CHAPTER 5

KALAM THROUGH THE EYES OF RAMANATHAN
AND NAIR

5.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the biographical elements presented in R. Ramanathan’s *Who is Kalam? A Good Human Being* (2003) and P M Nair’s *The Kalam Effect: My Years with the President* (2008).

Kalam is a famous public figure. His identity is transparent to the society. It is revealed through his public activities, writings, speeches as well as through the biographies written on him. Hardwig’s (1998) view on “outside” is endowed with the hint that a study on the biographies of Kalam will provide an outsider’s view on Kalam. Kalam incorporated the incidents happened in his life and his deeds in *Wings of Fire* and in *Turning Points*. Ramanathan’s *Who is Kalam? A Good Human Being* (2003), Nair’s *The Kalam Effect: My Years with the President* (2008), Qurashi’s *Abdul Kalam: India’s Scientist President* (2010) and Ramesh Chandra’s *Scientist President: Dr. A. P. J. Kalam* are a few biographies on Kalam, which portray the public deeds of Kalam. They bring out a few major aspects of Kalam’s personality, which even Kalam might not be aware of or Kalam might have intentionally excluded from his autobiographies. Ramanathan (2003) brought this nature by saying that “there are many facets of his life, known only to a few, who had had the opportunity to observe him closely.”
5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN RAMANATHA WHO IS KALAM?

Ramanathan worked as Financial Advisor to Kalam in DRDO. He has been associated with Kalam for more than ten years. He recorded selected incidents that happened in the life of Kalam between 1993-2002 in *Who is Kalam?* He selected the incidents happened in the life of Kalam when Kalam was the Scientific Advisor to Defense Minister. He viewed Kalam as a visionary, dreamer, leader, lover of children and the Director implementing the strategic action plan to convince the directors to work with dedication in the Peer Review system in DRDO. He also included biographical notes on Kalam shared by the personalities who studied with Kalam at St. Joseph’s College and worked with him in the projects like SLV and IGMDP, Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) and in Moghul Garden. He captured the personality of Kalam from different perspectives.

5.2.1 Perspectives on Kalam by Ramanathan

Ramanathan chronicled an account of Kalam’s personal history under a separate title *The Evolution*. He gave a note on the major events that shaped Kalam and the victories and frustrations that contributed to his development. He talked briefly about the important role played by the personalities and their peculiar nature in shaping Kalam. He listed out the peculiarities of Kalam with their sources. For example, Ramanathan traced Kalam’s secularism and sense of national spirit. The ever praying and helping Muslim father instilled in Kalam an abiding faith. The loving Brahmin teacher inculcated the spirit of religious tolerance in Kalam. The accepting and recognizing Christian teacher cultivated a strong sense of self-esteem in Kalam. The committed scientists like Sarabhai, Dhawan, and Brahm Prakash shaped Kalam’s spirit of national development. The dedicated colleagues like
Arunachalam and Narayanan moulded Kalam’s team building capacity. All these, finally resulted in Kalam’s commitment and tireless hard work for the success of the indigenous technology in India. One of the tasks of the biographer is to include the will and achievements of his subject as adult. Ramanathan briefly discussed Kalam’s achievements which speak volumes of Kalam’s skills, efforts, qualities, characters, etc. The account of Kalam’s achievements started from Nandi, a hovercraft. Ramanathan gave a brief description of the projects like Rocket Assisted Take off (RATO), SLV, IGMDP, TIFAC, India Millennium Mission, Pokaran Nuclear Test, BrahMos, a Russian joint venture and Supersonic Cruise Missile, development of Research Centre Imarat (RCI), etc. He also exposed Kalam’s utilization of composites as a spin-off technology for various purposes in order to help the common people.

Ramanathan portrayed Kalam’s poetical nature, positive attitude, love for nature and spirituality. He exposed some of the situations, when Kalam wrote poems. He observed that Kalam expressed his vision to fly an Indian aircraft equal to that of developed countries, his pain for a tree, when it was cut down, for mother Theresa when she felt ill and for those who lost their lives in the communal riots occurred in Hyderabad through his poems. His poems also exhibited his search for God in nature. It showed Kalam’s humanistic quality as well as his aesthetic sense.

The biographer is expected to register both the positive and negative faces of his subject. Lee (1999) and Pilditch (2001) acknowledged this. Lee (1999) stressed that “two Brownings are to be explained” in a biography and Pilditch (2001) criticized the biographers who avoided being neutral in their work by imagining themselves to be the disciples of their subjects. Ramanathan focused only on the positive side of Kalam, though Kalam permitted him to criticize him wherever necessary. Ramanathan (2003)
said, “I have been asked why I stressed only on the positive nature of Dr. Kalam, totally avoiding any reference to the negative aspects of his personality. I plead guilty to the charge, but without apologies”. His intention is to write *Who is Kalam?,* “neither as a biography nor as a critical study on Kalam”. The relationship of boss and assistant and Ramanathan’s gratitude are the reasons for this approach. Moreover, Ramanathan justified his writing on Kalam by saying that “Kalam’s life style would be of great relevance to any student who wishes to have better understanding of the man”. He also attempted to bring out some of the inspirational as well as lesser known aspects of Kalam to kindle the interest of the readers and youngsters to contribute to achieving India 2020 vision. Munslow (2001) felt that the biography should teach “how to life one’s life”.

The level of interference of the subject is a controversial issue in writing biography. Kalam, a living personality, did not interfere much in the construction of *Who is Kalam?* But his modesty forced him to review Ramanathan’s selection of incidents. Ramanathan (2003) indicated Kalam’s interference as, “Out of a sense of humility and modesty, he had omitted to bring out many facets of his personality that would vastly interest the youth and the general public of this country”. This confirms that Kalam wants his biographer to be a critic but not an exaggerator of his personality. Lee postulated the biographer to discuss the adventures and psychological interpretations of the protagonist. In *Who is Kalam?,* Ramanathan circumvented the psychological interpretations of Kalam. Kalam’s achievements and his writings which include his psychological interpretations helped Ramanathan to fulfill Lee’s recommendations.

There are many biographical elements found in Ramanathan’s *Who is Kalam?* Like a celebrity biography, *Who is Kalam?* invites the blame of “praising the subject”, an aspect criticized by Denzin (1989) in *Interpretive*
Biography. As Kalam created a history in Indian science, his life and achievements are so transparent to the world. Ramanathan extracted the achievements which showed the human face of Kalam and represented them in *Who is Kalam?* In a few places, Ramanathan explored Kalam’s mild negatives. Kalam has the habit of giving much importance to the presentation of the scientists. He paid keen attention to the thoughts of even junior most scientists. This habit had both positive and negative impact on others. It strengthened the intellectual property of DRDO. It also encouraged all the scientists and revealed Kalam’s humanistic nature. Meanwhile, it confused the person who had to take care of Kalam’s schedule because Kalam had often postponed his next schedule when the presentation session was not completed in time. Ramanathan serenely reflected the complexities that arose due to Kalam’s interference to do little changes in schedule in the last minute.

Rollyson (2001) demonstrated that the 18th century biographers portrayed the lives of ordinary people. Ramanathan portrayed the life of Kalam who has an ordinary village family background and built his life style on simplicity. Roberts (2002) expected the biographer to refer to the letters, diaries, logs and memoirs of the subject in his biography. Ramanathan got permission from Kalam to utilize Kalam’s library resources, his poems, paintings and the letters sent to Kalam from different kinds of people from various parts of India and other countries. Roberts (2002) emphasized that, “The practices of biographical research should be seen more comprehensively as occupying unstable positions within a number of dimensions object/subject; auto/biography; self/other; public/private; realist/constructionist and others according to purpose, scope and conception of individual life”. The biographer becomes the subject of the biography when he selects the incidents. He is objective during his description of the selected incidents which highlight the multiple faces. Ramanathan highlighted only Kalam’s characteristics and attitudes. He rarely used first person singular. Ramanathan
(2003) expressed his intention as, “another feature of this book is that I have chosen to be in the background, excepting for a small chapter giving my reminiscences; one would hardly know the biographer at the end of it. This is intentional”.

Lee (2009) advised the biographer to understand his subject. Ramanathan maintained close contact with Kalam for more than ten years. His readings on Kalam, his association with Kalam as a writer and as a subordinate, his travel experience with Kalam and the opinion of others who have close association with Kalam gave Ramanathan the capability to understand who his subject is? Ramanathan recorded the situations where Kalam did favor to Ramanathan. Even, before Ramanathan became the Financial Advisor, he knew the achievements of Kalam as they are well-known to the world. Out of his own interest, Ramanathan approached his immediate boss Mr. Adavi, to recommend Ramanathan for the post of Financial Advisor in DRDO. On Adavi’s recommendation Kalam forwarded Ramanathan to the Prime Minister for the post of Financial Advisor in DRDO in 1993 when Kalam was the Director General of DRDO and Scientific Advisor to Defence Minister. He did it only after he was satisfied with his analysis on the beneficial factors of Ramanathan’s appointment to DRDO. He earned good name from Kalam. So, Kalam again recommended to the Prime Minister for extending Ramanathan’s service for three more years and he got the approval. Ramanathan also narrated an incident which describes how Kalam was stubborn in his decision in sending Ramanathan abroad for a negotiation purpose by convincing T. N. Seshan, who shortlisted Ramanathan to be an official of the election commission. He also remembered February 1998, when he accompanied Kalam to Minsk, the capital of Belarus, in order to sign in a Memorandum of Understanding to build an Advanced Research Centre in Hyderabad. Ramanathan was proud when Kalam mentioned Ramanathan as a model finance officer to the other Secretaries in Scientific
Departments. It was the result of Kalam’s motivation that he wrote *Contract Management* which was released by Kalam. He discussed with Kalam many times to write books. All these interactions, studies, inquiries, experiences also gave Ramanathan a good understanding on Kalam.

Lee (2009) noticed that celebrities like Barbo, Callas, Diana, Elvis and Madonna expected their biographers to sort out their ‘iconic’ image from reality, myth from fact and surface from depth. As a celebrity of many achievements for the nation, Kalam did not like his biography to be a celebrity biography. As the Financial Advisor, Ramanathan recollected the incidents he had with Kalam in DRDO. He filtered and organized the incidents to focus on the good human qualities of Kalam. According to Munslow (2001), dealing with the life of “famous men and women as moral lessons” is an aspect of biography. Ramanathan wrote about the popular and successful Indian scientist and writer. Kalam’s works including his autobiographies and the biographies written on Kalam prove him as a man following righteousness, the aspects of humanism, karma and the values of Indian tradition and culture throughout his life. Ramanathan attempted to show a glimpse of Kalam’s moral standards.

Lee (2009) solicited the biographer to register “the service mind of the subject”. Ramanathan showed the service mind of Kalam in so many angles. He narrated a few incidents, where Kalam extended his helping hand for the suffering or affected group. He documented Kalam extending his helping hand to the family of the officers who lost their life during the Airborne Surveillance Platform accident on January 11, 1999, H. M. L. Narendraji who was suffering due to “sub-arachnoids hemorrhage” served in the Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), an officer from Naval Science & Technology Laboratory (NSTL) Visakhapatnam who was suffering from writhing pain and a seven year old polio affected girl of
Balasore, in Chandipur Interim Test Range, to do the corrective surgery. He recounted Kalam claiming the Prime Minister Narasimha Rao for compensation, when there was an extensive damage to DRDO caused by the Beas River ran 1995 monsoon. The Prime Minister responded to Kalam’s claim by arranging a special meeting for Government Body of the National Defence Fund and granted 20 Lakhs as a special case, even though, there was no provision in the government rule to allot compensation. Ramanathan also mentioned the incidents where Kalam spent his own money and the money he got through royalty, awards, savings and retirement for the sufferings. For example, he affirmed Kalam personally paid for the entire expenditure of the corrective surgery of a seven year old polio affected girl. Ramanathan (2003) also articulated that “He gave much of his royalty income to deserving charitable institutions like Sister of Charity founded by Mother Theresa”. By calculating his needs as very little, Kalam contributed his savings and his retirement benefits to the deserving voluntary organizations.

Ramanathan projected the humanistic face in Kalam’s approach and concern for others. The “others” includes the officers of DRDO, the staff below the officers’ grade, the driver, gardener, children, village people, politicians, and the people of India, including Ramanathan. Ramanathan stated that Kalam settled the bills for newspapers, journals and hotel out of his personal money and limited his expenses during his visits in and out of India. It differentiated Kalam from other personalities who hold top ranks in government sectors. It also kept Kalam away from the charge of nepotism.

Varma (1979) viewed “encounter with the response generating objects” as an aspect of humanism. Kalam’s actions and interpretations show that he viewed children and youth as the future response generating objects. Ramanathan did not aim at drawing a complete picture of Kalam’s childhood stage in Who is Kalam? Instead, he sorted out the reasons and importance
behind Kalam’s meeting with the children. In brief, he dealt with what made him ambitious to meet the children and what Kalam did in the meetings. He described how Kalam received and responded them. For Ramanathan, Kalam worked hard on the contents of the speech to be addressed the children. Kalam used a simple language during the presentation, encouraged the children to ask questions, answered them patiently and closed the session by confirming whether the children were answered or not. Ramanathan registered the impact of Kalam’s visits too. For example, he stated that Kalam received lots of responses from the school teachers and students after his visits. He included a student’s feedback as, “Sir, while you were speaking to us I felt you were a dear friend, but not a great personality” (Ramanathan 2003). He also disclosed the fact that out of the impact of his visits, Kalam sometimes wrote poems. For example, he included a poem written by Kalam after visiting the mentally challenged children of a school in Trivandrum.

Ramanathan exposed Kalam’s intention by describing Kalam’s meeting with children. For example, Ramanathan observed that Kalam tried to instill self-realisation, nationalism, moral thoughts and visions, dream and creative thinking in them and to make the children to realize the potential of Indian mind. He implanted his vision that the development of the future India should be on par with G- 8 countries. He ignited the focus of the students towards promoting Indian science and technology in the international arena. He created awareness about the “present time, which is filled with so much of ego, anger, greed, jealousy, spite, cruelty, lust, fear, anxiety and turmoil” (Ramanathan 2003).

Moreover, through Student Centric Literary Movement, Kalam convinced the children to involve in adopting villages with poor illiteracy rate and teaching them with the support of their parents. He also attempted to save the environment by suggesting the children to plant atleast five trees at home.
or in school or in a village. Kalam taught them the value of forgiveness. Thus, Kalam’s meeting with the children serve the purpose of Kalam representing his visions for developing India, removing illiteracy in India, creating eco-friendly atmosphere for man with nature, removing the negative thoughts, propping up creative thinking and instilling the nature of love and forgiveness in order to lead a successful at the same time a peaceful life in the future world.

Kalam’s personal life portrayed in his autobiographies proves that the childhood age was the birth place of a man’s future vision. He realized this truth and framed his vision of meeting one lakh school children in a year even in his busy schedule as a Director in DRDO and the President of India. He also treated this vision as one of his major aims. He completed this vision successfully and still he continues to meet them. He also wrote a chapter for motivating the mind of the children in You are Born to Blossom: Take my Journey Beyond. Kalam’s meeting with the children produced energy in him as he hopes that he could discover the inner and higher self through the interaction with joyous children.

Ramanathan portrayed Kalam as a person who felt a lot for the pain of the suffering people and took many initiatives to console them. For example, Ramanathan recollected, how Kalam used the technology as a spin off technology to help the society. Kalam initiated the use of carbon-carbon technology for human heart valve prosthesis, bone implants and hip prosthesis, micro-processor based systems and software for cardiac pacemakers for heart patients, Telemetry system as remote patient monitoring system in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Cytoscan for diagnosis of ailments such as tumor in human body and Titanium or Synthetic materials for dental implanting.
For Ramanathan the fundamental principle of Kalam’s life is working for the “equality of human beings”. He recollected July 25, 2002, when Kalam assumed the charge as the President of India and October 2, 2002, Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday. In the earlier one, Kalam arranged a prayer meeting in Rastrapathi Bhavan, where Maulvi from Rameshwaram Mosque, the priest from Rameshwaram temple and Father Rector from St. Joseph’s College, Trichirapalli, were called and asked to pray in their own tradition for the welfare of the new President and the country. In the later one, Kalam wrote a national prayer and requested the leaders of different religions to sing that common national prayer song. Kalam’s successful implementation of Floor Reaction Orthosis (FRO) made with composites disclosed Kalam’s wish to make the polio-affected people feel free as well as equal to all human beings. He gave more preference to those who came to see him from various states of India keeping even the officers in house to wait. At the same time, he did not negotiate to meet the officers. Introduction of the Flexible Complementing System (FCS) for technical staff below officers for the first time in DRDO also proved Kalam’s impartial treatment of his colleagues.

Ramanathan recorded Kalam’s eco-friendly nature too. By narrating the formation and activities of “Yellow Heaven Group”, he revealed Kalam’s sensitivity and his close attachment with nature, animals and birds. He included many incidents that show Kalam’s attempts to save nature. He recollected the incidents in which: Kalam relocated the site for building a guest house 100 Meters away in Chandipur Interim Test Range, in order to save a tree, expressed his longing to plant 100,000 trees for the newly established missile Research Centre Complex at Imarat (RCI), in Hyderabad, to the Raksha Mantri, K. C. Pant, converted the land as a bird’s sanctuary in Chandipur Test Range with the help of Dr. S. K. Salwan, etc. Kalam admired the ever-giving quality of trees. He was moved to write a poem called The Life Tree on the Nag Phalli tree, when he discovered that it was cut. During
his meeting with children, Kalam encouraged school children to plant trees in schools, villages and other places by the calculation that the implementation of Kalam’s suggestion by the huge population of India would surely make mother earth green. The former Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, Prof. Kalanithi, remembered Kalam’s suggestions for water harvesting and usage of sewage water for gardening purpose which helped to transform the university into a green campus.

Mehrotra et al. (1990) talked about Prometheus who was called a demigod according to Greek Mythology in *Nehru Man among Men*. The demigod was said to steal the fire from gods and give it to the human race. It meant that the demigod gave light for the life of the people. Kalam’s humanism directed him to identify the truths about life in the world, the secrets to lead a successful life and to build a strong mind to overcome the struggles of life. He identified the answers from his experiences, his readings and his observations of the contemporary and noble leaders. He also shared his findings through his writings, speeches and meetings for the benefit of the present and future generations.

According to Mehrotra et al. (1990), “renaissance humanism was not only an extension of Greek ideals but it also endorsed faith in man’s capability and aspirations as being the marker of his own destiny”. In the chapter *The Evolution*, Ramanathan listed out the major incidents from his childhood and adulthood stages that shaped Kalam. The description specified that Kalam designed his destiny even in his early childhood days. He achieved his aim beyond his dream. It proved Kalam’s capability to convert his decisions rooted in his deep heart for the benefit of vast human beings in real life. It also proved Kalam’s continuous attempt to make his fellow human beings to understand their real capability by expressing his visions, his achievements and by explaining his thoughts in his meeting with leaders,
directors, scientists, students, etc. Mashelkar, Director General, CSIR, admired Kalam’s capability of learning things quickly. Murthy, Director, Defence Scientific Information & Document Centre (DESIDOC), admired Kalam’s capability to allot time even for reading variety of books in his busiest schedule. P. R. Sivasubramanian, Retired Secretary of Defence Finance acclaimed Kalam’s capability to explain the most complicated technical problem in a “layman language” (Ramanathan 2003).

Varma (1979) enunciated that inspiration by “the depth of inner experience” and being away from vain glory are the aspects of humanism. For Ramanathan, Kalam was guided by his inner voice. He did not like personal exaggeration. He admitted that Kalam instructed him to eliminate some facts, which exaggerated Kalam’s personality. His intension to change the name “Kalam Walking Group” to “Yellow Heaven Group” is an example that showed Kalam’s cautiousness to be away from personal exaggeration and vain glory.

Varma (1979) believed that “humanism is … the quest for the perfection of human spirit through consummation of man’s inherent potentialities”. The notes given by Ramanathan about the achievements of Kalam in the field of science and missile technology illustrate the amount of potential consumed by Kalam for the development of his nation. Varma (1979) also stated that “Humanism wants to redeem the most degraded, exploited, depressed, backward and condemned last man and the lost individual”. In his discussion on the work style of Kalam, Ramanathan appreciated Kalam for fixing schedule to visit rural villages of India during holidays. Nair talked elaborately about Kalam’s visit to rural villages of India in The Kalam Effect. Kalam framed TIFAC project with 5 farmers for the development of rural villages. Ponraj, Scientist-E, Ministry of Defence remembered Kalam’s help to organize the career oriented training program
for 1000 rural students, out of Kalam’s own expense. Ramanathan talked about Kalam’s concern for his driver, the chief gardener of Moghul Garden, his favor to the technical staff below the officer, his impartial treatment of his subordinates, his love and affection for the diseased and suffering people and his longing for the people to enjoy equality. The intention behind Kalam writing his autobiographies revealed the fact that Kalam by nature is more concerned for the poor, subaltern, children and the rural people of India.

Mehrotra et al. (1990) regarded “aspiration as being the maker of his (one’s) own destiny” as basic value of humanism. Kalam designed his own destiny. Ramanathan validated Kalam and his connection with his dream in three aspects. Firstly, Kalam dreamt for the larger benefit of the society. Secondly, he converted dreams into reality by using collective effort. And thirdly, he tried to transform the good qualities to the society. For example, IGMDP and SLV Project, Vision 2020 and the initiatives of TIFAC were all the outcome of Kalam’s dream for the society. Kalam’s strategic action plan applied to encourage the involvement of project directors endorsed, how he noticed good qualities of others. Ramanathan talked about two levels of Kalam’s convincing strategy applied in the project reviews held in DRDO. He observed that at one level, Kalam motivated the project directors with examples to plan boldly and to take up big tasks and at another level he simply warned them by saying, “there are others who will be able to undertake the task”. Ramanathan believed that these words convinced most of the project directors to recast the project with bigger objectives. He discussed another incident that showed the strategy, Kalam used to convey his dream to the leaders of the organizations. Kalam dreamt to see Indian aircrafts to adorn the skies at Paris show when he watched “the fighter planes of many countries roar past the skies of Paris Air Show” on June 12, 1989. He wrote his dream under the title Dream, as a small poem and gave it to Dr Arunachalam, Defence Scientific Advisor, in DRDO.
Varma (1979) considered that ideal humanism inculcates a spirit of boldness, courage and strength in facing the challenges in the terrific struggles of life. Kalam’s achievements, his leadership qualities, his risky attempts for the improvement of his nation, open discussion with the top level political leaders for the compensation of the suffered, to allot fund for library resources and increase in the budget for the scientists’ trip to foreign countries are a few examples that attest Kalam’s struggles and his boldness. Mashelkar appreciated Kalam’s boldness to accept his fault and asking apology for the same (Ramanathan 2003). Ramanathan also admired at Kalam’s value added leadership qualities like assessing the potentialities, encouraging the free thinking and providing keen attention to the thoughts and suggestions of each member in his group, maintaining respect and hope in the potentialities of his team members, his way of analyzing failure, treating the faults of his team members with humanism in a way to produce the expected result, indentifying the problems and forming the right team to tackle them, networking the lab with passion, utilizing the existing facilities to the optimum level and getting the best out of them, converting the system to work for him, motivating the fellow workers by initiating award system for best contributions or achievements and keeping the moral and ethics as the high hall mark of his management style. These qualities were also discussed in Kalam’s autobiographies.

As a director of DRDO, Kalam managed 55 research laboratories spread all over the country with about 30,000 scientific and technical staff members. The fund allotted for the projects that Kalam undertook crossed crores and crores. Kalam knew that the negative result of the long term projects would cause huge damage to the image of Kalam, his organization and nation apart from causing financial crisis. It would also welcome hot criticism from the envious politicians. His discussions with the spiritual leaders, visionary scientists, teachers, parents, politicians and students kept
him to remain as a great, inspiring and celebrated leader of the nation. Reading of the life history and achievements of leaders, scientists, political leaders and Nobel laureates also infused leadership skills in him. He has courage to forgive his enemies and to forget the mistakes done by them. He also imparted his leadership qualities to the people through his writings, meetings, speeches and sharing his thoughts in his websites.

Ramanathan also discussed some of the notable leadership characteristics of Kalam under the title The Leader. Kalam did not intentionally exhibit himself as a leader. His visions and mode of achieving the visions in real situation by using the energy and intellects available in his organization and outside organizations of India and other countries made the people to view him as an inspiring leader of human beings. He appreciated Kalam for forming a noble vision which highlights the nation in the international forum. He affirmed that Kalam set visions at every stage of his career. Kalam had a vision for his studies. He set a vision for DRDO, DRDL and for all the organizations, where he worked. Ramanathan stated that the vision statement which was created by Kalam along with some senior directors of DRDO as, “Make India prosperous by establishing world class science and technology base and provide our Defence services decisive edge by equipping them with internationally competitive systems and solutions” (Ramanathan 2003). He admired Kalam for not following the feudal approach that “boss is always right”.

According to Mehrotra et al. (1990), the humanist cultivates the spirit of optimism in the society. The way Kalam took the mistakes of his fellow workers is the best example to prove Kalam as an optimist. In a reply to a question by a member of Yellow Heavan Group on his dislike for Amarvasya, Kalam said that “he enjoyed them as much as he could watch the stars clearly on those days” (Ramanathan). Ramanathan found that there is no
place for “negative emotions in him”. He captured Kalam’s vision, secularism, liberalism, positive attitude and his consideration for children and fellow human beings as the faces of Kalam’s humanism. He differentiated the purposes for which Kalam spent his money as well as the fund allotted by the Government. He described Kalam’s life till the day Kalam assumed the charge as the President of India. His description clearly revealed the humanistic face of Kalam.

5.2.2 Perspectives on Kalam by ‘Others’

An important aspect found in Who is Kalam? is that it is filled with the perspective of more others. Ramanathan drew the image of Kalam from the views provided by the personalities who worked with Kalam at various stages of his life. Their views envisage a part of Kalam’s holistic personality. Their views show Kalam’s characteristics, nature, belief, trust, vision, attitudes, life style and achievements. Ramanathan asked the heads and retired personalities of various departments of the organizations like DRDO, ISRO, CSIR, Anna University, etc., to write their opinion on Kalam. He received a number of responses. He selected and included the notable responses of the personalities who had close connection with Kalam. Their sharing summarized the important events and incidents that happened in the life of Kalam. Except for a few writings, Ramanathan incorporated the views of ‘others’ shared on Kalam without any editing. He said that he did “little editing in the language after getting permission from the person concerned” (Ramanathan 2003).

Venkatasubramanian, Member, Union Planning Commission, viewed Kalam as a representative of non-political President at Rastrapati Bhavan like Saravepalli Radhakrisnan, the former President of India. Venkatasubramanian and Kalam were the products of St. Joseph’s College, Tiruchi. He admired Kalam’s mental strength and revealed one of the keys
that strengthened Kalam’s mind. He recollected the atmosphere and the system followed in St. Joseph’s College. He justified that the system served as a course of “high level mental training enabling the students to raise themselves by their own effort and to be a more disciplined fellow of the society”. Prof. Kalanithi, (former Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, Chennai) recollected Kalam’s habit of sitting with the students in the verandah, discussing the lessons and giving suggestions to the Vice-Chancellor to make the campus of Anna University as a Smart Campus. He viewed Kalam as a good teacher and a thought provoking advisor.

P. M. Nair, Secretary to the President, shared the experience he had with Kalam as a Controller in Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and as a Secretary to the President. He called Kalam people’s president, because he witnessed Kalam’s humility, simplicity and his concern for achieving his vision 2020 through “connectivity” of people, students, children and workers of all departments. As a Member of Scientific Advisory Committee, Dr R. A. Mashelkar, Director General, CSIR, recollected his first meeting with Kalam. He observed humbleness, simplicity and professionalism in Kalam. Mashelkar looked at Kalam as a warm-hearted and simple individual. He admired the nature of Kalam to admit, what he did not know and the capability of learning anything quickly. Mashelkar considered these characteristics as crucial leadership qualities. He also highlighted Kalam, as a freedom fighter and a visionary leader. Kalam introduced the patent cells in the DRDO laboratories. V. S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, registered some efforts taken by Kalam as the Chairman of the Governing Council of TIFAC, which is the outcome of Kalam’s concern for the welfare of the common man and his concern for national security. He showed Kalam as actively preparing the Vision 2020 documents for publication and his action plan to convert the visions into action. He also described the participation of TIFAC in providing composite shelters and
composite based limbs for the victims of Gujarat earthquake under the guidance of Kalam. It shows Kalam’s service mind.

Vice-Admiral (Retired) Bhushan pictured Kalam as a teetotaler advising others not to drink, as a human being and as a simple person who wish to be a teacher. Dr. Gopalaswamy, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Dynamics Ltd., Hyderabad, drew the image of Kalam as a scientist, program manager and an administrator of the research development. He expressed that he had contact with Kalam in the projects RATO, the Missile Programs and India Millennium Mission 2020. He admired Kalam’s dedication for the success of ISRO and DRDO. He felt that Kalam’s “peer review culture” transformed the nature and character of the laboratory. Kalam also encouraged Gopalswamy and his team members to publish their findings in the proceedings of the International Aeronautical Congress. Dr S. S. Murthy, Director, DESIDOC looked at Kalam as an example of a good library user by analyzing Kalam’s usage of DESIDOC resources. He admired Kalam’s capability to allot time for reading a variety of books in the areas like missile technology, philosophy, communication networks, spirituality and literature in his busiest schedule. Murthy also remembered Kalam’s contribution to the DESIDOC. He remembered Kalam’s intellectual suggestions and initiations to draw funds for library resources from the government. He recalled Kalam’s interactions with the heads of large Science &Technology Libraries of the country, supported by the DESIDOC Library in a general meeting. He also gave a note that Kalam also arranged finance for the libraries of India. Murthy (2003) said:

he used to telephone me and tell me he was arranging a special grant of Rs.1 Crore for DESIDOC and ask me to see that the DRDO libraries are enriched further with right books for every library (Ramanathan 2003).
Major General A K Dasgupta gave a note on Kalam’s simplicity, memory, kindness, approach, personal honesty and dedication to work. He praised Kalam for his remarkable capacity. Dasgupta called Kalam’s lunch as a “fruitful lunch”, as Kalam used to take “his vegetarian lunch with fruits and to involve in discussion on serious matters”. Dr Lazar Mathew, Director, St. Francis Hospital, Ajmer, viewed Kalam as a Technical Director of Life Sciences, at DRDO, the chief executive at the Society for the Biomedical Technology and the Director, Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS). He recollected Kalam’s approach to Lazar in organizing health care measures and greening the campus and he accoladed Kalam’s method of making the “other man important”.

P. R. Sivasubramanian, Retired Secretary of Defence Finance, observed Kalam as a person giving preference to equality. He acclaimed Kalam’s capability to explain the most complicated technical problem in a “layman language.” He also projected Kalam’s utilization of collaborating the public and private sectors as well as the academic institutions to strengthen the overall strategy of defence. S. B. Krishnan, Director, Technology Development Board, pinpointed the changes made by Kalam in technology development through DRDL. He showed Kalam’s firm belief in transferring the innovations from lab to land and the application of science to the society. He stated that Kalam served as an instrument in opening up the Defence Research and Development Laboratories for “transferring of technologies to civilian sector for civilian use”. Krishnan admitted that Kalam played a key role in increasing the budget allocation from 300 million to 700 million for the Technology Development Board. He also remembered the endeavor, Kalam took to motivate the board members to work for the success of TIFAC.
Prof. T K Ghoshal, Jadavpur University, viewed Kalam as his motivator and a family friend. He felt that it was Kalam’s motivation that made his team members to understand their real energy and potential as well as enabled them to complete the tasks which seemed impossible. As a friend, Kalam spent time with Ghoshal and instilled leadership qualities in him, by talking about great leaders. Ghoshal also wondered about Kalam’s simple language which he used with Ghoshal’s teenage children who were not good at English conversation. Deepak Patnagar, a member of TIFAC project, noticed Kalam’s ability to extract the best from his team members. Dr. Vidyasagar, Executive Vice President of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) praised Kalam’s management techniques: “they created an environment in which people are not afraid to admit their mistakes and to learn from them” (Ramanathan 2003). He viewed Kalam as man of forgiveness.

V. Ponraj, an Ex-Scientist-E, in the Ministry of Defence, Bangalore, evaluated Kalam’s words and deeds. Ponraj realized that Kalam was not a person who shows off himself being busy with the newer higher positions forgetting the promise given in the previous position. Kalam did not forget the promise he gave, when he was the Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister to organize a career oriented training program for 1000 rural students out of his own expense. Ponraj admitted that Kalam remembered the promise he gave, during his period of Scientific Advisor. Kalam, in fact, conducted the training programme. He also checked the results of the TIFAC which multiplied its members up to 500 farmers and offered a platform to get better price and marketability for farmers. Ponraj noted that Kalam did not like publicity. He recalled the effort that Ponraj and his team took to convince Kalam to accept the proposal of starting a website (www.abdulkalam.com) for Kalam. Kalam accepted the proposal, only when he was convinced that the website would serve as a tool to motivate the youngsters towards Kalam’s
Vision 2020. He remembered the huge response the website received. He wrote that he used to meet Kalam very often and sometimes he used to discuss with him till 1.00 am. He recalled about the honor given to Kalam’s brother and his family who came to attend the function in Delhi and made a visit to Delhi. He noted that Kalam himself took care of their travel and accommodation expenses and he did not allow the authorities to provide special treatment to them. This shows that Kalam is not a person to misuse the Government money and power for his personal benefit.

Herbert A. Yefermov, Director General of Federal State Enterprise from Russia, also recollected his experience with Kalam while organizing the collaborative Joint Venture Project of India and Russia in Indian Chandipur Interim Test Range, in 2001. Yefermov compared the technology utilization in India and Russia and observed that India lacks in utilizing advance technology. He said that “the number and diversity of programs in DRDO was comparable with what was done in the Soviet Union in the 1950s”. But, he admired at Kalam’s vast knowledge in the missile technology, his involvement in producing the JV Project. He justified that Kalam knew the Russian technology well. His recollection proved that due to Kalam’s initiation through DRDO, the main office of the Joint Indian Russian Company was stared in Delhi. Kalam named it BrahMos by combining the names of the rivers Brahmaputra in India and Moskva in Russia. It shows Kalam’s universality. Yefermov marveled at Kalam’s selfless devotion to the work accompanied by “human warmth, politness in addressing people, poetic talent and creativity”. He also wondered about his hospitality.

The sharing of these personalities reflects others’ perspective which is necessary for a biography. The personalities were from various fields like science, technology, medicine, defence, law, education, etc. They were from various places of India like Delhi, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Bangalore, Andhra
Pradesh, West Bengal, etc. They are from both public and private sectors. Herbert from Russia also shared his experience with Kalam in *Who is Kalam?* It acknowledges the affection and respect they have on Kalam. It proves Kalam as a very lovable person. It proves Ramanathan’s relationship circle too. Further, the collective voice of others’ on Kalam projects Ramanathan’s *Who is Kalam? A good Human Being* as a bio-ethnography.

5.3 **BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN NAIR’S THE KALAM EFFECT**

P M Nair’s *The Kalam Effect* opens with the description of Kalam assuming as the 11th president of India on 25th July 2002. Nair provided a glimpse of incidents from Kalam’s life that happened during the period 2002-2007. Nair was the Secretary in Defence Production and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES). He was appointed as the Secretary to the President of India in July 2002. An officer from the 1967 IAS batch, Nair worked as Controller in VSSC, during 1990s, when Kalam was the Director. Nair was the Chief Secretary to the Government of Puduchery under the Chief Minister M O H Farook, Additional Secretary in the Department of Defence Production and Supplies, Ministry of Defence and Chief Secretary to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. He was appointed as the Director General, in National Disaster Response Force & Civil Defence (NDRF & CD) on August 2012. He observed Kalam at VSSC where Directors and Controllers used to meet and some places where Kalam and Nair greeted each other. At VSSC, Nair heard about Kalam as a hard worker, loved by the vast work force of VSSC. These backgrounds had an impact on Nair when he got a chance to work with Kalam. Nair accepted frankly that he did not close his contact with Kalam. He did not have any intention to write a biography of Kalam. However, his deep longing to register his association with Kalam resulted in *The Kalam Effect*. The Kalam
Effect can be considered as an auto/biography, because Nair portrays the life of Kalam and his association with Kalam in the first person narrative.

According to Cuddon (1992), a biographer should concentrate on the subject and the structure of biography. Nair had a clear picture of The Kalam Effect. He began the biography with a surprise call from the Distinguished Scientist from DRDO, Dr A. S. Pillai, indicating the message that Kalam, the President of India, wanted Nair to be the Personal Secretary to the president. He ended it with Kalam bidding farewell from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In between, he organized the account of Kalam’s life during his presidential tenure, in a chronological order. Naik (1962) said, “the biography should be essentially objective.” In The Kalam Effect, Nair recollected the memorable events, which projected Kalam’s identity, character, mannerism, working style, wisdom and humanism and narrated those events in the first person singular. The first person narration found in The Kalam Effect highlights Nair’s potentials to portray Kalam’s personality, as the subject of the book. The book is constructed based on the central performance of Kalam. At the same time, Nair did not fail to reveal the bureaucrat in him.

Nair revealed his identity as a bureaucrat and an advisor. He remembered his suggestion to Kalam. He reworded the reactions of Kalam and hardly done deep examination on the reflections of Kalam’s inner mind. As a bureaucrat, Nair applied his invasive nature to draw a clear picture of Kalam. His experience as an IAS officer and Chief Secretary to the state governments of Puduchery and Arunachal Pradesh helped him to acquire tremendous legal knowledge. This knowledge helped him to narrate certain sensitive political issues in the presidential office with clarity. He registered psychological interpretations of Kalam’s belief shown on others, his dealing with the threatening letters and his concern for the people who accompanied him in his foreign trips.
Many a time, Nair was very anxious about timing and scheduling of events. Once, Kalam was supposed to address the members of the European Parliament for 25 minutes, but Kalam exceeded the time limit. Nair was worried and became normal only when the address was completed to a thunderous applause and standing ovation from the audience. Later, Nair learnt that Kalam had obtained permission from the European Union President Joseph Borrel Fonteless.

The 19th century critics of biography gave more importance to the tone of the biographer. Nair approached Kalam with a neutral tone but sometimes he criticized Kalam’s procrastination. While recording his association with Kalam, Nair also noted Kalam’s strength and his mild weakness. He criticized Kalam for not caring about the sufferings of security forces that used to wait for a long time during the President’s visit. He also blamed Kalam’s blind faith in everybody that created problems for him. He blamed his innocence. On the other-hand, he also appreciated Kalam’s love for children, his sharp memory, love of nature, birds, animals, spirituality, faith, humanism, style of speech and approach and the hospitality shown while receiving foreign delegates.

Nair’s direct experience with Kalam in Rashtrapati Bhavan and his experience in DRDO, Kalam’s popularity and his autobiographies and biographies written on Kalam gave Nair, a clear view of Kalam’s personality. Lee (2009) believed that writing the life of an individual had implications in politics and society. Kalam’s life, as told by Nair echoed the social and political implications of India. As the Personal Secretary to Kalam, Nair took care of Kalam’s regular schedules, arranging meetings, and tour schedules in India and foreign countries. He attended discussions on the petitions and papers forwarded to the president’s office. He provided suggestions to Kalam before he visited the places that were affected by natural calamities and
political or religious confusions. He obeyed the president’s decisions by executing them. These working conditions offered Nair an opportunity to observe the personality of Kalam, his mood, attitude, habits, sentiments, religious belief, boldness, love for nature and fellow human beings, capability to tackle complex issues and some mild negatives. Most of the incidents narrated in *The Kalam Effect* are witnessed by Nair. Nair cautiously mentioned the words “I heard” in a few incidents which happened in the absence of Nair.

Nair narrated his association with Kalam in first person narration. It reflects the autobiographical mode of narration. He included the incidents from in the presidential period of Kalam which highlighted Kalam’s personality. Along with Kalam’s personality, Nair consciously incorporated his intelligence, identity, mood and others. His being objective or subjective revealed the major complexity existing in writing biographies. Nair also created many scenes and introduced dialogue in *The Kalam Effect*. He portrayed vital elements from the presidential period of Kalam. Nair’s voice-over the incidents echoed the relationship between the biographer and his subject. They had difference of opinion on spiritual belief, reality, belief in people, capital punishment etc. Nair’s mind is bureaucratic, while Kalam’s is based on spiritual and humanistic.

Nair included some evidences in his biography to support his claims about Kalam. For instance, he included an appreciation letter from George Bush explaining Kalam’s hospitality provided by Kalam when he toured to India and reports from the standard news papers to prove his spiritual belief. Lee (2009) expected the biographer to maintain involvement as well as detachment in his narration about the protagonist. Nair applied this strategy while describing impressions of Kalam. In his Foreword, Nariman gave a note which proves Nair’s objectivity in his description. Nariman said,
“the Bihar Dissolution Bill, the Office of the Profit Bill and others mentioned by the author in detail, but with impeccable detachment” (Nair 2008). Nair did not describe Kalam’s childhood stage or the conflicts of his childhood stage as he decided to deal with Kalam’s account of life as the President of India. But he included Kalam’s address delivered at the University of Mauritius, where Kalam shared a small incident about his childhood struggles.

Nair’s narration does not fall under the category of “hero worship”. He narrated the facts without exaggeration, but he organized his narration as if it created suspense among readers. He articulated that the frankness he maintained in his recollections as, “I have very clearly called white white and black black and there has not been the slightest attempt to indulge in suppression.” In the foreword, Nariman approved Nair’s frankness: “It is a well documented appreciation of P. M. Nair’s days with President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, recounted with frankness, sincerity and affectionate reverence and without all the flattery and fawning” (Nair 2008). In his preface, Nair affirmed that “I have taken special care to see that there is not the slightest exaggeration in my recounting of the experience” (Nair 2008). Moreover, Kalam by nature does not like flattery. Nair revealed how Kalam felt uncomfortable when people or any officers addressed him “Your Excellency” outside his office and his negotiation on the proposals of institutions to honor Kalam with an award for his achievements by guessing that their approaches were more to do with Kalam’s position.

Denzin (1989) suggested that the biographers should “include turning points” as one of the characteristics of biography. Nair included the turning points that happened in Nair’s and Kalam’s life in *The Kalam Effect*. Nair becoming the Personal Secretary to the President of India and Kalam becoming the President are the major turning points with which the book
starts. As a scientist, Kalam was away from politics. He had links with the political leaders in his earlier positions, but he used them only for getting approval for scientific projects. Sometimes he approached the ministers to provide compensation for the group of people and colleagues who were suffering from deadly diseases and were affected by natural calamities. The position, President of India, taught Kalam the values of constitutional powers and laws and revealed him the original faces of politicians and much more. Kalam also increased the value of Presidency, by utilizing his responsibility for a broader benefit. He identified that it also could be used in a broader way to maintain equality among the people to reduce the illiteracy rate of the country, to transform the nation to be a developed one and to connect India with all nations. Nair exposed Kalam’s will, achievements, and management style that reflected his mature mind.

Nair included a few incidents which became a record of Indian history. They gave information about the eleventh President of India. As the President of India, Kalam represented India in each and every activity. Nair also talked about Orissa Cyclone occurred on 14th May 2003, Tsunami in 2004, riots affected area in Gujarat, the result of the general election 2004, dissolution of Assembly of Bihar in 2005, the rape case of a girl in the campus of Rashtrapati Bhavan and the visits of General Pervez Musharraf and President George Bush to India during 2006. These were some of the important incidents of the nations that were significant milestones in Indian history.

Elms (1994) pointed out an aspect which is more applicable only to the biography of politicians. He insisted that the biographer should look back over the course of the protagonist life and should sort out the reason behind the actions that happened. Elms called this method “predictive enterprise.” Nair registered certain complex issues that happened in the life of Kalam.
They hold the suspense in the heart of people. Kalam’s dealt with the serious issues like the Office of the Profit Bill, the dissolution of Bihar Assembly, the appointment of the New Prime Minister in the year 2004 and the mercy petition of Afzal Guru. Nair described these issues objectively and clearly. The dissolution of Bihar Assembly kept Kalam to think a lot. Afzal Guru was the key in the attack on parliament in December 2001. He was sentenced to death by a special Prevention of Terrorism Act Court in 2002. In his narration, Nair noted that Kalam received the mercy petition on 3 October 2006. Kalam was waiting for the Home Ministry to respond to it. But, Kalam didn’t receive any response till his presidential period ended. Nair who used to view the letters sent to the presidential office assured that till 25 July 2007, no recommendation had come from the ministry. This mercy petition was rejected by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee and the Home Minister in 2013 and Afzal Guru was hanged. Nair carefully narrated the appointment of the Prime Minister, after 2004 elections. He recorded the decisions of Kalam, Nair and the Congress President. He also captured the tension generated by the political parties and people’s expectations. As a man of patience with more maturity, Kalam decided to go with Nair’s suggestion. Nair requested Kalam to decide, according to the suggestions given in the letter of support from the political parties. Kalam determined to follow the system and appointed Dr. Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister of India. Nair increased the suspense in this part more through his investigative skills. There were various opinions prevailing outside the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Nair registered the hardest incident which is dissolution of the assembly of Bihar. Kalam learnt the attitudes of the politicians through this. Even in this hard situation, Kalam showed his peculiarity. Kalam is a person who respects people even though they are his enemies. When he identified the real face of the politicians, Kalam felt a lot, but he did not utilize his power to take revenge on those politicians. He used the suggestions of the bureaucrat Nair to overcome the difficult situations.
Nair narrated how Kalam executed the constitutional power as the President of India, so efficiently. His dealing with the Office of the Profit Bill, the appointment of India’s Prime Minister after the 2004 elections are some of the best examples that prove Kalam’s perfect execution of the constitutional power as the President. Nair recollected Kalam’s involvement in addressing the nation, school children, youth, lawyers, scientists, teachers, Jawans, visiting rural villages, areas which were affected by riots, natural calamities, his trips to foreign countries, receiving foreign delegates with high hospitality, arranging cultural programs in Rashtrapati Bhavan, taking effort to convert Rashtrapati Bhavan as a beautiful place reflecting nature, dealing with political issues, responding to letters and emails from the citizens of India, conveying the visions for India through proper channels, officially taking the honor of India to other nations. His continuous effort and engagements revealed Kalam’s love for the people of democratic India. He also registered the envy of political leaders kindled by the popularity of People’s President of India, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. He found that Kalam’s commitment and vision for India encouraged 80% of the people to recommend Kalam to be the President of India for the second term through SMS, e-mails, survey in newspapers and TV channels. This shows Kalam’s achievement in creating his identity as the suitable President of India.

Ramanathan included some comments in *Who is Kalam?*, which served as a tool to pre-justify Kalam’s suitability as the President of India. He included some of the comments posted in the internet by Aravamudhan in a special issue of REDIFF. Aravamudhan was a close friend and a colleague of Kalam and he retired as a Director from ISRO. He appreciated the sincerity, hard work, motivating mind, management style and impartial treatment of Kalam’s fellow workers and other human beings. He also commented that Kalam quickly adapted himself into his new role and turned out to be an outstanding president. Ramanathan also included the comments by the
editorial board in their *Financial Express*, by Suraj an engineering student in Kalam’s website and by Balasubramanian who was a leader of the Fan Club for President of Sivaganga District. He also added a survey by the United News of India, the responses given by B. R. Shetty, president of the Indian Pharmaceutical Association and Sinil Bhatia, Adviser to the Indian Association to the *Khaleej Times* and a poem by a student called Syed Nissar Ahmed. The editorial board of the *Financial Express* called Kalam “the most qualified, respected and statesman like person of great integrity and intellect” (Ramanathan 2003). Balasubramanian was impressed by the expertise and knowledge of Kalam. The United News of India (UNI) honored Kalam by saying that his presence on the political horizon is the “silver lining in the cloud of poor governance encircling India” (Ramanathan 2003). Many top level technocrats like N. Vital, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner, Prof. P. C. Kesavan, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Homi Bhabha Professor and Distinguished Fellow, and G. Thyagarajan, the Scientific Secretary, Committee on Science and Technology in Development (COSTED) appreciated Kalam’s tenure as the President of India. For example, G. Thyagarajan said that “the widening political support base for Dr. Kalam and the positive feedback from the general public could be taken as a reflection of the people’s choice” (Ramanathan 2003). B. R. Shetty reported to the *Khaleej Times*, that “in India anyone with intelligence and loyalty can achieve anything”.

Sutherland (1969) noted that biography deal with worthy personages and with both their public and private actions. Nair narrated a few private activities of Kalam like receiving his relations in Delhi and visiting Nair’s family out of care, etc. He recollected the incidents which portrayed Kalam’s public actions. He selected the most challenging incidents that Kalam faced as the president of India. There were expectations among the parliamentarians, political leaders and the public about the way Kalam as a
Muslim, receiving Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the president of Pakistan and George Bush, the President of United States. The same level of expectations existed when the mercy petition of Afzal Guru were taken for the consideration of Kalam who is wellknown for his humanism. Kalam’s visit to Gujarat after the Gujarat riots and visiting Siachen, the highest battlefield of the world in his old age were also notable incidents. As a President supported by National Democratic Alliance (NDA) parties, the way Kalam handled the confusion arose from the election results of 2004 and Kalam’s approach towards the Office of the Profit Bill also kindled expectation. Nair also discussed the effects of Morning Meetings held in the presidential office, Kalam’s important trips to places like Orissa and Alapuzaha which was warned by the media to be hit by natural calamities, his response to the mails and letters sent to his office and his meetings with public. Nair gave the statistics that Kalam had 175 tours. It included his visits to twenty five states and three union territories, 7 foreign trips including Mauritius, Europe, South Africa and many rural villges. Kalam visited Siachen glacier on 2nd April 2004. He addressed the Jawans of Siachen. He also pictured the day Kalam leaving his Presidential Office.

The “first time strategy” is one of the many tools served for Kalam’s success and made him to be different from others. It acted as an agent of Kalam’s creative skills. It created thirst in Kalam to know new things and to observe and analyze them quickly and broadly. It also instilled the nature of attempting any deeds courageously. Age did not stand as a barrier to his attempts. Nair brought out many attempts of Kalam which other presidents of India did not even think of. Inviting 100 children as special invitees for the ceremony when Kalam assumed the charge as the President of India, addressing the European Parliament comprising twenty seven nations, flying in the fighter aircraft IAF Sukhoi 30 MKI and addressing the Jawans (Soldiers) of Siachen, one of the highest and the most challenging battlefields
in the world were some of the attempts of Kalam described by Nair as things done for the first time by the president of India.

Nair described Kalam’s emotions for the suffering group of people. He unveiled the soft nature of Kalam’s heart. He pictured Kalam’s sympathy shown towards the letters and e-mails. Nair categorized the letters sent to Kalam as worthy letters, unworthy letters, threatening letters, blackmail letters, letters explaining the social challenges and letters of recommendation for admission in universities, for awards ranging from Padma Shri to Bharat Ratna. These letters were discussed in the Morning Meetings and were responded positively and negatively. Nair found that through letters some started to misuse Kalam’s sympathy for the suffering group. When the e-mails became blackmail through threatening letters, Nair interfered in the dealings of letters. Kalam’s sensitiveness and his love for the suffering urged him to respond positively to each and every letter and emails sent to his office. In this way, Nair clicked Kalam’s humanity too.

Nair portrayed Kalam as a person leading a life of righteousness. He pictured Kalam’s outlook on superstitious belief. He witnessed that Kalam did not consider any time or date as auspicious one when assuming the charge as the President of India. He cited two incidents where nature played a favor to Kalam, which became proof for Kalam’s spiritual faith. They were the ceremonial process in Rashtrapati Bhavan on 15th August 2003 and Kalam’s visit to Orissa when it was hit by cyclone. Nair’s narration indicates that it was Kalam’s blind belief in the Almighty converted Nair’s disbelief. Nair was afraid that the bad weather would stop the ceremonial process to be held in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Kalam out of his faith in God believed that the reception of the hosts on that day would happen. Apart from witnessing the success of the meeting, Nair attached the message published in *The Weekly* of 31 August 2003 issue, as evidence. It says, “… It was pouring since the morning of 15th
August, but the rain stopped an hour before the President was to arrive at the Mughal Garden, and the moment he exited, it started drizzling …” (Nair 2008). In another incident, Kalam and his team members were upset due to the information passed by the Meteorological Department about the Cyclone to hit Bhubaneshwar in Orissa, where Kalam planned to visit on 15th May 2003. Out of his belief, his team members and Kalam successfully completed the trip. Nair attached the news report given by the India Meteorological Department on 14th May 2003 and the reports published in The Hindu on 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th May 2003 issues as evidence. These revealed the spiritual belief of Kalam. Kalam did not give up his belief in divinity at any cost. Ramanathan observed Kalam practicing his religion in private.

Nair’s first meeting with Kalam divulged Kalam as a man of visions and missions in every stage of his life and in every position. Kalam said, “Nair I have a mission … I need your assistance and support” (Nair 2008). He expressed his work philosophy in his presidential address as “what you will do tomorrow do today, what you will do today, do it now” (Nair 2008). Kalam’s work ethic has many advantages for his fellow workers. Subordinates working under Kalam enjoyed freedom of thinking and talking apart from equipping knowledge and being relaxed. He trusted the subordinates and their capability. Nair articulated the freedom that he enjoyed in many places. After observing Nair’s argument on capital punishment with Kalam, a legal personality asked Nair, “This is the way you speak to the President of India”. Nair replied “This is his strength and that is my strength too” (Nair 2008). Nair also got freedom to appoint his team comprised of Joint Secretary to the President, Military Secretary and other officers as he wished. This showed Kalam’s trust on his subordinates. Nair’s (2008) concluding lines,
For me personally, these have been a fantastic five years during which I observed, learnt and accomplished much more than I ever did before, and I hope I became a much better person elucidate the effect of Kalam undoubtedly.

Nair recollected certain key moments he had with Kalam. He narrated the opening chapter capturing his inner conflict of his mind whether to accept the call of Kalam to be the Secretary or not. He enquired his family members and his close friends in order to take decision. They also confused Nair by their different opinions. Finally, he decided to accept Kalam’s call. His narration reflecting the status of his temper and his mind’s travelling from present to past and from past to present till he took charge resembles James Joyce’s stream of consciousness technique. He reminded his experience in DRDO while travelling to Delhi. His flashback went on in the subconscious mind till he met Kalam who made Nair to realize the present by expressing his vision for the nation as the President of India.

Nair’s portrayal projects that Kalam had never used his authority unnecessarily to exploit the human resources and other resources of the office. In many cases like Capital Punishment, Nair revealed his opposite view. Kalam used to listen to him patiently and approve his suggestions. This showed that Kalam was free from feudalistic approach. Kalam allowed the scientists to present their thoughts fearlessly. Nair also evidenced Kalam’s patriotism through his vision for India, and visits to the Indian rural villages.

Nair included a few incidents that explore Kalam’s oratoray skills and service mind. For example, the thunderous ovation Kalam got after he addressed the parliamentarians of 27 nations in the European Union and the appreciation he got after he addressed the audience in the Pan-African Parliament in Johannesburg in 2005 prove that Kalam is a good orator. Kalam’s plan to set up the Pan-African e-Network with the help of India
reflects Kalam’s multi-dimensional outlook. It showed the strength and the development of India in the field of technology and medicine. It could connect 53 nations of African Continent in tele-education and the uses of tele-medicines to serve them. It also showed Kalam’s service mind at a global level, with the tool of “inter-connectivity.”

Nair recorded various facets of Kalam. He personified Kalam as a kind-hearted human, a hard worker, a traveler, a poet, a person meeting high level political challenges, a visionary leader, a spiritualist, a sensitive person, an optimist, a perfect organizer, a good reader, a lover of rural people, a man true to his words, a motivator, a man having strong memory, a socialist, a vegetarian, a teetotaler, an orator and a courageous person. He revealed his eco-friendlyness, love towards common man, management style, longing to unite the people, righteousness and courageousness. He also witnessed Kalam’s democratic approach in getting work done without hurting others and approaching work scientifically and systematically.

Kalam’s personality was apparent. During the presidential period also he maintained this nature. He allowed Nair to read some of the letters. He welcomed the views of public in critical and cases for taking final decisions. Nair also registered one occasion, where Kalam put on loud speaker and called the Air Oops wings during the time of Cyclone hit in Orissa. The open discussion happened in the Morning Meetings also served as an agent to prove Kalam’s transparency. But a point given in the Foreword by Nariman as “… for instance on whether Afzal Khan should or should not be hanged, he played his cards close to his chest, never revealing his hand ” (Nair 2008) showed that Kalam used to take decisions individually after getting suggestions from others. It also proved that he also maintained secrecy as the President of India.
Nair strengthened Kalam’s profile as the President of India by recollecting his meeting with foreign delegates, heroic attempts, and his address inside and outside India. He imagined Kalam’s identity, before he became the President of India as a scientist and hard worker. Kalam’s consideration for villages is also notable. Nair’s narration proves that Kalam did not show any favoritism for his village. Kalam visited his village in Rameshwaram once to lay a foundation stone there and returned. During his visit, the road of the village was repaired. He visited his village as if he was visiting other villages of India. It showed Kalam viewing himself broadly as an Indian. He also did not utilize the government fund for unnecessary purpose. He met his personal needs with his own money. Nair evidenced Kalam spending his own money for the expenses of his relations’ visit and stay in Delhi. He named Kalam’s sensitiveness as “ultra-sensitiveness”. He registered the working atmosphere metaphorically. He imagined Kalam’s office as a glasshouse and he commented that “there were many people waiting with stone” (Nair 2008). His life’s philosophy is built on the basis of forgiveness and positive attitude. They gave confidence to overcome the situations of high sensitiveness.

The address given by Kalam in the Central Hall, on 21 March 2005, was the best example which showed that Kalam used the opportunity to pass a message for the benefit of the society. Nair admired Kalam for spending hours and days to do research and to prepare for his presentation. Kalam responded to a young girl claiming the working condition of the sea-saw through a letter positively. He came forward to help a villager from Pune who approached Kalam through a letter. He gave sum of 2.5 lakh allotted for “Iftaar dinners” and 1 lakh from his own account to help more than twenty eight orphanages. He paid his own money of Rs. 3.52 lakh and settled the rent for the rooms occupied by Kalam’s relatives in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Nair admired Kalam’s memory. It produced Kalam as a good reader. He presented
Kalam as being selective in reading. Kalam has the habit of appreciating the writers. He used to discuss his readings with his close group of people. His mind has the capability to comment on the thoughts of the writer even with the page number. It reveals Kalam’s face as a critic. Nair stated Kalam’s consideration of his subordinates by recollecting the occasions like Kalam meeting Nair’s mother and getting blessings from her as well as Kalam’s voluntary visit to Nair’s home and enquiring about the health of Nair’s wife Christy Fernandez who got fractured in her ankle.

Nair also registered Kalam as a teetotaler, his interest in music and his habit of regular walking. Kalam’s interest in culture is revealed through Indradhanush organized in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Nair noted that fifty three performances were organized during Kalam’s tenure. He expressed Kalam’s interest in art by recollecting the time Kalam spent to watch exhibitions organized on 26 January and 15 August of every year. General Musharuf’s remark about the hair of the star batsman Dhoni during the meeting between Musharuf and Kalam expressed their interest in cricket. He also mentioned that Kalam handled the visits of President George Bush and General Musharraf diplomatically. Kalam took care of his discussion with General Musharraf to deal with the Kashmir issue by explaining the PURA Project. Musharf appreciated Kalam as … “Mr. President, India is lucky to have a scientist President like you” (Nair 2008) Kalam took care of President George Bush and family with his usual hospitality which was appreciated by Mrs. Laura Bush. Nair also considered Kalam’s meeting with Mandela as a memorable one as he felt that Mandela “too stands for the same values and ideals that he holds” (Nair 2008). The words used by Dr. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, the Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius, after listening to Kalam’s speech in Mauritius established the idea that Kalam’s mannerism and his speech attracted everyone within short duration. The Deputy Prime
Minister of Mauritius, appreciated Kalam as “we know you are the son of India - but from now on you are the son of Mauritius too” (Nair 2008).

Nair also described the external changes made in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He explained the revamping work done in the residential quarters and in Ashoka Hall to increase the number of books in the library and the efforts taken to facilitate the sports complex of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Children’s Museum, Herbal Garden, Cactus Garden, Garden for visually challenged, the Musical Fountain and Bio-Diversity Park were set up during Kalam’s period and attracted people. He also appreciated the period when a massive tree planting campaign was launched. He observed that Kalam had changed the common comment that “the President of India is just a rubber stamp and that his office is only a ceremonial one” (Nair 2008). Kalam was called “the People’s President” and Rashtrapati Bhavan during his period was called “People’s Bhavan”. Nair thanked all the teammates, particularly the security personal, the reception staff, the medical staff and those colleagues who worked ceaselessly on the grounds through The Kalam Effect. The lines used by Nair in his concluding part of The Kalam Effect prove that he did not write The Kalam Effect for popularity but to register his gratitude to Kalam who helped Nair to complete his journey of government service with full satisfaction.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter explored the biographical elements in R Ramanathan’s Who is Kalam? and P M Nair’s The Kalam Effect. It traced the major aspects of Kalam’s personality from the perspectives of Ramanathan and Nair. It also traced the aspects of Kalam’s personality from the biographical notes shared by the high level authorities from DRDO, ISRO, CSIR, DESIDOC, Ministry of Defence, Federal State Enterprise - Russia, TIFAC, TCS, Anna University, Punjab Technical University, Rashtrapati Bhavan, etc., in Who is Kalam? It
evaluated the humanistic nature of Kalam incorporated in *Who is Kalam?* It explored Kalam’s impact on Ramanathan, Nair, and on the society by evaluating Kalam’s deeds when he was the Director of DRDO and the President of India.

The next chapter will summarize the findings of the research and present the scope further research.