

## B. A. English (Honours) Part-I

### Paper-I

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### Forms of Poetry: Ode

An **ode** has been called a poem in full dress. It is a long lyric poem that is serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style and elaborate in its stanzaic structure. The prototype was established by the Greek poet Pindar whose odes were written for public occasions, especially in honour of victors in the Greek games. Modelled on the choric songs of Greek drama, the stanzas of Pindaric odes were patterned in sets of three: moving in a dance rhythm to the left, the chorus chanted the **strophe**; moving to the right, the **antistrophe**; then, standing still, the **epode**. Pindaric odes are also known as Regular ode. Pindaric odes in English are very rare. An example of Pindaric is Thomas Gray's "The Progress of Poesy".

An ode in which stanzas or verse paragraphs are irregular in rhyme scheme and in number and length of lines is called a "Cowleyan" or "Irregular" ode. The type was established by Abraham Cowley in 1656 and has been widely used ever since. He allowed each stanza to establish its own pattern of varying line lengths, number of lines, and rhyme scheme. This type of stanzaic structure is free to alter in accordance with shifts in subject and mood and it has been the most common for the English ode ever since. Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimation of Immortality" is a representative.

The Horatian ode, so called from the Roman poet Horace, is one in which each stanza follows the same metrical pattern (this pattern is called **homostrophic**). Horace's odes were more personal and reflective but shorter than those of Pindar. These odes are calm and colloquial. Marvell's "An Horatian ode upon Cromwell Return from Ireland" is an example as is Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale".

English romantic poets used the ode form with masterly perfection. Many of the English odes are **encomiastic** (that is written to praise or glorify someone/something) like Pindaric odes. Dryden's "Alexander's Feast", Collins' "Ode to Evening" and Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" are some examples of such type of odes. Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Collins wrote poem in this mode, which will remain immortal till the English

language is used. Anyone who wishes to see how much scope there is for artistic achievement in this poetic form should study Keats's odes, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and Collins' "Ode to Evening". When we read Wordsworth's Immortality ode, we find that this poetic form can also be successfully used as a vehicle of Philosophy.

**Source-**

Abrams, M. H. & G. G. Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning, 2015.