

3rd SEM BA/BSc/BTTM

CALICUT UNIVERSITY

SIGNATURES: EXPRESSING THE SELF

2019 ADMISSION

Prepared by

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ENG3 A05 S: **SIGNATURES: EXPRESSING THE SELF**

COURSE CODE: **ENG3 A05**

NO. OF CREDITS 4

NO. OF CONTACT HOURS 90 (5HRS/WK.)

INTERNAL: 20 MARKS

EXTERNAL: 80 MARKS EXAMINATION 2.5 HOURS

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- a. To enable the students to read and critically appreciate the different genres of expressing the self
- b. To appreciate the fluid and flexible narratives of self-expression that transcend the conventions of genre
- c. To understand how personal narratives intersect with the larger social realities
- d. To read personal narratives that move beyond the individual self to express the collective self
- e. To understand how the distinctions between fact and fiction blur in personal narratives

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

I. COURSE SUMMARY

Module 1: Autobiographical Writings and Memoirs 28 hrs.

Module 2: Speeches and Testimonies 25 hrs.

Module 3: Diary entries and Letters 25 hrs. Evaluation 12 hrs. (Total 90 hrs.)

II. COURSE DETAILS

Module 1: Autobiographical Writings and Memoirs

1. Memoirs: Pablo Neruda (Excerpts)
2. Pilgrim at Tintercreek: Annie Dillard (Excerpts)

3. Wings of Fire: A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (Excerpts)
4. I Stand With You against the Disorder: Jeanette Armstrong
5. When I was Growing Up: Nellie Wong

Module 2: Speeches and Testimonies

1. Retirement Speech: Sachin Tendulkar
2. Art, truth and Politics: Harold Pinter
3. Charlie Chaplin's Final Speech in the movie 'The Great Dictator'
4. Voices from Chernobyl: Svetlana Alexievich (Excerpts)
5. Breaking Silence: Janice Miri Kitani

'Module 3: Diary entries and Letters

1. A Diary of a young Girl: Anne Frank (Excerpts)
2. The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged t 3 y.: Sue Townsend (Excerpts)
3. Nenjamparamba Letters: M.A. Rahman
4. Letters from a lather to his daughter: Jawaharlal Nehru 5. Sylvia Plath's letter to her mother

MODULE I: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS AND MEMOIRS

CHAPTER I: EXCERPTS FROM MEMOIRS - PABLO NERUDA

- Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basolto (Pablo Neruda), the Chilean poet and diplomat was born on 12th July 1904 in Parrel, Chile.
- Adopted Pablo Neruda as his pen name.
- Many prestigious awards were conferred upon Neruda such as the International Peace Prize in 1950, the Lenin Peace Prize and Stalin Peace Prize in 1953 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.
- The Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez called him “the greatest poet of the 20th century in language”.
- “Memoirs” is Neruda’s life story as well as a fine narration of Latin American history.
- As the name suggests, Memoirs are about his entire life, literary influences on him. A major portion of his “Memoirs” details his political birth and subsequent political career, which influenced his poetry.
- “The Word” is an excerpt from the ‘Memoirs’ of Pablo Neruda. It is a great paean to poetry.
- “The Word” proves the multitude potential of words and the poet’s intimate affiliation with words that portray his personal and political life.
- The word is something that is born in us. In this poem he discusses the idea of how individual learns and has shared experiences through language.
- The poet personifies the word by stating how it ‘born in blood’ and that it ‘grew in the dark body’. i.e. the word is something that is born within ourselves and it grows inside of us.
- He compares his encounter with words to the everyday activities in a human life. He finds words from everything that exists in this world. The words gather its meaning through long journey from country to country and that carry the inheritance of ancient culture and history. In this small extract, he brings the memory of his great ancestors who struggled to build up a civilized culture.
- ‘The ‘Word’ is Neruda’s tribute to his uncontrollable passion for poetry. In the poem, Neruda says words are so beautiful that he wants to fit them in his poems. He imagines words to be like fruits and vegetables with which he can prepare tasty dishes.

- To Neruda, the words glitter like coloured stones. According to Neruda, an idea undergoes a complete change by shifting the position of a word or placing a new word in the middle of a phrase.
- Neruda compares vowels to coloured stones, silverfish, foam, thread, metal and dew. He compares words to stalactites, slivers of polished wood, coals, pickings from a shipwreck and gift from the waves. Stalactites are icicle like rocky structures hanging from the roof of caves. Neruda says that he uses words in his poems like glittering stalactites.

CHAPTER 2: PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK BY ANNIE DILLARD

- Annie Doak, known as Annie Dillard is an American poet and naturalist. Getting inspired by writers like Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, Dillard writes lyric poetry and prose. Her prose is richly poetic and densely philosophic.
- She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for general notification in 1975 for her work Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. In Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Dillard looks at the marvels of nature and searches for God. The book has been described as a naturalistic classic. Dillard says about this work: “it’s all a matter of keeping my eyes open”.
- Pilgrim at Tinker Creek is an exciting meditation on nature and its seasons. It is a personal narrative revealing the writer's exploration during a whole year in her neighbourhood in Tinker Creek in Virginia. She is undertaking a pilgrimage into nature and observes nature with a microscopic eye. She carefully crafted this by observing and researching the natural world.
- As the contemporary Emerson and Thoreau, Dillard typically offers meditation on transcendental themes found by venturing into nature and observing it with keen sight and insight. Like her predecessors, Dillard sees in nature a manifestation of a higher power that, when attended to properly offers a spiritual clarity not available in the world of urban life
- Annie Dillard has sharply described the attacking strategy of the giant water bug. The giant water bug catches the frog with its strong front legs, paralyzes the victim with enzymes, shoots poison that dissolves the victim's muscles, bones, organs and sucks out the body juice. What remains is the floating frog skin on the water surface.
- Annie Dillard says every living thing is an emergency survivor without any protection in this world. The frog and the water bug, both were created by God. They have an equal right to live. But what actually happens is that the water bug catches the frog, injects poison into its body and sucks its body juice dry. Where is the sense of justice here?

Blaise Pascal believes that God is hiding, leaving the living creatures God created, to their fate. However, Einstein believes that God is subtle but not malicious. The writer believes that the creator is not responsible for the death of anything in nature.

- Answer: Annie Dillard's "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" can be considered as a spiritual excursion into the natural world. One day when the writer was walking on the side of a creek, she notices a small frog floating on the surface. It was not trying to escape like other frogs. As the writer looked at the frog, it slowly started collapsing, leaving the skin floating on the water. It was sinking in front of the writer's eyes like a deflated football. Actually, it was a giant water bug which was sucking the frog dry.
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- Annie Dillard says every living thing is an emergency survivor without any protection in this world. The frog and the water bug, both were created by God. They have an equal right to live. But what actually happens is that the water bug catches the frog, injects poison into its body and sucks its body juice dry. Where is the sense of justice here? The writer quotes Koran saying Allah has not created anything in jest. Blasé Pascal believes that God is hiding, leaving the living creatures God created to their fate. However, Einstein believes that God is subtle but not malicious. The writer believes that the creator is not responsible for the death of anything in nature.

CHAPTER 3: 'I STAND WITH YOU AGAINST THE DISORDER' BY JEANETTE ARMSTRONG

- The Okanagan teach that each person is born into a family and community. The actions of the individual affect both the family and the community. Without the family and community, a person is nothing. The Okanagan believes that individuals have four main capacities. They are the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking self and the spiritual self. All the four capacities have to operate together for a person's life to be successful and content.
- Okanagan refer to relationship to others by the word "Our one skin". This means everyone in Okanagan shares not only the place they live, but are also bonded together by common thoughts, culture and the feeling that community comes first. Modern man is selfish by nature, but Okanagan believes in sharing everything. .

- The Okanagans are people of British Columbia that is dry and hot. River Columbia flow through Okanagan. They are mainly fishermen and hunters who live with what nature provides and so the people of Okanagan are very much bonded to nature. They strongly believe that each person is born into a family and community. The actions of the individual affect both the family and the community. Without the family and community, a person is nothing.
- The Okanagan believes that the body is operated by four forces mainly the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking self and the spiritual self. The Okanagan believes that the body is earth itself. Their flesh, bone and blood are all part of the earth. Their body moves through all the cycles that the earth moves. For the Okanagan, the body is pure and sacred. What is provided by earth finally returns to earth by death.
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CHAPTER 4: WHEN I WAS GROWING UP BY NELLIE WONG

- The poet's sisters had very white skin and everyone admired their beauty. This made the poet feel crushed.
- The image of the desirable woman that is seen in the poem is that of a blond woman with curly hair, fair skin and full lips.
- The poet was proud of her English, her grammar and her spelling. She felt she belonged to the group of smart Chinese children.
- According to Nellie Wong the lucky girls were those with fair skin, curly hair, cotton dresses and cashmere sweaters.
- The poet was ashamed of Chinese people, their yellow skin, small size, their weak bodies and their habit of spitting in the streets.
- The poet thought that god had made the white people clean. So she bathed for many times a day to get her skin colour white, but she could not become white and this made her desperate.
- She wanted to run away to purple mountains, to houses by the sea with space to breathe, uncongested by yellow people.

- There are images of self-pity and loathing in the poem “When I was growing Up”. The poet is a Chinese American, who is not happy with her yellow skin. The poem is autobiographical and describes the pain of a Chinese girl, growing up in America.
- The poet was proud of her English, her grammar and her spelling. She felt she belonged to the group of smart Chinese children. She was a well-educated girl, but her skin was yellow and this made her ashamed as she was living with white people in America. She felt dirty all the time. She thought God made white people clean. She bathed several times a day.
- However it couldn't make her white. This made her desperate. She was ashamed of Chinese people, their yellow skin, small size, their weak bodies and their habit of spitting in the streets. She wanted to run away to purple mountains, to clean and white houses by the sea with space to breathe, uncongested by yellow people. Growing up was a very painful period for the writer.
- The line “When I was Growing Up” is repeated 11 times in the poem. The poet was truly influenced by the white culture popularized by the newspapers, magazines, TV programmes and cinema. The lucky girls were those with fair skin, curly hair, cotton dresses and cashmere sweaters.
- The whole poem shows how living in a place far away from one's own place of birth or culture can be very painful to children while growing up. The scars left by the pain of growing in an alien culture will take a long time to heal. Some carry the scars for a life time.

MODULE II-SPEECHES AND TESTIMONIES

CHAPTER 1: ART, TRUTH AND POLITICS BY HAROLD PINTER

- Harold Pinter, the Nobel Prize-winning British playwright, screenwriter, poet, actor and political activist.
- “Art, Truth and Politics” is the Nobel Prize acceptance speech given by Harold Pinter
- He is well known for his play “The Birthday Party” (1957). Some of his well-known plays are "The Home coming" (1964) and “the Betrayal” (1978) which were adapted to the screen as well. Pinter wrote plays for radio, television and film.
- “Art, Truth and Politics”, is an edited version of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. It was projected on screen on 7 December 2005 since he was not present at the ceremony due to his illness.

- In his speech he criticizes the US government's war policies and its attempts to become the 'Big Brother'. In the end he reminds the audience the importance to fight for a War-free, peaceful society for the future generation.
- The speech also reminds the role of an artist as a citizen to respond critique and condemn the injustices enforced by the State.
- In art, as he says, truth is "elusive". The idea of a real truth cannot be found in dramatic art. One come across many truths and they may challenge or reflect or critique the idea of a single truth. Therefore the function of language is ambiguous in art.
- For political theatre the situation is different. It has to be objective and should not take the form of a sermon. He mentions how the war on Iraq was initiated on the basis of an allegation that Saddam Hussein possessed dangerous weapons.
- Similarly it was alleged that Iraq shared the responsibility with Al Qaeda for 9/11 attack and declared as a threat to the US. He says that direct attack on countries has never been a policy of the US. Instead it preferred 'low intensity conflict' which meant a slow and a gradual intervention by planting a "malignant growth" and allow it to grow and then intervene with military.
- In the end proclaim that for protecting democracy military intervention was needed. Harold Pinter argues that similar pattern can be found in most of the military interventions done by the US across the world.
- In this speech Pinter vehemently criticises the US Govt's foreign policy from Second World War onwards till the contemporary period. He also points out how the US becomes a threat to every nation with the history of bloodshed and violence that it has committed in these years. He ends the speech by explaining the role of the writer in these political turmoil and how vulnerable an artist in these situations.
- Conclusion Harold Pinter's speech is an explicit political statement against the war atrocities and military interventions carried out by the US. The speech is a call for justice for the innocent civilians caught up in these warfare. It also reminds the artist community about their responsibility as citizens in condemning the violence of the State.

CHAPTER 2.THE FINAL SPEECH FROM "THE GREAT DICTATOR

- Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) an English comedian, actor, producer and director of silent films.

- His last film “The Great Dictator”, is the only talking film which he has acted, directed and produced.
- His characters portrayed the anxieties of common man in the industrial society with humour and pathos.
- “The Gold Rush”, “Limelight” “City Lights”, “Modern Times” and “The Great Dictator” are some of his noted films.
- About the film: “The Great Dictator” is a comedy written, acted and produced by Charlie Chaplin in 1940. The film is the first “talkie” film of Chaplin. It is a political satire condemning Hitler and the fascist regime in Germany during the World War II.
- About the chapter: text is the edited version of the speech delivered by Chaplin’s character at the end of the film.
- In the film he played a dual role 1) as Adenoid Hynkel, the great dictator and the ruler of Romania 2) as a Jewish barber whose shop has become a part of the ghetto during the time of the war.
- Satirizing on the similarity of appearance between Chaplin’s character and Hitler.
- The film explicitly criticizes Hitler and his Nazi Regime for the violence committed against the Jews.
- The speech urges all the humanity to unite and fight for peace and justice for everyone regardless of colour, race and gender and emphasized the power of democracy in safeguarding the rights of the oppressed.
- Outline of the Text Chaplin’s speech is addressed to soldiers in the film. He begins his speech by saying the crowd that he does not want to become an emperor or conquer anyone; but to help people.
- He emphasises the ability of humanity to live in harmony regardless of colour, race and gender.
- The speech ends with the exaltation that in order to save democracy they should unite. They should all unite and fight for a world devoid of greed and hatred; devoid of barriers; and a world of reason where science and progress make human life better and happy.

CHAPTER 3 : VOICES FROM CHERNOBYL: THE ORAL HISTORY OF A NUCLEAR DISASTER

- About the author: Svetlana Alexievich, Belarusian journalist and writer, won Nobel Prize for Literature in 2015.
- The book, “Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster” (1997) is one of the early works that have recorded the personal testimonies of the victims of the

tragedy. Alexievich structures her book in three parts, each of which consists of multiple **monologues**.

- The section given here titled “A Solitary Human Voice” is an edited version of the excerpt recorded by Svetlana Alexievich,
- Lydmilla Ignatenko narrates the incidents from the night of the accident till the slow death of her husband and her life afterwards
- At night she woke up from her sleep hearing a noise. Her husband informed her that a fire had broken out.
- She remembers that the heat was unbearable and the sky was radiant.
- The doctors and nurses who initially treated these firemen later succumbed to death due to radiation.
- The Govt transported them to hospital no 6, at the Shchukinskaya bus stop in Moscow for further treatment in radiology department.
- Her husband’s central nervous system was completely affected and skull was also damaged.
- The doctor advised her not to have kids anymore as she might be exposed to radiation.
- She narrates in detail the last two weeks she spent with him in the hospital at Moscow.
- At the hospital his condition got worse as days went by and the body began to change. The doctors informed her about how body reacts differently to radiation.
- Her husband died after two weeks and she recollects clearly the last days she spent with him.
- The doctors told her that he had become a radio active object. His body degenerated so badly that even the internal organs began to come out and he was choking of his internal organs.
- Similarly his skin and hair began to peel off and body produced stools with mucous and blood frequently.
- One or two days before his death he asked her to name the baby as Vasya if it is a boy and Natasha if it is a girl and told her to raise the baby alone. she recollects vividly moments of love and affection that they shared in the hospital.
- After his death the body was not handed over to the relatives and buried in Moscow. Two months later she gave birth to a baby girl, ‘Natashenka’, who later died due to birth defects following the effects of radiation.
- She concluded the story by saying that nobody would understand what they saw and experienced and it is difficult to put them to words.

CHAPTER 4: BREAKING SILENCE

- About the author: Janice Mirikitani is a Japanese American poet, dancer and activist well known for her anti-war campaigns and her works against institutional racism and exploitation of women and poor. Her collections of poetry include *Awake in the River* (1978), *Shedding Silence* (1987), *we, the Dangerous: New and Selected Poems* (1995), and *Love Works* (2001).
- The poem "Breaking the Silence", reflects on the knowledgeable of silence of the generation of the Japanese-American. This poem focuses on experience during World War II; When Japanese-American's were put into internment camps.
- In "Breaking Silence," Janice Mirikitani writes eloquently of the terrible experiences that her mother underwent during the Second World War, and of how her deafening silence over those experiences has made it difficult for her to come to terms with her own Japanese American identity.
- About the poem : Her mother went to testify after forty years before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Japanese American Civilians in 1981 about the experience of Japanese Americans in World War II and narrates how she testifies her experiences before the Commission.
- Her mother narrated how their property was confiscated and was forced to sign documents before going to giving the authority to take.
- The poet explains how her mother's silence was broken and how words were 'peeling off from her' body.
- All her work over the years were silenced when they were asked to give up everything. The poet laments that the colour of their skin betrayed them.
- All her mother's hard work toil and hope were destroyed when they were incarcerated.
- For her silence expresses depth and intensity of their trauma. After forty years she is breaking her silence before the Commission to claim her past. She speaks for those who had suffered in silence.
- They would speak about humiliations they had suffered; about war crimes committed by the government; about their longings and hope.
- They began to recognise themselves and the noises within themselves. The poet ends by saying that after breaking silence they are not scared and feel that their language is beautiful.

MODULE III

CHAPTER 1: EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL

- About the author: Anne Frank was a German Jewish girl who was the victim of the anti-Jewish law of Nazi Germany.
- She kept a diary from June 12, 1942 to August 1, 1944.
- Anne was impressed by this speech of Gerrit Bolkestein and she decided to publish a book based on her diary once the war ended.
- After the mass attack, Meip Gies and Bep Voskuijl, two secretaries working in the building found Anne's diaries scattered all over the floor. Later when it was confirmed that Anne was dead, Anne's Father Otto Frank decided to fulfil his daughter's wish and published her diary.
- 'The Diary of a Young Girl', also known as 'The Diary of Anne Frank', journal by Anne Frank, a Jewish teenager who chronicled her family's two years (1942–44) in hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II
- Written in the backdrop of the Second World War
- Written originally in Dutch. Translated into 70 languages
- The book was first published in 1947—two years after Anne's death in a concentration camp.
- Written with insight, humour, and intelligence, the Diary became a classic of war literature.
- Her diaries are a testimony to the persecution and genocide of Jews by Hitler.
- Her diary was a red and white checked book she received as a gift on her thirteenth birthday. She immediately began filling her diary with details of her life, including descriptions of her friends, boys she liked, and events at school.
- The diary addressed to Kitty, a fictional character in Cissy van Marxveldt's *Anoop der Heul*, is a telling narrative on war, humanity and identity.
- It has influenced great personages like John F Kennedy, Nelson Mandela, Hillary Clinton and John Berryman.
- **About the text:** Analysing two of the many entries in her diary: Monday, 22 May 1944 and Thursday, 25th May 1944.
- Monday, 22 May 1944: She expresses her concern for her fellow Jewish community.
- Anti-Semitism: hatred of Jews.
- She is in dilemma of the attitude of Christians at her place and that of suffering Jews

- With the regime of Hitler, German Jews who emigrated to Holland and Poland were not allowed to return to Netherland.
- There is a mention about the attitude of the Dutch in this diary entry.
- In the end, she shows her love for Holland and she wishes it would become her fatherland and she continues with that hope. In this, she expresses her agony of not having a land of their own.
- Thursday, 25th May 1944: Two days later she began the diary afresh. Later, she narrates of the incident where the vegetable man was picked up for helping two Jews to hide in his house.
- In this entry, Anne explains the condition of the people in the society. The world has turned upside down. People with noble status in the society are sent to concentration camps, prisons, and lonely cells; also the other people who are young and old, rich and poor.
- People reached this trap through black market, by helping other Jews or people who have not gone "underground". Anyone who was not the member of NSB did not know their fate.
- She also mentions about the atrocities caused against the Jews. The loss of the man and the condition of the girls are miserable.
- She states that it is better to remain hungry than being discovered by them. On the whole, this diary entry gives an insight into the plight of the Jews under the Nazi Germany.

CHAPTER 2: THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE AGED 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ - SUE TOWNSEND

- This is a novel written in the form of a diary through the perspective of Adrian Mole, the most famous adolescent hero in English literature before Harry Potter.
- Full name is Susan Lillian Sue Townsend. She is one of the Britain's most celebrated comic writers, novelist, playwright, and journalist.
- She is best known for her Adrian Mole books, which include a series of nine books that were dairy entries of a teenage boy named Adrian Mole.
- The first of the series 'The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' was published in 1982.
- David Williams calls the book " a genuine phenomenon"

- Mole tries to depict vividly the life of his family and make them live through the pages of his novel.
- In this chapter we have a few bits and pieces from the novel. All these bits depict the teenager's anxiety at the spot on his face, his self-pretensions on being intellectual, his worries about health, his crush towards Pandora, his girlfriend and the effects of his parents' quarrel on him. The diary begins when Adrian is aged 13 3/4 and ends with Adrian's fifteenth birthday.
- The first entry is on Wednesday, 14 January and he writes about his first day on joining the library.

CHAPTER 3: LETTERS FROM THE MOTHERS OF NENJAMPARAMBU TO THE SUPREME COURT - M.A. RAHMAN

- M A Rahman is a retired professor who is well known as an activist, critic and film maker. He has been at the forefront of the eco movement against Endosulfan. He has been the recipient of the Odakuzhal Award, an Indian literary award to honour writers for an outstanding work in Malayalam language.
- As the title of the lesson, “Letters from Mothers of Nenjamparambu to the Supreme Court” suggests, It is a letter written to the Supreme Court of India by Prof. M.A. Rahman, on behalf of the mothers of Endosulfan affected families.
- It was based on a news item that appeared in the Mathrubhumi daily of 9 May, 2011 with the headline, "New born infant of Endosulfan afflicted family dies".
- The author begins the letter citing the tragedy of an Endosulfan afflicted family where the new born infant of Mamtha and Narayanan of Adhur, Kaithode is born without eyes and dies immediately. Her other children were also affected by Endosulfan in various ways. The twins that were born in her second delivery also die.
- These Endosulfan inflicted infants were never mentioned in the government list of people dead due to Endosulfan.
- This letter has a very big impact on the crusade against Endosulfan.

CHAPTER 4: LETTER TO ADOLF HITLER - M.K.GANDHI

- Gandhi and Adolf Hitler were contemporaries who represent the opposite extreme of human character.
- Written on 24 December 1940. Gandhi begins the letter by addressing Hitler as 'Dear friend'.
- The letter, written during the Second World War after Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia, is a plea to stop the war.
- Gandhi mentions his method of non-violence which he strongly believes is the best form of resistance.
- He wrote two letters, the first was written prior to Hitler's invasion of Poland which marks the beginning of the Second World War.
- Gandhi has intended to address a joint appeal to Hitler and Signor Mussolini.
- He affirms Hitler that he has no enmity towards Hitler and that his business in life for the last 33 years is to create friendship universally by befriending mankind regardless of race, colour or creed. He seeks the attention of Hitler towards the humanity who live under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship.
- Gandhi met Mussolini during his visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference.
- Gandhi ends his letter on a positive hopeful note by stating himself as Hitler's sincere friend.