THE BLOSSOMING MIND
THE BLOSSOMING MIND
Poems, Grammar and Composition

Prescribed for B.A. Part I English (Compulsory)
Himachal Pradesh University

Edited by
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The revised syllabus for English (Compulsory) aims at encouraging students to develop their skills in reading and writing English, and hopefully in speaking English as well. The biggest challenge a teacher faces is most students’ unthinking cramming from the so-called help-books; and each teacher evolves his or her own strategies to tackle this problem. To ensure students’ attention to what is being taught in the class, it may be useful to keep aside a few minutes and different students may be asked questions on the important points covered in the lecture, and then those points could be revised at the beginning of the next lecture. It also helps if the students are asked to attempt a brief question at home, and then the teacher corrects the answers, crossing out irrelevant matter copied out by students blindly from help-books or from one another.

The sections on grammar and composition have been written by way of remedial coaching for adult learners who have learnt some English at school. In grammar those points have been covered which the editors have actually found useful in classroom-teaching for students fresh from school. Introductory information about Tenses and types of sentences has been included to help them understand Voice and Reported Speech more clearly. To make the book student-friendly, technical terms have been largely avoided, and cross-references have been kept to the minimum. Explanations and directions have been repeated whenever a particular point is taken up again in another chapter, so that a student reading any part of the book should be able to understand what is being discussed.

Of course, individual teachers will design their own strategies for training students in specific aspects of English language. Ideally, about three lectures per week should be provided for intensive
language teaching with smaller groups of about 30 students each, so that each student attempts at least one sentence in the grammar exercise being covered. Even diffident students, who feel shy of speaking a word in the class, gain confidence after attempting two or three sentences. Once they realise that they can understand and tackle grammar, they start making an effort and then speedily master the language. Even if it is not possible to have small groups in some colleges, different groups of students could be made to attempt answers on different days, so that each student gets to attempt specific items. The college library should have a number of different learner's dictionaries for ready reference by students, many of whom may not be in a position to buy a good dictionary immediately. For practice in grammar also, it helps if the college library has about 80 copies of a practice book recommended by the teacher(s) concerned (e.g. W.S. Allen’s Living English Structure [Longman] or A.J. Thomson & A.V. Martinet’s A Practical English Grammar Exercises: With Key, Vol. 1 & 2 [Oxford Univ. Press]), so that the students can get them issued and can be compelled to bring them to the class for practice.

The poems have been edited by V. K. Khanna, who has also prepared the section on grammar. The sections on Letter writing, Paragraph writing and Comprehension are by Meenakshi F. Paul. The teachers and students are invited to convey their suggestions for making improvements, additions, changes, corrections, etc. in this book, to the editors at H.P. University Centre for Evening Studies, Shimla 171001, or by email at vkkhanahpu@gmail.com or mfpaul@rediffmail.com.

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This book is suitable for self-study: private students can also prepare this part of the course with the help of this book, without using any help-book etc. Regular students should read the relevant parts of the book at home before any particular poem or item of grammar or composition is taken up in the class. If something is not clear on first reading, read that part again carefully.

For grammar, exercises in sufficient number have been provided for self-study, and answers have been provided for those exercises at the end of the book. You can consult those answers if you are not clear about how to attempt a particular sentence. Later, when you become more confident about a particular item of grammar, you may first write down answers of some sentences, and then check their correctness by comparing them with the answers given at the end of the book. If your answer is different from the answer given in the book, read carefully the answer given in the book, and, if necessary, read again the description and examples given in the relevant chapter. You may start with any poem you like, or with letter writing or paragraph writing, or with any item of grammar. However, before taking up the chapter on Voice or Direct and Indirect Speech, you should go through the chapters on ‘Forms of the Verb and Tenses’ and ‘Types of Sentences’. If some parts of these chapters are not clear on first reading, read them again after going through the chapters on Voice and Indirect Speech. Later, you should also go through the chapter ‘Tenses and Their Uses’. (In the examination, under grammar, questions will be set only on the use of articles and prepositions [4 marks], Active and Passive Voice [4 marks], and Direct and Indirect Speech [4 marks].)

For letter writing, paragraph-writing and comprehension, carefully read the directions given in the book and go through the examples. Refer to the directions and examples whenever
there is any doubt. In these matters also, practice helps us—so attempt a number of formal and informal letters at home, write some paragraphs on any of the given topics, and attempt the comprehension passages given for exercise. You may also attempt letters and paragraphs on other topics that interest you. For practice in comprehension you may also read a passage in a newspaper or magazine, trying to find out the main points in that passage.

For the poems, a brief description of the poet and some comments on the poem have been given before the text of the poem. Do read the comments on the poem carefully. They will help you understand the poem and also help in attempting questions on it. You may first read the poem, and then read the comments on the poem. Even if you go through the comments before reading the poem, read them again after reading the poem. Difficult words and phrases etc. have been explained in the notes given after each poem. Only those meanings are given which are relevant in the context of a particular poem, and at times the meaning of a word or phrase in one context may be different from its meaning in another context. An example of explanation with reference to the context has been provided with the first poem to guide you. (In the introductions to poems and in the notes some additional points have been given in brackets, which are not required for examination but which you may like to know.)

In a course of language teaching, poems are included because they make us focus attention on the use of words and sentence structures; and, being brief, they allow us time to study them closely. There is no need to buy any so-called help-book. Try to understand each poem yourself. Even if you do not understand some words or some lines at first, it does not matter. What is important is your attempt to understand the poem, and your effort to answer questions about it yourself—that way you begin to get some command over the language.

Up to the age of about eight years human beings learn any language quickly which they hear spoken around them. After that, learning another language requires some effort, but we can learn it at any stage if we have the will to learn it and confidence in our ability to learn it. Don’t take to cramming—read the poems and other texts with a desire to understand them. Then express your response to the given poem, story or essay—in your words. What you write at first may not be grammatically correct sometimes, but soon you will gain greater command over English. You will learn only by making an effort yourself. Cramming does not take
us even one step forward—rather it destroys our initiative and growth. Instead of wasting money on useless ‘help-books’, spend money to buy a good dictionary whenever you can; you may buy any one of the following dictionaries which are especially useful for those learning to write English correctly and well, as they also give examples of how to use a particular word or phrase:

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s Dictionary
Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary
Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners

You may also buy one of the following books of grammar whenever convenient:

Intermediate English Grammar (with answers) by Raymond Williams (Cambridge Univ. Press/ Foundation Books)
A Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students by F.T. Wood (Macmillan)

One or more of these books are likely to be available in your library; otherwise you may request the Librarian to acquire them for the Library. In the Grammar book you may go directly to the section you like to read: articles, prepositions, voice, or direct and indirect speech, or any other topic that interests you.

In this book the following abbreviations and symbol have been frequently used:

\[ \text{i.e.} : \text{that is} \]
\[ \text{e.g.} : \text{for example} \]
\[ > : \text{‘changes to’, ‘becomes’} \]
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