

# The Role of Autobiography in the Review of M.K. Gandhi, J.L. Nehru and N.C. Choudhary

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**Abstract:** Autobiography is an important genre of literature. Great men and thinkers of the world have written autobiographies in order to reveal various facets of their personality. What fascinates a man most is his own self? Sir John Davis is rightly said:

My selfie am centre of my circling thought.

Only my selfie, he I studie, learn and knowe.

So we want to say that The Role of Autobiography in the review of M.K. Gandhi, J.L. Nehru and N.C. Choudhary. Autobiography is a proper medium of self expression, which is an innate human faculty. It is literature of personal revelation and its main interest lies in conscious or unconscious. Self-revelation or self portrayal by the author. M.K. Gandhi, J.L. Nehru and N.C. Chaudhary are incontrovertibly three significant Indian English autobiography writers. The Role of autobiographies of three significant writers belonging to three different, in fact, diametrically opposed back grounds will, no doubt be as delightful as profitable. They belonged to the freedom struggle of India and had an ambition to make the country independent. They belonged to political arena of India during British Rule, but Gandhi was not fully. As a writer they practised the same genre, they sharply differ from each other in manner of presentation and focus.

Now autobiographies all over the world and especially in India are extensively read and enjoyed, but paradoxically enough, they have received very scant critical attention, let alone comparative role of treatment. The Role of comparative approach to literature enables us to widen our critical horizon and develop the concept of prevalent literary tendencies in the world as well as the different regions of a Nation. The Role of comparative review of authors belonging to the different nations should be preceded by that of writers belonging to the same country, preferably coming from three different parts of the country belonging to three different fields and professions. It is needless to say, that the role of comparative review aims at establishing the universality and oneness of human experience through the depiction of diverse peculiarities of it. It also enables us to know about the ideas, thoughts, experience, and style of three different writers. So we want, an attempt is made here in that direction.

**Keywords:** Mahatma Gandhi: An Autobiography, A Study of Nehru

Mahatma Gandhi, J.L. Nehru and N.C. Chaudhary are known as good autobiographies. It is a matter of pleasure for the reader or critic to notice that Gandhi, Nehru and Chaudry have formulated their own theories about the art of autobiography. The role of theoretical differences between the three naturally create the presentational differences also. They throw light upon the three radically different personalities moulded by three different atmospheres. They differ from each other in their tastes,

preoccupations, professions, family backgrounds, economic status, temperaments and world views etc. For example Nehru is aware of the difficulty of writing the autobiography. Gandhi's writing his My Experiments with Truth, Gandhi wrote his autobiography when he was in his fifties. Therefore, there is no need for him to change his opinions as his outlook on life has almost been formed and fixed. Moreover, he was a well-known figure at that time and therefore his autobiography had a direct influence on its readers. Written at the age of forty-five, Nehru's autobiography is a literary expression of a man at the height of his powers. However the two autobiographies picture the two different sides of Indian life, viz., spiritual and secular. As a spiritualist Gandhi aims at the moral and spiritual enrichment of the readers of his autobiography. The role of autobiographies Gandhi, Nehru and Chaudhary are mines of gold. They contain great treasures. Gandhi's autobiography My Experiments with Truth especially that written after his experiments with life carries precious ideas about religion, art, truth, ahimsa, brahmacharya, education, Satyagraha, diet etc. His autobiography has a moral value as well.

Gandhiji wrote his autobiography not to please his critics. It has educative and didactic purpose. It was written as a means of education and reform. One of its object in certainly to provide some comfort and food for reflection for my co-workers. He again writes about its educative quality: The exercise has given me ineffable mental peace, because, it has been my fond home that it might bring faith in Truth and Ahimsa to waivers. In the story of My Experiment with Truth, Gandhiji has given us short sketches of his usurious contemporaries. The sort Character sketches he has portrayed, or truthful and reveal his frankness. He portrays a pen picture of his father, "My father was a lover of his clean, Truthful, brave and generous, but sort tempered. to a certain extent, he might have been given to carnal pleasures. For he married for the fourth time when he was over forty. But he was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict. Impartiality in his family, as well as outside his loyalty to the state was well known." Indeed, Gandhiji's autobiography has wielded tremendous influences on its readers. That by Nehru is largely political and contains his struggle for Freedom and his experience of jail life. In Nehru's autobiography we find his precious thoughts on communalism, communism, democracy, internationalism and nationalism. He also includes the most burning problem of the present day, the problem of terrorism in his writing. Gandhi wrote his autobiography when he was almost fully matured. For writing his compendious autobiography, Gandhi depends upon his memory with which he is well endowed. But it is clear when he began writing he had no definite plan before him. The Story of My Experiments with Truth" is, however, is very far from what may be called a spiritual treatise. Three – Fourth of the work records ordinary happenings historical, political and social, as also, those of a personal nature. Facets of everyday life invest the work with the elusive quality known to the creative writer as human interest. This is especially true of the account of Gandhi's early years. A Very ordinary youngster with no intimations of genius in him grow under the compulsions of events into a leader of millions of people, and in order to be fit for this unwanted role thrust upon him, he had to attain in word growth. That is the heart of the story.

So in India, too was born a great seer at a time when mother India was groaning with great agony under the British Yoke of slavery and supersession, when there was no brave and enlightened, soul to captain the ship of India's destiny when gloom and darkness where writ large on every face. At such a crucial epoch was born a sear who recovered the radiant weapon of non- violence and presented it as a shining light to generations of men and women, to nations and continents sunk in the mire of greed and anger, vengeance and destruction. A friend of the poor and underdog, humble and bold, sincere and frank,

simple and austere, non-violent and thoughtful in thoughts, words and deeds. Frail in body, but mighty in a spirit. This seer known, all the world over as M.K. Gandhi, shook the foundation of the mightiest British Empire, liberated India, introduced religion into, Politics emancipated the untouchables, reformed the Indian village, regenerated the condition of women, gave this the message of peace, love, brotherhood, truth and non-violence to the war battered world and like Christ sacrificed himself at the altar of human welfare.

According to H.M. Williams : Gandhi, however, was never a conscious artist for him, English was a useful, efficient and necessary tool, neither more nor less. He was essentially, a man of action, a leader, and he found a little time to contemplate the tool, he was using so vigorously. There is a close connection between his spoken or written styles. By sheer power of personality, he forget a simple vivid English, plain and undistinguished, but capable of suggesting poison and truth by its very simplicity.”

Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* betrothed occupies an important place in Indonesia. And ranks very high with the greatest autobiographies of the world. It is divided into five parts. The first part begins with Gandhiji's birth and parentage, and ends with his return after studies from England in 1891. The second part of Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography relates to a year's stay in India and the first South African phase till 1896. The third part deals with his stay in Durban, and the Bombay interlude till 1902. The second and the third parts deal with his experience in South Africa. The fourth part deals with the epoch, making transvaal period lasting up to the end of 1914. When he finally returns to India. At the age of 45, Gandhiji emerged as a man of steel, giving a moral and spiritual message and disseminating, the light of love, truth and non-violence. The fifth part deals with his Meteoric emergence of Indian political sense. On is written to India from South Africa, Gandhiji launched fourth his mission of liberating India from the Yoke of British Imperialism. He successfully used the weapon of Satyagraha for India's liberation.

Nehru wrote his autobiography in the prison in order to recapitulate the past events. Sometimes he looks behind in order to join the threads of the past to the future. The innermost desire of Nehru to keep into the secrets of India's heart and mind must have driven him to write the story of life. As this story is written in dismal and sordid surroundings of the prison, it is naturally a bit pessimistic. Gandhi does not claim any finality about his opinion and principle. He simply wants to tell the story of his numerous experiments with Truth. In writing his autobiography, he is not guided by any model. On the other hand Nehru was not concerned with so called experiments. His autobiography serves a dual purpose. He makes use of his enforced leisure in jail, and begins the task in a mood of self-questioning and to a large extent, this persisted throughout. His primary object is to occupy himself with some definite task in order to ward off the boredom of 'long solitudes of jail life as well as to review the past events in India, with which he was intimately connected.' The revelation of truth has been Gandhi's main aim in writing his autobiography. He writes his autobiography not to please his critics. It has educative and didactic purpose. Nehru's primary object is obviously to make constructive use of his time spent in prison and to record his own mental development. Gandhi's autobiography is 'a spiritual manual, an absorbing human document, agonizingly frank and unflinchingly honest in its self-portraiture'.

According to C.D. Narsimha: Jawahar Lal is not a politician who gives a literary vice to his writing but an intellectual whom the times have drawn into the vortex of politics. His literary genius has been highly appreciated even by foreign cities. Majorie Boulton ranks him with Tagore, Anand and Radha Krishnan.

“English people who will not troubles to write their own language, well ought to be ashamed by reading the English of such Indian writers as Nehru, his sister Krishna, Mulkraj Anand ,D.F. Karka, Professor, Radha Krishnan And number of obscure Indian to be met in British universities”. His masterpiece, The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, published in 1951, put him on the long list of great Indian writers. Chaudhary had said that The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian is 'more of an exercise in descriptive ethnology than autobiography'. He is concerned with describing the conditions in which an Indian grew to manhood in the early decades of the century, and as he feels that the basic principle of book is that environment shall have precedence over its product; he describes its affectionate and sensuous detail the three places that had the greatest influence on him: Kishoreganj, the country town in which he lived till he was twelve; Bangram; his ancestral village; and Kalikutch, his mother's village. A fourth chapter is devoted to England, which occupied a large place in his imagination. Later in the book he talks about Calcutta, the Bengali Renaissance, the beginnings of the nationalist Movement, and his experience of Englishmen in India as opposed to the idyllic pictures of a civilization he considered perhaps the greatest in the world.

Nehru's style in his autobiography is a simple, lucid, easy, graceful, lyrical and eloquent. It is a true expression of his personality. He copiously quotes from English poets. He shows incredible detachment when Summons come to him to go to prison and the following lines from Hamlet, come to his lips,

Absent thee from felicity a while

And for a season, draw thy breath in sorrow.

He calls liberal leaders “the hamlets of Indian politics, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thoughts”, ever doubting, hesitating and irresolute:

The time is out of joint, O cursed, spite

That ever, I was born to set it right

to express a sordid state he quotes from T.S. Eliot:

This is the way the world ends,

Not with a bang, but a whimper.

Commenting our appropriateness of questions to situations and mental states in Nehru, autobiography. C.D. Narasimhaiah says:

But narrow know the poet, the poems, the lines and occasion, which would suit them so well that is own experience and the poet's expression fuse with such authenticity that they hardly sound like a question.

Nehru' attempt to express Indian sensibility through foreign language laudable. Nehru's autobiography is a great book through which runs a deep current of humanity. It is the greatest of all his writings. It gives a comprehensive picture of his political life of the country but his personal life in intimately blended with the life of the nation. Nehru emerges as a brave, heroic and adventures character, who in spite of a powerful undercurrent of melancholy and feeling of isolation in his personality, remained calm and unperturbed and wholly devoted to the cause of nation building. He courted controversy in the newly independent India due to the dedication of the book, which ran thus: To the memory of the British

Empire in India, Which conferred subjecthood upon us, But withheld citizenship. To which yet every one of us threw out the challenge: "Civics Britannic us sum" Because all that was good and living within us Was made, shaped and quickened By the same British rule. It is sometimes stated that 'Chaudhury was hounded out of government service, deprived of his pension, blacklisted as a writer in India and forced to live a life of penury'. However, as Sociologist Edward Shills, who helped Chaudhury immigrate to the UK, stated in his article 'Citizen of the World' (American Scholar, 1988), Chaudhury retired at the compulsory age of 55 but was not eligible for a pension because he had not completed sufficient years of service. It is also stated that-'Furthermore, he had to give up his job as a political commentator in All India Radio as the Government of India promulgated a law that prohibited employees from publishing memoirs.' This is not the case. There was a pre-existing rule that employees must get clearance before publishing anything.

Chadhury was refused an extension of service. He was not asked to prepare any more talks on a freelance basis because of severe criticism directed at him by senior figures- like Krishna Men on. However, he did publish in nonGovernment magazines. Chaudhury argued that his critics were not careful-enough readers; "the dedication was really a condemnation of the British rulers for not treating us as equals", he wrote in a 1997 special edition of Granta. Typically, to demonstrate his perceptions he drew on a parallel with Ancient Rome. In this book he talked about his visit of five weeks to England, and more briefly about his two weeks in Paris and one week in Rome. During this time away from his home in Delhi, he visited museums, galleries, cathedrals, country houses, and attended plays and concerts. Chaudhury reflects on his experiences from the perspective of a man who had grown up in the British Empire and was now the citizen of an independent India. His later works include personal essays, biographies and historical studies. Duff Cooper Memorial Award in 1967 Ananda Purashkar in 1988 DLitt from Oxford University in 1990.

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