

TOPIC OF THE SEMINAR

# **ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN MAKING OF MAHATMA**

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# Introduction

- ❖ In the long, uneasy & interminable task of making English an Indian language, **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** is in central figure.
- ❖ He tried to English language to make it intimate, fluent.
- ❖ He showed how the English language could be a tool of freedom.
- ❖ He never used imaginative aspect in language.
- ❖ His political personality established a way of structuring human relations through fragile architecture of language.

**He shaped the place and form of English in India,  
in three decisive ways :-**

1. He used English language, a language of official bureaucrats(legal petition, imperial proclamation, pleaders, Five-year plans, Ministries of India etc.
2. About the function of English in India, he kept a political commitment to English as a language of public communication.
3. Finally, the forms in which they wrote; *auto-biographies, public & private letters, journalistic essays & articles* etc. for this genres they chose effective English medium.

## First Phase as a Language Learner:

- ❖ Gandhi's entry & early life as a learner into English was unsteady & uncomfortable.
- ❖ Born in 1869, the youngest child of Dewan of Porbander.
- ❖ The first language he spoke was *Guajarati*.
- ❖ At school he was poor student & wrote badly. E.g. words regularly misspelled, handwriting ill defined.
- ❖ '*I found myself completely at Sea*'- in his autobiography he realized that importance of English in foreign.
- ❖ In 1888 Gandhi sailed for London & that journey left him linguistically traumatized.

## Second Phase as a Language Learner:-

- ❖ From age of sixteen: he prescribed reading included 200 pages of Addison's '*Spectator*', 750 lines of '*Paradise Lost*' (200 to be learned by heart) & reading of '*Pride & Prejudice*'.
- ❖ His first experience of public speaking:  
*'I had written out a few words of thanks. But I could scarcely stammer them out. I remember my head reeled & my whole frame shook as I stood up to read them'*
- ❖ In London, while learning the law Gandhi set to the task of making himself an English gentleman.
- ❖ To master his fear, he decided to take elocution lessons from his teacher recommended Bell's '*Slandered Elocutionist*'
- ❖ In early years of life in foreign culture & language, Gandhi was painfully aware of his timidity & force on boldness to speak.

## Third Phase - Literary career

- ❖ In course of time he became a good drafter after sending letters to editors of newspapers.

***'I just write as the spirit moves me at the time of writing...'***

- ❖ His first literary work was ***'HIND SWARAJ'***-

At first it was in Gujarati language & he wrote it when sailing from England to South Africa.

-It is in form of dialogue between Editor & Reader

-like Sermons

-expression about Modernity's obsession

- ❖ It was published in Gujarati in 1909(own press)
- ❖ Translated by himself in English & published in 1910 entitled as ***'INDIAN HOME RULE'***, Which was banned by South Africa up to 30 years.(1935-lifted)

- ❖ In London he began to read daily newspaper and impress by the functional & informational style of Press.
- ❖ He developed his habit of a reader through reading of Theosophical pamphlets & Vegetarian tracts etc.(Intellectual, Spiritual & Vegetarians).
- ❖ In 1893 he sailed for South Africa, then he spent two decades with Political Activism, Legal Battles,& Social experiment.



## ❖ His work as a Journalist & Columnist:-

*...Week after Week I poured out my soul in columns expounding my principles & practice of Satyagraha as I understand it...*

❖ *‘Indian Opinion’* took over in 1904- Weekly from **Durban**.

❖ He left South Africa for India in **1914**.

❖ His first paper an unregistered Weekly in India was *‘Satyagraha’* in 1919.

❖ His *‘Young India’* in English medium its circulation was around - 1200.

❖ His *‘Navajivan’* in Gujarati its circulation was around -40,000.

❖ *‘Satyagraha in South Africa’*- longest of Gandhi’s book.

- dictated bulk of text in Yerwada jail in 1923-24.
- It was published in Madras in 1928.
- It is about political practice, the principles & logic that guided his actions.
- factual record of his South African life
- It shows concept of Satyagraha was derived not from moral theory or doctrine, but from experience & practice.
- Writing:- practical events in form of epic, flattest, plain prose.

- ❖ Mid 1920 he began writing & publishing (in Gujarati) a series of weekly newspaper columns under title '*The Story of My Experiments of Truth*'.
- ❖ Later published as '*An Autobiography or the Story of my experiments with Truth*'.(Vol.I,1927 & Vol.II,1929)
- ❖ *...I just write as the spirit moves me at the time of writing...*
- ❖ Gandhi described himself in the book as a scientist-experiment.
- ❖ Scientific method-testing, trial & error, constant revision .

❖ Experimental themes – political field, spiritual fields ,on my body, in dietetics.

❖ Counted life as a laboratory & experience as report .

*...I had no definite plan before me. I have no diary or documents on which to base the story of my experiments...*

❖ *‘Key to Health’ 1942-* written in Gujarati , the English translation by Sushila Nayyar.

- It is a self-help health manual.
- Naturapathy, methods.
- Vegetarianism.

# Findings about English Usage of M.K.Gandhi

- ✓ Less than a fortnight before his assassination in January 1948 , Gandhi wrote-  
*‘ English & Indian scholars of English believe there is something special in my English ’*
- ❖ He moves seamlessly from low to high styles & easily mixed new coinages.(Ahimsa,Satyagraha)
- ❖ He used common language or simple words .
- ❖ He used perfect phrases e.g. ‘My Himalayan Blunder’.

- ❖ Perfect use of political slogans, which matched to ordinary, different audiences e.g. '*Quit India*', '*non-cooperation movement*', '*go-back Simon*'
- ❖ His style was unornamented, very lucid.
- ❖ His timidity, introvert nature, contemplative mood expressed by his writing in English.
- ❖ His language transforms from a language of barrister(Lawyer) to a socio-politician.
- ❖ He evoked the transcendent qualities of words.e.g '*Ahimsa & Satyagraha*'.

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**Thank You!**