so utterly miserable, oh, it was terrible. I was holding back my tears all the while I was with Peter, then laughed with Van Daan over a lemon punch, was cheerful and excited, but the moment I was alone I knew that I would have to cry my heart out. So, clad in my nightdress, I let myself go and slipped down onto the floor. First I said my long prayer very earnestly, then I cried with my head on my arms, my knees bent up, on the bare floor, completely folded up. One large sob brought me back to earth again, and I quelled my tears because I didn't want them to hear anything in the next room. Then I began trying to talk some courage into myself. I could only say: "I must, I must, I must . . ." Completely stiff from the unnatural position, I fell against the side of the bed and fought on, until I climbed into bed again just before half past ten. It was over!

And now it's all over. I must work, so as not to be a fool, to get on, to become a journalist, because that's what I want! I know that I can write, a couple of my stories are good, my descriptions of the "Secret Annexe" are humorous, there's a lot in my diary that speaks, but - whether I have real talent remains to be seen.

"Eva's Dream" is my best fairy tale, and the queer thing about it is that I don't know where it comes from. Quite a lot of "Cady's Life" is good too, but, on the whole, it's nothing.

I am the best and sharpest critic of my own work. I know myself what is and what is not well written. Anyone who doesn't write doesn't know how wonderful it is; I used to bemoan the fact that I couldn't draw at all, but now I am more than happy that I can at least write. And if I haven't any talent for writing books or newspaper articles, well, then I can always write for myself.

I want to get on; I can't imagine that I would have to lead the same sort of life as Mummy and Mrs. Van Daan and all the women who do their work and are then forgotten. I must have something besides a husband and children, something that I can devote myself to!

I want to go on living even after my death! And therefore I am grateful to God for giving me this gift, this possibility of developing myself and of writing, of expressing all that is in me.

I can shake off everything if I write, my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn. But, and that is the great question, will I ever be able to write anything great, will I ever become a journalist or a writer? I hope so, oh, I hope so very much, for I can recapture everything when I write, my thoughts, my ideals and my fantasies.

I haven't done anything more to "Cady's Life" for ages, in my mind I know exactly how to go on, but somehow it doesn't flow from my pen. Perhaps I never shall finish it, it may land up in the wastepaper basket, or the fire ... That's a horrible idea, but then I think to myself, "At the age of fourteen and with so little experience, how can you write about philosophy?"

So I go on again with fresh courage, I think I shall succeed, because I want to write!

Yours, Anne

**Friday, 26 May, 1944**

Dear Kitty,

At last, at last I can sit quietly at my table in front of a crack of window and write you everything.

I feel so miserable, I haven't felt like this for months; even after the burglary I didn't feel so utterly broken. On the one hand, the vegetable man, the Jewish question, which is being discussed minutely over the whole house, the invasion delay, the bad food, the strain, the miserable atmosphere, my disappointment in Peter; and on the other hand, Elli's engagement, Whitsun reception, flowers, Kraler's birthday, fancy cakes, and stories about cabarets, films and concerts. That difference, that huge difference, it's always there, one day we laugh and see the funny side of the situation, but the next we are afraid, fear, suspense, and

despair staring from our faces. Miep and Kraler carry the heaviest burden of the eight in hiding. Miep in all she does, and Kraler through the enormous responsibility, which is sometimes so much for him that he can hardly talk from pent-up nerves and strain. Koophuis and Elli look after us well too, but they can forget us at times, even if it's only for a few hours, or a day, or even two days. They have their own worries, Koophuis over his health, Elli over her engagement, which is not altogether rosy, but they also have their little outings, visits to friends, and the whole life of ordinary people. For them the suspense is sometimes lifted, even if it is only for a short time, but for us it never lifts for a moment. We've been here for two years now; how long have we still to put up with this almost unbearable, ever increasing pressure?

The sewer is blocked, so we mustn't run water, or rather only a trickle, when we go to the W.C. we have to take a lavatory brush with us, and we keep dirty water in a large Cologne pot. We can manage for today, but what do we do if the plumber can't do the job alone? The municipal scavenging service doesn't come until Tuesday.

Miep sent us a currant cake, made up in the shape of a doll with the words "Happy Whitsun" on the note attached to it. It's almost as if she's ridiculing us, our present frame of mind and our uneasiness could hardly be called "happy". The affair of the vegetable man has made us more nervous, you hear "shh, shh" from all sides again, and we're being quieter over everything. The police forced the door there, so they could do it to us too! If one day we too should . . . No, I mustn't write it, but I can't put the question out of my mind today. On the contrary, all the fear I've already been through seems to face me again in all its frightfulness.

This evening at eight o'clock I had to go to the downstairs lavatory all alone, there was no one down there, as everyone was listening to the radio, I wanted to be brave, but it was difficult. I always feel much safer here upstairs than alone downstairs in that large, silent house, alone with the mysterious muffled noises from upstairs and the tooting of motor horns in the street. I have to hurry for I start to quiver if I begin thinking about the situation.

Again and again I ask myself, would it not have been better for us all if we had not gone into hiding, and if we were dead now and not going through all this misery, especially as we shouldn't be running our protectors into danger any more. But we all **recoil** from these thoughts too, for we still love life, we haven't yet forgotten the voice of nature, we still hope, hope about everything. I hope something will happen soon now, shooting if need be – nothing can crush us more than this restlessness. Let the end come, even if it is hard, then at least we shall know whether we are finally going to win through or go under.

Yours, Anne

**Tuesday, 6 June, t 944**

Dear Kitty,

"This is **D-day**," came the announcement over the English news and quite rightly, "this is the day". The invasion has begun!

The British gave the news at eight o'clock this morning: Calais, Boulogne, Le Havre, and Cherbourg, also the Pas de Calais (as usual), were heavily bombarded. Moreover, as a safety measure for all occupied territories, all people who live

within a radius of thirty-five kilometers from the coast are warned to be prepared for bombardments. If possible, the English will drop pamphlets one hour beforehand.

According to the German news, British parachute troops have landed on the French coast, "English landing craft are in battle with the German Navy," says the B. B. C.

We discussed it over the "Annexe" breakfast at nine o'clock: Is this just a trial landing like Dieppe two years ago?

British broadcast in German, Dutch, French, and other languages at ten o'clock: "The invasion has begun!" - that means the "real" invasion. English broadcast in German at eleven o'clock: speech by the Supreme Commander, **General Dwight Eisenhower**.

The English news at twelve o'clock in English: "This is D-day". General Eisenhower said to the French people: "Stiff fighting will come now, but after this the victory. The year 1944 is the year of complete victory, good luck."

BBC news in English at one o'clock (translated): 11,000 planes stand ready, and are flying to and fro nonstop landing troops and attacking behind the lines, 4000 landing boats, plus small craft, are landing troops and material between Cherbourg and Le Havre incessantly. English and American troops are already engaged in hard fighting. Speeches by Gerbrandy, by the Prime Minister of Belgium, King Haakon of Norway, De Gaulle of France, the King of England, and last, but not least, **Churchill**.

Great commotion in the "Secret Annexe"! Would the long-awaited liberation that has been talked of so much, but which still seems too wonderful, too much like a fairy tale, ever come true? Could we be granted victory this year, 1944? We don't know yet, but hope is revived within us, it gives us fresh courage, and makes us strong again. Since we must put up bravely with all the fears, privations, and sufferings, the great thing now is to remain calm and steadfast. Now more than ever we must clench our teeth and not cry out.

France, Russia, Italy, and Germany, too, can all cry out and give vent to their misery, but we haven't the right to do that yet!

Oh, Kitty, the best part of the invasion is that I have the feeling that friends are approaching. We have been oppressed by those terrible Germans for so long, they have had their knives so at our throats, that the thought of friends and delivery fills us with confidence!

Now it doesn't concern the Jews any more, no, it concerns Holland and all occupied Europe. Perhaps, Margot says, I may yet be able to go back to school in September or October.

Yours, Anne

P.S. I'll keep you up to date with all the latest news!

## 1.4.2 Glossary

<b>unbosomings</b>	:	to reveal the innermost thoughts and desires.
<b>emigrated</b>	:	to leave one country to settle in another.
<b>pogrom</b>	:	organized massacre, originally of Jews in Russia.
<b>dismal</b>	:	causing or showing gloom
<b>hostage</b>	:	a person given or seized by another as pledge or security.
<b>sabotage</b>	:	wilfully destroy.
<b>fatalist</b>	:	a person who submits to all that happens as inevitable, who believes that everything is predetermined.
<b>veteran</b>	:	a person who has a long experience of military service and war
<b>spick and span</b>	:	very neat.
<b>corsets</b>	:	a woman's close fitting supporting undergarment
<b>siege</b>	:	persistent attack
<b>mummed</b>	:	to reduce sound for secrecy.
<b>recoil</b>	:	to move back suddenly.
<b>D-day</b>	:	day on which any important operation is scheduled to begin; the Allied forces invaded northern France on 6 June 1944.
<b>General Eisenhower</b>	:	Commander of the Allied forces and later President of the U.S
<b>Churchill</b>	:	British Prime Minister during World War II and eminent statesman and writer.

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## 1.5 DISCUSSION

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You have just read a few entries in Anne Frank's *Diary*. It describes the incidents in her life from her thirteenth birthday in June 1942 till she was captured by the Gestapo in August, 1944. The entries are full of interesting anecdotes, thoughts and dreams that are part of the life of a young girl. She truthfully describes the fear and hopes of a group of people comprising immediate family and friends who took refuge in a secret hideout to escape the persecution of the Nazis. Let us look at some of the important incidents and people in Anne's Diary.

### **Anne's early recollections of Jewish persecution**

Anne was born of Jewish parents in Germany who emigrated to Holland in 1933, due to Jewish persecution, when Anne was four years old. Even there, the family felt the impact of Hitler's anti-Jewish laws. Once the Second World War started and the Germans captured Holland, life became really hard. Many Anti-Jewish laws were passed. Jews had to wear a yellow star to distinguish them, they had to hand in their bicycles, and they were banned from trams and forbidden to drive. They could shop only between three and five and only in Jewish shops. Cinemas



and theatres were forbidden to Jews and they could not take part in public sports. Jewish children could study only in Jewish schools. So Anne had to discontinue her regular school and attend the Jewish Secondary School.

### **The family’s escape to the ‘secret annexe’**

Anne’s father had decided that they would escape the Germans before they came to arrest them. When the Nazis summoned Anne’s sister Margot, the family decided that the time had come to go into hiding. Anne and Margot packed their essentials into school bags. Their friends Miep and Henk took some bags filled with clothes. Early in the morning each family member put on a number of clothes and giving the impression that they were going to school, they walked to the secret annexe in the building of Anne’s father’s office. The annexe was hidden behind the office and contained a few rooms with minimum facilities. They were soon joined by the Van Daans and later on by a dentist called Albert Dussel. Thus this group of eight people lived in the confines of the secret annexe for two years.

### **Anne’s relationship with her parents**

Anne’s relationship with her mother was strained. But she was deeply attached to her father Otto Frank. She had little in common with her mother. She felt that her mother loved her sister Margot more than her. Anne adored her father to whom she was emotionally the closest.

### **Anne’s relationship with others in the secret annexe**

Initially Anne looked forward to the arrival of the Van Daans at the secret annexe since there would be more company. She describes their son, Peter as not yet sixteen and rather ‘soft, shy and gawky’. At first she does not like his company but later on they fall in love. Anne does not like the quarrels between Mrs. and Mr. Van Daan who shout at each other. She constantly makes fun of Mrs. Van Daan who is often described as ‘unbearable’.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

Read the questions given below and answer them in your own words in the space provided before you turn to the answers given at the end of the Unit:

- i) What does Anne call her diary and what are her reasons for writing a diary?  
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.....  
.....  
.....
  
- ii) Why does Anne think she is living in a paradise?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

iii) Why Is Anne thankful to God?

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

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## 1.6 ANNE FRANK'S DIARY AS A LITERARY WORK

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Anne Frank's *Diary* is a touching and beautifully written commentary on war and its terrible impact on human life. Though a first person narrative which describes individual and personal experiences, one can hear in it the voice of over six million people affected by the Holocaust. As a writer and humanist, she is the spokesperson of an age, while at the same time speaking to future generations about the folly of indifference. Thus, her diary is a social, historical and literary document. Even though it is a diary, one can read it like a good novel because it is able to sustain tension in the reader. Anne portrays the curious mental state of transformation from a child to an adult which is both a universal and personal experience. Her prose style is characterized by precision, confidence and tenseness. But what is most striking is her stunning honesty which makes her diary a valid historical document. Anne is a master in characterization and is able to portray the people around her with great psychological realism. Occasionally, she becomes shrewd and cruel in her character analyses but these can be seen as part of the mood swings of adolescence. But she is most critical and uncompromising in her analysis of herself. The most endearing quality of the diary is Anne's self-introspection. The reader is able to peep into the depths of the mind of a young girl living under great stress in extraordinary conditions. Yet her cheerfulness and optimism, her perseverance and will power, her courage in speaking the truth, make her writing unique in itself.

Her prose style is also characterized by warmth and wit, sensitivity and humanity, all combining with vivid picturization and psychological insight. She wrote under the threat of death but her writing has immortalized her. Anne Frank's *Diary* is a fitting memorial to her fine spirit and offers a rich and rewarding experience in reading. Today Anne Frank's *Diary* is considered a classic and has been translated into more than thirty-one languages, including Bengali and Malayalam. It has been published in thirty countries and has sold more than one million copies in hard cover alone. It has been adopted into numerous plays and films. Anne Frank's wish "I want to go on living even after my death", has thus come literally true. She lives on through her diary.

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have

- acquainted you with the life and times of Anne Frank;

- analyzed the prose form of diary writing;
- discussed the Holocaust and its significance; and
- read a few entries from Anne Frank’s diary

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## 1.8 SUGGESTED READING

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It is recommended that you read the whole diary of Anne Frank.

*Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, Introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt.  
New York: Bantam Books.

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## 1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Anne names her diary Kitty. Her reason for starting a diary is that she has no real friend and she feels Kitty is the friend she had been wanting for so long.
- ii) When Anne compares her life with the fate of millions of Jews who are not in hiding and are suffering great persecution at the hands of the Nazi regime, she feels that she is living in paradise.
- iii) Anne wants to be remembered even after her death and so she thanks God for giving her the gift of writing which helps her to develop herself and express all her thoughts. When she writes, her sorrows disappear and she feels courageous enough to face the world again.

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## UNIT 2 MARGARET LAURENCE’S: “MY FINAL HOUR”

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### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 What is a Speech?
- 2.3 Margaret Laurence: Life and Works
- 2.4 Laurence’s Social Concerns
- 2.5 “My Final Hour”: Excerpts from Laurence’s Speech
  - 2.5.1 Text
  - 2.5.2 Glossary
- 2.6 Discussion
  - 2.6.1 Summary
  - 2.6.2 Features of Laurence’s Speech
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Suggested Reading
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit, we shall read and discuss excerpts from a speech delivered by Margaret Laurence at Trent University. After a careful reading of this unit, you should be able to:

- outline the life and works of Margaret Laurence;
- understand a speech as a form of literary expression;
- consider the commitment of Laurence to the cause of nuclear disarmament; and
- explain the main features of Laurence’s speech.

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we shall acquaint you with a spoken form of non-fictional prose — a speech. For this, we have selected a speech by Margaret Laurence, “My Final Hour”, given at Trent University. You will be reading excerpts from this speech in this unit.

History is witness to many a powerful speech made by eminent persons like Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill, Subhas Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, to name just a few, that have marked a turning point in the life of people and nations of the world. For instance, Swami Vivekananda won recognition abroad for India and Vedantism with his magnetic personality together with the thought-provoking address he gave at Chicago in September 1893, during the World Parliament of Religions, in which he advocated tolerance and universal acceptance and condemned bigotry and fanaticism. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the most famous black civil rights

leader, changed the way America treated its black citizens with his most stirring and fiery extempore speech 'I Have A Dream'. Delivered in 1963 to more than 2,50,000 people in Washington, this speech marked a turning point in American history. Following the speech, the cause of the blacks occupied centre stage, with 'I Have A Dream' as the national mantra, till the 1964 Civil Rights Act made racial discrimination illegal. One still remembers that unforgettable and landmark speech 'Tryst With Destiny' made by Jawaharlal Nehru to the Constituent Assembly, at the midnight hour of Indian independence, August 14, 1947, in which he defined and captured the essence of the triumphant culmination of years of freedom struggle against the British Empire in India.

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## 2.2 WHAT IS A SPEECH?

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A speech is a "continuous spoken utterance" or a "spoken communication or expression of thought in prose" addressed to an audience. It presents the personal viewpoint of the speaker in a convincing manner, on a subject that is of universal importance. A speech can be spoken from a written draft or be delivered extempore (given on the spur of the moment; without prior preparation; an extempore speech is one that is delivered without the help of any text or notes).

Speeches are generally associated with politicians. But not all political speeches have literary merit. Usually, a political speech becomes a mere vote-catching rhetoric (a showy and declamatory expression), that is designed to elicit superficial public applause. On a slightly lesser scale, it becomes an oration rather than a speech. Is there a difference between an oration and a speech? Only very slight as both terms are generally treated as having interchangeable meanings. But, since we are analyzing a speech as a form of literary expression, we must point out the difference between an oration and a speech, especially with regard to their aim, content and presentation.

Oratory is the art of public speaking. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), a great Roman orator who captivated his audience with his stately oration, wrote a textbook on oratory, *Treatise de Gratore*, in which he laid down the laws of rhetoric. The aim of the orator is to sway multitudes and decide dynastic fortunes, electoral issues, and fates of national and international issues. What differentiates an oration from a speech is the presentation or style. The content of an orator is not as important as its presentation. In other words, oratory is more a matter of style than of substance; more an issue of manner than of matter; less a question of content (subject matter) and more of diction (choice of words). The same ideas may occur to many, but an orator dresses them well, thereby capturing the attention and admiration of the listeners. When we call someone a good orator, it is not because we like the content of his or her speech but because of the manner in which the speech is delivered. Thus, an oration is a skilful speech intended to create an impression, and relies on slogans, catchphrases, epigrams, and, in its extreme form, on rhetorical devices like a high flown and pompous language and a great deal of theatricality. Most, not all, political speeches are rhetorical orations with an inflated, over-decorated and insincere style. In fact, it would not be wrong to call them harangues (loud, pompous and wordy addresses made to a multitude). Some modern-day religious discourses are in the nature of rhetorical orations.

A fine speech, on the other hand, is not delivered with the aim to excite or rouse the audience to tumultuous applause. Rather, it is made to inspire and persuade the hearers to think along the lines the speaker wishes them to. Unlike in an oration, it is the content in a speech that is of primary importance and which lends force to it. A power-packed speech is one that is charged with the sturdy conviction the speaker has in his or her beliefs. This makes his/her speech persuasive and convincing. It comes direct from the heart of the speaker and goes, just as direct, into the hearts and minds of the listeners, bringing a radical change in their way of thinking.

Both a powerful content and the manner of speaking imbue a speech with literary merit. By manner is meant style or presentation of the subject matter. A judicious and effective use of language and literary devices adds literary value to a speech. Good speakers have a way with words. They are persons of eloquence, that is, they know the art of expressing their strong emotion in correct, appropriate, expressive and fluent language. Since a speech is vocal, voice modulation and intonation (the rise and fall in pitch in the voice) in its delivery are also desirable. Literary devices like humour, pathos, irony, metaphorical expressions, forceful repetitions etc. give additional flavour to a speech.

In a nutshell, an orator speaks for effect, banking on a skilful use of language, while a fine speaker is one who reasons justly and expresses himself/herself elegantly upon a subject he/she passionately believes in. Margaret Laurence's "My Final Hour" is a good example of a fine speech.

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### **2.3 MARGARET LAURENCE: LIFE AND WORKS**

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Margaret Laurence (1926-1987) is universally acclaimed as one of the most compelling voices of Canadian Literature. Although firmly rooted in the, Canadian soil, her stories and novels touch the psyche of all developing nations.

Born on July 18, 1926, in Neepawa, Manitoba, as Margaret Wemyss, she began writing at the age of seven, though she took herself seriously as a writer only when she was twenty-three. In 1948, Margaret married a civil engineer, Jack Laurence, with whom she first proceeded, to England and then to Somaliland in East Africa, where they lived for two years. Later the Laurences lived in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) for five years. This seven- year sojourn in Africa, where she had a first-hand experience of the stunting effects that colonization can have over the natives and their cultures, shaped her socio-political commitment as a writer. Here she also saw the bondage and subjection of women and realized their position to be that of victims of a "male-centric society" a theme she took up in her African novels and later elaborated in the Canadian novels. In 1957, the Laurences moved to Vancouver. In 1962, Margaret separated from her husband and settled in England where she wrote four out of her five Canadian novels. She finally went back to Canada where she was honoured with various awards and citations for her work. In 1986, she was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, and, in 1987, unable to bear her illness, she took an overdose of sleeping tablets and ended her life.

A prolific writer, Laurence has seven novels to her credit. *This Side Jordan* (1969) and *The Tomorrow Tamer* (1963) constitute her African novels and are set in Ghana. *The Stone Angel* (1964) is the first of Laurence's Canadian novels and

tells the story of ninety-year-old Hagar Shipley and her life-long journey towards self-understanding; *A Jest of God* (1966) tells the story of Rachel Cameron, a woman struggling to come to terms with herself and her world; *The Fire Dwellers* (1969) explores the dilemmas of personal identity of the protagonist Stacey MacAindra; *A Bird in the House* (1970) is a set of eight interconnected stories that constitute the “fictional autobiography” of Laurence; *The Diviners* (1974) is the last of the Canadian series and is a powerful story of an independent woman, Morag Gunn, who refuses to abandon her search for love.

In addition to the novels, Laurence has also written four books for children. Her autobiography *The Prophet's Camel Bell* was written in 1963 and a book of translations *A Tree for Poverty: Somali Poetry and Prose* in 1954. A large number of her essays, articles, interviews and speeches have been published in various anthologies, the more prominent ones being *Long Drums and Cannons* (1968) and *Heart of a Stranger* (1976). Her memoir *Dance on the Earth* was published posthumously in 1989.

### Check Your Progress 1

i) What is Margaret Laurence’s nationality?

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ii) Name any two novels of Laurence that are set in Canada.

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iii) What was the main cause of Laurence’s death?

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iv) Who gave the speech ‘I Have A Dream’?

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## 2.4 LAURENCE'S SOCIAL CONCERNS

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Before you begin to read the speech "My Final Hour" by Margaret Laurence, it will help you to know something about her commitment to social causes, especially the one of nuclear disarmament, so that once the background to the speech is clear to you, you can understand the views expressed by Laurence more clearly. "It is my feeling that as we grow older we should become not less radical but more so," said Margaret Laurence in her speech "My Final Hour". Acting on this belief, Laurence turned from fiction-writing to promoting causes like nuclear disarmament, social justice and environmental protection, through didactic lectures, essays and even direct-mail fund raising campaigns during the final decade of her life. Animated by moral and religious urgency, she even lent her prestigious name to other causes.

On all nuclear questions, Laurence's arguments were the simple observations of a moral, sensitive person. She argued that when it comes to a nuclear war, "there are not two sides," as there will neither be any victors nor any vanquished, but only a handful of survivors, that too if the earth survives the nuclear holocaust. To Laurence, the nuclear issue was most important. If the issue of a nuclear attack was not solved, according to her, there was not going to be anyone around to solve any of the other issues like those of starvation, disease, hardships and sufferings that existed in so many parts of the world. To quote her: "For the price of one Trident nuclear submarine, malaria could be wiped off the face of the earth. That gives me pause. These two issues, the old one of the needless suffering in the world, and the building of nuclear weapons, are very closely tied together."

For Laurence, the problem in the nuclear arms race was due to a "crisis in the imagination" on the part of world leaders, particularly the two great super powers, who talked about megadeath without realizing, as Laurence put it, "that these are real live human beings, that they're talking about our children, real people, who in a nuclear holocaust would die horribly... ..". She further pointed out that while writing a novel she always tried to feel that her characters were as real as she was, that their joys and pains were as real as hers, and declared that, "...the inability to feel the reality of others is what enables people to become so brutalized that they are able to torture and murder their fellow human beings."

Laurence emphasized the importance of the ordinary people who could have an effect in halting the nuclear arms race. If people realized that none of them was ordinary, that they all were unique human beings who mattered, they could get together and force their respective governments to bring about global disarmament of nuclear weapons.

As a writer, too, Laurence was committed to solving the nuclear issue, although she found it hard to address the question or tackle it through her articles, talks, lectures etc. As she summed it: "I cannot write novels that preach, but what I can do is to affirm my whole life-view through the characters in my books. I think that in all my writing, a very strong kind of celebration of life itself comes through."

This speech expresses Margaret Laurence's commitment to resolve the nuclear issue. She speaks out against the use of nuclear arms and the expenditure of billions of dollars on their production. She emphatically advocates global nuclear disarmament.



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## 2.5 “MY FINAL HOUR” : EXCERPTS FROM LAURENCE’S SPEECH

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Margaret Laurence had a long and close association with Trent University. After her return to Canada in 1969, Margaret finally established permanent residence in Lakefield, a small town ten minutes drive from Trent University. She was awarded an honorary degree by Trent in 1972, and she joined the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Canadian Studies* in 1973. Her association with Trent University deepened in the years that followed. She became Trent’s first Writer-in-Residence in 1974, participating generously in the life of the university, attending tutorials and seminars, delivering formal and informal talks and counselling young writers. Two most splendid examples of Laurence engaging her friends and community in a direct way are her addresses “Books That Mattered to Me” and “My Final Hour” given at Trent University. “My Final Hour”, is an address first delivered to the Trent University Philosophy Society on 29 March 1983, at the Trent Seminary.

### 2.5.1 Text

#### “My Final Hour”

This is the first time I have ever had the privilege of addressing graduating students who are candidates to the **ministry** of the church. I must admit to a feeling of nervousness, in standing here and making a statement of personal belief. In accepting this invitation, I requested that a solid **lectern** be provided something I could lean on. I told a friend about this need, and she said, “Margaret, what you really want is not a lectern but a **pulpit**”. Well, I don’t think that is the case at all, but it is true that in speaking to you now, I feel the need of something solid to lean on, physically, but also the need, not just now but every day, of something spiritual to lean on. This **sustaining** force is faith.

First I would like to pass on one piece of advice. If, as you grow older, you feel you are also growing stupider, do not worry. This is normal, and usually occurs around the time when your children, now grown, are discovering the opposite — they now see that you aren’t nearly as stupid as they had believed when they were young teen-agers. Take heart from that. True, your new- found sense of stupidity will no doubt be partly due to the fact that the technology of the age has far outstripped any feeble knowledge of it that you may once have felt you had. It may, however, also be due to the fact that at last you may be learning a little healthy humility — humility in its true and indeed religious sense, which of course has nothing at all to do with self- effacement but with a recognition of your human limitations. I would not claim that I have learned that kind of humility — that struggle to learn which will never cease. But at least I now can accept with some sort of equanimity that many things are beyond my power.

My limitations extend to many fields. I know now that I will never know an enormous amount about music and painting. My knowledge of science is likely to remain minuscule. I will never know as much as I would like to about the planets and their patterned courses. Even in my own area of so- called expertise, I will never read all the novels I would like to read, even though I read great numbers of them yearly. I will also never write a novel with which I am really satisfied.

.... Well, an acceptance of limitations does not mean that one is not constantly trying to extend the boundaries of knowledge and accomplishment. And it certainly does not mean an acceptance of defeat, in whatever fields our endeavours take place. It is my feeling that as we grow older we should become not *less* radical but *more so*. I do not, of course, mean this in any political-party sense, but in a willingness to struggle for those things in which we passionately believe. Social activism and the struggle for social justice are often thought of as natural activities of the young but not of the middle-aged or elderly. In fact, I don't think this was ever true, and certainly in our own era we are seeing an enormous upsurge of people of all ages who are deeply and committedly concerned about the state of our hurting and endangered world.

We are faced now with an emergency that concerns not only our own personal lives, but the lives of all people and all creatures on earth.

Ours is a terrifying world. Injustice, suffering and fear are everywhere to be found. It is difficult to maintain hope in such a world, and yet I believe there is hope. I want to proclaim and affirm my personal belief in the **social gospel**. I speak as a Christian, a woman, a writer, a parent, a member of humanity and a sharer in life itself, a life I believe to be informed and infused with the holy spirit. I do not think it is enough to hope and pray that our own lives and soul will know **grace**, even though my entire life as a writer has been concerned with my belief that all human individuals matter, that no one is ordinary. Our Lord's new commandment speaks very clearly. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The social gospel is no easier now than it ever was. My generation was the first in human history to come into young adulthood knowing that the human race now had the dreadful ability to destroy all life on earth and possibly the earth itself. Only later did we realize the full extent of the destruction of life, a continuing destruction passed on to the then-unborn children of survivors, but we did know that after **Hiroshima**, August 6th, 1945, the world would never be the same again. The **annihilation** caused by the first atomic bombs was unthinkable, but it had happened. Also, we had **taken it for granted** that through wars, through disasters, yet would the earth endure for ever. It was clear to many of us in 1945 that this was no longer to be taken for granted. We have lived with that thought ever since, and have yet borne our children, lived our lives, done our work. The will to survive and to pass on important caring to future generations is very strong. But today we have to realize that the bombs used at Hiroshima and **Nagasaki** were *small* bombs, compared to today's nuclear weapons.

I ask you to think of the **Holocaust** in Europe, when the **Nazis** murdered a very great part of all the Jewish communities. That horror, surely, must *never* be forgotten. No amount of mourning will *ever* be enough for those millions of children, women and men whose unique and irreplaceable lives were torn away by the group of **dehumanized humans** who had taken power in **Hitler's** Germany. Despite the lessons of Hiroshima and of the Holocaust, today's leaders can speak with apparent **complacency** of "winning a nuclear war" or of "a limited nuclear war", or—in a **jargon** that **demeans** languages itself—of "**overkill**". Such concepts must be called by their true name, and that name is Evil.

Do the world's leaders really suppose that it is all just an act on TV and that the dead would get up again and take on a different role in another TV series so they might be killed again and again? I fear greatly that many of the world's leaders

have so little imagination and so little caring that they cannot visualize at all what a nuclear holocaust would mean. Do they really think that they and their families and executive staffs would survive in deep-buried **bunkers**? And if, by any unlikely chance they did, what kind of a world do they think they would emerge back into?

It is precisely this failure of the imagination on the part of militarists and leaders that is so dangerous today, the failure to visualize what a nuclear holocaust would mean, the apparent inability to imagine the scorched and charred bodies of children ... our children or children of Russian parents or parents anywhere, and to know, by an extension of imagination that *all* children are our children. The jargon of the militarists is a distortion and a twisting of language, of our human ability to communicate. Language itself becomes the vehicle of concealment and deception. Such words as “overkill” and “**megadeath**” do not convey in any sense at all what would really happen — the dead, mutilated, and dying people clogging the ruined cities and towns like so much unvalued discarded rubbish, the suffering humans screaming for help with no medical help available, no water, no relief at all for the unbearable pain of millions of humans except finally the dark relief of death for all. Any shelters that the few might reach would in time turn into tombs. Civil defence plans are a sham. In a nuclear war there would be nowhere to hide, and nowhere except a dead and contaminated world to emerge back into. I profoundly believe that we must proclaim that *this must not happen*.

In Somaliland, many years ago, I saw people, I saw children, who were dying of thirst. I can never forget. Now, in that area, things are much, much worse. The late Dr. Barbara Ward, the great economist, in one of her books put forward the thesis that if the world’s economy could be geared less towards arms production and more towards helping people, it would be possible for anyone in the world to have enough fresh water. Dr. Helen Caldicott says that for one third of the cost of trident nuclear submarine, malaria could be eliminated from the world. In East and in West Africa I saw children who were desperately ill with malaria. My own two children had malaria, as babies, in Ghana. They were fortunate. They had medical help, and had previously been given anti-malaria medication, and they recovered. But I remember as though it were yesterday — and it was in fact nearly thirty years ago — my own sense of helplessness and anguish. How many parents in malarial areas, now as then, mourn their children, killed by a disease that could have been eradicated years ago? One third of the cost of a Trident submarine! Here in Canada, native people in such places as Grassy Narrows are slowly and painfully dying of Minamata disease, caused by mercury poisoning in the fish they must eat for lack of other food. These are only a few, a very few, of the tragic issues in this desperately hurting world. These sufferings and deaths could be halted, could be prevented. Yet world-wide spending on instruments designed only for killing goes on and is escalating.

As a writer, therefore, I feel I have a responsibility. Not to write pamphlets; not to write **didactic** fiction. That would be, in many ways, a betrayal of how I feel about my work. But my responsibility seems to me to be to write as truthfully as I can, about human individuals and their dilemmas, to honour them as living, suffering and sometimes joyful people. My responsibility also must extend into my life as a citizen of my own land and ultimately of the world.

Dr. Helen Caldicott speaks of “psychic numbing” — the temptation to shut out from our minds and hearts all the horrifying things in our world. To think that

the problems may just possibly go away if we ignore them. They will not go away. It is not all happening on TV. It is happening on our earth, and we are the **custodians** of that earth. We cannot afford passivity. We must take on responsibility for our lives and our world and we must be prepared to make our government listen to and hear us. Our aim must be no less than human and caring, justice, and peace...*for all people that on earth do dwell.*

## 2.5.2 Glossary

<b>ministry</b>	: office of clergymen; the clerical profession.
<b>lectern</b>	: a reading desk from which the lessons are read.
<b>pulpit</b>	: a raised structure in the church for preaching from. Note: since the audience comprised graduating clergymen, her friend thought perhaps Margaret needed a pulpit for giving a religious discourse.
<b>sustaining</b>	: anything that supports or helps to keep things going.
<b>radical</b>	: holding extreme views favouring fundamental changes.
<b>social gospel</b>	: a strongly advocated system, belief in social changes.
<b>grace</b>	: undeserved mercy of God.
<b>Hiroshima</b>	: A Japanese city on which America dropped its first atom bomb on August 6, 1945.
<b>annihilation</b>	: total destruction, reduction to nothing.
<b>taken for granted:</b>	to presuppose; to assume, tacitly or unconsciously.
<b>Nagasaki</b>	: a city in Japan on which a second atom bomb was dropped on August 9, 1945.
<b>Holocaust</b>	: a huge slaughter or destruction of life; here the word beginning with a capital 'H' refers to the state-sponsored systematic killing of millions of Jews by the Nazis under the rule of Hitler during the Second World War (1939-45)
<b>Nazis</b>	: National-Socialist; the National Socialist German Workers Party led by Hitler.
<b>dehumanized</b>	: people who lack human qualities.
<b>humans</b>	
<b>Hitler</b>	: Adolf Hitler (1880-1945) German Nazi dictator.
<b>complacency</b>	: self-satisfaction; unwarranted calmness.
<b>jargon</b>	: artificial or barbarous language, language used by a particular group of speakers.
<b>demeans</b>	: makes mean; degrades.
<b>"overkill"</b>	: the word is explained in the following paragraph.
<b>bunkers</b>	: bomb proof shelters, generally underground.
<b>megadeath</b>	: death of millions.
<b>fantasy</b>	: fanciful imagination or mental image.
<b>didactic</b>	: intended to teach, instructive.
<b>custodians:</b>	caretaker or keeper.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) Where did Laurence give two of her most splendid addresses : “Books That Mattered To Me” and “My Final Hour”?

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- ii) Who was Margaret Laurence addressing in her speech “My Final Hour”?

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

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## 2.6 DISCUSSION

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You have just read excerpts from Margaret Laurence’s speech “My Final Hour”. The speech is simple and direct with no ostentation and theatricality to mar its appeal. The ideas expressed follow each other in a connected and systematic manner that leaves no place for ambiguity. We shall now take up a brief summary of the speech to analyse the main points that Laurence is putting across to her audience. At the same time, we shall note Laurence’s deep commitment to social causes.

### 2.6.1 Summary

At the outset, Laurence admits to being nervous in presenting her personal belief before would-be clergymen graduating from Trent University. She feels the need to have a physical prop to lean on. At the same time, she feels she needs a spiritual prop i.e. a strong **faith** that will sustain her.

In the next paragraph Laurence suggests -that as we grow old we should not feel inhibited by our limitations or accept defeat in our endeavours, but we should become more radical and struggle for things we passionately believe in. She feels happy to see that the old and the young alike are feeling concerned about the “state of our hurting and endangered world” and are rising to save it. This quite naturally leads Laurence to list the dangers being faced by the world today, namely, injustice, suffering and fear. Despite these dangers, she feels there is still hope for mankind. She affirms her personal belief in the social gospel and in the Lord’s commandment that says we should love our neighbours like ourselves.

Laurence then comments on two world events that changed the face of the earth. First, the dropping of atom bombs, by America, on the Japanese cities of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which caused unbelievable annihilation and established beyond doubt, man's dreadful ability to destroy himself and his earth (though people still hope the earth would endure through all disasters, a hope belied by the appearance of nuclear arms); and second, the Holocaust in Europe when the Nazis exterminated millions of Jews and proved how little human lives mattered to world leaders. (You already know something about this after reading Anne Frank's diary in the previous unit.) Despite these two catastrophes, world leaders are contemplating fighting a war using nuclear weapons that are far more deadly than the atomic bomb.

Laurence expresses astonishment at the enormous amounts of money being spent on the production of nuclear arms - amounts which, if properly utilized, could supply enough fresh water to everyone in the world or eradicate malaria from the face of the earth.

In concluding her speech, Laurence makes two points " one, that a person must affirm life and, therefore, we should all actively commit ourselves to saving the world by bringing about nuclear disarmament; and two, that an artist must commit to the generations of the future and, therefore, she as a writer feels it her responsibility to write truthfully about the dilemmas being faced by individuals everywhere and to ensure that the succeeding generations live to inherit the wonderful achievements of the human mind.

## 2.6.2 Features of Laurence's Speech

### Conversational Tone

The first thing we notice in "My Final Hour" is the conversational style that Laurence has adopted. By admitting at the very beginning that she is nervous in making a statement of her belief before an august audience of graduating candidates who will be priests in the church, Laurence at once takes them into her confidence, while at the same time making it clear that she is going to talk **to** them, one to one, and not talk **down** to them. Hence, the tone adopted by her is personal and subjective. She shares with her audience instances from her personal experience in Africa. She recalls how she saw children dying of thirst in Somaliland and of malaria in East and in West Africa. She also discloses before them her commitment as a writer to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

### Clarity of Expressions

There is clarity of expression in the speech which reflects the clarity of Laurence's thoughts. She is very clear in her mind what she has to present before her listeners and uses a language that is lucid and simple. There is no disjointedness in her discourse. One idea leads to another very systematically. For instance, she first mentions the catastrophes that have already overtaken man and destroyed large chunks of human life on earth and then proceeds to talk about the imminent catastrophe — a nuclear war — that might finish the earth itself. Thereafter, she makes out a clear case for the necessity for nuclear disarmament by all nations.

### A Forceful Style

Without taking recourse to any rhetorical devices, Laurence succeeds in delivering a powerful speech. The power comes from her sturdy conviction, in her belief that the nuclear arms race must stop. She quotes facts and figures given by eminent

people, like Dr. Barbara Ward, to convince her audience about the sheer undesirability of using nuclear weapons.

### Use of Humour and Pathos

Laurence’s speech displays both her sense of humour as well as pathos. There is a touch of humour in her advice to her listeners not to worry if they grow stupid as they grow old. She informs them that this is quite ‘normal’. She pokes fun at the parent-child relationship, saying “ your children, now grown, are discovering the opposite - they now see that you aren’t nearly as stupid as they had believed when they were young teenagers”. She also succeeds in creating a pathetic picture of a post-nuclear-war world with graphic description like “...the dead, mutilated and dying people clogging the ruined cities and towns like so much unvalued discarded rubbish, the suffering humans screaming for help with no medical help available, no water, no relief at all for the unbearable pain of millions of humans except finally the dark relief of death for all.” The easily-visualised description leaves a deep impact on the minds and hearts of the listeners. And this is what a good speaker always aims at — to make the audience think and feel.

A speech that is heard leaves a greater impact on the mind than the one that is read because while hearing it you can feel and share the passion with which it is delivered by the speaker. Therefore, it will help you to get a feel of “My Final Hour” if you read it aloud to yourself or before your friends at the study centre. Also note, that some words and phrases are in italics - Laurence would have given greater emphasis to these when delivering her speech.

### Check Your Progress 3

i) In what ways did Margaret Laurence become a radical in the last decade of her life?

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ii) What moral responsibility does Laurence have as a writer?

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## 2.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have:

- discussed a spoken form of non-fictional prose, i.e; a speech;
- acquainted you with the life and works of Margaret Laurence;
- read and discussed a speech given by Laurence at Trent University; and
- discussed the style of her speech.

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## 2.8 SUGGESTED READING

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Margaret Laurence : "My Final Hour"

Jawaharlal Nehru : "Tryst With Destiny"

Martin Luther King Jr.: "I Have a Dream"

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## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Canadian
- ii) *The Stone Angel; A Jest of God.*
- iii) An overdose of sleeping pills.
- iv) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) Trent University
- ii) Graduating students who were candidates to the ministry of the Church.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) In the last decade of her life, Margaret Laurence turned a radical and promoted causes like nuclear disarmament, social justice and environmental protection through didactic speeches, lectures, essays and even direct-mail fund raising campaigns.
- ii) She has the moral responsibility to work against the nuclear arms race and to make the governments and military leaders realise that nuclear weapons must never be used, but must be systematically reduced.



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## UNIT 3 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: 'THE QUEST OF MAN'

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### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Letter Writing - A Historical Perspective
- 3.3 Jawaharlal Nehru : A Biographical Note
- 3.4 An Introduction to 'The Quest of Man'
  - 3.4.1 Text
  - 3.4.2 Glossary
- 3.5 Theme
- 3.6 Prose Style
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Suggested Reading
- 3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this text, you will be able to

- outline Jawaharlal Nehru's life and works;
- appreciate the distinctive style of his letter-writing;
- understand the essence of man's quest for knowledge; and
- attempt a letter to a friend on a serious topic of your interest

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we will familiarize you with another form of non-fictional prose, the letter. What is a letter? On the personal level, a letter is a spontaneous expression of one's self and is often called an extension of the self. On the social level, letters hold up a mirror to the age in which they are written. Letters can exude warmth, intimacy, passion and romance, like the letters written by Napoleon Bonaparte to his lady-love Josephine. Or, they can be scurrilous and full of invective like Alexander Pope's 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot', a verse-letter in which each line comes whizzing like a poisoned dart to sink into its target. Letters can also be very informative, being at the same time very direct and informal, like Jawaharlal Nehru's letter 'The Quest of Man' that you are going to study in this unit.

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### 3.2 LETTER WRITING - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Letter writing came to be recognized as a literary form in England during the Renaissance when critics came in touch with the works of Seneca, Cicero and Guevara. Early Renaissance letter writers include the Paston family whose letters

give us considerable insight into the social life of the age. Roger Ascham, another entertaining correspondent, achieved prose that is at once simple and straightforward in his *Two Hundred and Ninety-Five Letters*. Among the letter writers of the seventeenth century, Lady Rachel Russell's letters, that are as authentic an account of the times as the diaries and memoirs of the famous diarists Pepys and Evelyn, helped prepare the way along with diaries and memoirs for the rich blossoming of fiction during the seventeenth century.

The art of letter writing in the 18th century assumed an interesting form. It produced gossipy letters on things in general or political squibs. By means of this light, discursive literature, we have a steady flow of illuminating gossip on the life of the time, highly valuable to the social historian. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters, written to her daughter from Italy, are among her best. Her *Turkish Letters* dispelled a good deal of ignorance about the Turkish character; Philip Dormer Stanhapse's literary fame rests upon the letters he wrote to his illegitimate son; Horace Walpole distinguished himself more as a letter writer than as a politician. His letters caught exquisitely the affectation and artificialities of his times. William Cowper, Lord Chesterfield, Gilbert White and Thomas Gray are some more famous letter writers of the 18th century. Many eminent novelists, both English and American, were great letter writers too. The letters of Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Henry James and many others are considered pieces of literature today. Henry James' letters are so delicately worded that Leon Edel calls them "the greatest glories" of literature.

Though letters comprise non-fictional prose, they lend themselves very usefully to the writing of both fiction as well as poetry. Alexander Pope's philosophic poem "Essay On Man," consisting of four epistles, and his satirical verse-letter *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* are good examples of verse- letters. Letter as a form of expression in fiction was explored by Samuel Richardson in his epistolary novels *Clarissa* and *Pamela*. Thereafter, many English fiction writers incorporated letters in their novels to explain a situation or to advance a character. An abundant use of letters has been made by Jane Austen in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

A good public letter is a literary piece of work that explores an issue, idea, impression or interpretation. It has a focused point and has both informative value and aesthetic appeal. Among the eminent Indian letter writers, we have Vivekananda, Swami Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose letters not only reveal historical, political and religious thoughts but also provide a commentary on Indian culture and civilization. One such volume of letters is Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History* from which 'The Quest of Man' has been selected for your study in this unit.

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### 3.3 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Jawaharlal Nehru was born in 1889 in Allahabad to Motilal Nehru, a highly successful lawyer of Kashmiri lineage. Jawaharlal was educated at home by a host of English governesses and private tutors until he was admitted to Harrow, a public school in England, at the age of sixteen. In 1907, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and then pursued the study of Law at the Inner Temple, London. He was called to the Bar in 1912. The same year, he returned to India

and came close to Mahatma Gandhi who had also returned to India as a lawyer, after fighting for political rights and equality for Indians in South Africa. Under Gandhi’s magnetic influence, Nehru gave up his western style of living and joined Gandhi in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He remained in the forefront of the Indian Independence Movement for well over three and a half decades and was imprisoned seven times by the British rulers. His rise in Indian politics was meteoric. He was elected Congress President five times and became the first Prime Minister of Independent India, a post he held continuously till his death in 1964.

Nehru was a prolific writer with an enviable command over the English language which he used with the ease and facility of an Englishman. His language became poetic in describing a nature landscape; conversational in his personal letters and jail diaries; forceful, penetrating and occasionally scholastic in his addresses. Some of his major works like *The Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History*, *A Bunch of the Old Letters*, and *An Autobiography* are as thought-provoking in terms of their content as they are charming in their style.

**Check Your Progress-1**

i) Name three important writers of the 18th century known mainly for their letters.

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ii) Give the titles of two books written by Jawaharlal Nehru.

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iii) Name two eminent Indians whose letters give an insight into Indian culture and civilization.

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(Check your answers with those given at the end this Unit.)

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## 3.4 AN INTRODUCTION TO 'THE QUEST OF MAN'

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Nehru frequently interacted with his daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, through letters especially when he was serving a prison sentence during the British rule in India. The first set of letters were written in the summer of 1928, when the ten-year-old Indira was in the Himalayan hill station of Mussoorie and Nehru was in the plains. These were published in book form in 1929, with the title *Letters from a Father to his Daughter*, subtitled "Being a brief account of the early days of the world written for children." Nehru points out in his preface to the original edition of *Glimpses of World History*: "These early letters were subsequently published in book form and they had a generous reception. The idea of continuing them hovered in my mind". The result was *Glimpses of World History* published in two volumes, 1934-1935, with the subtitle "Being further letters to his daughter written in prison, and containing a rambling account of history for young people". All the 196 letters here, and his book *The Discovery of India*, were written in prison. The first such letter he wrote her was from the Central Prison in Naini, in 1930. The letter you are about to read was written two years later, in 1932, from Dehra Dun jail.

While in prison, cut off from active life and from his beloved daughter, Nehru decided to make use of the available time to write a brief and simple account of the history of the world. Nehru himself admits that he is not a historian but has attempted to put together facts and ideas he had culled from books. Very often, the facts of history are overrun by his own ideas and philosophic thinking.

'The Quest of Man', the fifty-sixth in the series of letters in *Glimpses of World History* and the first that he wrote from the district jail of Dehra Dun, takes us back to the origins of human civilization that had been preceded by the Earth's story for many thousands of years. The distinctive feature of human civilization is that it owes its existence and perpetuation to the genius of the human mind. It is the eternal curiosity of the human mind to find out and learn more and more about the world that started man on this quest. In this letter, Nehru goes beyond historical dates and facts to focus on man's innate quest to know and understand the world around him.

### 3.4.1 Text

#### JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : 'THE QUEST OF MAN'

June 10, 1932

Four days ago I wrote to you from Bareilly Gaol. That very evening I was told to gather up my belongings and to march out of the prison - not to be discharged, but to be transferred to another prison. So I bade good-bye to my companions of the **barrack**, where I had lived for just four months, and I had a last look at the great twenty-four-foot wall under whose sheltering care I had sat for so long, and I marched out to see the outside world again for a while. There were two of us being transferred. They would not take us to Bareilly station lest people might see us, for we have become **pardahnashins**, and may not be seen! Fifty miles out they drove us by car to a little station in the **wilderness**. I felt thankful for this drive. It was delightful to feel the cool night air and to see the **phantom** trees

and men and animals rush by in the semi- darkness, after many months of seclusion.

We were brought to Dehra Dun. Early in the morning we were again taken out of our train, before we had reached the end of our journey, and taken by car, lest **prying** eyes should see us.

And so here I sit in the little gaol of Dehra Dun, and it is better here than at Bareilly. It is not quite so hot, and the temperature does not rise to 112 degrees, as it did in Bareilly. And the walls surrounding us are lower and the trees that overlook them are greener. In the distance I can even see, over our wall, the top of a palm tree, and the sight delights me and makes me think of Ceylon and Malabar. Beyond the trees there lie the mountains, not many miles away, and, **perched** up on top of them, sits Mussoorie. I cannot see the mountains, for the trees hide them, but it is good to be near them and to imagine at night the lights of Mussoorie twinkling in the far distance.

Four years ago (or is it three?) I began writing these **series of letters** to you when you were at Mussoorie. What a lot has happened during these three or four years, and how you have grown! With fits and starts and after long gaps I have continued these letters, mostly from prison. But the more I write, the less I like what I write; and a fear comes upon me that these letters may not interest you much, and may even become a burden for you. Why, then, should I continue to write them?

I should have liked to place vivid images of the past before you, one after another, to make you sense how this world of ours has changed, step by step, and developed and progressed, and sometimes apparently gone back; to make you see something of the old civilizations and how they have risen like the tide and then subsided; to make you realize how the river of history has run on from age to age, continuously, interminably, with its **eddies** and **whirlpools** and **backwaters**, and still rushes on to an unknown sea. I should have liked to take you on Man's **trail** and follow it up from the early beginnings, when he was hardly a man, to to-day, when he prides himself so much, rather vainly and foolishly, on his great civilization. We did begin that way, you will remember, in the Mussoorie days, when we talked of the discovery of fire and of agriculture, and the settling down in towns, and the division of labour. But the farther we have advanced, the more we have got mixed up with empires and the like, and often we have lost sight of that trail. We have just skimmed over the surface of history. I have placed the **skeleton** of old happenings before you and I have wished that I had the power to cover it with flesh and blood, to make it living and vital for you.

But I am afraid I have not got that power, and you must rely upon your imagination to work the miracle. Why, then, should I write, when you can read about past history in many good books? Yet, through my doubts I have continued writing, and I suppose I shall still continue. I remember the promise I made to you, and I shall try to fulfil it. But more even than this, is the joy that the thought of you gives me when I sit down to write and imagine that you are by me and we are talking to each other.

Of man's trail I have written above, since he emerged stumbling and **slouching** from the jungle. It has been a long trail of many thousands of years. And yet how short a time it is if you compare it to the earth's story and the ages and **aeons** to

time before man came! But for us man is naturally more interesting than all the great animals that existed before him; he is interesting because he brought a new thing with him which the others do not seem to have had. This was mind — curiosity — the desire to find out and learn. So from the earliest days began man's quest. Observe a little baby, how it looks at the new and wonderful world about it; how it begins to recognize things and people; how it learns. Look at a little girl; if she is a healthy and wide-awake person she will ask so many questions about so many things. Even so, in the morning of history when man was young and the world was new and wonderful, and rather fearsome to him, he must have looked and stared all around him, and asked questions. Who was he to ask except himself? There was no one else to answer. But he had a wonderful little thing "a mind" and with the help of this, slowly and painfully, he went on storing his experiences and learning from them. So from the earliest times until to-day, man's quest has gone on, and he has found out many things, but many still remain, and as he advances on his trail, he discovers vast new tracts stretching out before him, which show to him how far he is still from the end of his quest, if there is such an end.

What has been this quest of man, and whither does he journey? For thousands of years men have tried to answer these questions. Religion and philosophy and science have all considered them, and given many answers. I shall not trouble you with these answers, for the sufficient reason that I do not know most of them. But, in the main, religion has attempted to give a complete and **dogmatic** answer, and has often cared little for the mind, but has sought to enforce obedience to its decisions in various ways. Science gives a doubting and hesitating reply, for it is of the nature of science not to dogmatize, but to experiment and reason and rely on the mind of man. I need hardly tell you that my preferences are all for science and the methods of science.

We may not be able to answer these questions about man's quest with any assurance, but we can see that the quest itself has taken two lines. Man has looked outside himself as well as inside; he has tried to understand Nature, and he has also tried to understand himself. The quest is really one and the same, for man is part of Nature. "Know thyself", said the old philosophers of India and Greece; and the *Upanishads* contain the record of the ceaseless and rather wonderful strivings after this knowledge by the old Aryan Indians. The other knowledge of Nature has been the special province of science, and our modern world is witness to the great progress made therein. Science, indeed, is spreading out its wings even farther now, and taking charge of both lines of this quest and co-ordinating them. It is looking up with confidence to the most distant stars, and it tells us also of the wonderful little things in continuous motion - the **electrons** and **protons** - of which all matter consists.

The mind of man has carried man a long way in his voyage of discovery. As he has learnt to understand Nature more, he has **utilized** it and **harnessed** it to his own advantage, and thus he has won more power. But unhappily he has not always known how to use this new power, and he has often misused it. Science itself has been used by him chiefly to supply him with terrible weapons to kill his brother and destroy the very civilization that he has built up with so much labour.

### 3.4.2 Glossary

<b>quest</b>	: the act of seeking or searching; an undertaking with the purpose of achieving or finding some definite object.
<b>barrack</b>	: A group of large buildings for soldiers to live in (here for the prisoners to be confined).
<b>pardahnashins</b>	: an Urdu word meaning people who live behind the veil.
<b>wilderness</b>	: an uninhabited place.
<b>phantom</b>	: ghost; any imagined thing.
<b>prying</b>	: inquiring with too much curiosity into other people's affairs.
<b>perched</b>	: to sit on something high and narrow.
<b>series of letters</b>	: he is referring to <i>Letters from a Father to his Daughter</i> .
<b>eddy (eddies-plural)</b>	: a circular movement of water, air or dust.
<b>whirlpools</b>	: a place in a river or the sea where there are strong currents moving in circles.
<b>backwaters</b>	: a part of a river not reached by the current, where the water does not flow.
<b>trail</b>	: path to be followed for a particular purpose.
<b>skeleton</b>	: framework.
<b>slouch</b>	: to stand or sit in a lazy way, often not upright.
<b>aeons</b>	: a very long period; many thousands or millions of years.
<b>dogmatic</b>	: insisting that one's beliefs are right and that others should accept them.
<b>electrons</b>	: tiny pieces of matter with a negative electric charge present in all atoms.
<b>protons</b>	: tiny pieces of matter with a positive electric charge present in all atoms.
<b>utilize</b>	: to use for a practical purpose.
<b>harness</b>	: to control and use the force or strength of something to produce power or to achieve something.

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### 3.5 THEME

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The subject matter of this letter is philosophical but it has been rendered in a simple and elegant style. The writer makes it easy for the reader (here he had a fourteen-year-old girl in mind) to understand a serious subject matter relating to human quest for knowledge. The paragraphs are linked to make the letter read like a story about human civilization.

Paragraphs 1 to 3 describe the author's current place of imprisonment and the sense of joy he experiences on being close to the mountains and the greenery surrounding his prison. There is no bitterness on being confined to a solitary stay in a prison. On the contrary, the writer has the rare ability to find joy even in the cool night air and trees and mountains that he can view at a far off distance.

Now we may ask whether the author is sceptical about the worth of his writings?

Paragraph 4 expresses the author's scepticism as to the worth and value of his writings. It is however, our good fortune that despite his scepticism he continued to write these letters that are a delight to read even today, after a long gap of over ninety years.

In paragraphs 5 and 6 the writer attempts to recreate the history of the world from pre-historic times to modern days. Nehru says that he started with the narration about discovery of fire and agriculture and extended his writings to cover facts of history about empires and different civilizations. He wonders whether midway he had lost sight of the biggest human challenge that sought to unravel the mystery of the universe. He has written about civilisations that have come and gone, but somewhere along the line he had missed to delve upon the human quest to understand the world that man journeys through.

Paragraph 7 traces the journey of man in his long quest to know about his world. It is his mind which is man's greatest asset that helps him in his quest. Once Nehru starts writing about the quest of man, his scepticism fades away. He feels close to his daughter when he writes, as if they were sitting together and talking.

Finally he provides an answer to the question about what has helped man in his quest to know more about his world:

Paragraphs 8-10 describe the twin approaches to understand the world, through religion and through science. Nehru feels that religion seeks to impose its own views that are based on faith and spiritual beliefs while science seeks answers through experiment and reason. There cannot be any single answer to what man is seeking, as his quest has taken two distinct directions — one to understand himself and the other to understand Nature. Religion looks to the inner nature of man while science to the outer nature. Both are important. But Nehru prefers the scientific approach, because it is rational and open minded, not dogmatic like religion. However, man is misusing science instead of harnessing its power, almost to the point of destroying the very civilization that he has built up.

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### **3.6 PROSE STYLE**

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This letter has been selected for your study as it shows what makes a letter interesting. As you read the text, you will recognize its direct and simple style that makes you as much an addressee as Indira to whom it was first addressed. As Nehru himself says, he felt the presence of his daughter by his side when he wrote his letters as though they were talking to each other. Likewise, it is as though the reader and the writer are in conversation. The writer seems to engage his reader in direct talk and, therefore, the letter uses the direct form of address. In short, the prose style in all his letters is personal, subjective, conversational and informal. Even though Nehru's letters, to begin with, were personal and meant only for his daughter, they form a well-knit series of world history for every reader to savour.



### Check Your Progress-2

i) From which prison was Nehru transferred to the prison at Dehra Dun?

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ii) Pick up a sentence from the letter that shows Nehru's preference for science and its methods.

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iii) Mention three features of Nehru's prose style in the letter 'The Quest of Man'.

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

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### 3.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have:

- learnt something about Jawaharlal Nehru's life and writings;
- analysed one of his letters to his daughter in terms of its background, theme and prose style; and
- picked up some idea about how a letter on a complex topic like the quest of man, can be rendered in a fluent and easy style.

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### 3.8 SUGGESTED READING

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Jawaharlal Nehru: *Glimpses of World History; An Autobiography; Letters from a Father to his Daughter.*

C.D. Narasimhaiah: *Jawaharlal Nehru: The Statesman as Writer.* New Jawaharlal Nehru: Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001.

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### 3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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#### Check Your Progress-1

- i) Lady Montagu, Philip Stanhope and Horace Walpole.
- ii) *Glimpses of World History. An Autobiography.*
- iii) Swami Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda.

#### Check Your Progress-2

- i) Bareilly
- ii) Para 8: "I need hardly tell you that my preferences are all for science and the methods of science."
- iii) Simple, direct, conversational.



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## UNIT 4 TRAVELOGUE: *TRAVELS BY A LESSER LINE* — BILL AITKEN

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### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Travelogues - A Historical Perspective
- 4.3 Bill Aitken: A Biographical Note
- 4.4 A Background to *Travels by a Lesser Line*
  - 4.4.1 Text
  - 4.4.2 Glossary
- 4.5 Theme - Understanding the Text
- 4.6 Prose Style
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The objective in this Unit is to:

- appreciate a travelogue as a literary form;
- distinguish the prose style of a travelogue vis-a-vis other prose forms.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous Units you have seen the distinctive prose styles used in writing a diary, a speech and the characteristic style — direct and informal — used in writing letters. In this Unit we have selected the final two chapters from Bill Aitken's travelogue *Travels by a Lesser Line*.

What is a travelogue? It is a piece of writing about travel; it can also be a book or a film or a radio broadcast on travel. It is written in a style that is both interesting and informative. After reading excerpts from Aitken's travelogue, we will analyse their content and prose style to see what makes his travelogue a visual treat while, at the same time, making it informative and aesthetically pleasing.

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### 4.2 TRAVELOGUES - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The passion for knowledge about other countries has always driven men to embark upon land travels and sea-voyages to distant lands, the accounts of which have been left by them for posterity. Hence, the history of travelogues is as old as the history of man's travels. Going far back in time, when the world was not much known, there were travellers like Al-Beruni, Fahien, Hiuen Tsang and others who travelled to lands in the East (Fahien visited India from 399 to 411 B.C. and Hiuen Tasang from 627 to 645 B.C.) and the West and left rich accounts of their travels in books that have since served as important documents about the life, culture and history of the places they visited.

There have been almost as many written accounts of travel down the ages, as there have been travellers. Beginning with Renaissance England, a large number of Elizabethan adventurers, traders, settlers, explorers and even exploiters, influenced by Columbus' voyages in the fifteenth century, set sail to discover new lands. Innumerable narratives of travel, which we now term as travelogues, were printed during the times, of which some popular ones are: Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana*, Silvester Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Bermudas*; Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages*; and *History of Travel* by Richard Eden, that traced travels from the earliest times to the sixteenth century. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England saw the advent of diarists, letter-writers, memoir-writers and historians rather than the flourishing of travel writers. The Victorian age, however, saw a spurt in globe-trotting. Sir Richard Francis Burton, George Henry Borrow, Richard Jefferies and Laurence Oliphant were some eminent writers of nineteenth century England who were also extensive travellers. Burton's personal narrative of travel in Arabia, contained in his book *Pilgrimage to El Medinah and Mecca* (1885-56) exhibits his keen scholarly interest; Borrow's travel experiences with the gipsies, exuding an intimate charm, found expression in his *Lavengro* (1851); Jefferies' travelogue *Wild Life in a Southern Country* and Oliphant's *Narrative of a Mission to China and Japan* (1857-1859) enjoyed immense popularity. The list would be incomplete if mention were not made of David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels in South Africa* (1857) and R.L. Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey* (1879) and his canoe journey in Belgium entitled *An Island Voyage* (1878), that are still read with relish. Travel accounts are non-fictional prose but, like letters, have found their way into fiction. We have a large number of novelists — both English and American — whose novels are a mix of travel and fiction. For instance, Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a fictionalized account of Alexander Selkirk's real-life adventures and travels; Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726-27) is also a pseudo-realistic narrative that follows the voyages of Gulliver; Herman Melville, the great American writer, has given us *Omoo* (1847), and the popular classic *Typee* (1846), his very popular *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale* (1851) that reads more like a travelogue than a novel.

India has always attracted travellers, right from Fahien and Hiuen Tsang, as mentioned earlier, to the nineteenth and early twentieth century British travellers like Moorcraft, Harcourt, Francis' young husband and Penelope Chetwood whose travelogues give us rich accounts of their treks across the Himalayas or into the interiors of India. Present day writers like V.S. Naipaul, Bill Aitken and some others have opened up India to the outside world in some of their books. Naipaul, whose Indian grandparents migrated to the West Indies, has recounted his travels to India in *An Area of Darkness* (1964), and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977). Anees Jung's book *Unveiling India* is an account of travel mixed with interviews of Indian women from different walks of life. Vikram Seth won a literary prize for his travelogue *From Heaven Lake* (1986) describing his travels from Nanjing to Nepal. Amitav Ghosh whose *In an Antique Land* (1972) is a mix of novel and travelogue recounting his travel in Egypt, has tried his hand at travel writing in *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma*.

Parts of a travelogue selected for your study in this Unit come from the pen of Bill Aitken, and describes his travels in India.

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### 4.3 BILL AITKEN: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Bill Aitken was born in Scotland in 1934; he became a naturalized Indian by choice in 1972. He has written a number of books about India, capturing its Himalayan majesty, its scenic beauty and its spiritual core. He studied Comparative Religion at Leeds University in England and he moved to India in 1959. He lived in Himalayan ashrams for some time and undertook many trips all over India, extending from Nanda Devi, a Himalayan peak in the North to Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip in the South. Most of his excursions were either on an old motorbike or by the steam railway. It was not only the Indian scenic beauty that fascinated him, he was also attracted by the steam engine that helped him cover the whole of India from the North to the South, from the East to the West.

Bill Aitken has several books to his credit. Among them are:

- 1) *Seven Sacred Rivers (1992)*
- 2) *Exploring Indian Railways (1994)*
- 3) *The Nanda Devi Affair (1994)*
- 4) *Divining the Deccan: A Motorbike to the Heart of India(1999)*
- 5) *Branch Line to Eternity (2001)*
- 6) *Footloose in the Himalaya (2003)*
- 7) *Sri Satya Sai Baba-A Life (2004)*

#### Check Your Progress-1

- i) Define a travelogue.

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- ii) Name a Chinese traveller who came to India.

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- iii) Mention a biography from Aitken's books listed in above.

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## 4.4 A BACKGROUND TO *TRAVELS BY A LESSER LINE*

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These two chapters which form the concluding part of Aitken's book *Travels by a Lesser Line* were first published in 1993. These are the three gauges in the Indian Railways: Broad gauge (1.676 metre), metre gauge (1 metre in width) and narrow gauge (where the width of the rail track is 0.762 or 0.610 metre). 'Lesser Line' is a reference to metre gauge and the book describes the travel undertaken by the author along the metre gauge line from Ledo, the easternmost station in Assam to Bhuj, the westernmost station in Gujarat and again from Fazilka in Punjab to Kanyakumari in Tamilnadu. The journey took him through fourteen states and this was his attempt to find an answer to the transport riddle: "Can one travel all the way by one gauge?" If you are aware of India's size and diversity, such a unified single metric route will astonish you. This travel seems to be a railway marathon covering all the four corners of India and ends with his visit to Tiruchendur, the last resort in the south. The author has the gift of perception, a liberal and sympathetic understanding of the cultural divide between the North and the South and a gentle sense of humour that accommodates the idiosyncrasies of different people in different parts of India.

### 4.4.1 Text

#### *Last Resort in the South*

Tiruchendur is a tiny temple town that occupies the coast between Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram. Its white *gopuram* is almost on the shore. What looks like the giant hour-hand of a clock, affixed in neon lights, is actually the symbol of the lance with which Lord Murugan **vanquished** a particularly troublesome *asura*. Unusually this tower has been built to the west of the sprawling temple. Surrounded by the blue sea and waving palms, a more delightful end to one's metre gauge journey from the northern **arid** zone around Fazilka could not be imagined.

The small station has recently been renovated and is **immaculate** in appearance and operation. A notice threatens to fine anyone Rs. 16 who enters without a platform ticket, so quickly I buy one to photograph the train about to leave. This is the "732 Tirunelveli Passenger" **hailed by a diesel**. Though I can jump aboard and return by the "733 Down", the blue of the sea is too inviting and instead I settle for some conversation with the station master, who apparently has been alerted of my coming. When in Delhi, promises of flashed messages to ease my way had seemed a kind gesture by the Railway Information Officer, but to my pleasant surprise the friendliness with which I was met along the way was largely due to the promises kept in Delhi.

To make my day, a steam engine lay smoking idly in the siding, waiting to haul the last of the three daily Passengers. For the end of the line, everything was perfect. The station building had been remodelled in the temple style, but tastefully so, and the **miniscule** reservation office must be the only one in the whole of India where the green discs are permanently on display. In fact you wonder how long this branch line can compete with the faster and similarly priced buses. With Tuticorin less than 40 km away, it is understandable that a famous port

town can use a railway link. A friend had advised me to give Tuticorin a miss since it held little of railway or **aesthetic** interest.

The bus is much more direct than the train for the Rameshwaram-Tiruchendur section, but you pay for the convenience by becoming part of a hectic running battle between North and South. A party of 14 Hindi speakers got on a Rameshwaram-bound bus and from the word go there was **bickering** between them and the Tamil running staff. There were some rain clouds about and the travellers were worried about their luggage on the roof getting wet. The bus crew could not provide a tarpaulin and this began the **acrimony**. "If it rains, you can report me", said the conductor helpfully, implying that the clouds would go away - which they did. Next there were complaints of having to spend 25 paise every time the passengers from the free-peeing North went to spend a penny in the bus stations. Another grouse was that the driver was a great **gobber**, who marked each furlong with the discharge of spit. At speed this meant some of the passengers shared the fall-out.

The wayside halts for refreshments were spotlessly clean but almost blew customers away from their counters with the volume of Tamil rock music belted out. Another source of friction lay in the strict interpretation of 5 minutes by the bus crew. The timeless North assumed it meant anything up to 15. When you consider that most of the long-distance passengers between Rameshwaram and Kanyakumari are pilgrims from the North it means this verbal warfare occurs daily on the Tamil Nadu government buses. So much for the claims of cosy **cultural integration** that the temple at Rameshwaram puts out.

The **resilience** of Hindu culture is reflected in the casteless appeal of the six Murugan temples, of which Palani is considered third in importance. Tiruchendur is the second in the list and referred to as "**The Abode of Fulfilment**" - a very apt description of my feelings at completing the extended and involved metric circuit. It is **besieged** by busloads of pilgrims who sport on the beach as the rust-coloured breakers add another curious effect of this place with a cave valued for its "medicinal" properties. (Shankaracharya was cured here.) Many are the black-clad, bare-bodied Ayappa pilgrims bound for the Sabarimala temple in the Kerala hills. That too is a casteless attraction and it could well be the orthodox priests, seeing where the pickings are to be had, who decide to throw open their temples. Tiruchendur for all practical purposes seems a spiritual holiday resort. Devotees rent cottages overlooking the sea and though they may not **have a whale of a time** at least they upstage the much richer tourist clientele at the Hotel Tamil Nadu run by the government which is situated further behind. This hotel only had double rooms for 80 rupees, so I inquired at a new lodge nearby and ended up with a much better deal for 40 rupees, overlooking the temple and the sea. One breathed in the tantalizing realization that the **elation** one had felt at the start of one's journey on the majestic expanse of the Brahmaputra was echoed exactly in the furthest pounding of the waves at Tiruchendur, though the **cultural chasm** between the two is enormous. In shrinking the physical poles the metre gauge had performed a kind of **alchemical union** of opposites. I was tickled to recall at the half-way mark of my probings (near Dwarka) the stout **teetotaller** proposition that India's ancient **propitiatory** beer **Somras** was **lugubriously** "non-injurious to health," because the outstanding memory of this **MG quartering** had been my constant **intoxication** at the sheer wonder India still is. Those who declare India to be "poor" announce only their own poverty of

acquaintance. But will they listen to the proving imprint of a lesser track that gave this traveller a unique glimpse of a rare unity; soon to be dismantled.

### *The Poetic Diction of Steam*

Fulfilment is not just the satisfaction of seeing a laborious job through but is also felt in the more subtle relief of having performed a financial **tight-rope act** and managed to land on one's feet. My metric path **veered** crazily at times, to take in special likes such as the high ranges of Kerala. Looking back it went like a dream and all the worries about reservations and the **elbowing** through crowds that travel in the North implies, simply did not arise on the metre gauge in the South. It was leisure all the way. Full marks to the Railways for their unfailing efficiency and close sense of duty. This vast network with its million-and-a-half employees pulls together impressively to keep the economy running and the passengers for most of the time from complaining. When I started out from Ledo in furthest Assam, it was to see if it was possible to cover the whole of India by metre gauge. The answer is yes, provided you believe that journeying is as important as arrival.

That way the journey can teach you more than any university can about the diverse wonders of India so few of our political masters have the width of vision to encompass. Their India is nowhere near so remarkable as the real one which can only be viewed without **blinkers**. With its astounding **array** of human types and sublime array of beauty, anyone exposed to the marvel becomes a natural patriot. Whether it's boatmen on the Brahmaputra or toddy-tappers in Telengana, the railway gives you India like nothing else can. It enables you to ride camels in Jaisalmer and **catamarans** in Tiruchendur. Unlike the politicians who pass through in their helicopter you will know the difference between the two! Add the flavour of the metre gauge and you get the extra magic of the classic age of railway travel - the **poetic diction** of steam.

#### 4.4.2 Glossary

<b>vanquish</b>	:	to defeat an opponent.
<b>arid</b>	:	(of land or a climate) having little or no rain; dry.
<b>immaculate</b>	:	perfectly clean and tidy.
<b>hauled by a diesel</b>	:	pulled or dragged with force by a diesel engine.
<b>minuscule</b>	:	very small; tiny.
<b>aesthetic</b>	:	concerned with beauty and the appreciation of beauty
<b>bickering</b>	:	arguing about unimportant things.
<b>acrimony</b>	:	angry and bitter feelings or words.
<b>gobber</b>	:	spitter.
<b>cultural integration</b>	:	different cultures (here the Northern and the Southern cultures) closely linked together.
<b>resilience</b>	:	the ability to recover quickly from injury or damage or hock, springing back to original form after being bent or stretched.
<b>the abode of fulfilment:</b>	:	a place of satisfaction and happiness.



<b>besieged</b>	:	surrounded closely.
<b>have a whale of a time:</b>		to enjoy oneself very much; to have a very good time.
<b>elation</b>	:	great happiness, excitement.
<b>cultural chasm</b>	:	cultural difference.
<b>alchemical union</b>	:	mysterious process or change that brings two different things into one.
<b>teetotaler</b>	:	one who does not drink alcoholic drinks.
<b>propitiatory</b>	:	intended to win the favour of others (especially gods) by a pleasing act.
<b>lugubriously</b>	:	sadly; sorrowfully.
<b>MG quartering</b>	:	dividing the country into four zones by the MG (metre gauge line).
<b>intoxication</b>	:	greatly excited; drunk or under the influence of drugs or alcoholic drinks.
<b>idiosyncrasy</b>	:	a person's particular way of thinking, behaving etc. that is clearly different from that of others.
<b>tight-rope act</b>	:	to proceed in a situation which allows little freedom of action and in which an exact balance must be preserved.
<b>veered</b>	:	changed direction or course suddenly.
<b>elbowing</b>	:	pushing roughly with the elbows in a specified direction, to make way to move ahead.
<b>blinkers</b>	:	leather pieces fixed on a horse's bridle to prevent the horse from seeing sideways; not prepared to see the opinion of others; narrow-minded.
<b>array</b>	:	impressive display or series
<b>catamarans</b>	:	a raft of logs tied together; a small boat made of wood, used by fishermen in Tamil Nadu.
<b>poetic diction</b>	:	the style or manner of speaking or the choice and use of words appropriate to poetry.

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## 4.5 THEME - UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

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After reading the two extracts, 'Last Resort in the South' and 'The Poetic Diction of Steam', from Aitken's travelogue *Travels by a Lesser Line*, you must have noticed the author's eye for detail, his understanding of the cultural divide between the North and the South, and his fascination for the steam engine. Keeping in mind these three points, just recall how the temple and the railway station have two things in common — beauty and solidity. How does the author picture the two in his narration?

The railway station has been remodelled in the temple style. The author adds: "tastefully so" which means that the station architecture has an aesthetic appeal similar to that of the temple. Both are situated close to the shore, surrounded by the blue sea and waving palms.

The temple has a giant lance on its tower looking like the hour-hand of a clock. Aitken graphically describes the lance by comparing it to the hour-hand of a huge clock that one normally sees in a railway station. The lance is a symbol of the mighty lance of Lord Murugan that gives it strength and solidity in addition to being radiant because of the neon lights fixed on it.

Imagine the temple, with a white gopuram, on the seashore surrounded by blue waves and green palms and observe the majestic lance shining from the temple tower. The picture is one of beauty and solidity.

Now let's see how Aitken comments upon the cultural divide between the North and the South. Is he severely critical or is he gentle and sympathetic in his observations?

Aitken refers to the verbal bickering between the pilgrims from the North and the Tamil staff running the bus services in the Rameshwaram-Tiruchendur section. This is a good example of the difference in perspectives between the two groups. The travellers from the North do not feel the need to be punctual, while the Tamils are strict on punctuality. The Southern people have a far greater sense of hygiene than those from the North. The charge of 25 paise to use the toilets seems an extravagance to the Northern travellers. The flip side of all this is that the Tamil driver does not mind spitting all through the journey much to the consternation of the travellers inside his bus. The constant anxiety displayed by the travellers with regard to their luggage on the uncovered roof of the bus is made light of by the bus crew causing further bickering between the two.

The author is objective. He writes about both the groups in a light-hearted vein and displays no bias for one or the other. In fact these little foibles are more of a human frailty than serious flaws and they add harmless fun to an otherwise tedious travel narration. Only a writer with sympathetic understanding and gentle compassion can have an eye for such details and this is what makes his book a good read.

Finally recall how the author expresses his fascination for the steam engine

He begins by saying “To make my day a steam engine lay.. .”(para 3) Apart from delighting in the architectural beauty of the temple and the station both in the vicinity of the blue sea — the author says that his day was made richer by the presence of the steam engine in the station. In his concluding chapter “The Poetic Diction of Steam”, he pays a tribute to the steam engine for giving him the ride through fourteen states in a single metre gauge line. It had also been inexpensive in comparison to the fast moving broad gauge express trains whose fares are much higher. In its leisurely pace, with no jostling crowds around, the steam engine chugged its way through different regions of India and gave Aitken a glimpse of the vast country. The train travel was almost like a pleasant dream as he could see the beauty of the land, listen to the animated talk of the co-passengers, feel the spiritual quest of the people and sway to the rhythmic motion of the slow moving steam locomotive. The author feels a great sense of repose, almost sublime, similar to the repose one experiences in the writing and reading of poetry.

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## 4.6 PROSE STYLE

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Bill Aitken writes about the places he had seen when he travelled through the length and breadth of India, using a narrative prose of a rare simplicity and elegance. Every town, every hillside, every stream in different parts of India comes visually alive before our eyes. There is also a splendid use of descriptive prose style. The description is factual and photographic. In the excerpts from his travelogue *Travels by a Lesser Line*, you must have noticed that he has used a simple prose with no ornamentation. His lucid style and an unpretentious use of language gives a photographic edge to his travel account. It will not be an exaggeration to state that he seems to wield a camera more than a pen in his description of the magnificent temple town of Tiruchendur in the southernmost part of India. When it comes to expressing his love for rail travel, especially on the metre gauge, and with a steam engine, he almost goes into a rhapsody, calling it “the poetic diction of steam” - (rhapsody is an ecstatic or unrestrainedly enthusiastic utterance of feeling).

Aitken’s travel account is also marked by humour of the gentle variety. Without being maliciously critical, he describes the passengers from the North, who grumbled about having to pay 25 paise for using a toilet in the bus stations, as “passengers from the free-peeing North”. He also makes gentle fun of the bus driver from the South calling him “a great gobber, who marked each furlong with the discharge of spit”. These gentle digs relieve the monotony of the otherwise prosaic account of the bus journey to Rameshwaram.

### Check Your Progress-2

- i) What does ‘lesser line’ refer to?

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- ii) How many passenger trains left the Tiruchendur railway station daily? Pick up the sentence that gives you the answer.

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iii) How does Aitken make fun of Indian politicians?

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit).

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## 4.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, you have studied an excerpt from a travelogue. You would have discovered that:

- travel writing has to be in simple, direct language;
- it has to be informative; correct to the minutest detail, requiring a perceptive eye for detail; and
- Aitken’s photographic description of Tiruchendur, his sympathetic understanding of the cultural difference between people of the North and the South, and his sense of poetic magic in the movement of the steam engine, make the extracts both informative and interesting to the reader.

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## 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress-1

- A travelogue is a piece of writing about travel. It can also be a book, or a film, or a radio broadcast on travel.
- Hiuen Tsang; Fahien.
- Sri Satya Sai Baba - A Life*.

### Check Your Progress-2

- It refers to the meter gauge railway line.
- Three. The sentence is: “To make my day a steam engine lay smoking idly in the siding, waiting to haul the last of the three daily Passengers.
- Aitken says that most Indian politicians do not have the vision to encompass the diversity of India. In fact, most of them will find no difference between a camel and a boat while flying above them in their helicopters.