



## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN'S *MY SEARCH FOR TRUTH* AND APJ ABDUL KALAM'S *WINGS OF FIRE*

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### ABSTRACT

Autobiographies have a strong impact on literature world over. Through autobiographies authors can express their own experiences and thoughts which are not possible to communicate with any other genre like poetry, drama and novel. Reader comes to know the biographical facts and the inner self of the author through autobiographies. This paper highlights the popular autobiographies of writers such as A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who is a scientist and former president of India, Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan who is a philosopher, educationist, first Vice- president and second president of India. Both their autobiographies speak about their vision of emerging India in the coming years and their glimpses from their personal life about the changing trends in the society and culture.

Key Words: Autobiography, Self, Vision, Experience

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Dr. M.K.Bhatnagar, Head, Department of English, M.D. University, Rohtak in his article, "Comparative English Literature-Limits and Prospects" says "Comparative study of Literature involves in lumping together of two or more texts which are perceived by the critic, to have a significant, similar or dissimilar theme or style. It also gives ways to assume a number of dual awareness studies inter-genre or intra-genre, inter-cultural or intra cultural, inter authorial or intra-authorial or a specific permutation and combination of these" (1). Many Indian writers have tried their hands in writing autobiographies. This paper distinguishes the similarities and the dissimilarities established in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's *'My Search for Truth'* and Abdul Kalam's *'Wings of Fire: An Autobiography'* through a careful study of the functions of autobiographies.

Autobiography has its own impact on literature. D.K. Naik in his *'Arts of Autobiography'* views autobiography as a popular and satisfying form of literary art and a great blessing to humanity. E.S.Beats in his *'Inside Out, An Introduction to Autobiography'* views, autobiography has a great store house of first hand, vivid, authentic. It offers an opportunity to understand the circumstances of the person and the personality of the writer. The reader may have the opportunity to know the failure and success stories of the author and he comes to know how an ordinary man becomes an extraordinary man. The reader can form the psychological bond with author; he will get the inspiration from them.

The term 'autobiography' was coined by the nineteenth century poet Robert Southey in 1809. But in the world of literature the modern

western autobiography, is said to be started from AD 398-400. John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, James Boswell's *The Life of Johnson*, Rousseau's *Confession*, *Dialogues*, and *Rivers*, Williamworth's *The Prelude*, John Keat's *Endymion* are some of many works, where autobiographical elements were applied and the applied elements encouraged and invited a number of autobiographies in the history of world literature. The writings of Autobiographies in India are recent. But in many of the earlier works by Gowthama Buddha, Kalidas, Babur and Jahangir autobiographical elements were represented. Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiments With Truth*, Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography*, Srinivasa Sastri's *My First Meeting with Gokhale*, Vijayalakshmi Pandit's *So I Became a Minister*, Kamala Das' *My Story*, Dr.Radhakrishnan's *My Search for Truth* and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's *Wings or Fire: An Autobiography* are some of the famous Indian Autobiographies. Kalam's and Radhakrishnan's autobiographies have a remarkable place in Indian autobiographies. They share their experiences from their position, both have common goal for India and its development.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was born at Tirutani, North West of Madras. He belonged to middle class brahmin family and most of his education went through on scholarship. He got primary education at Tirutanni, graduated from Madras Christian College, completed master's degree in Philosophy in 1906. Avul Pakir Jainlubdeen Abdul Kalam was born and brought up in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. His schooling was at Rameswaram, Studied Physics at St.Joseph's College, Tiruchurapalli and Aerospace Engineering at the Madras Institute of Technology. He also got education on scholarship.

Radhakrishnan and Kalam wrote admirable autobiographies. Most of the universal characteristic literary genre is handled more or less similarly in their autobiographies. They used their autobiographies to admire the people who support them in their personal life and talk about the future of India. Their autobiographies became everlasting gift to their parents because through the works of their children they enter into the Indian English Literature. Radhakrishnan and Kalam wrote about their father's impact to mould their personality and

acquiring knowledge. Kalam wrote,"I inherited honesty from my father, from my mother I inherited faith in goodness and kindness as did my brothers and sisters". Radhakrishnan was influenced by his father's philosophy.

Radhakrishnan and Kalam gave importance to truth. Radhakrishnan said, "The world is a mixture of truth and illusion, even as man is a complex of the eternal and temporal (96). He talks about God and says God does not say 'I am tradition', but he says "I am truth. Truth is greater than its greatest teachers (57). Kalam quote Pakshi Lakshman Sastri's words," seek the truth and truth shall set you free (25). Both of them have faith in hardwork but not in luck. According to Radhakrishnan suffering and its through suffering we learn and grow better. Kalam always remembers the words of his favourite teacher, Iyaduri Soloman, "With faith you can change your destiny" (10).

Beautiful hands are those that do  
Work that is earnest and brave and true  
Moment by moment the long day through  
(53).

Kalam and Radhakrishnan wrote about the encouragement of their teachers in their work. Kalam wrote about Dr.Vikram Sarabhai, Prof. Satish Dhavan, and Dr.Brahma Prakash. Radhakrishnan, when his students wanted to celebrate his birthday as 'Teachers Day.' Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if 5<sup>th</sup> September is observed as Teachers day". It was a tribute to Dr. Radhakrishnan's close association with the cause of Teachers. According to him "Teachers should be the best minds in the country". Both of them were known as for their motionless speeches and interaction with the student community in India.

Dr.Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a philosopher, a savant, a scholar, a speaker, a writer, a diplomat served as the first Vice-president and the second president of India from 1962-1967 and went on to shape the nation's future as a modern, secular and democratic state. He worked as a Vice- Chancellor for Andhra University and Benara Hindu University, Spalding professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at University of Oxford. APJ Abdul Kalam "the Missile Man of India", dedicated scientist in DRDO and ISRO,

project director of SLV3, developer of the nation's prestigious AGNI and PRITHVI missiles, the founder of the Advanced Missile Technology Research Centre IMARAT, Scientific advisor of India's defense minister, the first bachelor president of India from 2002-2007 and the first designer of very light braces for the disabled. Both of them got Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award in India. Kalam and Sarvepalli rejected the president post for the second time.

Radhakrishnan was brought up under limited Hindu high caste culture and in a very poor family. But Kalam was brought up under mixed culture. Though he belongs to Muslim religion, one can identify his writing that he lived in a place where people belonged to various religions. The beauty of Rameswaram tells us though there is a mixed culture, its people maintained unity among them. Radhakrishnan's language is poetic, aphoristic and highly realistic and Kalam's is precise, scientific and realistic.

Self identity and national identity are the important factors that autobiography holds. Radhakrishnan's *My Search for Truth* is essentially a discovery of Radhakrishnan and 'discovery' of his India in the aspect of philosophy. He supports Science and Technology but he strongly believes that they can not reveal what nation is. "Science helps us to build up our outer life, but another discipline is necessary to strengthen and refine the living spirit" (22). Kalam discovers that Science and Technological development will help the improvement in the economical status of a country, and conveyed this message through his autobiography. Though Radhakrishnan supports technological advancement he talks about the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and Tagore. Kalam has contributed his part to free the independent India's struggle from powers which are dominating the other countries of the world with their technological advancement.

Finally the autobiographies of Radhakrishnan and Kalam show how they are universal in attaining the highest position in nation. They have proved one can lead to height through dedication, hard work and interest.

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