**Introduction:**

In 1972, Frank Dance and Carl Larson surveyed the field for definition of communication. They found 126 (as cited in Trenholm, S. & Jensen, A., 2008). Even more have been formulated since then. Obviously, a process as complex as communication is hard to summarise or define.

Communication is a process whereby Humans collectively create and regulate social reality. We believe that humans communicate in unique and powerful ways that differ markedly from those by others. Accordingly to Aldous Huxley “…words make us the human being we actually are. Deprived of language we should be as dogs or Monkeys…”

“The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!
I felt the well house eager to learn. Everything had a name; every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange new sight that had come to me,” wrote Helen Keller, years after her first realization of what words were (Trenholm, S. & Jensen, A., 2008).

Communication allows us not only to create the world around us but to take possession of it as well. Through communication, we can act on our world. Through communication, we can persuade, dissuade, anger, hurt, comfort, soothe, entertain or bore one another.

While every action of ours could be termed as a way of communication i.e. verbal, non-verbal, sign language, our dress sense, our action etc., communicate can also be of different kind like intra-personal, inter-personal, small-group communication, organizational communication, public communication or mass communication depending upon how and with whom we are communicating.

When we are alone and communicating with ourselves, it is intrapersonal communication where as if we communicate with another person then it is interpersonal communication. However, one more addition of person changes
the character of the communication and becomes small group communication. More the number of people, the communication aspects changes like organizational communication, public communication and mass communication. Interpersonal communication involves communication between two persons. It can be verbal, non-verbal or through sign language. In both verbal and non-verbal communication, words play the central part. Face-to-face interaction by two persons or communication over telephone (in addition to VOIP i.e. voice over internet protocol) constitute verbal interpersonal communication, written letters, SMSes, emails etc., could be fall in the category of non-verbal interpersonal communication.

According to ‘Wikipedia’ ("http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal_communication-09-07-2012", "Interpersonal communication is often defined by communication scholars in numerous ways, usually describing participants who are dependent upon one another. It can involve one on one individuals interacting with many people within a Society. It helps us understand how and why people behave and communicate in different ways to construct and negotiate a Social reality. While interpersonal communication can be defined as its own area of study, it also occurs within other contexts like groups and organizations. Interpersonal communication is the process that we use to communicate our ideas, thoughts, and feelings to another person. Our interpersonal communication skills are learned behaviours that can be improved through knowledge, practice, feedback, and reflection.

Interpersonal communication includes message sending and message reception between two or more individuals. This can include all aspects of communication such as listening, persuading, asserting, nonverbal communication, and more. A primary concept of interpersonal communication looks at communicative acts
when there are few individuals involved unlike areas of communication such as group interaction, where there may be a large number of individuals involved in a communicative act."

According to Beebe, Beebe,& Redmond, 2002 (as cited by Berger, Roloff, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2010) “Interpersonal communication is a distinctive form of human communication that... is defined not just by the number of people who communicate, but also by the quality of the communication. Interpersonal communication occurs not when you simply interact with someone, but when you treat the other as a unique human being”

Similarly, according to Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, (2007) (as cited by Berger, Roloff & Roskos-Ewoldsen,2010), interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of messages, verbal and non-verbal, between people, regardless of the relationship they share... Thus, interpersonal communication includes the exchange of messages in all sorts of relationships, ranging from functional to casual to intimate. These definitions all represent interpersonal communication as involving some form of mutual activity, interaction, or exchange, but they also differ significantly.

Interpersonal communication is not a single process but rather is composed of several interrelated processes that need to be carefully coordinated. These processes include message production, message processing, interaction coordination, and social perception. Besides Interpersonal communication never occurs in the abstract but always in a specific, concrete situation. It is also a social process. There are two or more beings that are mutually oriented towards each other in the unfolding situation. As a species of social interaction, communication necessarily involves mutual influence and joint action.

The message centre conception of Interpersonal communication focuses on messages- a particular type of behavioural structure that is generated,
interpreted, and coordinated through numerous cognitive, linguistic social and behavioural structures.

This message centric definition emphasizes its fundamentally pragmatic character; people produce and interpret messages to accomplish social goals or functions. There are four principles of Interpersonal Communication namely 1. Interpersonal communication is inescapable 2. Interpersonal communication is irreversible 3. Interpersonal communication is complicated and 4. Interpersonal communication is contextual. Interpersonal Communication does not happen in isolation. It always happens in a context. The context could be Psychological, Relational, Situational, Environmental and Cultural.

Lazarsfeld and colleagues’ work on the 1940s and 1948s U.S. Presidential elections focused on how citizens made vote choices. Two key elements of it were the Limited-effect model and the relationship between mass media and interpersonal communication. While the former holds that the mass media have little impact on public opinion, the latter argues that political information in the media is consumed largely by opinion leaders, and those opinion leaders act as mediators between the media and the broader public. Thus the impact of media is relatively small and largely indirect, with the direct effects of communication in a political context firmly rooted in interpersonal communication (as cited by Benoit W.L. & Holbert R.L in the book by. Berger, Roloff, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2010). This implies that interpersonal communication has a strong role to play in political communication.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Gandhiji) was considered one of the best communicator at his times. In an age when the infrastructure for mass Communication was restricted to print media in India, and it was under great surveillance of British government, he succeeded as a mass communicator per excellence. Gandhiji reached his messages to the masses through a judicious selection of oral and non-verbal communication channels. But, with lack of technology, he relied heavily on interpersonal and group communication.

Gandhiji was one of the most prolific writers the world has ever seen, but most of his writings were short pieces in various newspapers and journals of India and the world. Besides, he wrote thousands of letters expressing his views, ideas, suggestions etc., to large number of people during his active public life spanning more than half a century. More than any other communicator in modern India, Gandhiji used the personal letters
as an effective medium to spread his ideas. In fact, it was his numerous letters that he wrote to co-workers, political activists, government officials, to the editors as well as to his own family members, which gives us glimpses of Gandhiji’s communication skills. These letters played an important role in his interpersonal communication.

His selection of words in each letter, the form of address, sign-off address to the receiver, presentation of the issues in the letters, use of tools like Metaphors, Similes, Irony, Quotes, Climax, Anti-climax, References etc., provides an insight of Gandhiji’s personality as an excellent communicator.

However, gone are those days when written letters used to be an important medium of communication. The 21st century has revolutionised the entire communication process. Be it the interpersonal communication, mass communication or any other forms of communication, the ICT (Information-Communication-Technology) has made the process faster and techno savvy. This has also made the world a ‘global village.’

The heralding of ICT era, has given birth to new forms of interpersonal & mass communication which are being termed as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and communication through Cell-Phones. E-mails, blogging, chatting, facebook, tweeter, SMS etc. falls under these categories.

Ulla Bunz and Scott Campbell’s (2004) research on ‘Politeness Accommodation in Electronic Mail’ as cited by Trenholm, S. & Jensen, A. (2008) had the objective to see whether convergence could take place in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The language variable they choose to examine was politeness. The research showed that although certain social cues may be filtered out by e-mail technology, “politeness indicators are communicated, interpreted and reciprocated,” allowing communicators to build positive impressions online.

The central theme of this research was to study the syntax in the Computer-Mediated Communication and its effectiveness as interpersonal communication as compared to the letters written by Gandhiji to different people.

The researcher intends to study the finer points used in the letters by Gandhiji and its impact vis-à-vis the present day communication which, it seems, though has got the speed, lacks courtesy.