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# UNIT 14

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'A World of Four Senses' by Ved Mehta

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## 14.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit our aim is to give you practice in reading comprehension by

- i) giving you a passage from Ved Mehta's autobiography, *Face to Face*, and
- ii) giving a glossary of difficult words, and questions on comprehension.

We have also set exercises on selected items of vocabulary.

In the section on grammar and usage, we have discussed

- i) prepositional phrases and participial phrases, ii) phrasal verbs, and
- iii) relative clauses: defining and non-defining.

We have also asked you to write a short composition based on the passage you have read and your reactions to it.

After completing the unit you should be able to

- read and appreciate a biographical passage;
- recognize prepositional phrases and participial phrases;
- use some of the phrasal verbs correctly;
- use the relative clauses correctly; and
- write a short composition based on your reaction to the passage read.

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## 14.1 READING COMPREHENSION

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Here is an extract from Ved Mehta's autobiography, *Face to Face*.

### 14.1.1 Passage for Reading

**A World of Four Senses,**  
by Ved Mehta

- 1 In India as elsewhere every girl or boy has fond and warm memories of his childhood, from the day he begins to talk to his mother and father in broken

syllables. Invariably a child learns and recognizes the faces of his mother and father, of sisters and brothers who play with him constantly, or the servants who prepare his meals or watch him play in the nursery. He must also remember the rich colours of the butterflies and birds which children everywhere always love to watch with open eyes. I say must, because when I was three and a half, all these memories were expunged, and with the prolonged sickness I started living in a world of four senses—that is, a world in which colours and faces and light and darkness are unknown.

- 2 If my age and the length of the sickness deprived me of the treasured memories of sight, they also reduced things which are valued so much in the sighted world to nothing more than mere words, empty of meaning. I started living in a universe where it was not the flood of sunshine streaming through the nursery window or the colours of the rainbow, a sunset or a full moon that mattered, but the feel of the sun against the skin, the slow drizzling sound of rain, the feel of the air just before the coming of the quiet night, the smell of the grass on a warm morning. It was a universe where at first—but only at first—I made my way fumbling and faltering.
- 3 It was good that I lost my sight when I did, because having no memories of seeing, there was nothing to look back to, nothing to miss. I went blind in November 1937. At that time we were living in Gujrat, in the province of Punjab in northern India. After my sickness we moved to Lahore, a few miles away, but the procession of relatives who came to sympathize made my father ask for another transfer, this time to Karnal, where we had neither friends nor relatives. There we got a cottage on the canal bank, built in very peaceful and quiet surroundings.
- 4 As might be expected, in the beginning it was tough for all of us—for my mother and my father, for my three sisters and my brother, and for me, too. The illness had left me weak. The servants shirked me as though I were an evil eye personified. My sister treated me with care, as though I were a fragile doll, and my mother wept. My father, who was a doctor in the public health service, was grateful that my spine had been tapped in time, for a delay in the lumbar puncture would have affected my mind or endangered my life. But he, like the rest, despaired.
- 5 A state of complete inaction therefore followed my blindness. In part this was due to the immediate shock of the illness, but more important still, the impasse was caused by ignorance of the potentialities of a blind child, since the only blind persons my parents saw were beggars.
- 6 My father's wide medical experience had prepared him for an acceptance of this tragedy, and he understood that any course of action must begin with the realization that I would be blind for the rest of my life. My mother, on the other hand, neither would nor could convince herself that my sight would never return; she did not have the medical experience of my father, and she blamed something in her past for the tragedy.
- 7 The family *pandit*, upon whose advice mother had relied almost from her childhood, was called in and consulted. 'He knows more about religion and science,' Mother said with pride, 'than any other *pandit* in our province.' I was taken before him, and for a long time I sat in my mother's lap while he was lost in reflection. After a while, he took my hand and thoroughly examined the lines. Then he looked at Mother's and he studied her forehead, mumbling steadily. He said he found himself inadequate, and more *pandits* would have to be consulted. At his request, they were called and questioned exhaustively as to what atonement could be made. Although their analyses and remedies differed considerably, they all agreed that by doing penance for her sins, my mother could improve my chance of regaining sight.
- 8 Along with this religious counsel was coupled a series of visits to *hakims* (physicians who followed the Greek or Unani system of medicine). These quacks prescribed all types of drops to put in my eyes. The *surmas*, which were administered at all hours of the day and night, burned and stung my eyes; and the only soothing part of the otherwise miserable treatment was the loving caress of Mother afterwards.

- 9 One night when my mother was administering these eye drops, and I was protesting with loud cries, my father unexpectedly returned. He asked and I told him why I was crying. He was outraged.
- 10 He questioned Mother as to how long this had been going on, but she would not answer him. She was prepared to bear any outburst silently and the longer she stayed silent, the more irritated my father grew. He said harshly that her superstitions far surpassed those of any village woman he had ever known. He went on to say that any person with the slightest consideration for her husband would have readjusted her ways in ten years of marriage. All his efforts to break her from her deplorable past had been in vain. He did not want his children brought up in such a tradition.
- 11 Even then she did not defend herself. Just as my mother had silently suffered the verdict of my blindness, the self-abasement imposed by the *pandit*, and the pleading which preceded the administration of my eye drops, so now she suffered my father's anger quietly. He forbade her to make any more visits to the *hakims*, and strictly prohibited the purchase of any more *surmas*. Then he gently lifted me from her arms, and took me away. With steady hands, he bathed my stinging eyes. After this incident, even though we stopped going to *hakims*, now and then applications of *surmas* continued until I was eleven. But they were very mild, and my mother always obtained my consent in advance.
- 12 I remember other little tests my mother put me through. One day she perceived that just before I arrived at a closed door I would stop and reach for the handle to open it. She began letting me go about the house by myself and she discovered that I seldom ran into things. She credited the *hakim* and the stinging drops, but every evening she would hold her hand up before my face and ask me to tell her where it was. She used to shake her hand before me so that myriads of pores next to, below and above my ears could feel her hand even when it was a foot away. The air currents helped me to spot it. But she wasn't satisfied with this. She wanted me to tell her whether the light was on or off. When I failed this test she was unhappy again, but I soon caught on and would listen for the click of the switch and then tell her. Sometimes she would flip the switch very rapidly time and again, and I would always count the clicks and give her the right answer.
- 13 The reason for the conflicting approaches of Mother and Father towards my blindness lay in each of their backgrounds. My mother had come from a large middle-class family, and had three sisters and three brothers. She was the eldest of the sisters and at the time when she came to attend school it was still customary for even the best-educated women to go only as far as the eighth grade. Thus her education had ceased with simple arithmetic and Hindi grammar. From that time until her marriage five years later she had devoted herself to cooking, sewing, and caring for her younger brothers and sisters. While these skills trained her to be an excellent mother, they did not prepare her to cope rationally with an unfamiliar tragedy such as blindness. She found the weapons of love and affection useless. If she pampered me as her maternal instinct dictated, my father would scold her; and if she tried to use the medical cures which had been practised and handed down from mother to daughter for generations, my father would forbid their use.
- 14 Although in my case there was an obstacle which seemed insurmountable, my father was determined to leave no avenue unexplored. He read all available literature on blindness. He learned that almost all India's blind people had turned to begging for their livelihood, or had become owners of *pan* and *biri* shops. He was determined that this was not going to be the fate of his second son, and he started corresponding with many of the prominent educational authorities, asking their advice. The replies were not optimistic. For the blind, educational facilities and personnel were limited, and often the school became semi-asylums with all ages grouped together in classes without any gradation system.
- 15 My father still persisted, for he knew that my staying at home would result in over-indulgence. He realized, as well, that I would have difficulty playing with normal children, and that my mother would always be afraid to let me leave the immediate premises.

16 At last he heard of Dr. R.M. Halder, Principal of Dadar School for the Blind in Bombay. My father wrote to him asking advice. Dr. Halder showed unusual interest in my case, and promised to take special care and personal responsibility for me if I were sent to his school.

17 When my mother learned of my father's decision to send me to the Dadar School, she was appalled. She had never been to Bombay, and to her it might have been a foreign country. She could not understand the reason for sending me nine hundred miles away from home to attend school with orphans and children of the poorest classes. After all, another year at home could not but help my development. Yet she placed her faith in my father's superior judgement, and in her quiet way she agreed.

### 14.1.2 Glossary

- 1 'syllable: a word or part of a word containing a vowel sound  
ex'punged: rubbed out, removed
- 2 'universe: all space and the matter which exists in it  
'fumbling: handling things without skill; moving the hands awkwardly in search of something
- 3 'faltering: walking or moving unsteadily
- 4 'fragile: easily broken or damaged  
spine: the row of bones in the centre of the back that supports the body  
'lumbar: of the lower part of the back  
de'spaired: lost all hope
- 5 im'passe/æm'pɑ:s/ : a point where further movement is blocked
- 7 'mumbling: speaking unclearly  
ex'haustively: thoroughly  
a'tonement: making repayment for some crime  
'penance: self-punishment suffered willingly to show that one is sorry for having done wrong
- 8 'counsel: advice  
quack: a person dishonestly claiming to have medical knowledge
- 9 'outraged: offended greatly
- 10 'super'stitious: beliefs which are not based on reason or facts
- 12 'myriads: a great number
- 13 'rationally: according to reason  
'pampered: treated too kindly  
'instinct: natural feeling  
scold: speak in an angry and complaining way to someone
- 14 'obstacle: something which stands in the way  
'insur'mountable: too difficult to be dealt with  
'semi-: partly  
a'sylum: a mental hospital
- 15 'over-: too much  
in'dulgence: yielding to someone's desires  
'premises: a house or other building with any surrounding land
- 17 ap'palled: shocked deeply  
'orphan: a person lacking one or both parents

### 14.1.3 Comprehension Questions

#### Exercise 1

Answer the following questions:

1 a) What are some of the things children everywhere learn and recognize?

.....  
.....

b) The author's childhood was different from that of other children. Why?

.....  
.....

2 The author's perception of the world was confined only to four senses. Pick out phrases which highlight the use of the senses of

i) hearing, .....

ii) touch, .....

iii) smell. ....

3 Why does he say 'It was good that I lost my sight when I did'?

.....  
.....  
.....

4 From Lahore the family moved to Karnal, where they had neither friends nor relatives. But they were happy. Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

5 'The servants shirked me as though I were an evil eye personified.' This means that the servants thought I was

i) blind.

ii) a curse on the family.

iii) a spoilt child.

Select the correct alternative.

.....

6 What were the two reasons for 'a state of complete inaction' after the author's blindness?

.....  
.....

7 Why did the author's father object to the treatment prescribed by *hakims* and the family *pandit*?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8 How did the author manage to tell his mother whether the light was on or off?

.....  
.....  
.....

9 What was the main difference between the attitudes of the author's mother and his father towards his blindness?

10 a) The author's father decided to send him nine hundred miles away from home to school. Was it the right thing to do? If so, why?

b) What was his mother's reaction to it?

## 14.2 VOCABULARY

### Exercise 2

Words under A mean the opposite of those under B. Match them.

Example : empty - full

#### A

- a) empty
- b) optimistic
- c) blind
- d) quiet
- e) lift
- f) ignorance
- g) soothing

#### B

- i) sighted
- ii) drop
- iii) full
- iv) knowledge
- v) stinging
- vi) loud
- vii) pessimistic

### Exercise 3

Choose the correct meaning of each of the following words:

a) shirk

- i) accuse
- ii) avoid
- iii) annoy

b) fragile

- i) which works smoothly
- ii) which functions independently
- iii) which breaks easily

- c) surpassed                      i) exceeded  
    ii) embarrassed  
    iii) established  
    .....
- d) atonement                      i) an action for wrong-doing  
    ii) an action for pleasure  
    iii) an action for fame  
    .....
- e) insurmountable                i) which cannot be made possible  
    ii) which cannot be avoided  
    iii) which cannot be overcome  
    .....
- f) indulgence                      i) patronizing  
    ii) pampering  
    iii) pasturing  
    .....

#### Exercise 4

Each of the following words can be used both as a noun and a verb. Fill in the blanks using the given words in their appropriate forms:

despair, spot, hand, report, remedy

- 1 Surajkund is a popular picnic \_\_\_\_\_ in Haryana.
- 2 A bird in \_\_\_\_\_ is worth two in the bush.
- 3 The refugee's \_\_\_\_\_ of ever seeing his family again filled us with pity.
- 4 The discovery of a new planet has been \_\_\_\_\_ in today's papers.
- 5 The \_\_\_\_\_ seems more painful than the disease.
- 6 We cannot always observe the traditions \_\_\_\_\_ down to us from the past.
- 7 You can \_\_\_\_\_ a friend even in a crowd.
- 8 Why he \_\_\_\_\_ of success in his new profession was because he was lazy.
- 9 The committee has been asked to hand in its \_\_\_\_\_ in four months.
- 10 Don't be unhappy; your faults of pronunciation can be easily \_\_\_\_\_

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## 14.3 GRAMMAR AND USAGE

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### 14.3.1 Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a phrase consisting of a preposition and the noun following it. Examples:

in bed  
 on top

Prepositional phrases can be adjectival or adverbial.

Examples:

- 1 The springs *under the cushion* are broken. (adjectival phrase)
- 2 He listened to the speech *with great attention*. (adverbial phrase, indicating manner)
- 3 I reached the station *at 10 o'clock*. (adverbial phrase, indicating time)

4 The books were *under the cushion*. (adverbial phrase, indicating place.)

#### Exercise 5

Pick ten prepositional phrases from the first paragraph of the passage you have read in Section 14.1.1 and indicate whether they are adjectival or adverbial.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### 14.3.2 Participial Phrases

A participial phrase begins with a participle, that is, either the present participle (the *-ing* form of the verb) or the past participle—the third (*-ed*, *-en*) form of the verb used as an adjective.

Here are some examples from the reading passage of participles used as adjectives:

- i) the *prolonged* sickness (past participle)
- ii) *treasured* memories (past participle)
- iii) the slow *drizzling* sound of rain (present participle)

Examples of participial phrases:

- i) the flood of sunshine *streaming through the window*
- ii) we got a cottage, *built in very peaceful and quiet surroundings*.

#### 14.3.3 Phrasal Verbs

A phrasal verb is a group of words that acts like a verb and consists usually of a verb with an adverb and/or a preposition.

Examples: *get by* (= continue one's way of life),  
*use up* (= finish completely)

Some examples taken from the reading passage in Section 14.1.1 are:

Paragraph 3: There was nothing to *look back to*. (remember)

Paragraph 10: how long this had been *going on*. (taking place, continuing)

He did not want his children *brought up* in such a tradition. (educated and cared for until they grew up)

Paragraph 12: my mother *put me through* other little tests. (made me experience)  
I soon *caught on*. (understood).

#### Exercise 6

Some verb + particle (adverb or preposition) combinations are used in sentences under A. Words and phrases of similar meanings are given under B. Match the two lists.

- | A   | B                             |
|---|-------------------------------|
| i) He takes after his father more than his mother.  | a. wear                       |
| ii) He gave up the project for lack of funds.       | b. adopt as a hobby           |
| iii) Put on a clean shirt; you're going to a party. | c. resembles                  |
| iv) I need to look into the case thoroughly.        | d. investigate, study         |
| v) Most people take to gardening on retirement.     | e. abandoned.<br>discontinued |



### Exercise 7

Supply the appropriate particles from those given below:

up, out, after, to, down.

- i) I can't start the car; the battery has run \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Look \_\_\_\_\_ the baby while I am away.
- iii) The price of fruit usually goes \_\_\_\_\_ in summer in Delhi; even melons cost a lot.
- iv) I am looking forward \_\_\_\_\_ meeting my cousin next week.
- v) Long side-burns went \_\_\_\_\_ years ago.

### 14.3.4 Relative Clauses

Look at this sentence:

The boy who is standing there is my nephew.

Here the main sentence is

The boy is my nephew.

But I want to tell you which boy I am talking about. So I add the clauses *who is standing there* to define the noun *boy*. Such a clause is called a **defining relative clause**.

Here are some more examples:

- i) This is the house *that Jack built*.
- ii) Please return the books *which I lent you yesterday*.

Note that defining relative clauses generally begin with *who*, *which* or *that*.

### Exercise 8

Fill in the blanks using *who*, *which* or *that*:

- i) The man \_\_\_\_\_ is standing at the door is an actor.
- ii) The policy \_\_\_\_\_ the government is following these days is praiseworthy.
- iii) Teachers generally like students \_\_\_\_\_ are punctual and hardworking.
- iv) The play \_\_\_\_\_ we saw last night was hilarious.
- v) You are telling a story \_\_\_\_\_ is unbelievable.

### Exercise 9

Join each pair into a single sentence using *who*, *which* or *that* in place of the word in italics:

- i) The woman is my father's sister.  
*She came to see me last week.*

.....  
.....

- ii) The shop didn't have the book.  
*I wanted it.*

.....  
.....

- iii) How can I forget a friend?  
*He was so good to me.*

.....  
.....

- iv) Write a story.  
*It would interest everyone.*

.....  
.....

- v) The car will fetch a high price.  
*It was driven by the world champion.*

.....  
.....

### Exercise 10

Complete the following sentences by adding suitable relative clauses:

- i) Do you remember the name of the person .....
- ii) What is it .....
- iii) Give me a present .....
- iv) Did you collect the parcel .....
- v) I am yet to meet someone .....

Now look at this sentence:

My wife, who lives in Bombay, is arriving here next week. Here the relative clause *who lives in Bombay* does not define the noun *wife*, because I have only one wife. It only gives additional information about her. Such a clause is called a **non-defining relative clause**. It is necessary to put a comma before and after such a clause.

### Exercise 11

Join each pair into a single sentence using *who* or *which* in place of the word in italics. Don't forget to put a comma before *who* or *which*, and also at the end of the clause if it comes in the middle of the sentence.

- i) The country now has 300 TV relay stations.  
*They* are part of the national network.  
.....
- ii) His latest book has become a great success.  
*It* was well reviewed by critics.  
.....
- iii) Tourists are fascinated by our folk dances.  
*They* are interested in cultural programmes.  
.....
- iv) This year's harvest has been rather poor.  
*It* looked like a good one for some time.  
.....
- v) Some Indian scientists live in America.  
*They* are very well known for their knowledge and skill.  
.....

### Exercise 12

Rewrite the following sentences by adding clauses relating to the words in italics. Use *who* or *which* at the beginning of the clause and don't forget the commas. The words in brackets against each sentence will give you the clues.

*Example:*

My grandfather was once a keen sportsman. (age 75)  
My grandfather, who is now 75, was once a keen sportsman.

- i) My *health* doesn't allow me to take part in strenuous games. (Poor health)

- .....

- .....
- .....

- .....

- .....
- .....

### Exercise 13

**Educated parents can bring up their children much better than uneducated parents.**

**OR**

**OR**

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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## 14.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have given you practice in

- i) reading and understanding a biographical passage,
- ii) using some of the words both as nouns and verbs,
- iii) recognizing prepositional phrases and participial phrases,
- iv) using some of the phrasal verbs,
- v) using defining and non-defining relative clauses, and
- vi) writing a short composition based on your reaction to the passage read.

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## 14.6 KEY WORDS

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**participial** (in grammar): using a participle

**participle** (in English grammar): present participle or past participle form of a verb, which may be used in a compound form of the verb or as an adjective

**particle** (in grammar): a short word that is not as important in a sentence as the subject, verb, etc; e.g., a preposition.

**phrasal verb**: a group of words that acts like a verb and consists usually of a verb with an adverb and/or a preposition; e.g., *use up*

**prepositional phrase**: a phrase consisting of a preposition and the noun following it; e.g., *in bed*

**relative clause**: a part of a sentence that has a verb in it and is joined to the rest of the sentence by a relative adverb or a relative pronoun. e.g., in the sentence *The man who lives next door is a teacher of English*, the words *who lives next door* form a relative clause.

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## 14.7 SUGGESTED READING

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Ved Mehta: *Face to Face*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

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## 14.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

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### Exercise 1

- 1 a) Faces of members of the family, and colours of butterflies and birds.
- b) He was blind. He lost his sight at the age of three and a half.
- 2 i) The sound of rain.
- ii) The feel of the sun against the skin;  
the feel of the air before the coming of night.
- iii) The smell of grass.

- 3 He lost his eyesight at a very tender age. He almost began life as a blind child, and his mind had stored nothing much which he could have missed later.
- 4 The new surroundings were quiet and peaceful, and no relatives or friends came to offer sympathies, which used to be embarrassing.
- 5 ii)
- 6 a) The shock of the illness; b) the ignorance of the potentialities of a blind child.
- 7 Being a qualified doctor, he knew that the quacks and the priests would further harm the child rather than cure his blindness. He was also raising his voice against his wife's superstitious handling of a hopeless situation.
- 8 By counting all the clicks of the switch. If the first click meant the light was on, the second would mean it was off, and so on.
- 9 The main difference was that the father was rational and practical, whereas the mother was superstitious.
- 10 a) Yes, because i) the child would never get educated if he stayed at home, and ii) the Bombay school was the best available, and the Principal showed a lot of interest in the case.  
b) She was deeply shocked, but accepted her husband's decision.

#### Exercise 2

- |          |         |
|----------|---------|
| a) (iii) | e) (ii) |
| b) (vii) | f) (iv) |
| c) (i)   | g) (v)  |
| d) (vi)  |         |

#### Exercise 3

- a) (ii)
- b) (iii)
- c) (i)
- d) (i)
- e) (iii)
- f) (ii)

#### Exercise 4

- 1 spot 2 hand 3 despair 4 reported 5 remedy 6 handed 7 spot  
8 despaired 9 report 10 remedied.

#### Exercise 5

- 1 *In India*: adverbial
- 2 *of his childhood*: adjectival
- 3 *from the day he begins to talk to his mother and father in broken syllables*: adverbial
- 4 *to his mother and father*: adverbial
- 5 *in broken syllables*: adverbial
- 6 *of his mother and father*: adjectival
- 7 *of sisters and brothers*: adjectival
- 8 *with him*: adverbial
- 9 *in the nursery*: adverbial
- 10 *of the butterflies and birds*: adjectival

#### Exercise 6

- i) a ii) a iii) a iv) d v) b

#### Exercise 7

- i) down    ii) after    iii) up    iv) to    v) out

#### Exercise 8

- i) who    ii) which/that    iii) who    iv) that    v) that

#### Exercise 9

- i) The woman who came to see me last week is my father's sister.
- ii) The shop didn't have the book that I wanted.
- iii) How can I forget a friend who was so good to me?
- iv) Write a story that would interest everyone.
- v) The car that was driven by the world champion will fetch a high price.

#### Exercise 10

- i) who came to see us this morning
- ii) that you wish to talk about
- iii) that is not too expensive
- iv) that arrived at the post office yesterday
- v) who can speak English like a native

#### Exercise 11

- i) ... stations, which are part ...
- ii) ... book, which was well reviewed by critics,
- iii) Tourists, who are interested in cultural programmes, are fascinated by our folk dances.
- iv) ... harvest, which looked .... time, has been rather poor.
- v) ... scientists, who are very well ... skill, live in America.

#### Exercise 12

- i) My health, which has been rather poor, doesn't allow ...
- ii) ... floods, which came too suddenly, damaged ....
- iii) P.T. Usha, who appeared on T.V. last month, is one of ....
- iv) Last night's meeting, which was attended by the two rival groups, broke up in disorder.
- v) Trams, which do not run in Delhi now, are still used in Calcutta.