

Gandhiji was primarily not a writer nor was he particularly interested in the art of writing, but he had to write and talk a great deal in English. Though he had neither the time nor the inclination to become a writer he had left behind him an amazingly large volumes of writing. Writing for Gandhiji became an instrument to explain, to clarify, to appeal his thoughts and ideas. These writings established him as a writer of distinction among Indian masters of English.

His Style of Writing

Mahatma Gandhi's style is simple, easy, graceful and forcible. He expressed himself in plain, distinct and impressive manner and imparted to his readers the same views and feelings he himself had. He was sincere in thoughts, words and deeds and his style reflects the transparent sincerity and frankness of his heart. Infact, perfect sincerity, truth and frankness has been his chief aim in writing. He wrote in the introduction of his famous autobiography, "The Story of my Experiments with Truth", 'I am not going to conceal or understate any ugly things that must be told. I hope to acquaint, the reader fully with all my faults and errors. My purpose is to describe experiments in the science of Satyagraha, not to say how good I am.' And it was true. With perfect candidness and sincerity he described even the greatest secrets of his life and never concealed anything about his life from his readers. In this respect he was far ahead from his contemporary writers.

Influences On His Writings

Gandhiji was a devout Hindu and was tremendously influenced by the classics of his own country. The influence of *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavat Gita* was strong on him and its philosophy and style became part of his writing. The *Bible* also imparted a complementary influence. Gandhiji was a seeker after truth, but he knew that truth alone is not enough, he must be careful too. His careful reasoning and the consciousness of being a leader and guide of his countrymen made him work along the lines of rules and principles. His active and contemplative mind required a medium to help in its functioning and this medium was his writings. The influence of his religion imparted a prophetic tone in his writings to exercise moral influence on his readers.

The writings of Ruskin, Carlyle and Tolstoy also exercised formative influence on Gandhi. He felt spiritual and intellectual affinity with these writers. The prophetic and forcible style of these writers left an imperishable stamp on Gandhiji's writings.

Gandhiji's Influences on Indian Writings

The Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian writings brought about results in various directions. As regard the language, a general preference

for the mother tongue and the regional language has been made. Also, he stressed more on simplicity, clarity and on immediate effectiveness than on labourious activity. As regard the choice of themes and the portrayal of character, there has been a conscious shift of emphasis from the city to the village. Further, a contrast between the too urban luxury and sophistication on the one hand and rural modes and manners on the other is implied. The other side of the rural life is also not ignored. The lights and shades are mingled as in actual life, but the essential simplicity, beauty and even nobility of the rural way of life are brought out with disarming sincerity and power.

Gandhiji wrote both in English and his mother tongue, Gujarati. Under the influence of his example, writing in the various regional languages flourished as never before during the twenties and after. It attained a modern incisiveness and force. However, by the growth of regional languages, English writing in India did not suffer any set back. Gandhiji's writings had simplicity, pointedness and clarity that was refreshing.

Gandhi's Contribution to Indian Literature

Gandhiji's most significant contribution to Indian writing in English is the change he effected in its prose style. Before him the Indo-Anglian prose-style was apt to be rhetorical and periodical. The shadow of victorianism loomed large over it. He ushered in a style which is surprisingly modern. It is a style remarkable for its directness, simplicity and clarity. It is free from all artificial manipulations and is spotlessly clean. At times it is often lyrical, though there is no straining after effect.

Greatness as a Writer

As an Indo-anglian writer, Gandhiji mostly appears as a journalist. He started *Indian Opinion* in South Africa in 1904. Though he was not avowedly the editor of *Indian opinion*, he was virtually responsible for its conduct. He poured out his soul in its columns. He wrote every word in those articles with profound thought and deliberation and even the bitterest critic found very little to which he could object. *Young India* and later *Harijan* served the similar purpose in India. In 1919 *Young India* started with a circulation of less than 2500 papers. Under the guidance of Gandhiji it steadily waxed in power and prestige and in March 1922, its weekly sale was nearly 40,000. This circulation was achieved without any aid of advertisements. Later *Navajivan* also came under his disposal and was immediately a success. These journals enabled Gandhiji freely to ventilate his views and to put heart into the people. As a result, both the journals rendered good service to the people.

His greatness lies in the belief that a true journalist should be very careful in remaining true to his path of truth and non-violence. A journalist

cannot write in anger or malice, or even idly cannot write to excite the passions and emotions. Though in anger and excitement, he should remove the offending words and phrases. These views of Gandhiji on journalism, made his journalism more than mere journalism. His journalistic writing qualifies as literature because for him, newspaper was a vehicle for the expression of his ideas on all subjects. Consequently he wrote on many subjects such as education, language problem, social reform, religion, ethics and numerous other subjects.

On the whole, Gandhiji became the master of his medium, nor its slave by deliberate choice and conscious practice. The greatest strength in his writings lies in its utter sincerity and transparent honesty. This authenticity makes Gandhiji a master of English prose-style, though he had no pretensions to be a writer. Simplicity, economy, frankness and unpretentiousness were the virtues that Gandhiji practised all along his life and these qualities are found in his writings also. In fact, these virtues strengthened his writings.