CHAPTER II

THREE FACES OF INDIA

2.1.0 Gandhi's autobiography is "a spiritual manual... an absorbing human document, agonizingly frank and unflinchingly honest in its self-portraiture" (Naik 1982: 119). Nehru's autobiography, "a sketchy, personal and incomplete account of the past", (Naik 1982: 119) presents a vivid picture of both the man and his milieu. Chaudhuri's autobiography which he claims is "more of a national than personal history" (Naik 1982: 118) describes the conditions in which an "unknown Indian" grew to manhood in the early decades of the 20th century. The three authors, therefore, reveal not only the private but also the public side of their personality in their autobiographies. The self-revelation which is the main element in the art of autobiography writing, remains in the background, but it is their rational character which is of importance here. While Gandhi and Nehru discuss at length about both their inner self and outer world, Chaudhuri is ponderously erudite, cynical and lacks in personal revelation. While Gandhi and Nehru look at India from within, Chaudhuri distances himself from it and looks at it from the vantage point of a foreigner. And yet we can derive an image of India -- an
iconoclastic India -- from this "unknown Indian's" autobiography.

2.2.0 The art of writing autobiographies is not a new phenomenon in India. It is not something which is imported from foreign countries. It is, therefore, incorrect to say that the ancient Indians had only life-negating attitude and hardly knew the art of autobiographical writing. In fact, there are some autobiographical pieces which date back to the Vedas and form the part of Vedic literature. Though they are only a few in number, yet they establish the fact that the ancient Indians knew the art of autobiographical writings.

2.2.1 Apart from the Vedas, the most important autobiographical pieces are the inscriptions of Emperor Asoka on rocks and stone pillars. They reveal how the thoughts and actions of this great Emperor transformed a local religion into one of the greatest religions of the world. He narrates the story of his religious conversion in the first person. Some of the ancient playwrights in Sanskrit have also given their life-sketches in the prologue of their plays. In the history of classical Sanskrit literature, the most important autobiographical piece is Bana Bhatta's life sketch in Harsacarita. He writes with
profound regret about the irresponsible and aimless life he had during the hay-day of his mis-spent youth. His book is an important mile-stone in the history of confessional literature in India. The Muslim period of Indian history abounds in autobiographical works, mostly written in Persian. Some Muslim leaders were not only fine soldiers but also good writers. Their reminiscences, memories, and biographies-cum-autobiographies are invaluable historical records of their times. With the introduction of English in India, the art of autobiographical writings took a new turn. The autobiographical literature in English must have inspired some Indians to write about their life histories after the western fashion. Bengal was the first province to come in contact with the English study, and almost of the early Indian autobiographies are of Bengalis. To Raja Ram Mohan Roy goes the credit of being the first Indian to write his autobiography in English. But the first Indian to write a full length autobiography in English was Lutfullah in 1857. He presents a fairly readable picture of the Indian society of the middle of the 19th century. He is critical of the evil customs prevalent in the Indian society such as "suttee" among the Hindus and "circumcision" among the Muslims. The other autobiographical works of the 19th century are Rakhala Dasa Halder's The English Diary of an Indian Student and Lal Behari Day's Recollections of My Schools Days.
2.2.2 There is a rapid increase in the art of autobiography writing in the 20th century and some of the autobiographies aim at social reforms, which has inspired the imagination of many Indian writers. But the three notable autobiographies of the 20th century are Gandhi's The Story of My Experiments With Truth, Nehru's An Autobiography and Chaudhuri's The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian.

2.2.3 The advent of the 20th century sees the dawn of an era which presents a fertile ground for autobiographical writings. The new political awakening and upheaval bring forth new political leaders on the horizon of India. There is an unprecedented spurt in autobiographical writings. Lala Lajpat Rai is the first politician of the 20th century to write about himself in three fragments. However, the most important piece of autobiographical work during the time is Rabindranath Tagore's Reminiscences, which is published in English translation in 1917. He is the first notable poet and writer to write about his creative experiences. It is no exaggeration to say that this book stirred the imagination of many Indians. Sunita Devee's The Autobiography of an Indian Princess is the first to be written by an Indian woman in English in the 20th century. An associate of Mahatma Gandhi, and 'Khilafat' movement leader, Maulana Mohamed Ali wrote a short sketch of his
life, *My Life: A Fragment*. Dan Gopal Mukerji's *Caste and Outcaste* is written with a motive to defend the customs and rituals of the Hindus against the propaganda of the westerners.

2.2.4 The next to follow are the two important autobiographical works which stirred the imagination of many future autobiographers. First to appear is Surendranath Banerjee's *A Nation in Making* and the second is Mahatma Gandhi's *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1925). Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936) appeared seven years later, when Gandhi's autobiography was already acknowledged as a world classic. Chaudhuri started his career as a writer in 1951 with the publication of *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*. In it, he describes the conditions in which an "Unknown Indian" grew to manhood in the early decades of the twentieth century. Written at different periods, these three autobiographies are incontrovertibly the outstanding prose works in the annals of Indian writing in English.

2.2.5 Gandhi picks and chooses some of the incidents from his life which are important from the point of view of his numerous experiments with truth while Nehru is sweeping in his narrative and has historical approach to the events.
Gandhi's simple, straightforward style stands in contrast with Nehru's sophisticated, effortless, spontaneous and racy style. Chaudhuri's autobiography basically differs from Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments With Truth* and Nehru's *An Autobiography*. Gandhi's and Nehru's autobiographies are concerned with the development of human personality and are suffused with abiding personal interest. The social, political and other important events are described only in relation to their influence on human souls. They do not contain anything superfluous and are pregnant with frankness, intimacy and the warmth of personal touch. Chaudhuri's autobiography overflows with superfluous and redundant expressions which contribute little to the personal appeal of the autobiography. It is an erudite and subjective analysis of Chaudhuri's distorted and anglicised version of Indian history and culture from the Aryan conquest down to his own age.

2.3.0 Gandhi wrote his autobiography when he was in his fifties. Therefore, there is no need for him to change his opinions as his outlook on life has almost been formed and fixed. Moreover, he was a well-known figure at that time and therefore his autobiography had a direct influence on its readers. Written at the age of forty-five, Nehru's autobiography is a literary expression of a man at the
height of his powers. But is is surprising to note that Chaudhuri started his career as a writer with the publication of *The Story of My Experiments With Truth* and that made him suddenly - and deservedly-famous. However, the three autobiographies picture the three different sides of Indian life, viz., spiritual, secular and iconoclastic. As a spiritualist Gandhi aims at the moral and spiritual enrichment of the readers of his autobiography. As a secularist, Nehru’s autobiography emphasizes his faith in science and the scientific outlook - a faith partly inherited from his father who was keenly interested in practical science. As an iconoclast, Chaudhuri’s autobiography is an account of his idiosyncratic theories and attitudes towards Indian history, thought and religion. Since the three autobiographies picture the three different faces of India, the time, occasion, the declared aims of the authors and the revealed objectives such as personal/public are worth considering to merit a comparative study of this kind.

2.3.1.0 Gandhi wrote his autobiography in Gujarati for his own paper *Navajivan* and in English for *Young India* and it was issued in book form in 1925. Nehru wrote his autobiography in Almorah Prison. It was written between June 1934 and February 1935 and was published in England.
Chaudhuri's autobiography was published in 1951. Gandhi's and Nehru's autobiographies were written during the pre-independence days and therefore they depict a comprehensive picture of the development of freedom movement and their movement in it. They were so very much lost in the movement, that it is difficult to distinguish them both as "men" and as "freedom-fighters". Their personal lives were so intimately blended with the life of the nation that it is impossible to distinguish the personal from the private side of their personality. Chaudhuri wrote his autobiography in the post-independence period and because he was nurtured in an anglicised environment and had a predilection for western thought and literature from his early boyhood, he emerges as an inveterate anglophile in his autobiography.

2.3.1.1 Gandhi's autobiography was written in 169 weekly instalments in Navajivan. For want of time it could not be written separately for publication as a book. He writes: "I have no spare time. I could only write a chapter week by week. Something has to be written for Navajivan every week. Why should not be the autobiography?" (SET: IX). It was written in about 4 years. The 'introduction' came out in November 1925 and the 'farewell' in March 1929.

2.3.1.2 When Nehru had been imprisoned in the Almorah Jail in 1934, he wrote his autobiography. It was written in a
continuous spell of about 9 months from June 1934 to February 1935. It must have been written with an astonishing speed. The death of his wife, after a prolonged illness, delayed his work for a while and the autobiography was published in 1936, with a dedication to his wife "Kamala, who is no more" (AA: Dedication).

2.3.1.3 Chaudhuri's first book The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian was published in 1951 and made him immensely popular in literary and intellectual circles. The "unknown Indian" suddenly became a "well-known Indian". Chaudhuri's descriptions, his birthplace Kishorganj, his ancestral village Banagram and his mother's village Kalikutch are so brilliant and authentic that "going through these passages one almost feels as if one is living in the Kishorganj of 1907, or the Calcutta of 1920's" (Deva 1968: 12).

2.3.2.0 Gandhi wrote his autobiography when he was almost fully matured. He wrote it at the instance of his co-workers Jeramdas and Swami Anand. For writing his compendious autobiography, Gandhi depends on his memory with which he is well endowed. But it is very clear when he began writing he had no definite plan before him. Nehru wrote his autobiography in the prison in order to recapitulate the past events. Sometimes he looks behind in order to join the threads of the past to the future. The
innermost desire of Nehru to keep into the secrets of India's heart and mind, must have drove him to write the story of his life. As this story is written in dismal and sordid surroundings of the prison, it is naturally a bit pessimistic. Chaudhuri wrote his autobiography for the academic circles in the west, under whose influence he grew up and owed all his intellectual and academic attainments. Though an unknown Indian, Chaudhuri became known to the world only through this maiden work which was, paradoxically enough, written not in the teenage but when he was at the threshold of his fiftieth year. When it has earned the critical appreciation of the western readers, it has incurred the wrath of Indian readers consequent upon its unusual method of presentation.

2.3.2.1 When Gandhi wrote his autobiography in his fifties, a "God fearing friend" (SET: IX) advised him to postpone the project of writing the autobiography because, in his opinion, Gandhi was likely to change his opinions. But Gandhi does not claim any finality about his opinions and principles. He simply wants to tell the story of his numerous experiments with Truth. In writing his autobiography, he is not guided by any model. He wrote it at the request of his co-workers, Jeramdas and Swami Anand. "Indeed, I started writing it" says Gandhi, "in compliance with their wishes. It might not have been written if
Jeramdas and Swami Anand had not persisted in their suggestion" (SET: 322). When he began writing it, he had no definite plan before him. He had "no diary or documents on which to base the story of my experiments with Truth. I write as the spirit moves me at the time of writing" (SET: 322). He knows about the inadequacy of all autobiographies as history. He does not set down in his autobiography all that he remembered. He writes:

If some somebody were to cross-examine me on the chapters already written, he could probably shed much more light on them, and if it were a hostile critic's cross-examination, he might even flatter himself for having shown up "the hallowness of many of my pretensions" (SET: 210).

2.3.2.2 Nehru's autobiographical writing serves a dual purpose. He makes use of his enforced leisure in jail and begins the "task in a mood of self-questioning, and to a large extent, this persisted throughout" (AA: Preface). Nehru, therefore, is motivated to write his autobiography by lonely jail life. His primary object is to occupy himself with some "definite task" (AA: Preface) in order to ward off the boredom of "long solitudes of jail life" (AA: Preface) as well as to review the past events in India, with which he was intimately connected.
2.3.2.3 Chaudhuri's first attempt of *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian* has unanimously been acclaimed as his best book. This book is more than an autobiography because it is "a contribution to contemporary history" (AUI: IX) and the "story of the struggle of a civilization with a hostile environment in which the destiny of British rule in India became necessarily involved" (AUI: IX). It also describes "the conditions in which an Indian grew to manhood in the early decades of this century" (AUI: IX). Since the expression 'the conditions' includes a whole lost of other influences, such as, social, cultural and political -- the 'Autobiography' turns out to be less of a personal story and more of a national history.

2.3.3.0 The revelation of truth has been Gandhi's main aim in writing his autobiography. He writes his autobiography not to please his critics. It has educative and didactic purpose. Nehru's primary object is obviously to make constructive use of his time spent in prison and to record his own mental development. Chaudhuri writes his autobiography with the conscious object of reaching the English-speaking world. Therefore, to please his European mentors, Chaudhuri makes scathing and derogatory comments on Indian civilization and the entire course of the development of Indian history.
2.3.3.1 Gandhi himself explains the purpose of writing his autobiography:

But it is not my purpose to attempt a real autobiography. I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind, if every page of it speaks only of my experiments. I believe, or at any rate flatter myself with the belief, that a connected account of all these experiments will not be without benefit to the reader (SET: X).

Gandhi calls his experiments "spiritual, or rather moral" (SET:X). He has endeavoured his best to narrate his experiments "in a dispassionate and humble spirit" (SET:X) and he does not claim any degree of perfection for these experiments. Self-introspection is the cardinal characteristic of his autobiography. He says "I have gone through deep self-introspection, searched myself through and through, and examined and analysed every psychological situation" (SET: X1). He also reveals the other side of his objective, "one of its objects is certainly to provide some
comfort and food for reflection to my co-workers" (SET:210). The autobiography has also an educative purpose in itself "The exercise has given me ineffable mental peace, because it has been my fond hope that it might bring faith in Truth and Ahimsa to waverers." (SET: 419). It is not Gandhi's aim to discuss academic principles' of truth in *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*. His purpose, therefore, is:

... to give an account of various practical applications of these principles, I have given the chapters I propose to write the title of *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*. These will of course include experiments with non-violence, celibacy and other principles of conduct believed to be distinct from truth. As for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles (SET: X1).

2.3.3.2 As a pragmatic individual, Nehru's primary aim is to fill his hours in prison. He clearly states in his autobiography:

The primary object in writing was to occupy myself with a definite task, so necessary in the long solitudes of goal life (AA: Preface).
But he further adds:

... as well as to review the past events in India, with which I had been connected to unable myself to think clearly about them (AA: Preface).

Nehru knows the importance of vigorous physical and mental discipline for a man in prison. As he observes in the Autobiography, "I managed to accustom myself to the goal routine, and with physical exercise and fairly hard mental work kept fit" (AA: 348). Secondly, as he says he "began the task in a mood of self-questioning, and to a large extent, this persisted throughout" (preface, p. xl). He adds later "My object was primarily for my own benefit, to trace my own mental growth" (AA: 596). At another place in the autobiography he asks "Why am I writing all this sitting here in prison?" and answers himself by saying, "I write down my past feeling and experiences in the hope that this may bring me some peace and psychic satisfaction" (AA:208). He says in the preface that he writes this book for his own countrymen or else he could have written differently. Yet, paradoxically enough, the book was first published in England and the first Indian edition appeared more than twenty five years later. Nehru also makes it clear that his aim was "not to write a survey of recent Indian history"
Incidentally the contemporary historical events get paramount importance in the narration, not withstanding the aim of the author. However, as with most of the other autobiographers so with Nehru, the psychological compulsion to express oneself and to highlight one's achievements cannot be a less motivating force.

2.3.3.3 Chaudhuri's autobiography is less a revelation of his life and personality and it hardly touches the theme of self-introspection. Chaudhuri writes:

The story I want to tell is the story of the struggle of a civilization with a hostile environment, in which the destiny of British rule in India became necessarily involved. My main intention is thus historical, and since I have written the account with utmost honesty and accuracy of which I am capable, the intention in my mind has become mingled with the aspiration that the book may be regarded as a contribution to contemporary history (preface ix)

He continues "In relation to modern Indian society, I am like an aeroplane in relation to earth. It can never rise so high as to be able to sever the terrestrial connexion,
but its flight helps it to obtain a better view of the lie of the land" (preface: x). Being dedicated to "the memory of the British Empire in India" Chaudhuri's autobiography is meant for its western readers because "all that was good made and shaped and quickned by the same British rule" (AUI: Dedication). The autobiographical form of this book is only a matter of convenience and Chaudhuri calls it The Autobiography of An unknown Indian in order to attract the attention of his western readers.

2.3.4.0 Gandhi's autobiography unfolds the various stages of the development of his personality. It aims at the moral and spiritual discipline of the readers and indeed it has wielded tremendous influence on its readers. As Mohinder Singh says, Gandhi's autobiography "is not an ordinary experiment in self-portrayal, but the product of a life wholly dedicated to truth as understood in its widest connotation and an outstanding creation standing apart in its lonely grandeur on the Indian autobiographical scene" (Singh 1980: 739). Gandhi's autobiography is an authentic personal revelation and it is not marred by its conscious suppression of one's sense of shame. But not withstanding the aim of the author that his intention is not to write a survey of recent history, Nehru's autobiography abounds with contemporary historical events. However, in spirit and
form, Nehru's autobiography is similar to that of Gandhi. Gandhi has described his personal events most candidly. It is an account of his spiritual growth. Nehru has also tried to be candid and in many places his statements are almost confessions. Though a 'sketchy, personal and incomplete account', it nevertheless presents an unforgettable picture of both the man and his milieu. The book is not only a 'discovery' of Nehru but a 'discovery of India' of the period roughly between the two world wars. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, at the very outset reminds us that his autobiography is more than just the record of one man's experiences. He claims that it is an account of the moods and sentiments that swayed the embryonic Indian nation.

D.S. Philip observes: "Through autobiographies, in the shape of Gandhi's and Nehru's provided the Indian public with intimate memories of the nationalist struggle, the arrival of personal reminiscences by relative unknowns is emblematic of the growing sophistication of the Indian consciousness" (Philip 1986: 43). Gandhi and Nehru present a picture of the growth of consciousness of the man including the inevitable crisis and conciliation of conscience. Therefore they tend to he subjective and the objective element comes only as subordinate. But Chaudhuri presents the picture of the objective world shaping the subjective element itself. He wants to show how the subjective element itself is
decided, limited and conditioned by the objective world. Chaudhuri's great achievement in his autobiography is that he presents his own inner conflict as the conflict of the whole race.

2.4.0 The three autobiographies can be divided into two major heads -- personal/public. Gandhi's autobiography is not merely an individual's personal document of his numerous experiments with truth, but it has necessary remedies to cure the social, national and even international ill wills. Albert Einstein points out that Gandhi "invented an entirely new and human technique for the liberation of a subjugation and has energized his people, roused and consolidated the moral forces in them through his personal example" (cited in Sitaramayya 1943: 190). The autobiography is relevant today because it contains universal values. Nehru's An Autobiography is essentially a personal document and therefore it reflects his personal views and reactions. But at the same time it also serves as a commentary on Indian public life during the pre-independence period. It is but natural that the dividing line between private and public comments and views should have blurred or in some cases merged. It is because An Autobiography is not just an eye-witness account by a man, but the first hand information of one who was deeply involved in that fateful period of
India's history. The book, however, does not cover the last and the most significant quarter century of his life and therefore 'this partial autobiography' unfortunately leaves many things unsaid. Chaudhuri's credit lies in the fact that he successfully presents his inner conflict as the conflict of the whole race. In fact, it would be more apt to say that he converts the 'personal' into the 'national'. In other words, Chaudhuri sees in his own microcosm the macrocosm of the whole Hindu ethos. The three autobiographers, apart from revealing their 'inner self', deal with the wider problems such as Religion, Human rights, nationalism and the unity of India in their own characteristic ways.

2.5.0 The three autobiographies throw light on the domestic side of their life. Gandhi, the spiritualist, is also a successful householder. Nehru, the upright statesman, is equally a kind husband and a noble father. 'The British Indian', Chaudhuri also narrates his early life and his association with numerous people in moving expressions.

2.5.1.0 Gandhi lives a very simple life and his wife Kasturba manages to shoulder her responsibilities of an ideal wife, irrespective of harsh treatment in the early
days, by her "cruelly kind husband". Though he loves his children, he fails to give them proper education, which he frankly admits in his autobiography. The short pen portraits of his parents and his contemporaries like Sir Pherozeshah, Lokmanya Tilak and Gokhale have spiritual undertones.

2.5.1.1 From the autobiography, Gandhi emerges as a saintly figure who has no allurement to worldly things. Therefore his role as a householder has been underestimated. But, for a long period, he works as a successful householder. Through experimentation Gandhi cuts down food requirements and starts taking uncooked fruits and nuts. In matters of dress, he takes to Khadi dhoti and observes complete Brahmacharya from 1906. Austerity and renunciation become the chief ideals of his life. He proves that a varied and enriched life can be enjoyed with the fewest needs and requirements. Mohinder Singh aptly remarks: "In fact, Gandhi's life style became such that he could only live in an ashram, in full public gaze, influencing people around all the time by his very presence and example. He could no longer take shelter behind a house-holder's walls" (cited in Kumar 1983: 24).

2.5.1.2 Gandhi's wife Kasturiba adjusts with the saintly ideals and dictatorial manners of her husband. In the
autobiography, Gandhi pays high tributes to her. He frankly admits "I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher, and so harassed her out of my blind love for her" (SET: 207). He loves his sons and is proud of his capacity of handling and educating them, but his methods are more suited to adults. He cannot impart necessary literary education to his sons. He frankly admits his mistake: "My inability to give them enough attention and other unavoidable causes prevented me from providing them with the literary education I had desired, and all my sons have had complaints to make against me in this respect" (SET: 150).

2.5.1.3 Gandhi has also given short pen portraits of her illustrious contemporaries. The short character sketches he has portrayed are truthful and reveal his utmost frankness. This is the pen picture of his father:

My father was a lover of clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short tempered. To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures. For he married for the fourth time when he was over forty. But he was incorruptible and had learned a name for strict impartiality in his family as well as outside. His loyalty to the state was well known (SET: 1).
His mother left on his memory an impression of "Saintliness" (SET: 4). He says,

My mother was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers. My mother had strong commonsense. She was well informed about all matters of state, and ladies of the court thought highly of her intelligence. Often I would accompany her, exercising the privilege of childhood, and I still remember many lively discussions she had with the widowed mother of the Thakore Saheb (SET: 4-5).

Gandhi's spiritualism colours almost all his pen portraits as is evident in the following:

Sir Pherozeshah had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the holy river. The Himalaya was unscaleable, and one could not easily launch forth on the sea, but the Ganges invited one to its bosom. It was a joy to be on it, with a boat and an oar (SET: 148).
2.5.2.1 Nehru's *An Autobiography* reveals his inner personality by offering several illuminating glimpses of his rich emotional and imaginative nature and his keen aesthetic sense. Radhakrishnan has said that "as a man, Nehru combined a fine sensitivity of mind and a rare delicacy of feeling, with large and generous impulses" (cited in Patil 1987:396). In analysing the ethical aspect of Nehru's personality as revealed in the *Autobiography*, what strikes one most forcefully are his transparent sincerity and unflinching self-analysis. Some of the most memorable passages in the autobiography are those devoted to self-analysis.

I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place every where, at home nowhere...

I am stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it, but in my own country also, sometimes, I have an excile's feeling (AA: 596).

2.5.2.2 Nature fascinates him and cools "the fever in the brain" (AA: 569). Not only nature, but animals and birds are also of great fascination for Nehru. In prison he once nurses a sick puppy with care, "sometimes getting up a dozen times in the course of the night to look after her" (AA: 358). In Lucknow goal, he "used to sit reading almost
without moving for a considerable periods, and a squirrel
would climb my leg and sit on my knee and have a look round" (AA: 356), one fine morning he suddenly realizes "that I had
not heard a dog bark for seven or eight months" (AA: 98).
It is no wonder that C.D. Narasimhaiah exclaims: "how many
go to prison and even of those who write in prison how few
are capable of compassion for the animals around them!" (Narasimhaiah 1978: 154).

2.5.2.3 Nehru's autobiography excels in its pen-portraits
of people, which reveal his shrewd understanding of human
nature. Here is Nehru's description of Gandhi:

This little man of poor physique had something of
steel in him, something rock-like which did not
yield to physical powers, however great they might
be. And in spite of his unimpressive features,
his loin-cloth and bare body, there was a royalty
and a kinglyness in him which compelled a willing
obeisance from others (AA: 129).

Nehru is very harsh and critical in his pen picture of
Srinivasa Sastrı: "Mr. Sastrı is always eloquent, and has
the orator's love of fine words and their musical use. But
he is apt to be carried away by his enthusiasms, and the
word-magic that he creates blurs his meaning to others and perhaps to himself. "(AA: 389) K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar points out: "People no doubt rightly resented Jawaharlal's ungenerous references to the late V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, and deployed the tone of intolerance that was heard here and there. But how overwhelmingly satisfying the total impression!" (Iyengar 1984: 112).

Comparing Gandhi with Motilal, Nehru remarks,

How different was my father from him! But in him too there was strength of personality and a measure of kingliness. Consciously imperious, he evoked great loyalty as well as bitter opposition. With a broad forehead, tight lips and determined chin, he had marked resemblance to the bursts of the Roman emperors in the museums of Italy (AA: 130).

Assesing the pen-portraits of Nehru, M.K Naik points out "In contrast with these father-figures which evoke Nehru's eloquent admiration, persons like Shyamji Krishnavarma, Mahendra Pratap and Madame Cama elicit his sharp ironic sense, not unmixed with sympathy" (Cited in Patil 1986: 396).
2.5.3.0 Chaudhuri, from the very early days, develops an anglomania which often makes him a square peg in a round hole in any Indian situation. He has a personal dislike for everything 'Indian'. Therefore, his autobiography tends to become a short-sighted account of Indian civilization and culture. However, there is a personal revolution when he describes about his early life with his parents. His criticism of Gandhi is certainly a biased one.

2.5.3.1 Through his autobiography, Chaudhuri emerges as a 'British Indian'. His anglomania has so much purblindled him that he does not find anything of sterling worth in the hoary civilization of India, which has been appreciated all the world over for its spiritual and moral qualities. Inspite of his smyopic cultural and historical views, Chaudhuri emerges as a vigorous and conscientious craftsman with his typical iconoclastic views. There is personal revelation when he writes about his parents and the first twelve years of his life. But he does not aim at creating "romantic interest" or "contrast" in the memories of his early life, as many authors have done in their autobiographical masterpieces. Therefore he calls this book "more of an exercise in descriptive ethnomology than autobiography" (AUI 9: 131). He calls himself an "unknown Indian" when he portrays himself. M.K. Naik says "Chaudhuri's self-portrait is all the more fascinating
because 'the unknown Indian' is so much of an 'unusual Indian'" (Naik 1982: 266).

2.5.3.2 The pen portrait of his father and mother are equally interesting. But he cautions the readers above the pit falls of his attempt. "There are few things more unconvincing than a son's portrait of his parents" (AUI: 142). About his father he says:

His face was high-featured. A domed forehead merging into the bald top, strongly marked ridges of the brows, a high and fleshly nose, and deep-set and rather small eyes gave an impression of sternness, which was further heightened by the thin and tightly closed lips, the strong jaws, and a substantial and regular thin. . . . In his old age he often sat still for hours on his bed, squatting and cross legged. In that posture he bore a very striking resemblance to the famous statue of the scribe of the old kingdom of Egypt (AUI 9: 145).

From his father Chaudhuri learnt English "without tears, although not without toil" (AUI: 153). There is colour, candour and humour in the pen picture of his mother.
She was not handsome, but no more was she plain. Her forehead was very well-shaped without being high, and the oval of her face was broad in his upper half, but very quickly receding and tapering in the lower. Her eyes were large and liquid, her nose very regular and prominent. . . The real weakness of the face was the chin, which though neatly shaped was not weighty enough for the upper part. Taken in their entirety, her features gave an impression of unsleeping albertness and inexhaustible animation (AUI: 204).

From his mother Chaudhuri learnt the significant of good manners in life.

2.5.3.3 The portraits Chaudhuri draws of his great contemporaries are terse, vivid and masterly. But he is very harsh and unreservedly hostile to Mahatma Gandhi.

Can he be a faddist, a man with a bee in his bonnet, a fanatical rough-rider of hobbies out for naive tilts at social standards and civilization? I asked myself, and I could not wholly resist the formation in my mind of an alternative image challenging the accepted one -- the image of a
crude thaumaturge wandering with a following of Orphic mountebanks, the Coryphaeus of a pack of dancing dervishes or half-naked fakirs, for whom rational and civilized men could not feel anything but derision and contempt (AUI: 266)

He sums up the role of Gandhi as the leader of the freedom movement: "If anyone among our political leaders could be expected to remain wholly unaware of the novel and better adaptation of the means of the nationalist movement to its ends, that person was Mahatma Gandhi (AUI: 447). He continues to say ". . . Neither his station in life nor his English education succeeded in making him understand the things of the intellect and civilization. He remained profoundly uneducated in the intellectual sense and lived in utter nakedness of spirit till his death. At last in India the Masses and the Man has become one" (AUI: 447-448). Certainly, this pen picture of Gandhi is a biased one. One cannot expect a better treatment of Gandhi from Chaudhuri as he is an Anglophile and Western in his outlook.

2.6.0 The three writers do not merely confine themselves into a petty circle of their families and friends. They also discuss the major problems of the nation/society with a daring spirit, since all of them in one way or other were
involved in the national struggle and positively responded to the nation's call. Gandhi's autobiography is not just a personal revelation of a spiritualist, but it covers one of the most controversial epochs of Indian history. Nehru's autobiography can be described as a semi-history of the Indian national movement. Chaudhuri wishes that his autobiography should be acknowledged as a 'historical testimony' rather than a personal account of an unknown Indian.

2.6.1.1 In his autobiography, Gandhi describes the emergence of freedom movement and his successful launching of Satyagrah. The autobiography abruptly ends after the year 1920, since then he has become a public figure and his personal life has almost blended with his national life. He not only brings out the political upheaval of his time, but also highlights the social evils of the day, such as social inequality, untouchability and child marriage.

2.6.1.2 Gandhi's autobiography deals with his meteoric emergence in the Indian political scene. This was an important period because, it was during this period, Gandhi successfully used the weapon of Satyagrah for India's liberation. He says: "I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagrah is a sovereign remedy" (SET: 285).
Within a short span of six years, new weapons of hartal, fasting and non-cooperation were introduced and a few more things like spinning Khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity and Harijan welfare were added.

2.6.1.3 Gandhi sees no point in continuing the story beyond 1920 because it is already known to the public. There are no personal secrets to conceal as he is leading a life in the continued blaze of controversy and political action. The latter part of his life is in a considerable measure the life the nation as well. Before taking leave from the readers Gandhi writes:

My life from this point onward has been so public that there is hardly anything about it that people do not know... In fact my pen instinctively refuses to move (SET: 382).

Had he prolonged his autobiography, it would have deteriorated into a political memoir submerging the personal story of Mahatma Gandhi.

2.6.1.4 Gandhi's autobiography covers one of the most turbulent epochs of Indian history. This was a period marked by social evils and diparties, and political
subjection, exploitation and injustice. Although writing mainly about his own life, Gandhi cannot overlook his milieu, and, hence, the autobiography contains lucid and succinct comments on contemporary social and political cross currents. Child marriage is the first social evil which he discards as he sees "no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage" (SET: 5). He criticizes the insanitary and unhygienic habits of Indians living in South Africa and lovingly teaches them the importance of cleanliness in life. He is dead against the social inequality and considers "all were alike the children and servants of the motherland" (SET: 105). Gandhi works for the emancipation of women and untouchables and bravely fights against economic exploitation. The Khilafat movement, the Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy, the Amritsar and Nagpur sessions of congress are highlighted in his autobiography.

2.6.2.0 The attainment of complete independence forms the corner-stone of Nehru's political philosophy. Therefore, he devotes a lion's share to the political developments of his time in his autobiography. Because of his scientific temperament, he often questions the validity of Gandhi's spiritual quest and disapproves of the non-violent method employed by him with a religious colouring.
2.6.2.1 Nehru's autobiography serves as a commentary on Indian public life during the pre-independence period. It is no exaggeration to say that An Autobiography is a sort of semi-history of Indian struggle for independence. Nehru himself says that "the book was more about the struggle in India than about myself" (AA: 347). No less vivid than the portrait of the man is the picture of his milieu. It brings to life several significant developments between 1912 and 1936, including the advent of the Gandhian whirlwind and the gathering clouds of the Second World War. Nehru has also expressed his opinion on wide range of subjects such as communism, Fascism, Socialism, Communalism, Non-violence means and ends, religious beliefs and rituals, fast, satyagraha, sex and what not.

2.6.2.2. Nehru approaches every problem with a scientific temperament. It is this new scientific faith that makes him criticize Gandhi's blindness to it. According to Nehru, Gandhi's creed of non-violence is not considered philosophically or scientifically. Nehru's social and political thought in An Autobiography is intimately connected with his belief in science. He admires Marx because of "the scientific method he adopted" (AA: 591). His vision of an ideal socio-economic order for India includes "a complete over-hauling of the agrarian system,"
"introducing organized collective and co-operative enterprises" and "the growth of industry" (AA: 524).

2.6.3.0 The hasty and unauthentic comments of Chaudhuri on Indian society may startle any reader, who has an admiration for India and its illustrious millions. But much of his criticism is tolerable because it is true. His 'nationalistic spirit' at the height of the Indian freedom movement is short-lived and he criticizes Gandhi for converting nationalism into a mass movement.

2.6.3.1 Since Chaudhuri insists that his autobiography should be acknowledged as 'historical testimony' (AUI: x) it is but natural that he should give an account of the cultural, religious and political environment in which he grew up to manhood. The second and third chapters in the second book of Chaudhuri's autobiography are devoted to intellectual, religious, moral and political ideas which he acquired in his early years. But, as an inveterate anglophile, his eudite and extremely controversial comments on the Indian society reveal his 'Un-Indian' attitude and one can easily be tempted to dismiss them as biassed and unauthentic conclusions. However, there is a force of clear-cut logic and common sense at the back of all these that makes much of his pungent criticism tolerable. Like Swift,
Chaudhuri makes a vitriolic attack on the entire social fabric of a nation, its men, and its morals.

2.6.3.2 Though he felt sympathy with the nationalists in the beginning, it did not last long. To him, by simplification and transformation, nationalism was converted into a mass movement by Gandhi. Unfortunately the oversimplification of moral problems brought about the degeneration of Gandhism. On the basis of these detailed discussions and analysis of the cultural, religious and political influences at work on the Indian, and, particularly, the Bengali social scene, one can take the stand that "A major theme of the autobiography is the origin and the death of the Indian effort to create a modern culture of the humanistic sort on the basis of an East-West cultural synthesis" (Rao 1977: 352).

2.7.0 Gandhi is a spiritualist and has therefore in his interpretation of religion accepts it. Nehru, as a secularist, modestly rejects it, but accepts its spirit. Chaudhuri is an atheist and therefore he negate the religion outright.

2.7.1.0 Gandhi believes in the fundamental principle that 'Truth is God'. He stands for religious tolerance and has
absolute faith in God, who has helped him to overcome obstacles in life in many mysterious ways. As he believes in the basic teachings of all great religions, he reads all the books of religion, yet he is deep-rooted in Hinduism, which has moulded his life to a great extent.

2.7.1.1 Gandhi is convinced that "God is Truth" and "Truth is God". He states clearly in his autobiography,

There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth Only (SET: Preface).

He maintained this belief till the end of his life. He insists the same argument again in a memorable farewell message at the end of the autobiography:

My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realization of truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain ... Truth is
the goal and Truth is nothing but God (SET: 419-420).

2.7.1.2 Gandhi, although a devout Hindu, stood for religious homogenity of mankind and fostered the spirit of religious tolerance. Gandhi used the term 'religion' in its broadest sense meaning thereby "self-realization or knowledge of self" (SET: 27). He believes that all religions are different paths leading to the same goal. He says in his autobiography referring to a speech he made at Transvaal:

I laid stress on the necessity of forgetting all distinctions such as Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, Christians, Gujaratis, Madrasis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Kachchhis, Suratis, and so on (SET: 150).

2.7.1.3 The greatest source of strength for Gandhi was his absolute faith in God. He says that God had saved him when, at the persuasion of his friend, he went to a brothel. He recalls "I went into the jaws of sins, but God in his infinite mercy protected me against myself (SET: 16). He daily prayed for "God's protection" and got it. "Not that I had" says Gandhi, "any idea of God. It was faith that was at work" (SET: 34). God again saved him when "a woman, other than my wife, moved me to lust" (SET: 53-54).
God often protected him, "... in all my trials -- of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics -- I can say that God saved me" (SET: 201). He says God laid the foundations of his life in South Africa and sowed in him "the seeds of the fight for national self-respect" (SET: 104).

2.7.1.4 Gandhi's faith has transcended the boundaries of Hinduism for he believes in the basic teachings of all great religions. He read all religious books without discrimination. He says "... I took mental note of the fact that I should read more religious books and acquaint myself with all the principal religions" (SET: 59). In South Africa, Gandhi had to work among people of many nations, races and colours. He came in contact there with Christian missionaries who were anxious "to save his soul" (SET: 54) by converting him to Christianity. But all these contacts confirmed him in his own faith, Hinduism:

How far should I undertake the study of Christianity? How was I to obtain literature about Hinduism? And how was I to understand Christianity in its proper perspective without thoroughly knowing my own religion? I could come to only one conclusion: I should make a
dispassionate study of all that came to me, and I should not think of embracing another religion before I had fully understood my own (SET: 101).

This is how his faith in Hinduism has compromised with other religions.

2.7.2.0 From his early days, Nehru has discarded all the organised religions, which often centres round blind dogmas and superstitions. According to him, religion can be defined as 'the inner development of an individual' in the right direction. He has a soft corner for the Chinese religion, which has no God to call its own. However, he does not rule out religion and even admires its influence over the masses.

2.7.2.1 From the very beginning of his career, Nehru had shown some indifference towards religion. Brought up in a family where the men-folk regarded religion as "a woman's affair" (AA: 201), Nehru recalls how he flirted briefly with Theosophy in his teens and with Cyrenaicism in his college days. Later organised religion comes to fill him 'with horror', for almost always it seems "to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests" (AA: 374).
2.7.2.2 According to Nehru religion "consists of the inner development of the individual, the evolution of his consciousness in a certain direction which is considered good. What the direction is will again be a matter for debate" (AA: 399). In his definition of religion, Nehru makes no mention of God, or any special relationship between a creator and creature, nor is there a hint of soul or after life, yet these concepts form the essential part of any religion. He deliberately avoids these concepts and rather focuses only upon the deepest utilitarian aspect of religion.

2.7.2.3 Nehru is disgusted with religion because "usually religion becomes an asocial quest for God or the Absolute, and the religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of society" (AA: 377). However, Nehru does not rule out religion which to a certain extent has penetrated his world outlook through the questions of ideal and ethics. He admits, "yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner carving of humanbeings. How else could it have been the tremendous power it had been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls?" (AA: 374) Though he is against the "common religious thinking" (AA: 154), he agrees that "the traditional
Chinese outlook, fundamentally ethical, and yet irreligious or tinged with religious scepticism has an appeal for me, though in its application to life, I may not agree" (AA: 377). It is true that Nehru maintains consistently his view of religion expounded in the Autobiography all his life.

2.7.3.0 Though Chaudhuri was given moral and religious instructions at home, he had discarded religion ever since his undergraduate days. He has a strong dislike for Hinduism, which breeds only superstition and blind beliefs, according to him.

2.7.3.1 Chaudhuri acquired many intellectual, religious and moral ideas up to the age of twelve. He says in the autobiography that he and his brother "received, first, the literary and humanistic influences, then the religious and moral, till our culture, like the national, attained its three-dimensional fullness" (AUI: 187). But slowly Chaudhuri becomes an iconoclast discarding religion ever since his undergraduate days. He frankly confesses in his autobiography:

When with the immaturity of undergraduate days, I paraded my disbelief in religion, I used to be told that the hot blood of youth did not remain
for ever hot and I should come to heel. I have not done so yet, I am at least ready to listen to a religious and moral discussion. (AUI: 112)

2.7.3.2 Chaudhuri divides the religious influences at work in the formative years of his life at Kishorganj into the following strands:

"... first, the most elementary and elemental, belief in ghosts and spirits and animistic deities and the routine of magic and ritual organised round this belief; secondly, a polytheism both anthropomorphic and pantheistic and on the whole sunny and benign, thirdly the Brahma monotheism; fourthly the pseudo-scientific Hinduism; and lastly, the Hindu revivalism preached by Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Vivekananda (AUI: 211).

According to Chaudhuri, it was only at the hands of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Vivekananda that Hinduism received a new impetus. But he is not satisfied even with the new Hinduism. Religion interferes in every walk of life and religious superstitions play a great role in the life of the Bengalis. Like a true iconoclast, Chaudhuri attacks all kinds of superstitions which have taken shelter under the umbrella of Hinduism.
2.8.0 In their autobiographies we also find their views on politics. Gandhi desires to change the very nature of politics by spiritualizing it, Nehru strongly opposes the use of religion in politics. Whereas Chaudhuri simply ridicules the Indian politics.

2.8.1.0 Gandhi is drawn into politics because of his unquenchable thirst for 'truth'. As a spiritualist, he justifies his stand for mixing religion with politics. He successfully launches 'Sathyaraha' into the political field as a non-violent weapon for resisting evil with righteousness.

2.8.1.1 It is Gandhi's strong devotion to truth that has drawn him into the political field. He says in his autobiography:

... my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation,; and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means (SET: 420).

In the Gandhian way there is a happy blending of politics with ethics, the immediate with the ultimate. Gandhi's
principles of truth and non-violence become the basis of social order and the instruments of socio political dynamics and he stands for the substitution of power politics by the politics of goodness based on his famous doctrine of the integrity and symmetry of ends and means.

2.8.1.2 The aim of Gandhi's Satyagraha movement is not to capture power but to control and guide power effectively without capturing the machinery of government. The principle called Satyagraha came into being even before the name was invented. In South Africa, Gandhi launched a non-violent and peaceful agitation for redressing the grievances of the Indian community. He felt that the English word 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed to explain the real nature of the Indian movement. Mohanlal Gandhi coined the word "Satyagrah" (sat-truth, Agrah-firmness) but Gandhi changed 'Sadagrah' to 'Satyagrah' in order to make it clearer (SET: 239). In short, Satyagrah is the science and art of overcoming evil with good. It is absolutely a non-violent weapon. It is an abundantly powerful weapon which shook the foundations of the mightiest British Empire and liberated India. Satyagrah combines satya and ahimsa and thus, its notary has infinite spiritual power. Therefore Gandhi believed that it should be successful in the political sphere.
2.8.2.0 Nehru is not in favour of mixing religion with politics. He is opposed to Gandhi, for his religious approach to politics. He neither favours non-violence, nor terrorism and seems to be in a confusion.

2.8.2.1 Nehru strongly opposed the use of religion in modern political life. He is unbending in his efforts to keep politics apart from religion, and adheres to this principle to the end of his life. Despite his admiration for the Mahatma, Nehru finds much of his principles puzzles and even infuriates him. When he learns about Gandhi's fast against separate electorates for the depressed classes, he feels angry with him for his religious approach to politics. He writes in his autobiography:

I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set!

(AA: 370)

Nehru seems to be in a dilemma when he considers the rival ideologies of terrorism and non-violence and has reservations about both. He finds terrorism wanting because
it "usually represents the infancy of a revolutionary urge in a country. That stage passes, and with it passes terrorism as an important phenomenon" (AA: 175). On the other hand, "the non-violent method was not, and could be, a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results and by those results it would have to be finally judged" (AA: 84).

2.8.3.0 During his boyhood days, Chaudhuri is consumed with the spirit of nationalism, though he does not actively take part in politics. He is drawn towards Gandhism and considers him to be a saviour of the nation. But after a little while, he feels completely out of sympathy of Gandhian politics and even accuses Gandhi for his political short-sightedness. However, he states very clearly that Indians are not matured enough to understand 'Gandhism' and what it stands for. Therefore, they interpret it to fulfil their selfish ends. According to him, it is a good thing that Gandhi died at the right moment. Had he lived a little longer, he would have suffered more tortures from his own countrymen than the cruel bullets from his assassin's pistol.

2.8.3.1 As a student, Chaudhuri kept himself at an arm's length from active politics though he was imbued with the
spirit of nationalism. He was swept by 'the emotional fervours' of the nationalist movement under the leadership of Gandhi. During the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, Chaudhuri became "an almost idolatrous worshipper of his [Gandhi's] personality" (AUI: 414-15). But unfortunately, after sometime he finds himself out of sympathy with Gandhian politics. He accuses Gandhi for his short-sightedness and concludes that the launching of non-violence ended in failure as it created only mob violence. In order to justify his own political oscillations, Chaudhuri presents a historical analysis of Indian nationalism. He points out that xenophobia and exclusiveness are the motive force of Hindu nationalism. Though Gandhi infused new values into nationalism, he should not have converted nationalism into a mass movement by simplification and transformation. Unfortunately, the over simplification of moral problems brought about the degeneration of Gandhism. And therefore, "In the end Gandhism in politics and in practice came to stand for very little else but a congealed mass of atavistic aspirations and prejudices" (AUI: 430). To him, Indians are not matured enough to accept Gandhism as Gandhi understand it. They accepted their own version of Gandhism: and made it serve their own ends. When it went against their interests, they discarded it outright. Surprisingly Gandhi himself seemed to be aware of this fact
and that had made him wish for death, "which came with merciful swiftness from the pistol -- the sacred weapon of Indian nationalism -- of a Hindu fanatic" (AUI: 450). To a startled reader, Chaudhuri justifies his stand for using the expression "merciful swiftness". He continues, "If he had lived he would have suffered tortures infinitely more cruel and exeruciating than death" (AUI: 450).

2.9.0 Gandhi longs for an ideal society that would neither be a jungle nor a straight jacket, but a home that would provide the maximum freedom for the individual's growth, not of a few but of each and every one in the human family. Gandhi wanted to build Ram Rajya, an ideal state of happiness and plenty. Nehru looked with disfavour at Gandhi's pre-occupation with Khadi and untouchability, for be considered these as comparatively minor activities in relation to other important tasks. A good society, therefore, according to him, should be based on economic equality, which in reality meant equitbale distribution, not absolute equality. Real freedom could come only when there was social and economic freedom. Chaudhuri's autobiography is a mine of information regarding the social customs prevalent in the then Hindu Society of East Bengal. A true iconoclast, he has a dig at the social norms and values of the Bengali Hindus.
2.9.1.0 Gandhi's contribution in the field of social reform is important for the reconstruction of the life of the nation. In its wide sweep, it embraces almost all its aspects. The first and foremost item of this reform is the removal of untouchability. He also fights against child marriage and champions the cause of women uplift.

2.9.1.1 Himself married at the age of thirteen, Gandhi considers child-marriage as one of the social evils, which ought to be discarded. He can see "no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage" (SET: 105).

2.9.1.2 Gandhi considers untouchability as a cruel and inhuman institution. It violates human dignity and deadens the sensitivity of both the oppressor and the oppressed. He is opposed to all distinctions and bravely fights against economic exploitation. The poor peasants of Champaran in Bihar were exploited by the landlords and had to face untold sufferings. Thanks to Gandhi's non-violent efforts, the slain of indigo is washed and the tinkathia system is abolished. He also redressed the grievances of the peasants in the Kheda district. Gandhi also discusses at length the three general types of Satyagrah -- Civil Disobedience, Non-Cooperation and Fasting -- to overcome the social evils. To Gandhi, observance of fasts has religious significance and
it sharpens his spiritual and moral power. His disciples at Tolstoy Farm were convinced of the value of fasting and they took to fasting as a means of self-restraint. "Fasting can help to curb animal passion, only if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint" (SET: 250). So Holomes calls Gandhian philosophy "a social programme for the redemption of the world" (Holmes 1926: 147).

2.9.2.0 Nehru strives for a 'classless society' and his short association with the U.P. peasants clears his vision which ultimately leads to the abolition of the Zamindari system. He is also pained by the Hindu/Muslim conflicts and feels that the caste system has done much harm to the society.

2.9.2.1 Nehru does not rule out the use of democratic, peaceful and non-violent methods advocated by Gandhi. However, the deep class contradictions in the country aroused Nehru's doubts as to the effectiveness of the constitutional and non-violent methods of removing social injustices.

2.9.2.2 Since the very beginning of his political career, Nehru had been a bitter critic of landlordism. His association with the peasants of Uttar Pradesh had convinced
him that the only remedy of the sufferings of the hungry and poor farmers is the abolition of this system. He stayed with the farmers and had an opportunity to listen to their tales of woes and suffering. He refers to his reaction thus in his autobiography:

Looking at them and their misery and over-flowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life and petty politics of the city which ignored their vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India ... A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable (AA: 52).

This sympathy for the underdog eventually leads to his developing a confirmed faith in socialism at a later stage.

2.9.2.3 An Autobiography also highlights the various sources of Hindu/Muslim conflict in the society which took place during his time. According to him, these conflicts are "brutal and callous in the extreme" (AA: 361). Nehru comes to believe in a free, just and humane society. This belief leads him to the committed view that modern Indian society should be based on equality of social justice and
security for her citizens. He says: "Our final aim only be a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity to all" (AA: 271). Nehru feels that the caste system will deny the masses their 'benefits'. He adds further:

Not only must equal opportunities be given to all. But special growth must be given to backward groups so as to enable them to catch up to those who are ahead of them.

(AA: 122)

Thus An Autobiography reveals Nehru as an idealist advocating a "classless society".

2.9.3.0 A noteworthy nature of Chaudhuri's autobiography is also its 'social content'. Sometimes he assumes the role of a social moralist and preacher. At other times, he is essentially a social critic, bitterly criticizing societies for their lapses.

2.9.3.1 Inspite of the ubiquitous class-consciousness, the Bengali society was also ridden with communal consciousness. Inspite of the inter-caste marriages in Bengal, the communal consciousness was very powerful in that society. Chaudhuri's keen and subtle observation makes him remark
that there is no real social life in Bengal, what the Bengalis has is gregariousness rather than sociableness. He says:

There was very little social life among the Bengalis of Calcutta, as understood even in the more frivolous connotation of the words 'society' and 'mondi'... what the native of the city lacked in sociability he made up in gregariousness.

(Opinion: 397)

Opportunism and power-mongering are the worst traits of Bengali society. Chaudhuri's bitterness about them is vented out in his words: "The Bengalis of Calcutta were and still remain some of the finest virtuosos of factiousness. There is hardly any activity into which they do not practise, and hardly any activity into which it has not formed its way." (Opinion: 401) Tara Sinha observes:

From what we have learned about the social scene of East Bengal from the pen of Nirad Chaudhuri, we can say that in the Autobiography he is more of a social observer and less of a social writer... For the most part, he seems to be writing for a foreign audience who are not familiar with the

2.10.0 Gandhi advocates for the cause of women uplift even at the cost of his religious faith. As a secularist, Nehru believes in the equality of the sexes. Though the iconoclastic Chaudhuri understands the plight of women in India, he criticizes their extremely superstitious behaviour which passes all limits of indecency.

2.10.1.0 Gandhi makes no distinction between men and women. He gives 'woman', a supreme status and warns anyone who tries to suppress the rights of women, citing scriptures. He does not consider man's wrongs to be woman's rights in her pursuit of equality. In moral conduct he believes in levelling up and not in levelling down.

2.10.1.1 Gandhi always regards woman "as an incarnation of tolerance" (SET: 21). He rises to the height of his greatness, when he boldly suggests that all that is printed in the name of scriptures defaming women need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word. In a way, he is an androfeminist, who strives for the rights of women. Pyarelal writes: "His own contribution to the cause of the emancipation of women had been to present for acceptance
truth and Ahimsa in every walk of life. In this woman could be the unquestioned leader. She had only to extend her love to the whole of humanity and forget that she ever was or could be the object of man’s lust” (Pyarelal 1956: 308).

When he was young, Gandhi was a "cruelly kind husband" (SET: 60) to his wife, Kasturba. In his autobiography, he openly attributes this violent behaviour in his youth to his animal instinct along with the proverbial inferior status of women. He says,

A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father's roof, and a friend may put an end to the friendship. A wife, if she suspects her husband, will keep quite, but of her husband suspects her, she is ruined. Where is she to go? A Hindu wife may not seek divorce in a law court. Law has no remedy for her. And I can never forget or forgive myself for having driven my wife to that desperation (SET: 21).

Gandhi condemns the exploitation of women. Woman is the companion of man endowed with equal mental capacities and she is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. Therefore, the practice of dowry, the bonds of caste in marriage and forced widowhood
are social crimes perpetrated on women in India. Gandhi fought for the eradication of these social evils and the amelioration of women's condition.

2.10.2.0 Nehru too believes in the equality of men and women. He takes immense efforts to liberate women from the barbarous customs and conventions which curtailed their progress. He wants them to participate along with men in Satyagraha, the non-violent fight for the freedom of the country and he associates women in every activity that he undertakes. He feels proud when he comes to know of women marching with men to liberate the country from the clutches of slavery. His wife, Kamala, takes an active part in the struggle.

2.10.2.1 Nehru also believes in the equality of sexes. In the autobiography, when he describes India, he pictures it to be a "beautiful lady" (AA: 431) and his patriotism is expressed through colourful and imaginative language. This 'mother image' takes him to the hoary past of India and in a very short and emotional passage, he unrolls before us the panorama of Indian history:

India becomes **Bharat Mata**, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in
appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her (AA: 431).

2.10.2.2 Nehru takes upon himself the uphill task of liberating Indian women from the ancient customs and conventions, which restricted their all-round progress. He feels proud when women participates in the frontline activities of the freedom struggle. With a feeling of pride, he writes in his autobiography: "I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activity of my mother, wife and sisters, as well as many girl cousins and friends" (AA: 224). Nehru is astonished when he sees women cast off their purdhas and march shoulder for independence. He recollects this memorable spectacle in a moving language:

Many strange things happened in those days, but undoubtedly the most striking was the part of the women in the national struggle. They came out in large numbers from the seclusion in their homes and, though unused to public activity, threw themselves into the heart of the struggle . . . Enormous processions consisting of women along were taken out in all cities; and, generally, the attitude of the women was more unyielding than
that of the men. Often they became Congress 'dictators' in provinces and in local areas (AA: 215)

2.10.2.3 When Kamala Nehru was arrested, she was asked by a pressman for a message and she said "I am happy beyond measure and proud to follow in the foot-steps of my husband" (AA: 240). Nehru was amused to know her reply and his comments are worth quoting here:

Probably she would not have said just that if she had thought over the matter, for she considers herself a champion of women's right against the tyranny of man. But at that moment Hindu wife in her came uppermost and even man's tyranny was forgotten (AA: 240).

Nehru's praise for Kamala reminds us of Gandhi's tribute to Kasturba in his autobiography for her courage and cooperation in lending a helping hand to him in whatever he does.

2.10.3.0 Chaudhuri hates Bengali women for their extremely superstitious behaviour. The 'colour-consciousness' of the Bengalis make them choose only fair girls as their life-partners, subjecting the dark girls to untold miseries. He
also discusses familial quarrels between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law and disapproves of the joint family system.

2.10.3.1 The iconoclastic Chaudhuri is dissatisfied with the Bengali women because of their superstitious nature and the purity mania which exceeds all the reasonable limits. He understands the sad plight of the 'dark girls' because of the 'colour-consciousness' of the Bengalis. These girls are subject to private and public humiliation during the days of marriage. They have to bear with the perpetual reproaches of their mothers that they would never get married because they are dark in complexion.

2.10.3.2 Chaudhuri neatly sums up the jealousy and hatred between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, which are common in the Indian society. In Bengali families also the archetypal figures of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are the dominant ones, who have to 'reign or to 'serve' by turns.

2.10.3.3 The joint-family system of India creates a good deal of confusion to the non-Indians. The diversity of familial relation in a family provides a good humour for the westerners. "At five years old" says Chaudhuri, "I was the
uncle of half a dozen grown-ups and was addressed as such by them. At twelve, I became the grand-uncle of a baby which was not so very far removed from me by filiration (AUI: 51). Chaudhuri points out the parental selfishness as one of the striking features of the Bengali family. The absence of natural affection between parents and children is also discussed to some length in the autobiography.

2.11.0 The fact that Gandhi, Nehru and Chaudhuri are temperamentally not alike is a positive factor in this study, because their views on matters like religion, politics, society, family and sex are coloured by their temperament. We are therefore, able to realise the different aspects of the same issue while comparing their views on these matters. While Gandhi and Nehru had faith in the past and accepted as it was Chaudhuri betrays a profound sense of frustration after his iconoclastic life.

2.11.1 While Nehru is essentially a man of action and leader of the nation, Chaudhuri is an intellectual and a professional man of letters. As there is an urge for self-revelation as in that Gandhi and Nehru, there is an urge to criticise the follies of society as in the case of Chaudhuri, even knowing full well that the forth coming generation would ignore him.
2.11.2 While India may be a land composed of two faces in which the twin process of spiritualisation and secularism march hand in hand, it is undeniable that the third image of India professed by Chaudhur, viz., the iconoclastic India, has joined the other, to make the figure complete.