ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi (1869 to 1948), Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 to 1968) and Nelson Mandela (1918 to 2013) are the exemplary personalities of the twentieth Century. The values and principles they left behind are an unparalleled inheritance. These three names have become synonymous with peace, morality and non-violence. These political thinkers from three different continents have many common ideologies of Humanism. Though they never came face to face in the span of hundred years these proponents of humanism have shared a large ground of similarity. The critical study of autobiography as a genre has thoroughly been examined in the present research. The autobiography as a prose narrative is evaluated in detail in the second chapter. The distinct features and the historical development of the genre are analyzed with the help of research data collected from the texts. Autobiographies are categorized on the basis of their respective themes. The selected autobiographies are studied in the light of the noble ideology of humanism. The purpose of their writing the autobiographies is studied in details. Different values have been cherished by these three apostles of peace, justice and morality. They lived for their ideals and their cherished values. They have thoroughly been examined in the present study. Humanism is not an ‘ism’ in the general use of the word. It is an umbrella term. It stands for humanity in general. It is the foundation of the notions of human welfare in particular. All the concerns of the marginalized voiceless people are considered under the term humanism. The word Humanism is a crystallized conceptualization of various humanitarian movements all over the world over the ages. The ideology of humanism which is reflected in the autobiographies of these three noble apostles is worth studying and worth emulating too. The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter I is entitled as Humanism: A theoretical Framework. It is devoted to the theoretical aspects of humanism. Various definitions of the term ‘humanism’ are examined. This will enable everybody to understand the nature and scope of humanism. The chapter also discusses various concepts such as human manifesto, modern humanism, atheism, universal system and so on. An attempt is made in this chapter to study historiography of humanism including political and religious implications of the enlightenment. Various interpretations are offered in this chapter. It lays emphasis on
Gandhian humanism, moral humanism and the quest for nationalism. At the end of this chapter an attempt is made to study Mahatma Gandhi’s humanism thoroughly. The parameters of humanism have been drawn from the history of humanism and they are as follows:

1.1. Humanism: Local and Global
Humanism has its local as well as global principles. The local traditions, rituals, cultural trends and value system are an integral part of humanism. Every society has its core values and it needs to be preserved and respected. Global humanism is an inculcation of universal values and principles. Global values have their impact on local ideas and vice versa.

1.2. A Role of Science and Reason
Science is viewed as an opposition to anything that is superfluous, supernatural and illogical. Science is a practical answer to theological confusions. The scientific method is the only way to study and to inquire about the nature of our universe. Scientific thinking was propagated by great scientists like Galileo, Copernicus, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Ptolemy, Newton, Einstein and Stephan Hawkins. Scientific thinking was not normal in the medieval times.

1.3. Religious Implications:
Religion is not an anti thesis of science but it is one of the tools of human welfare if it is taken in a positive way. Faith, emotional bonds amongst all, respecting the power beyond human capacity, moral trustworthiness and unification of all humans are the blessings of religion. Religion can be regarded as a unifying element in the human discourse.

1.4. Individual and Social Freedom:
The French revolution of the eighteenth century was a path breaking moment in the history of humanism. The revolution broke down the orthodox narrow mindedness and celebrated the victory of human rights and human potential. Freedom, equality and brotherhood are the three values that the French Revolution offered to humanity. Modern humanist pays its deep gratitude towards the proponents of this new dawn in favor of humanism. Man is born free and if not, it is a duty of a humanist to free him from any kind of slavery.
1.5. A Concept of Ethics and Morality:
In the Renaissance period the word humanism was attributed to those who used to study Latin literature and arts. Humanists were the privileged people who used to study poetry, rhetoric, history, ethics and politics which were the various branches of moral sciences. These disciplines alone deal with morality and make man stand in accordance with the morality effectively to implement his freedom. Knowledge was attended with morality and virtue.

1.6. Gandhian Concept of Seven Deadly Sins:
Mahatma Gandhi wanted people to put into practice morality in the seven main fields of life. He enumerated the following seven Social Sins:

- Politics without Principles
- 1) Wealth without Work
- 2) Commerce without Morality
- 3) Knowledge without Character
- 4) Pleasure without Conscience
- 5) Science without Humanity
- 6) Worship without Sacrifice

1.7. Ahimsa (Non-Violence): Love Thyself
Mahatma Gandhi himself is synonymous with "Ahimsa" which he considered as the law of life and law of all religions. His definition of "Ahimsa" goes with universal love. As he propagated that all well cultured societies are based on the law of Non-Violence. The families, societies, nations and the humanity are bound together by ties of love and so are groups in the so called civilized society.

1.8. The Social Aspects of Humanism
Mahatma Gandhi’s ashram was his laboratory. What he believed theoretically, was practiced there. His mission was to improve the inner strength of a human. Moral religion was a supreme thing for him For the sake of it, Mahatma Gandhi incorporated five vows or oaths for the development of morality in his Community center.

1.9. The Quest for Truth: Satya
Non-violence is the basic proponent to seek and to establish Truth. Non-violence and truth are inseparable. It is virtually impossible and impractical to separate them. They are
like two sides of the same coin or two banks of the same river. It has to observe, nor to reverst. Ultimately non-violence is the means of Truth and it is the end.

1.10. Tolerance: Equality and Harmony amongst all
This pledge personifies in its meaning, the real spirit of humanism and coexistence among all the theological orders of the world. Mahatma Gandhi as proponent of humanism has blessed us the ultimate solution to the aggravated and cruel difficulty of pseudo secularism. Humanism did not have an anti-religious or anti-Christian, anti-Muslim temper. The humanist vision of harmony aims for two characters; one is the social functions of religion and the tolerance of the larger ethnic community.

1.11. A Quest for Nationalism: Socio-Political Aspect
The autobiography is originally written in Gujarati and was later translated into English by Mahadev Desai who was Mahatma Gandhi’s shadow. Mahatma Gandhi’s direct interventions and supervision is the result of the form in which it is now available to us. It is a narration of Mahatma Gandhi’s self-experiences. The depiction is his quest for humanism and national patriotism is not different from his quest for self-actualization in the search of truth.

1.12 The Spirituality: An Unending Search for Truth
Spirituality is a controversial term. It has been defined by all philosophers and ideologists in different ways. Gautama Buddha has developed a spiritual practice of Vipashyanain which a technique of meditation which is given to search one’s identity and to master the mind that craves for materialistic life.

1.13 Holistic Approach towards Life:
To begin with holism which deals with analysis and interpretation of the mind and the body is a significant term in the humanism studies. Mahatma Gandhi’s holistic approach is a journey of a human being from innocence to maturity. One can achieve maturity in physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels.

1.14 Concept of a New Human Being:
Humanism is a philosophy that keeps its highest faith in human rather than God and other super natural beliefs. It affirms its ability and responsibility to create meaningful and ethical society based on humanitarian values. In the study of Humanism of Mahatma Gandhi a true Humanist or an ideal human has following qualities.
Chapter II is entitled as *Autobiography as Genre of Literature*. In this chapter an attempt is made to examine various elements of autobiography as a genre of literature. It throws light on the historical development of autobiography from 19th century to the present time. The chapter also makes classification of autobiographies according to their nature of narration. Towards the end of this chapter, the relation between autobiography and humanism is established.

Chapter III is entitled as *Mahatma Gandhi’s Quest for Humanism*. An attempt is made in this chapter to discuss and analyze Mahatma Gandhi’s ideology of humanism. His spiritual quest, way of living, and his concept of humanism which he followed in all the stages of the ancient Ashram system and related aspects are studied in details. The fourteen parameters of humanism is applied to his autobiography. The evaluation on the basis of these parameters helps to draw the different aspects on humanism found in Mahatma Gandhi’s life.

Chapter IV is entitled as *Long Walk to Freedom: A document of humanism*. An attempt is made to study in detail Nelson Mandela’s vision and practice of humanism. This autobiography, ‘Long Walk to Freedom’ is thoroughly examined keeping in view his concepts of humanism. The views of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela about India are also discussed in details. The struggle of Nelson Mandela forms an integral part of the chapter. The fourteen parameters of humanism is applied to the autobiography of Nelson Mandela. The humanism reflected in the autobiography is evaluated on the basis of these parameters.

Chapter V is entitled as *Martin Luther King Jr.’s Humanism in his Autobiography*. It is devoted to the discussion on humanism as advocated by Martin Luther King Jr. An attempt is made to discuss the traits of Humanism as seen through the eyes of Martin Luther King Jr. This chapter throws light on the humanitarian and non-violent struggle that Martin Luther King Jr undertook in democratic America and in which he eventually succeeded. The impact of Gandhian values is an integral part of King Jr’s struggle. The fourteen parameters of humanism are applied to the autobiography of Martin Luther King.

Chapter VI is the concluding chapter which deals with the findings of the research work. The chapter puts forth that humanism is the foundation of human welfare and equality is
the only way to live peacefully and harmoniously. Autobiography as a literary genre helps to understand the inner significance of the subject. Mahatma Gandhi had made a very profound influence on both Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. The parameters of humanism has been drawn and applied to these autobiographies. This novel research study will help the future scholars in their study of autobiography as a genre, the parametrical study of humanism, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr’s humanism.