

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE IN A P J ABDUL KALAM'S WINGS OF FIRE AND TURNING POINTS**

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This paper enlightens Kalam's retrospective narrative found in *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* and *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges*. Kalam registers the major aspects of his personality/identities and the transformation of a humble, modest, poor and rural person's life turning from obscurity to be an extraordinary talented scientist, spiritual guru and the President of India in his autobiographies. In *Wings of Fire* Kalam captured the important incidents and achievements that happened in his life during the period between 1931 and 1999. In *Turning Points* he recorded his lived experience that occurred between 1999 and 2007. *Wings of Fire* deals with Kalam's achievements done in the scientific history of India and *Turning Points* deals with Kalam's significant contribution to the Indian politics in order to make Indian democracy alive. Further, they are well known for character portrayal. Kalam highlights his personality by highlighting the role played by 'others' in his life. He consciously projects the collective efforts of scientists belonging to the highly prestigious scientific organizations of India that elevated India's status in the globe particularly in the field of missile technology and his call for the collective effort of Indians to attain vision 2020. His autobiographies reflect his patriotic spirit, commitment towards his profession and his service mind. They shared Kalam's spirituality, thoughts and personal philosophies, etc. This paper discusses *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* and *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges* to identify the narrative techniques that contributed to making Kalam a great autobiographer.

**Keyword:** Autobiography; biography; narrative; identity; self.

### **Introduction**

Autobiography is one of the major forms of life writings. "Auto" means "self", "bio" means "life" and "graph" means writing. Thus, 'autobiography' means life written by one (him/her) self. It is a popular form of life writing. Writing autobiographies in English is developed in India recently. Pallavi Rastogi (2001) classified Indian autobiographies as political autobiographies, literary autobiographies, religious autobiographies, women's autobiographies, sociological autobiographies, motivational autobiographies, etc. In the article *Indian Subcontinent: Auto/biography 1947 to Present* published in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* edited by Margaretta Jolly (2001). In the article, *The Indian Autobiography: Origin Type and Functions* published in the journal *American Literature*, Arnold Krupat (1981) points out that "Indian autobiographies require "contact" with living Indians, for it is the

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central convention of autobiography that the subject speaks for himself.” (p. 27) Nehru’s *An Autobiography* (1936) Gandhi’s *My Experiment with Truth* (1940) and Nirad C. Chaudhuri’s *Autobiography of An Unknown Indian* (1951) are famous Indian autobiographies. Kalam’s *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (1999) and *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges* (2012) have been published recently.

A P J Abdul Kalam is the former President of India. He is well known for his remarkable achievements in the history of science in India. His love for his nation and humanity, his achievements and his views shared in his books for the betterment of the society prove that he is one of the contemporary nation builders of India and a good human being. He got a number of honorary doctoral awards including the Bharat Ratna Award, the highest civilian award of India. He is a renowned writer who has authored more than thirty books. *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (1999), *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power within India* (2003), *Envisioning an Empowered Nation: Technology for Societal Transformation* (2004), *Guiding Souls: Dialogues on the Purpose of Life* (2004), *The Life Tree: Poems* (2005), *You are Born to Blossom: Take My Journey Beyond* (2008), *Target 3 Billion PURA: Innovative Solutions towards Sustainable Development* (2011) *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges* (2012) and *Squaring the circle: Seven Steps to Indian Renaissance* (2013) are some of the significant writings of Kalam. His writings include autobiographies, motivational writings, poems, etc. They cover a number of subjects. *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (1999) and *Turning Points: A Journey through Challenges* (2012) presents the account of Kalam’s life. *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* is listed as one of the famous autobiographies of the world published between 1900 and 2009. Kalam’s autobiographies draw a complete picture of Kalam’s personality by incorporating his experience under various positions, though they were written in different periods of Kalam’s life when he was in different states of mind.

### **Autobiographical Narrative**

Narrativity is an important and effective tool used for presenting thoughts, ideas, innovation etc., in any work of art like novel, poem, drama, history, paintings and other arts related to creativity. In *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism; Mediality, Disciplinary*, Jan Christopher Meister points out that the general, logical and structural properties of narrative as universal representations of narratology, which is a French term coined by Tzvetan Todorov. He also shared his opinion in the article *Narratology*, published in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, edited by Peter Huhn (2009) that narrativity was viewed as “product of meditation in the classical period” and “Plato viewed it as a ‘differentiating agent’ of the ‘indirect representational character of diegesis.’” (Peter Huhn 2009, p.311) In the article *Narrativity*, Porter Abbott quoted Ryan’s classification of the developed narrativity as “simple narrative”, “complex narrativity”, “figurative narrativity” “instrumental narrativity” and “proliferating narrativity” (p. 322) in the influential essay *The*

*Modes of Narrativity*. In the article *Narrator* published in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrativity* edited by David Herman (2007), Uri Margolin wrote that the logic of narrativity “requires no sequential structuring principle, but simply the ability to arouse “a sense of its own wholeness.” (p. 28).

The role of narrativity is more significant in telling the life stories in oral and written forms. The autobiographer should mainly focus to thematize his self through his narration in an autobiography. In the article *Identity and Alterity*, while discussing about the natural narrative Monika points out that narrativity “creates and elaborates an image of the self which the narrator wants to recognize as his or her character or personhood” (Peter Huhn; 2009: p.260) In *Autobiography*, Anderson (2007) defined autobiography by quoting Philip Lejeune’s words found in *Autobiographical Pact* as

“a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life in particular on the development of his personality.” (p. 20)

With reference to *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Ditee*, Nicole McDaniel says that

The movement in autobiography ...must be towards the present in order to illustrate the achievements of the autobiographer to the reader and to discover as Pascal writes “the concrete reality of the meaning of life (p. 70).

In *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, Roy Pascal (1960) views autobiography, as giving “a glimpse of the writer’s mind as well as an account of the events of their lives which perhaps shaped their destinies as creative writers.” (p. 3) In the article, *Narrating the Self: Subjectivity and Representation in Autobiographical Narratives*, published in the *Journal of Literary and Critical Writings*, while explaining the concept of autobiographical space, Nidhi Madan (2010) points out that it is essential to pay attention to how the story was narrated and to focus on ‘the choice of view and point of view’, since it was through this “combination the new narrative situation emerges. (p. 24).

Michael Bamberg suggests the autobiographer to use the personal pronoun “I” effectively to achieve the goal of writing a good autobiography in the article *Identity and Narration*. According to Michel De Montaigne an autobiography should have the study of the autobiographer on himself as well as on the world. Bamberg explains three dilemmas, which disturb the construction of the essential identity. They are, the narrative that account for how s/he (a) has emerged (as character) over time, (b) as different from others (but same) and simultaneously (c) how s/he views her-/himself as an (responsible) agent. (Huhn: 2009: p.138) In the article *Identity*, Brockmeir advocated that the autobiographer should register his multiple identities in his narration. In the article *Subject, Persona and Self in the Theory of Autobiography*, Barry Olshen views that the reason for the multiple identities is the local temporary selves that change under different conditions and at different times. He also points out that plural identities are used to acknowledge

the multiplicity of roles and contextual relevance. Madan (2010) also points out that “it follows the pattern of developmental narrative that orders time and the personality of the protagonist.” (p.17) Ronald N. Jacobs has argued constructing ‘collective identity’ is an important characteristic of narrativity in the article *The Narrative Integration of Personal and Collective Identity in Social Movements*. Monika Fludernik felt that narrative identity could be revealed in a person’s ‘social roles’. At the same time the autobiographer should also overcome the problematic element of autobiographical narrative by showing the distinction between narrator, agent and the protagonist in his narration. These are the three major functions of narration.

### **Wings of Fire: An Autobiography**

B. Sharma, editor, Philosophy and Action considers *Wings of Fire* as “the first authentic volume on our (Indian) Space Odyssey” (*Wings of Fire* - back cover) *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography*, presents the successful events of Kalam’s life history that reflect his humanism and his relationship with his parents, mentors, teachers and his colleagues. Kalam puts on record his lived experiences of his early childhood, youth, career span and days till he got retirement under four headings Orientation, Creation, Propitiation and Contemplation in *Wings of Fire*. In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrativity* David Herman (2007) explains the scientific mode of writing as it tells a story about who made what discoveries and under what circumstances. *Wings of Fire* celebrates the successful launching of SLV Project and other Integrated Missile Development Programs by Kalam, along with the leaders like Sathish Dhawan and other scientists. He chronicled his experience he gained during his service under various positions in various organizations of India in *Wings of Fire*. Kalam also included a few unforgettable and important incidents from his academic life. He recorded his understanding of life, notable characters, admirable attitudes and nature and hard efforts which helped him to develop his personality/identities. He shared his views on life, spiritualism, science, religion, society, education, etc. He narrated his everlasting energy and spirit that could motivate the young students, managers, scientists and technocrats to cherish their dreams and inculcate a spirit of integrity, unity, teamwork and honesty. He presented himself as a dynamic leader, a good motivator, a good project manager a great scientist and above all someone with passion and devotion towards work. *Wings of Fire* serves as the most eye-opening, inspiring thought provoking and educative piece of work.

### **Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges**

*Turning Points* is another Kalam’s inspiring autobiography. It depicts the important incidents and events from Kalam’s life, when he was the President of India. Along with his exigent experience in the field of science and missile technology, the

position President of India gave Kalam an immeasurable experience of the world and it also provided explicit outlook about India and its future. Unlike *Wings of Fire*, Kalam started *Turning Points* with the climax of his presidential period and proceeded to narrate the story where *Wings of Fire* ends. The publishers of *Turning Points* wrote that

*Turning Points* takes up the incredible Kalam story from where *Wings of Fire* left off. It brings together details from his career and presidency ... It offers insight not only into an extraordinary personality but also a vision of how a country with a great heritage can become great in accomplishment, skills and abilities through effort. (Back cover)

*Turning Points* created a perfect place for Kalam to pour out the inferno burning in his deep heart longing to see the developed India. He narrated his experience as an academician, the President of India and the roles played after his tenure as the President in *Turning Points*. He registered his courageous attempts like piloting Sukhoi – 3- MKI fighter plane and his experience in visiting Siachen glacier, the highest battle field of the world, addressing various groups of people inside and outside India, visiting rural areas of India and visiting the places that were affected by riots and natural calamities, etc. He also expressed his deep concern for those who lost their life in the Arakonam Aircrash. He shared thoughts to make the democracy alive and leadership qualities. Kalam (2012) also believed that the second episode of his story presented in *Turning Points* “would echo the concerns, anxieties and aspirants of many Indians.” (vii) He acknowledged that the positive responses of the millions of motivated readers of *Wings of Fire* and other inspirational books of Kalam increased his intention to write *Turning Points*. In *A. P. J. Abdul Kalam's Turning Points: A Political Autobiography of an Apolitical Man* (<http://isahitya.com/index.php/explore-more/non-fiction/421-apjabdul-kalams-turning-points-a-political-autobiography-of-an-apolitical-man>), Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee reviewed *Turning Points* as a rare kind of political autobiographies like Gandhiji's *My Experiments with Truth*, Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* etc., which talk about the truths of the autobiographers.

### **Autobiographical Narrative in *Wings of Fire* & *Turning Points***

#### ***Treasure of Knowledge and Maturity***

According to George Gusdorf, the task of writing autobiography is to be undertaken by an ‘aging man’ to appease ‘the more or less anguished uneasiness’. Kalam took the task of writing *Wings of Fire*, when he attained the age of complete maturity, sixty when he was about to retire from the government service. He wrote *Turning Points* in his ninth decade. Kalam wrote his autobiographies neither as a Muslim nor as a scientist and nor for personal exaggeration. His autobiographies show Kalam's transformed states of his spiritual and intellectual maturity. He presented his financial status in *Wings of Fire* as “I have acquired nothing, built nothing,

possess nothing” (177) and in *Turing Points* as “My few belongings were packed – the two suitcases” (p. 2) which were filled with the books and small possessions like dress and others. His personal life presented in his autobiographies prove that he earned no earthly possessions but knowledge, spiritual divinity and love for human beings which earned him millions of hearts throughout the world. In this states, Kalam recollected the important incidents of his life history and presented them along with his learning, observations and justifications in an organized way in his autobiographies.

### **Time**

Kalam’s life is bound with science and politics of India. The mode and the form undertaken by Kalam required him to show the ‘time’ to fit into the scientific historical mode of description. Kalam recorded that he had elementary education in Saamiyar School at Rameshwaram in 1944, intermediate education in Schwartz School at Ramanathapuram in 1950, discontinued his undergraduate course at St. Josephs’ college in Trichy and joined at Madras Institute of Technology (MIT), Chennai in 1954 and completed his engineering education at MIT in 1956. He started his career as a Senior Scientific Assistant at DTD&P (Air), Delhi in 1958, became the Project Director of India’s first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle Project at Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) in 1969, Chief Executive of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) in 1970, Director of Defence of Research and Development (DRDO) in 1982, the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister and Director General of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) in 1992, Principal Scientific Adviser to the government with the rank of Cabinet Minister in 1999, Professor at Anna University, Chennai in 2001-02 and became the President of India in 2002. The sequential and chronological structure of his narration covers his childhood, boyhood, adulthood, middle age and old age stages. It also highlights the impact of migration and multiculturalism in shaping Kalam’s self. It reflects his states of mind during his success, sufferings and complexities and inward gaze.

Kalam employed a slight change constructing *Turing Points*. He starts *Turning Points* with the climax of Kalam’s presidential period and proceeds to rewind his life from where *Wings of Fire* ends towards his future which is attached with the future of India. This strategy adds liveliness in his narration as well as it helps Kalam to create awareness about the future threats to India. Even, Kalam used the deictic (demonstratives, indexical, shifters) of time like “now” “here”, “lately” , “yesterday”, etc. purposefully. Kalam’s (1999) words “Today when the press calls me a ‘welder of people I attribute this to Rajan.” (p. 84) and his words “now, this is where the key to the modern world order lies – superiority through technology” (Kalam. 2012, p. 164) relate the narrated events to the present and embody the space- time. Kalam also conveyed his gratitude to Rajan and pinpointed the future

threads to India to awaken his readers, particularly the present generation and youth. Kalam (2012) also expressed the value of time by saying,

It is important that democratic processes and functioning, however satisfactory they may appear to be on the surface, cannot be, and should not be, frozen in time. We cannot rest content with past achievements, and ignore recent developments that call for a change in the way we run our society and nation. (p. 150).

Kalam's (1999) words

Dr. Brahm Prakash advised me to take care of the performance degrader... your problem is going to be your dependency on others in accomplishing the total SLV... You will require a tremendous amount of tolerance and patience. (p. 65)

show his skills in utilizing time for multiple purposes. These words link present, past and future. Kalam offered his gratitude to Prakash. He narrated as if the words of Prakash created self-awareness about the required skills to take up great responsibilities for the development of India. He conveyed this message to his readers. Kalam's (1999) intention to do anything with a noble purpose also made him to question the relevance of the adding incidents before he started writing his autobiographies by asking himself "Why should these be of any interest to the general public?" Later, he convinced himself that the incidents happened in his life were relevant, if not for anything else but because they tell something of the story of modern India, as individual destiny and the social matrix in which it is embedded cannot be seen in isolation. (p.xiv)

### **Memory**

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2001) made the view clear that memory as one of the important subjects of writing autobiography in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. In *Biographical Research*, Brain Roberts (2002) quoted the words of Conway on autobiographical memories as they "are dynamically constructed on the basis of knowledge drawn from different memory structures." (p. 137) Roberts (2002), classified memory as declarative memory (knowledge of certain things/events/facts), episodic memory (concerning personal events) flashback memory (where dramatic events is said to deliver a good recall of details due to personal effect), and autobiographical memory (concerned with how events are placed with time by individuals). Kalam has astounding memory capacity that helped him to store and fit a number of minutiae parts of the sensitive and mega scientific projects he undertook. P M Nair (2004) expressed his admiration for Kalam's memory thus Kalam's "memory was amazing – photographic and with plenty of films to register information."(18) Kalam's sharp memory served as the authenticated memory source to recollect the incidents happened in his life for writing his autobiographies. Roberts also stated that the narrator can apply certain "stimuli for recollection." (p. 135) In the article, *Kalam's Wings of Fire: A*

*Collaborative Autobiography*, Dr. S. P. Dhanavel pointed out that Kalam utilized the assistance of Arun K Tiwari, the co-author of *Guiding Souls: Dialogues on the Purpose of Life (2005)* in editing, organizing the contents to write *Wings of Fire*. Kalam also used the assistance of Ex. Major General R. Swaminathan who has association with Kalam for more than thirty years to write *Turning Points*. It shows that Kalam utilized Tiwari and Swaminathan as a kind of stimuli of his memory to write his autobiographies. Kalam's clear focus, fixed schedules, popularity, importance of the responsibility which motivated the Media to carry Kalam's activities regularly, his habit of writing diaries and registering important events of his life in verse form also served as stimulus for his memory.

### ***The Journey of Self***

In *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points*, Kalam's beautifully narrated the journey of an innocent rural boy's self becoming the self of great and ideal visionary leader of India. Kalam's inward search for personal identity in particular gave him clear insight to present the journey of his self in *Wings of Fire* and in *Turning Points* without any complexities. Kalam narrated the journey of his self, as if it achieved his noble goals through personal, physical, psychological and professional struggles. His self-esteem, self-realization, self-awareness, conceptual mind of dreams, desires and goal setting through motivation, internal and external struggles, decisions making skills, hard and smart work served him as the 'representations' of Kalam's self and they also created a peculiar identity for him in the international strata. 'Representations of the self' are important in the broader concept of autobiographical narrative according to structuralists. Kalam's life history reflect his self that felt proud to be 'an Indian' and beyond as 'a human being'.

### ***First Person Narrative***

Kalam narrated the incidents in the first person singular and he utilized it for multiple purposes. For example, Kalam's (1999) words "I was unaware of any other option for higher education. Nor did I have any information about career opportunities available to a student of science" (p. 16) found in *Wings of Fire* personify the status of his self which echoes the voice for the rural middle class society of India. Kalam's (2012) words "I am much concerned about the success of our parliamentary system as you all are" (Kalam; 2012; p. 51) found in *Turning Points* echo the expectation of every Indian and create awareness among them. Beyond that his narration replicates his service mind. Even, Kalam's usage of second person pronoun 'you' serves as an agent of his sense and social service. In *Wings of Fire*, Kalam (1999) remembered the words uttered by Iyyadurai Solomon, his school teacher, who said, "with faith you can change your destiny" (p. 13) which served as a motivation tool of Kalam's identity as well as they increase the faith of his countrymen and his readers in them and encouraged them to design their destiny.



Kalam forwards the inspirational words of 'others' given to him to inspire 'others' through his autobiographies. Kalam (1999) described the process and the difficulties faced during the construction of the hovercraft prototype as a ground equipment machine with first person plural 'we' and he shifted his narration from 'we' to first person singular when he individually took decision on the progress of the project by saying "I simply took the decision to proceed with ...." (p. 27) This strategy reflects Kalam's conscious mind applied in his narration. Kalam also employed the first person 'plural' to pinpoint the mistake of the society. He justified himself one among the Indians and pointed the negative face of India. Kalam (2012) addressed the parliamentarians,

There are some bare truths which we all know but refuse to acknowledge. I have no hesitation in taking to you about them, I said, because I am part of you; I am as much part of Parliament as you all are, and I am as much concerned about the success of our parliamentary system as you all are. Our polling processes have been, of late, under severe strain. Let us be honest to ourselves ... (p. 51)

He created a feel that he is one among the parliamentarians and started to register his dissatisfaction with the system that affect the democratic system of India. His words also create an image that he is away from feudalistic approach.

### ***Multiple Identities***

Kalam in the process of narrating the journey of his self revealed his multiple identities as a scientist, spiritualist, humanist, writer, philosopher, poet, lover of nature, patriot, leader, etc. These identities started to blossom even from his childhood days. Kalam autobiographies prove that the challenges and circumstances that Kalam faced under various sensitive responsibilities during his service for Indian scientific organizations paved a path to reveal the great scientist in him. His interest, curiosity and search for truth and personal identity, questioning mind, capability to understand the complex religious thoughts and his relationship with the spiritual leaders of various religions helped him to identify the secularist in him. Kalam's love for human beings and his wish to see the people living peacefully in the earth encouraged his human nature to grow as a fruitful human being. His vast reading in various subjects and quick grasping power, fruitful discussions with the experts and experienced people, love for nature and nation, creative skills and intentions to show a path to lead a peaceful life exposed Kalam as a great writer and a poet of the world.

Nationalism, humanism, optimism, being frank, capability to understand the concepts and the seriousness of the responsibilities, complete dedication to the goal, spirituality, treating humans with equality, simplicity, taking tasks beyond capability, courageous attempts, habit of learning from all, being away from flattering etc., are the major forces that watered his multiple identities to attain maturity. His autobiographies prove that the reactions of the external and internal

motivators of his mind also acted as motivating forces of Kalam's multiple identities and let them grow beyond their reach and made Kalam as a noteworthy person of the world. Kalam's writings, historical achievements in the field of science, and all the innovative efforts to make Indian democracy alive confirm that his multiple identities are ultimately driven to work for the development of India and to make a peaceful world.

### ***The Role of 'Others'***

Kalam portrayed 'others' as his external motivators of his internal mind and as 'wings' that ignited his visions burning in his heart. Kalam understood himself and 'others'. He remembered and created a space to describe about his father Jainulabudeen known for his innate wisdom, true generosity of spirit, simplicity, mother Ashiamma, known for her faith in goodness, caring, deep kindness, sister Zohara known for her caring and sacrificing nature, his brother-in-law Ahmed Jallaluddin, known for his nature of encouragement and knowledge in scientific discoveries, contemporary literature and achievements of medical science and spiritualists like Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry known for spiritual knowledge. He also described about his teachers like Lakshmana Sastry who respected teaching profession and was against social inequality, Iyadurai Solomon who used to instill a sense worthiness among students, Rev.Father Kalathil, Prof. Thothathri Iyengar, Prof. Suryanarayana Sastry, who preserved the individuality and maintained high professional standards and professors like Sponder, Narasingha Roa and KAV Pandalai who maintained cheerfulness and friendliness with their students and introduced fresh approaches in teaching. In *Wings of Fire*, Kalam also recognized the visionaries like Dr.Vikram Sarabhai, the leader of the Indian space program, Dr.Brahm Prakash the first director of VSSC, Prof.Sathish Dhawan Head of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) as the shaping forces of Kalam's destiny.

In *Turning Points* Kalam wrote a separate chapter entitled *Learning from Others* in which he recollected the lesson he learned from his father, his brother, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, writer Khushwant Singh, the Prime Ministers like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Dr. Manmohan Singh and other political leaders and great scientists. Kalam included a lesson he learnt from his father on "getting gifts" when Jainulabdeen was the President of a small village in Ramanathapuram. Kalam recollected that lesson when he was the President of India. The present position "President" made Kalam to understand the complete meaning of the lesson he learned during his childhood days. Kalam (2012) explained the effect of getting gifts (bribe) through the concept found in Manu Smriti, as

... by accepting gifts, the divine light in a person get extinguished. Manu warns every individual against accepting gifts for the reason that it places the acceptor under an obligation to the giver and ultimately results in making a person commit immoral or illegal acts. (p. 60-61).

Kalam also conveyed a powerful message on traditional values he learned from his elder brother. He recollected his brother negotiating the proposal of Kalam's Indian friend from United States to make arrangements to transform the house which has more than 'a century years old' to be a museum and a library, by saying

I would like to live in the house where I have grown and lived for ninety -five -years. I would like to build a new house in the same place through the earning of my kith and kin. I would not like to have any other arrangements. (p. 61)

This metaphorically reflects Kalam's intention to live in a new developed India built on the base of its tradition. He analyzed the opinions and feelings of the people by meeting them and through observing their letters and emails sent to him. He did face-to-face interactions with many leading scientists, technocrats, doctors, educationists, judges, politicians, teachers, policemen, soldiers, administrators, panchayat presidents, lawyers, nurses, students, village peoples, proficient professionals throughout the world, etc., observed much information and shared those information through *Turning Points* for the development of the nation. Kalam's this attitude shows that even in his seventies he kept his mind ready to learn and to share his learning for the betterment of the society through his writings. In *Wings of Fire*, he introduced others as the shaping and supporting forces of his destiny and his success and in *Turning Points* he presented his self as a shaping force of 'others' which include his countrymen and his readers. He positively characterized the people who came across his life after a clear analysis. He passed information about the nature of the people who dealt with Kalam and the people he dealt with.

### ***Problems and Solution***

Kalam's life portrayal in *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points* provides techniques for 'personal freedom' and freedom for the nation from the technological supremacy of the developed countries. It proves that 'building one's education and skills' and 'developing passion for personal responsibility' would free a person from the bondage which the society keeps on an individual. Kalam's autobiographies are constructed on the problem and solution method. He elevated the worthiness of his success by pointing out the struggles first and then the success next. A logical view on the narrated situations elucidating Kalam's educational background mirrors that the physical, mental and psychological changes and challenges, his social and financial status, lack of standard sources and materials, communal partiality and unawareness of the opportunities as his major problems as well as problems of educational institutions of rural places in India. These problems most often divert the Indians and educational status of India towards despondency.

Kalam recollected an incident in which a new school teacher belong to the Brahmin community asked the Muslim Kalam to sit in the last row and he symbolically represented the existing communal partiality in the educational

institutions of rural villages of India. Kalam (1999) gave the solution for the communal problem through the voice of his elementary school teacher, Lakshmana Sastry as “the teacher should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children” (p.9) His life description also reveals that the envious senior colleague’s discouragement, senior’s suppressing eminent fellow colleague’s valid dream of national development, lack of manpower, material procurement, communication and advanced technology support, dependency and heavy workload as the major performance degraders and major barriers of personal and national growth. Kalam called those who involve in justifying and teasing others and those who work only for personal pride and to get control over others as performance degraders. He emphasized the effect of ‘collective effort’ of wise and efficient as a source for these problems by registering the successful launchings of SLV, Agni and Prithivi Missiles which uplifted the status of India.

In *Turing Points* also Kalam expressed his dissatisfaction with the politicians who utilized the power for their personal benefit and not for the benefit of the society. He addressed the politicians to work for making Indian democracy alive. He narrated some complex issues that arose regarding Office of the Profit Bill case and in announcing the Prime Minister candidate of India after the 2004 election. He also highlighted water scarcity and fuel scarcity as the major threats to future India. He wished every Indian to work for vision 2020 by asking himself “What can I give to my Nation?” Kalam (2012) also advised Indians through the words of Dr. Sathish Dhawan who used to say,

You should not allow problems to become your captain; you should become the captain of the problems. (p. 70)

that serve as the best strategy which drove Kalam to make up his mind to come out of the unbearable burden occurred due to the loss of his father and mother before he completes the SLV – 3 Project. Being a master over failure and learning from the failures, using the inter-connectivity for a great purpose, one-to-one interaction, motivation, combining the private and public sectors for a noble cause, appreciating the successful personalities and encouraging those who faced failure with hopes, encouraging creativity, improving the technological, scientific, research areas for the growth of the nation are the other important strategies that Kalam applied to get the involvement of ‘others’ (both large and small) towards the success of his vision for India. A clear analysis of the problems described in his autobiographies will lead to the concept that how the problems of an individual, a village, a city, an institution and an organization became the problems of a nation.

### ***Characterization***

According to Gerard Genette, character, description and point of view are the three major categories that have a great concern with narratology. Gerard Genette also mentioned that ‘*Differentia specifica*’ is one of the important categories of

narratology in the article *Narratology*. It is a generic character for characterizing the self and nature of others. According to Michael Bamberg, the character rests on the internal and external forms of organization. *Wings of Fire* is famous for its character portrayal. Kalam followed a different strategy to highlight his character. Kalam used psychological insight and observation as the *differentia specifica*. Kalam highlighted the admirable nature and characteristics of his parents, immediate parents, teachers, professors, guides, mentors, scientists etc., and constructed his collective identity as if he has instilled the positive characters of 'others' in him along with his peculiar nature. For example, Kalam (1999) says, "I inherited honesty and self-discipline from my father; from my mother, I inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness and so did my three brothers and sister." (pp.8) In this sense, his autobiographies also act as a biography of the notable personalities who shaped Kalam's destiny too. Moreover, Kalam presented his nature as he does not like self-praise. He expressed the positive and negative outlook of his humble nature in his narration. Though, he used communication as a 'tool of mantra', he did not use the words of bitterness coated by words of sweetness. In article *Identity and Narration* while talking under the title *Identity and Narration: Biography and Life Writing*, Michael Bamberg called the 'ego identity' as having the ability to conceive life as an integrated narrative form. Kalam never spoke in his autobiographies that he came out of optimism which became his ego identity. He is free from nepotism. He is a secularist. He is a lover of nature. He is still a bachelor and a non-vegetarian too. His points of view reflect his scientific, spiritual, sociological as well as philosophical faces. He used the tool of description for describing the characters of his molders as well as his work philosophies like performance dimensions, flow and total commitment. He took the common basic beliefs of the major religions and linked the philosophies with the incidents of his life.

Kalam did not fail to register himself as a hard worker and free from being a hard task master through his autobiography. He also maintained that he was so practical and different from others in nature and attitudes. One of the best capabilities, that Kalam let to grow from his childhood days was his attitude of 'converting the challenges into to congrats'. Kalam included many incidents which highlight Kalam's this nature. In *Wings of Fire*, Kalam narrated an incident which explained how his studiousness helped him to convert the mind of Ramakrishna Iyer, an elementary school mathematics teacher. Iyer caught Kalam by the neck and canded him in front of the class for his small misbehavior. But, when Kalam scored full marks in mathematics he praised Kalam (1999) as "this boy is going to bring glory to his school and to his teachers" (pp.13) in front of the assembly. The incidents which describe Kalam's nature of transforming his determination into reaction act as the events of persistence. For example, Kalam decided to convert the teasing comments into appreciation. Kalam and his team members were commented as "eccentric inventors" by egoistic senior scientists before they start

the Ground Equipment Machine (GEM) project at Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bangalore. Kalam took it as a motivation, positively approached his team members, determined to get success in the project and achieved success too. He got appreciation from the egoistic senior colleagues as well as from M G K Menon, Director of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Centre (TIFR). He applied this life strategy throughout his life.

In the same way, Kalam (1999) pictured the status of Directorate of Research and Development Lab (DRDL) at the time of his entry and at the time of his retirement. He expressed the status of DRDL at the time of his entry through the words of Coleridge (1798) found in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, as

Day after day, day after day  
We stuck, nor breath, nor motion;  
As idle as painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean. (111)

But, Kalam (1999) pictured the transformation of DRDL when he was conferred Padma Vibhushan award for his contribution and service to India through the words “it was the first time in the history of India that so many scientists affiliated to the same organization found their names on the awards’ list” (p. 159) In *Turning Points*, Kalam presented outlook of media before Kalam assumed the office as the President of India and at the end of his presidential tenure. At the time of Kalam (2012) assuming the office of the President of India, the media commented him as “how could a non-political person, particularly a scientist, become president of nation?” and at the end of his presidential tenure, *Outlook* magazine appreciated Kalam’s tenure as “Kalam is a peripatetic president who has already visited 21 states in the 10 months he has been in office. This is possibly more than what most presidents manage to do in five years.” (138)

### **Service to the Rural Villages of India**

Kalam also gave his voice for the rural middle class society through *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points*. He registered the problems he faced during his studies and service for government in various places of India. These problems represent the status of students of rural middle class society. He narrated his educational career in *Wings of Fire*, as if he suffered a lot due to his humble background, lack of standard sources and materials, communal discrimination, homesick, internal and external changes and the expectation of the fascinating age, lack of awareness about the future, doubt and confusion about higher education and career opportunities, late realization of dreams, poor financial condition, lack of communication, ‘the act of procrastination’, etc. Kalam felt that these problems at one time ‘darkened his future’. He considered the rural society as the backbone of India and liked to strengthen it too. Kalam (1999) wrote *Wings of Fire* with the

intention that “some poor child living in an obscure place in an underprivileged social setting may find a little solace in the way my destiny has been shaped. It could perhaps help such children to liberate themselves from the bondage of their illusory backwardness and hopelessness’ (p. 167) In *Turing Points* (2012) he expressed his belief that “Developing the villages so that they can provide adequate opportunity for earning and improving amenities there can change the face of India...” (110) *Turning Points* clearly states that the main intention behind introducing Providing Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA) Project in India is to uplift the lifestyle of 600,000 rural villages of India. It also shows that as the President of India Kalam visited more villages, learned about the status of them and took efforts for their development. He also encouraged the students and insisted the public and private sectors to join in helping to improve the literacy percentage of Indian villages and to make them avail all the facilities which have been enjoyed by the people in urban areas. Kalam (2012) tried to give life to Gandhi Ji’s words “the real India lies in its villages” (117)

### **Nation’s Identity**

Kalam’s autobiographies also reflect a few biographical notes of India’s scientific history. Kalam narrated the birth, growth and success of SLV – 3 which was launched on 31 May 1981, Agni Missile which was launched on 22 May 1989 and other missile programs like Prithivi, Trishul, Nag and Akash done under the title Integrated Guided Missile Development Programs in *Wings of Fire*, and in *Turning Points* he gave a note about the successful launching of Agni V missile on 19 April 2012 at Wheeler Island and India’s first RISAT – (Radar Imaging Satellite), on 26 April 2012, from Sathish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, though he did not take part directly in designing, organizing and developing these projects. He appreciated both the DRDO team who worked for Agni V and the ISRO team who worked for RISAT through his autobiographies. These are the heroic deeds by scientists of the organizations like DRDO, DRDL, DTD&P (air), ISRO and VSSR. Kalam also registered the real condition that prevailed in these organizations while narrating about these heroic deeds which made India to be one among the five countries to achieve satellite launch capability and one among the six countries in the world to explode a nuclear device. The achievements of India in the field of science incorporated in Kalam’s autobiographies connect the dream of two Prime Ministers of India. The successful launching of SLV – 3 project and Integrated Missile Development Program portrayed in *Wings of Fire* fulfill the dream of Jawaharlal Nehru whose main concern was the scientific growth of India and the successful launching of Agni V pointed out in *Turing Points* fulfills the dream of Indira Gandhi who once asked Kalam (2012)

when will the laboratory launch a missile which will be capable of reaching places as far away as that to meet any contingency. (p. 80)

It shows that Kalam's narration metaphorically deals with the collective identity of India. He explained the process, the involvement of the collective effort of faculty and the struggles of scientists. He also explained how they got liberation from the oppressing forces like ego, financial crisis and selfishness that destroy unity. His narration behind presenting Kalam as an ideal visionary leader of India, projects him how futuristic he is. In *Turning Points* Kalam narrated his experience of his presidential tenure as if it reflected his justification of his future and the future of India. He expressed his desire to connect the dream of every Indian towards his vision for India 2020 and to create a peaceful atmosphere in the world. Kalam's (2012) words "I always be with you dear citizens, in the great mission of making India a developed nation before 2020" assure that even after his presidential tenure his self is moving only towards India 2020.

### **Actantial Model**

Kalam was subjective when he took decision, objective when he talked about others and while doing work, sender of personal philosophies, experience and hard work, receiver of honors, helper of humanity and opponent of personal problems and problems of society and nation. A J Greimas calls these roles as actantial modal in the article *The Actantial Model*. Michael Bamberg explained the necessity of the relationship between the narrator and the reader through the communication theory. According to this theory, the act of communication consists of a sender sending a message to a receiver. Kalam (1999) sends the message about the practical life theory as

After all what is life but a mixture of unsolved problems, ambiguous victories and amorphous defeats? The trouble is that we often, merely analyze life, instead of dealing with it. (p.140)

to the people of ignorance in order to ignite the fire inside their heart. He also handled the three functions of narrative "doing, seeing and saying" beautifully in his autobiographies. Kalam's scientific mind, nature of self examination and visionary aspects provided him the skills to distinguish himself as the protagonist and autobiographer. Kalam narrated the events and incidents of his life, as the protagonist. But sharing, the personal philosophies and personal intelligence of the protagonist links the involvement of the narrator, because the personal philosophies are interlinked internally for both the protagonist and the narrator.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee appreciated Kalam's narrative style used in *Turning Points* as "The writing style is very gripping and the contents are very unusual in their approach. It is an unusual kind of political auto-biography where the reader can easily rely on the narrative..." A study of the narrative techniques of *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points* reveals that Kalam narrated his life history in *Wings of Fire*



and *Turning Points* as if it stimulates everyone to realize the truth that he understood the power of dreaming and achieving the dream beyond its level. It proves that, though Kalam's autobiographies are written at different periods and at his different states of mind, his intensions like chronicling his life as an autobiography, using hard work as a tool of success, registering the personal ideologies in order to motivate the ignorant people of his nation, sharing the secret that helped him achieving success and responding the shaping forces with gratitude are common for both *Wings of Fire* and *Turing Points*. It inter-relates all the incidents and events of his life as if they promote the strength of the inner minds of poor and rural people of India and to stimulate their hard effort with broad dreams. It also spreads the seeds of the success formula of his visions and achievements to prop the standard of Indian scientific organizations up in the international arena. It exposes the conflicts of an individual, societal and national working condition and the strategies and philosophies he learned from them. It conveys Kalam's efficiency in expressing the effect of combing conflict-ridden objectives like science and religion, philosophies of various religions, traditionalism and modernism, collective effort of the experienced and youth of India, democracy, etc. It reflects different teaching strategies of various institutions and working philosophies and conditions of prominent Indian organizations. It shows a path to lead a righteous life. It proves that as a small boy Kalam started his service and he still continues his service for the benefit of the society tirelessly. Ponraj, a scientist in DRDO who created a separate website for Kalam wrote in a weekly magazine that still Kalam has been attending 500 programs inside and outside India each month. The analysis also reflects Kalam's simplicity applied in language and in his attitude. Prince, a critic viewed this phenomenon as a measure and function of the result yielding narrative.

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