

Preface

Whether an autobiography be treated as one of the creative literary genres is a much debated issue among critics and scholars of all times. The author himself is at the centre stage in an autobiography. He dwells on the incidents and events pertaining to his own life, thus enabling the reader to have the glimpses of the history contemporary to his life. He goes through a process of selection, deliberately omitting those details which may not be in accordance with the thematic importance of the autobiography. The memory loss may also be an important factor in omission of the presentation of some details from the life of the author.

Autobiography has been used by some of the great men to disseminate their ideas. Some autobiographies are religious because the writer wished to convey to the world his religious philosophy. A political leader chooses to convey through his autobiography his political ideology. A freedom fighter would, through his autobiography, tell to the world the details of the battle he fought, the circumstances in which he struggled, and the strategies he adopted.

M. K. Gandhi and Nelson Mandela are the two great men who steered their countries to a successful liberation from the powers which unjustly ruled and exploited the natives. Both the leaders perceived since their childhood the exploitation and discrimination on the basis of colour or caste. Both came from such families which could have provided them a happy and comfortable living but both renounced their comforts and decided to wage a battle for their people. The two men have won their respective battles by taking recourse to non-violent

movements, on the strength of the people who stood united behind them on their calls. The strength of the masses unhinged the very basis of the unjust ruling dispensations in both the cases and the masses were behind M. K. Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. The two great leaders proved themselves to be the men of the masses – their icons. Both have proved to be good communicators of their ideas, the trait which help the two, disseminate their ideas to the masses successfully. Both are good writers and through their written works their ideology reaches to the posterity. For example, the relevance of Gandhi's satyagraha is felt even today as Gandhians wield an influence on the masses even today and have the potential to shake the centres of power on the strength of the masses just by adopting non-violent protests. It is Mandela's ideology which has helped to root out the discriminatory apartheid from the world. The autobiographies of the two are the documents which help in conveying to the masses the thoughts and ideas of the two great icons of masses of history.

The present work envisages a comparative study of the autobiographies of the two icons of the masses. The comparative study is done on the hypothesis that the two are the great communicators also who could disseminate successfully their ideas to the masses of the world that made them their icons. The study begins with the discussion of an autobiography as a literary genre in the first chapter and then talks about the diction of the two writers and their ideological frontiers in subsequent chapters. Before reaching to the conclusion of talking about the two as successful disseminators of ideas and establishing them as authors, the study tries to compare the two, as the leaders of political organisations leading the masses through political movements.