

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, SHIBPUR
 B.Tech Dual Degree Programme, Ist Semester (ETC, CST, Elec, IT), Examination, 2015

Professional Communication in English (HU-1201)

Full marks :35

Time: 2 hours

All questions are compulsory

- 1) Read the following passage and write a **technical report** on the topic, "Reading is out". As the head, marketing division of Universities Press publishers write to the company CEO. Compose the title page, index page with eight annexure descriptions, the introduction and conclusion. [1+6+4+3]

All over the country, bookshops are closing down. And all over the country, litfests are springing up. So there is a paradox for you.

Yes, I know that many people buy books online because of the discounts they are offered. Also, many people don't venture out of their homes as much as they used to - except, of course, for the purpose of "eating out". But true book-lovers will always prefer a bookshop, even a small one, to the impersonal advantages of online shopping.

Book-lovers like to browse, they like to roam around a well-stocked bookshop; they like to discover new authors, rediscover old authors; they like to fondle books, examine their shape and texture, appreciate a good cover or dust jacket, dwell upon a book, put it back on the shelf, and end up by buying something quite different from what they had come looking for! In the bookshop, you might meet a fellow book-lover, or even an old friend (this has happened to me quite often); or, if the bookseller is a friendly sort (as he often is) you can have a chat about the new boys on the block - who's selling or who isn't - and who's got writer's cramp or writer's block - and why, today, there are far more writers than there are readers. In other words, all the latest gossip!

Whenever I want to gossip about books and writers, I drop in at a friendly bookstore. You can gossip at a litfest, but litfests only last for three or four days at the most, whereas a bookshop is fairly permanent - until it is forced to closed down.

So where have all the book-lovers gone? Are they all attending litfests? In my limited experience of attending litfests, I have found that genuine book-lovers are rather thin on the ground. Of course, there will be a sprinkling of well-known authors, a fairly large gathering of not so well-known authors, an even larger gathering of would-be authors, and (if it's Jaipur or Mumbai or Kolkata) a huge gathering of members of the public all heading for the refreshment stalls.

Somewhere in the crowd, if you hunt for it, you may find a stall selling books. Just one, usually. For some strange reason the space is given out on a contract basis. Books have to take a

backseat at these events, and sometimes they will end up splattered with ice-cream or tomato sauce.

I would be the last person to discourage anyone from writing, but I do feel that some simple grammar and composition would create a great foundation for literary success. Twenty to thirty years ago there were no litfests, just the occasional book fair. Even book launches were uncommon. The writers of my youth, be they RK Narayan in India or Graham Greene in England, were famous as writers but their faces were unfamiliar. You were known by your name and not by your profile. There was no television to broadcast your image across the globe. You could be famous and anonymous at the same time. At best, a smudgy black-and-white photograph would appear on the jacket of your book; you could be mistaken for Stan Laurel or Elizabeth Taylor or a visitor from another planet. The only exception was Ernest Hemingway, an extrovert who went out of his way to garner publicity and who loved to make headlines. In his obsession with centre-stage he drove himself over the edge.

Litfests happen in a big way in our larger cities, but they have also caught on in small towns and hill stations - Shillong, Mussoorie, Shimla, Kasauli, Agra, Trivandrum... the list gets longer by the year. Thimpu in Bhutan recently held the sixth edition of its Mountain Echoes Festival: a sweet name for the event. And here on my desk is an invitation to a litfest in Sangrur, in Punjab. Sangrur? No one in my household had heard of such a place, but I remembered it from the early 1960s, when I had a glimpse of an old palace surrounded by a sea of flood waters. Sangrur was once the capital of the princely state of Jind. Now Jind is in Haryana while Sangrur is in Punjab. I am told by the convener of the litfest that by the end of November the wheat fields will be a lush green carpet "laid out from one end of Punjab to the other." How splendid! But for my wobbly knees, I would be tempted to attend. I love the idea of those lush green fields going on forever. But I would only play truant, abandon the serious business of the litfest and go for a romp in the fields, on one leg if necessary.

A publisher friend tells me there is a slump in the book trade, both here and in the West. But there is always a slump on the book trade. Selling literature has always been a risky business. To write a good book is difficult enough; to sell it is another kind of challenge. But I am encouraged by the little people who still sell books - like the young man in Bhubaneswar who sells them from the back of a Maruti van. He has a small turnover, and a stock limited by space, but he attracts a number of discriminating and curious readers. And perhaps that's the way to go forward. Keeping it simple.

- 2) Make sentences with the following: [5]
Webinar, bootlegging, seamless, freebies, nosedive
- 3) Write a paragraph of 100 words on the topic, *Working while studying* [8]
- 4) Write a letter to the editor of a leading daily stressing the need to have good teachers in schools who will help students develop a strong base in English language. [8]