CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 OVERVIEW

The aim of this study was to examine the writings of and on A. P. J. Abdul Kalam to examine the qualities that made him an excellent auto/biographer. Kalam’s autobiographies *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points*, his collaborative works with Tiwari *Guiding Souls* and *You are Born to Blossom* and the biographies on Kalam *Who is Kalam?* by Ramanathan, and *The Kalam Effect* by Nair were the materials used for this study. Content analysis was used as a tool for this study against the theoretical framework of autobiography, biography and collaborative autobiography.

6.2 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

*Wings of Fire* can be called a collaborative autobiography for two reasons. First, it is filled with autobiographical elements and biographical elements. Kalam narrated the account of his life in the first person singular which is a clear indication of the book being an autobiography and he also narrated the characteristics of others (his parents, teachers, professors, and mentors who helped him to shape his destiny) that reflect as the biographical notes of those personalities. Moreover, Kalam’s life history is one or other way is associated with the nation’s history. Second, Kalam wrote *Wings of Fire* along with Arun Tiwari.
Kalam’s writings, addresses and interviews to the media reveal two of his traits. First, he used to explain his views and thoughts by quoting examples from his personal life even in his speeches inside and outside India. Second, most of his personal incidents shared in his speeches were there in his autobiographies and collaborative works. Major parts of his collaborative books are filled with his personal views, ideas, visions, and observations. Tiwari, Ramanathan and Nair accepted that they referred to Kalam’s diary and his works for writing on Kalam. They also used to attend many conferences inside and outside India, where Kalam addressed. The biographers drew Kalam’s image and his views from their close association with him. Most of the important aspects of Kalam’s personality represented by the biographers resemble the major aspects in his autobiographies and the collaborative works written with Tiwari. All these prove that Kalam is the sole material provider for the books on Kalam, particularly *Wings of Fire*.

Kalam strongly believed in collaboration for better results. It is one of the major reasons for Kalam’s success. Thus, Kalam not only used this collaboration to complete the projects like SLV, IGMDP and others but also to write his autobiographies. His characteristics observed from his autobiographies and collaborative works reveal that he used the editorial assistance of Tiwari in structuring *Wings of Fire*, as Kalam found the writer’s nature in Tiwari. Dhanavel (2007) acknowledged that Kalam utilized the assistance of Tiwari to edit and to organize the materials to write *Wings of Fire*.

Kalam’s life portrayed in *Wings of Fire* proves that he developed many skills particularly reading and writing skills during the period of his studies. Kalam remembered the article “Let Us Make Our Own Aircraft” which won him first prize in the essay competition conducted by MIT, Chennai. *Wings of Fire* also revealed the situations when Kalam wrote poems.
Ramanathan also talked about the subjects and themes of Kalam’s poems. In addition to these, Kalam himself wrote many books. All these prove that there is a great writer in him.

A study on the select biographies projects Kalam’s modesty, frankness and sensitiveness. It also draws his image as a man free from nepotism and personal exaggeration. Nair reported that Kalam willingly negotiated the proposals of many universities honoring Kalam, when Kalam was the President of India. It is this modesty and sensitiveness that made Kalam in reviewing even the biography Who is Kalam? by Ramanathan. It exhibits Kalam’s contribution and effort in writing and reviewing Wings of Fire.

Kalam’s collaborative works with Tiwari, exhibited that Kalam and Tiwari used the technology called Optical Character Recognition (OCR), a speech recognition technology. Tiwari also used to accompany Kalam during his travel and the latter used to discuss his views with Tiwari who also reviewed the writings of Kalam. These helped them to convert their discussion transparently in writing many books particularly, Wings of Fire.

The works of and on Kalam reveal a significant nature of Kalam. Kalam (1999) himself registered this nature as “I have never lived off the profits of others”. This sensitive nature of Kalam reveals his considerateness that motivated him to include Tiwari as the co-author of Wings of Fire.

All these prove that Wings of Fire is a typical collaborative autobiography. But, it is not like the as-told-to or ghost written work or celebrity autobiography which is written completely by the subordinates not by the subject.
This study also revealed major aspects and different facts of Kalam. Kalam’s achievements, thoughts and his activities show who Kalam is. His life proves that the outcome of his success is the result of his hard and intellectual work, broad and purposeful utilization of inter-dependency and the philosophies he applied in his life with high visions for the development of the society. Among these phenomena, the purposeful utilization of interdependence/interconnection is one of the predominant aspects that served as a successful agent of Kalam’s personality. For example, Kalam’s ideas connect the major theories of science, religion, history, philosophy, psychology and his vision for the nation. Kalam’s autobiographies and collaborative works reflect his basic belief that the journey of the self is based on the interconnection among body, soul, nation, universe and eternity. Kalam also affirmed that his observation on the interconnection of the waves of Ramshwaram Sea became a source of writing Guiding Souls. Kalam (2012) has also agreed that India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium is a creative work by the collective effort of more than 500 experts. He wrote many books along with co-authors. He brought many achievements for India by using the strategy “collaboration”. Even many of his thoughts reflect Kalam’s stress on “interconnection”. For example, he suggests the “interdependence” of parents and teachers’ effort and support for the natural development to shape the destiny of the children of India to live in a developed country. Kalam (2008) also expressed his belief on the paradoxical view of the truth: “If there is pleasure, there must be suffering”. Thus, it could be understood that the idea of “interconnection” is the root of Kalam’s writing and life.

This study finds that Kalam’s public service and activities are similar to his private life too. Kalam begins Wings of Fire with his spiritual quest and ends it with his attainment of spiritual fulfillment. In Turning Points, Guiding Souls and You are Born to Blossom, he discussed the learning
from his visits to holy places and his meetings with various spiritual leaders. He revealed that he also organized special meetings for various religious leaders. Nair highlighted a few incidents which prove Kalam’s faith and Ramanathan talked about Kalam’s faith and practice in prayer.

The prime forces that strengthened Kalam’s inner mind are hard work, prayer and failures. They taught Kalam a lot. He viewed them as “examination” in *Wings of Fire*. The *New Testament* in the *Bible* portrays “examination” of the self as the basic philosophy of Christianity. “Karma” is the base for Hinduism and “prayer” is the foundation for Islam. All these prove that Kalam’s works unite the major philosophies of many religions and show him as a secularist.

Kalam is a popular writer. In *Turning Points* Kalam recorded that he has written more than 30 books in English and in other regional languages. *Wings of Fire* is listed as one of the famous autobiographies of the world published between 1900 and 2009. Tiwari in *Guiding Souls* and Kalam in *Turning Points* stated that they have millions of readers throughout the world. Kalam wrote *You are Born to Blossom* as if he was directly addressing the readers. Ramanathan and Qurashi also shared the inspiration they drew from Kalam’s autobiographies and other motivational books.

Kalam is a socialist in his approach to the development of India. He said that the success of Agni and other defense projects under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) are the result of the combined effort of DRDO, private sectors and other academic institutions like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). His altruism revealed in his autobiographies also proves that he is a socialist. Nair noted this nature of Kalam in his works. Vidyasagar also depicted Kalam’s this nature in Qurashi’s *Abdul Kalam: India’s Scientist President* (2010)
Kalam shared his wish to become an academician at the end of *Wings of Fire* which shows Kalam’s gratitude to his teachers. He began *Turning Points* with the description of his life as an academician at Anna University, Chennai. His autobiographies and collaborative works show the respect Kalam has for the teaching profession and for the teachers and his vision to eradicate illiteracy in India. The auto/biographies of and on Kalam disclose the outcome of Kalam’s meetings with the teachers to collect information about the drawbacks of the education system and his ideas to improve the quality of education in India.

Kalam is one of the best contemporary national leaders of India. He tries to instill the leadership qualities in the minds of his readers by sharing his ideas related to performance degraders, total commitment, flow, capacity building and leadership qualities. For example, he comments on the leadership qualities of Nobel Prize winners and leaders of the world in his books and in his addresses and speeches. Tiwari viewed Kalam as one of the guiding posts showing the path for success. Ramanathan has written a separate chapter on Kalam as a leader in *Who is Kalam?* Nair (2008) and Vidyasagar (2010) have recorded Kalam’s leadership qualities, management style in their writings.

Ramanathan’s *Who is Kalam?*, Nair’s *The Kalam Effect* and Kalam’s addresses show Kalam’s interest in the political development of India. Kalam encouraged politicians and advised them to give life to democracy. *Turning Points* and *The Kalam Effect* show Kalam’s respect for democracy and Kalam’s dissatisfaction with certain issues. Kalam’s individualism can be viewed through the account of his life portrayed in his autobiographies which reflect the moments and facts of the history of Indian Science during his tenure as the President of India.
In *Turning Points*, Kalam talked about his visits to Indian villages. Kalam’s attempts to develop the villages represent Gandhi’s vision of rural connectivity pointed out by Bawa (1999) in *Gandhi in the Twenty First Century: An Alternative Approach to Development*. Nair acknowledged that Kalam has more than 175 visits in India and most of these visits were made to rural areas. Kalam also corroborated this in *Turning Points* and in *You are Born to Blossom*. It is Kalam who has introduced the PURA scheme for the development of the villages in India. The victory and growth of Kalam who represents the middle and lower middle class village people of India, reveal the democratic revolution. Kalam’s eco-friendly nature is also revealed in his autobiographies, select collaborative works, and biographies.

Kalam is a visionary and an idealist. He is used to set goals for every stage of his life. He sets visions for the general benefits of the humans. His autobiographies prove that he achieved his visions he had dreamt in his early childhood days and the visions for the nation. Tiwari commented on the visionary nature of Kalam in *Guiding Souls*. Ramanathan admired Kalam for having set a vision for DRDL. As the Personal Secretary to the President, Nair recollected Kalam’s visions shared even in their first meeting. He also listed out Kalam’s achievements for the society. Auto/biographies of A P J Abdul Kalam prove that the visionary in Kalam brought a number of achievements to Kalam as well as to his nation and to the world.

Kalam’s life philosophies are incorporated in *Wings of Fire*, *Turning Points*, *Guiding Souls* and in *You are Born to Blossom*. Keeping away from nepotism, transforming words and dreams to reality, converting pessimism into optimism, failure analysis and strategies for overcoming the failures, attempting beyond the capability, broad thinking, creativity, etc., are the hallmarks of Kalam’s success. Kalam’s work ethic is based on spirituality.
The autobiographies of and on Kalam provide many evidences for Kalam’s modesty. Tiwari, Ramanathan and Ponraj revealed Kalam’s modesty in their observations on Kalam. Tiwari (2005) said “I have always admired your self-effacing humility”.

Chandra (2002) pointed out that Kalam showed a sense of optimism to “use science for the new horizons of development of mankind”. Kalam’s optimism contributed to shaping a successful sense of Kalam’s identity. Nair admired Kalam for responding to the letters sent to him positively. Kalam himself accepted that his positive motivation changed the negative hopes of the 2000 workers and scientists of DRDL, who were confused and afraid of the problem during the Agni launch. His positive energy guided them to the success of the Agni launch.

One of the most amazing characteristics of Kalam is his humanism. It is based on the fundamental principle of equality. Kalam’s experience shared in You are Born to Blossom proves that thinking about the goodness of the vast humanity stimulated him to use his potentials to the optimum level. His humanism does not allow him to exploit his fellow workers. It keeps him away from feudalistic treatment. It also keeps him away from the charge of nepotism. Ramanathan elaborately discussed the humanistic nature of Kalam. For example, he mentions composite materials used for defense purposes that Kalam had used as a spin-off technology for the welfare of the people who are suffering from polio-attack, heart pain, etc.

Kalam is free from nepotism. Kalam’s life history proves that he did not exploit human resources or other resources of the offices for personal reasons in all his positions. This study proves that Kalam was so careful in spending money. He met all his personal expenses only with his personal money. He limited his expenses during his travel to foreign countries. Tiwari,
Nair and Ramanathan acknowledged this sensitiveness of Kalam. He was also very careful in handling of recommendations.

Kalam also has the nature of keeping his pain with him and allowing his colleagues to taste the happiness of success. Kalam learned this nature from Vikram Sarabhai. Ramanathan (2003) observed this nature of Kalam: “A defense secretary called him lightning rod that receives all the shock and leaves the building unharmed”. Kalam listens to his inner voice and gives voice for the peace of his nation by pointing out the problems, by traveling beyond his reach and by motivating people.

Moreover, this study of Auto/Biographies of Kalam also brings out the image of Kalam as a planner, internationalist, statesman, vegetarian, teetotaler, bachelor, motivator, man of action, good reader, orator, manager, etc. His memory capacity, service mind, and management style also act as the major aspects of his successful personality. Learning from failures, being transparent, sensitiveness towards responsibility, maintaining pride of the nation, team skills, converting the negative comments into praises, attempting task beyond capability for the welfare of humanity, technology utilization, broad thinking, work ethics, giving awakening voice about the weakness of India, Indians, Indian organizations and providing solutions for the problems, connectivity, taking follow-up actions on the decisions, forming personal rules for success and betterment of the society, interactions, using even the lunch and walking time and holidays purposefully for the benefit of the organization and nation, facing envious situations with positive approach, etc., are the remarkable qualities of Kalam who stands as a unique and a balanced personality as required of great auto/biographies.

“The Auto/Biographies of A P J Abdul Kalam” depicts the holistic personality of Kalam as found in Wings of Fire, Turning Points, Guiding Souls, You are Born to Blossom, Who is Kalam? and The Kalam Effect. The
image of Kalam derived from the portrayal of Kalam by Kalam, Tiwari, Ramanathan and Nair indicates that Kalam’s personality is translucent with a perfect balance between his private and public life. This study proves that the major aspects of Kalam’s personality have been with him throughout his career. It has also brought out the autobiographical elements in *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points*, auto/biographical elements found in *You are Born to Blossom* and autobiographical elements and conversational strategies in *Guiding Souls*, and biographical elements in *Who is Kalam?* and *The Kalam Effect*. Thus, this study proves that Kalam is an auto/biographer par excellence.

### 6.3 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has analyzed the auto/biographical elements in the works of and on Kalam. In future, research can be carried out on the auto/biographies of Indian scientists and Presidents. A comparative study of Kalam and Benjamin Franklin can also be undertaken. Kalam’s works can further be compared with other Indian auto/biographies from various walks of life.