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The Personal as Public: An Autobiographical Perspective on Gandhi's

*The Story of my Experiments with Truth*

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By

Prakash Singh Bist

Roll No.: 6124

Regd. No. : 6-2-329-74-2011

Central Department of English

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Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Prakash Singh Bist has completed his thesis entitled “The Personal as Public: An Autobiographical Perspective on Gandhi’s *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from October 2018 to April 2019. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Lecturer, Diwakar Upadhyay

Supervisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “The Personal as Public: An Autobiographical Perspective on Gandhi’s *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Prakash Singh Bist has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee:

Members of the Research Committee:

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Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

Head of the Department

Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Prakash Singh Bist

## The Personal as Public: An Autobiographical Perspective on Gandhi's

### *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*

#### Abstract

*This research examines Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography The Story of My Experiments with Truth and unravels the instances of Gandhi's personal and public life that are significant parts of public history. For this, this paper uses Sidonie Smith and Linda Anderson's theories of autobiography in order to scrutinize the life of Gandhi and associate his important instances to the public history. This association thus leads to the finding that Gandhi's life determines and shapes the history of India and Pakistan. Therefore this paper claims that the autobiography of Gandhi is less of his autobiography but more of a historical document resembling Indo-Pak history at many instances. Such a finding leads to a result that contrasts the normal expectations of an autobiography that it explains an individual's life and enables the readers to understand that even an autobiographical text can parallel public history in carrying intra and international facts.*

Keywords: Autobiography, Indian History, Life Narratives, Experience, Identity, Agency,

This paper explores Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography *The Story of My Experiment with Truth* and highlights its resemblances with the public history. It analyzes this autobiography from the perspective of autobiographical theory for the interpretation of life narratives primarily based on Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's scholarship and Linda Anderson's, Stephen Greenblatt's and Louis A. Montrose's theoretical insights autobiographical theory and New-historicism respectively. Autobiographical theorists opine sometimes people read autobiographical narrative as historical documents, a source of evidence for the analysis of historical movements or

person. From this perspective, autobiographical narrative and history writing seem to be similar. And New-historicism theorist's insights help to read contextual reading through text and context. Their theoretical ideas help to better explore and interpret Gandhi's personal history of that time which is presented in details in his autobiography. This research particularly focuses on the issue of Gandhi's life narrative in which his works, words, body, name, identity, his political carrier and his religion make him a public figure.

Put simply, autobiography is a writing about oneself. It has elements like memory, experience, embodiment of the body, identity and agency. These elements in Gandhi's autobiography make him a public figure who represents a large proportion of the Indian history. Therefore, this research claims that Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is not only a personal narrative but also the history of India. This autobiography alludes to different important incidents which occurred during his life time like: the birth of *Satyagraha*, the *Khilafat* movement, the non-violence movement of 1922, the birth of *Khadee*, and the partition of two nations.

Generally, if any renowned person writes about his/her life narration, his/her personal life becomes public, because his/her self gets changed into the national history. In this regards, the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi *The Story of my Experiment with Truth* is the true reflection of past, his whole life, which carries his personal history, India's history and the history of others who are related to the autobiographer as well.

*The Story of My Experiment with Truth* is an autobiography of Gandhi who was born at Porbandar on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869. After finishing his matriculation in India, he prepared to go to England for his further studies. He left India for studying Advocacy in English society. He then joined and completed his Graduate degree from the UK. After

1893, he went to South Africa to fight for the right of the coolies. In South Africa, he also organized Natal Indian Congress to fight for the British. While travelling by train, he sat in first class seat but he was thrown out by a white man even though he had first class ticket. He contributed to the voiceless commoners in safeguarding their rights. He fought in the Boer war for the right of the Indian coolies. Then he returned to India in 1912 from South Africa. Then, he became a lawyer but could not continue his profession. He joined the Congress party. Unfortunately, Lokmanya Gangadhar Tilak, the former president of India had died and Gandhi joined Indian Congress party in India. So, Gandhi became the leader of Congress party. He conducted many movements like “non-violence” and “Sabermati Dandni March”.

Gandhi was the pioneer of ‘pledge for truth’. The events in which he was involved directly or indirectly were The Birth of *Satyagraha*, the *Khilafat* movement, the non-violence movement of 1922, the birth of *Khadee*, and the partition of two nations. He attempted at improving the lives of women, improving the lives of families, strengthening their community, and creating more opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. He committed himself to fighting for the world. He saw the cunningness of English people and worked to expose it. He saw oppression. So, he worked to end it. He saw violence, poverty, discrimination and inequality and decided to make their voices heard for making healthy and clean India from the English rule .Therefore, this research is significant to my reader to know how an individual narrative can be a public history. Therefore, the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi is the true reflection of past, his whole life, which carries his personal history and more than that history of India, Pakistan, South Africa and the subalterns living there.

*The Story of My Experiments with Truth* has been critically examined, interpreted and reviewed by a number of critics and historians mentioned below. They

concentrated on different ideas like Religion, subalternity , ecology and philosophy.

Firstly, the critic Javed Majeed examines Gandhi's autobiography and states that

Gandhi's book digs out the truth claims of Gandhi. In his article "Truth and

Translability" he claims:

There are two crucial sites of translation in Gandhi's work which is easily translated because of self-presentation and another is his engagement with *the Bhagawad Gita*. His connection here is that the *Gita* is not a fix text whose doctrinal meanings are effortlessly conveyed by Gandhi and the others. He is arguing that *the Gita* is a repository of 'Truth' for Gandhi particularly because of way it is importantly makes with translation as both a mode of thinking and a process. (303)

The above lines imply that Gandhi's autobiography mainly has two important things;

one is self- presentation and another is its engagement with *The Bhagawad Gita*.

Here, Javed Majeed questions Gandhi's autobiography by arguing that even *Gita* is not truthful text then how his autobiography's meanings based on it are worthy for others.

In the same way, Farah Godrej in his review "Ascetics, warriors, and a Gandhian Ecological Citizenship" claims that *The Story of my Experiment with Truth* is totally eco-friendly and his non-violence movement favors the environment.

Gandhi's idea of non-violence is required in order to understand contemporary environmentalism. As Gandhi belongs to Khatwada or Baniya family who do not eat meat, he takes oath that he becomes a vegetarian. So, his ideas helps to conserve and protect the environment. Furthermore, Farah Godrej states that Gandhi's autobiography is purely eco-friendly. He states:

Gandhi used his experience with the scattered migrants of the Indian Diasporas in South Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere to partly construct the nationalist doctrine that he later brought to India. That movement called ‘revolutionary Atlantic’ where proletariat Indians could have bonded with other exploited races in a militant consciousness across ethnic and national divisions was not part of Gandhi’s resistance, indeed it was impeded by it. However, Gandhi’s focus on the Diaspora had an impact on Caribbean societies, through the agency of another migrant transnational from the side of the fence English clergy man. (43)

The above lines clarify that his autobiography talks about the purely eco-friendly situation. It is because his autobiography focuses on the non-violence, where warriors were thirsty for the blood and the monks were ascetics, who emphasized the peace. So, his autobiography mainly claims that the ascetics were the best warriors to save the ecology.

Likewise, another critic Vinay Lal, in his review “Gandhi’s West, the west Gandhi” digs out that Gandhi was fully influenced from the western culture and western day to day activities influenced over Gandhi. So, Vinay Lal opines:

Mohan Das Gandhi, who made his way from the coastal town of Porbandar in western India to London and South Africa iconic figure around the world, is commonly believed to have had, at best, an ambivalent relationship with the west. Gandhi was a relentless critic of modern industrial civilization, and more than one occasion he describe western civilization is ‘Satanic’ on the other hand, there is a strong body of scholarly opinion that holds. (281)

Gandhi portrays as ambivalent. His philosophy is link with west. In his autobiography, we can see he is influenced from Western philosophers like Leo

Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, Ruskin and the like. In India also he works first in west coast line Porbander, South Africa coastal line.

Here, Vinaya Lal argues that Gandhi is the West and the West is Gandhi. Gandhi is influenced from the Western philosophers. In his autobiography, we know that he read Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's book, Christianity Holy Bible and so on. Therefore, he is too much influenced from the West.

In the same way, Ashwini Tambe in his article "Gandhi's 'Fallen' Sisters: Difference and the National Body Politic" claims that Mahatma Gandhi is a Social Scientist of India and his autobiography is a Social science. He constructs, reconstructs and strengthens India in different ways. Ashwini Tambe sees through the lens of social Scientist. It is because Gandhi promotes hand spinning; (made *Khadi*) fasting activities typically carried by women- as mass national tactics, and rejects militarism. He mobilizes large number of women as volunteers for the congress party and renders more enterprise to the nationalist project. For him, Gandhi's autobiography is an entrepreneurship text, where he claims that there are number of entrepreneurs who make India as Factory of many things for instance religion, *Khadi* and civil- disobedience. Ashwini Tambe further claims:

It is marking for India the day of 'Religious awakening' in an allusion to the campaign of civil disobedience protesting the Rowlatt act. He reminded his followers of the beginning of *Satyagraha*. The struggle of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the struggle for *swaraj* or Indian self-rule. Gandhi drew attention to what he described as the impulse of *Swaraj*. To bring about spiritual awakening in us ... to go from untruth to truth, from darkness into light' through the civilization of the self and reining in of the sense. (47)

These lines suggest that Gandhi wants to bring the spiritual awakening on the Indian people, thinking that maximum of the people can come out from dark to light, falsity to truth. He made a plan of civil-disobedience, Satyagraha, *Swarj* and so on. In this way, he made one kind of civilization which omits all negative vibes from the people through religious awakening.

Likewise, Stephen Hay argues that Gandhi's text is full of his psychological thinking in his article "Digging Up Gandhi's Psychological Roots" He Presents:

What I was trying to do, I reflected, in collecting, ruminating on, and writing from an unprecedented mass of evidence on Gandhi and his family during his formative years, was not a biography so much as a "psychograph"—a study of how his psyche, or character, developed in those early year of the more important traits of character that some of the evidence suggests and none of it contradicts. Of these, three are particularly significant because Gandhi displayed them so clearly and effectively in the latter half of his life. (209)

These lines show that Gandhi's text is a kind of psyche of Gandhi. In the beginning of his life, he did not follow his psyche but in his matured life he followed his psyche. He helped who were helpless, he gives voice to voiceless.

The above mentioned critics examined Gandhi's autobiographical narrative as a historical document, a source of evidence for the analysis of historical movements and events or a personal document but, none of them analyzed this autobiography as a personal narrative which projects public history. As an autobiography tells all aspects of his/her life which reflects socio-cultural context, rhetorical aims and his/her narrative shifts within the time and space, Gandhi's autobiography also reflects the socio-cultural and political history of India. Therefore, the main significance of this

research paper is to explore the Indian history highlighted in Gandhi's personal narratives and how his individual life influence can shape the whole nation's history.

Autobiography means writing about the self. One of the writers Philippe Lejeune gives the definition: "We call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality" (qtd. in Smith and Watson 2). The term 'autobiography' was coined by the eighteenth century working class woman Ann Yearsley. Nowadays, the most commonly used term for life writing is 'autobiography'. At present, Autobiography does not mean that practice of self-referential writing which began only at the end of the eighteenth century. In earlier centuries, terms such as "memoir" the life, the book of my life 'confession', 'essays of myself' etc. were used to mark the writer writing about himself/herself. Also other terms were coined at the end of the nineteenth century like testimonial, auto ethnography, psycho biography, etc. to set the boundaries about the kind of and context of self-referential writing. This sub-categorization is important within life-writing because through it we know what kind of self-referential text is that writing. In other genres, readers do not believe what writers say. But, in life narrative we believe because it carries the ethos of the autobiographer. Thus, Autobiographical theories help to find out how a single person influences or shapes the whole Indian history.

Simply, personal narrative as a public history means personal life events are public events in some ways. The life of common has lived and the story of their life is significant only to themselves or their relatives at most. But the life of a historical man has lived marks its significance even in the history. Any piece of writing his/her personal events may reflect public history. The well-known autobiographical theorists

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for interpreting Life Narrative* argue that “Sometimes people read autobiographical narrative as historical documents, a source of evidence for the analysis of historical movements or person. From this perspective, autobiographical narrative and history writing seem to be synonymous” (10). These lines mean even history and life narrative are similar. This also suggests that, sometimes even life narrative carries more history than the official history. Gandhi's autobiography is thus both history and autobiography. In normal case, when any individual writes about the stories of his/her life, writing makes immense significance in his upcoming days, but it rarely becomes significant to the nation as a whole. But, Gandhi's personal story, unlike other autobiographers' is less a personal narrative and more a historical document.

Sometimes, the text itself carries the history of the contemporary time it highlights and presents the contemporary events. The whole way of life represented in a piece of writing helps the reader to know the then history through the text. There is a reciprocal relationship between history and text. Text is another way to know the public history. One of the theorist Louis A. Montrose, in the article *the Poetics and Politics of culture* states that the new orientation to history can be characterized as a “reciprocal concern with the history of text and textuality of history” (24). It means any kind of texts can carry the history of the contemporary time. An autobiography includes important incident of an author from birth to death. Yet, Gandhi's autobiography is not purely a personal text although it carries many things which had occurred in his time. For example it encapsulates not only his personal history rather it includes many issues of the time like poverty, oppression and exploitation of British upon Indian, and the complexities that were surpassed in the making of India. So, there is a reciprocal relation between historicity of text and textuality of history.

Gandhi's text highlights many circumstances which show how his personal narratives become the Public history. Gandhi narrates:

My first step was to call a meeting of all the Indians in Pretoria and to present to them a picture of their condition in the Transvaal. The meeting was held at the house of Sheth Haji Muhammad Haji Joosab, to whom I had a letter of introduction. It was principally attended by Meman merchants, though there was a sprinkling of Hindus as well. The Hindu population in Pretoria was as a metter of fact, very small. (141)

These above lines reflect the textuality of history and historicity of the text. Gandhi narrates: that as a politician he cannot do any work in isolation. Since no one can fulfill his/her desire oneself. One needs the other's help. Mahatma Gandhi is also an individual. So, he also needs helps and he wanted to help other. So, in his life time he meets a numbers of people. At that time, Indians faces many problems which were incited by English ruler when the English Governor wants to suppress the Indian coolie in South Africa. Gandhi promises Gandhi to share his knowledge of Advocacy and shares parts Natal Congress party. This incident 'Seeking touch with Indians' is Gandhi's personal but it becomes social when we look this incident through the autobiographical lens of identity.

In the same way, Michel Foucault claims that there are some laps, gaps and some silence in the official history. He focuses genealogical history is forever remains in unsolved debate in nature. It assumes that, it fills the laps and gaps of the undrawn history. Foucault analyzed as:

Discursive regimes. Every day we know ourselves, or experience ourselves, through multiple domains of discourse, domains that serve as cultural registers for what counts as experience and who counts as an experiencing subject. But

since discourses are historically specific, what counts as experience changes over time with broader cultural transformations of collective history (qtd Smith and Watson 26).

It means, genealogical history hides all aspects of history, which remains unseen and unheard about. In Gandhi's text, there is also a genealogical history. Gandhi puts unknowingly light on his times history. Gandhi asserts: "The villages were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the wells surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy. The elder people badly needed education in cleanliness. They were all suffering from various skin diseases" (475). Through these lines, reader can visualize the pathetic condition of people caused by poor sanitation and illiteracy. Everywhere there are diseases and slums. Reading Gandhi's text, India's Prime Minister Narendra Damodar Modi ran the campaign Clean and Green India from Gandhi's birth anniversary on October 2. Therefore, we can find the laps and gaps in archeological history from the text. It is not his personal life that is presented but it is the difficult life of the people that is presented. So, his personal events represent genealogical history of the time.

Sidoine Smith and Julia Watson describe about the body and how it carries the history of author's time.

The body and embodiment as sites of knowledge and knowledge production, life narrators do several things. They negotiate cultural norms determining the proper uses of bodies. They engage, contest, and revise cultural norms determining the relationship of bodies to specific sites, behaviors, and destinies. And they reproduce, mix, or interrogate cultural discourses defining and distinguishing the normative and ab-normative body (41-42).

It means, Gandhi's body play vital role to make him a representative of the Indians. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* portrays the history of in India of the colonial period. The chapters like the Boer war 'The Birth of *Satyagraha*, 'Passion for Unity', 'The Rowlatt Bills and my Dilemma, 'Case withdrawn, Intimate European contact, and 'The Khilafat Against Cow Protection' clearly explains the history of anti-colonial movement. But, it is associated with too many people. Gandhi exemplifies:

I cannot forbear from recording a sweet reminiscence of how human nature shows itself at its best in moments of trial. We were marching towards Chieveley Camp where Lieutenant Roberts, the son of Lord Roberts, had received a mortal wound. Our corps had the honour of carrying the body from the field. It was a sultry day -- the day of our march. Everyone was thirsting for water. There was a tiny brook on the way where we could slake our thirst. But who was to drink first ? We had proposed to come in after the tommies had finished. But they would not begin first and urged us to do so, and for a while a pleasant competition went on for giving precedence to one another.

(239)

These lines depict how Gandhi's body represents history. He was attended many movements where he was directly involved. He represents most of the events which had happened during the colonial time.

According to the theories of life narrative, human beings have two identities; one is his personal identity and another is his communal identity. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson claim in their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative* Quote that identity is in flux. It clarifies the definition of identity, how identity made or how it will be changed in course of time. Identity is made on the basis of potential, placement and displacement. So, it does not remain same.

Therefore, identity is different and common at the same time. In Gandhi's autobiography, we see Gandhi's identity changing according to place and space. Sometimes, he is a "lawyer", sometimes he is Mahatma Gandhi, sometimes he is "Bapu" and sometimes he is political leader of the Congress party. His Position also shifts from place to place. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state:

Our working definition of autobiographical or life narrative, rather than specifying its rules as a genre or form, understands it as a historically situated practice of self-representation. In such texts, narrators selectively engage their lived experience through personal storytelling. Located in specific times and places, they are at the same time in dialogue with the personal processes and archives of memory. (14)

When we apply these ideas in Gandhi's autobiography, we know that Gandhi is not only an individual with single identity but he has multiple identities analyzed from his different relationships. He is male in the sense of his gender, he is Gujarati in the sense of his community, he is an Indian in the sense of nationality, and he is an Eastern philosopher in the sense of his world view.

Another Autobiography critic, Jeremy Popkin suggests "Privilege a temporal frame work based on the individual author's life span whereas historical narrative takes place in collective time" (qtd in Smith 11). These lines give the author the temporal frame which makes up his/her historical narratives. It is therefore the place gives identity to the author of the text. Gandhi's autobiography also has autobiographical narrators and also offers the political and cultural context of the historical past which is clearly seen. Being an Indian political leader, his spoken words are not only his words, these words represent the voice of many Indians and Indian memory or the history. He begins *satyagraha* which means (*sat*=truth

*agraha*= firmness). Even Gandhi writes about this incident which matches with the events historians Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf include in their book *A Concise History of India*. They state

I found that the term ‘passive resistance’ is too narrowly constructed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak that it could be characterized by hatred, and that could finally manifest itself as violence. I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of Indian movement. It was clear that a new word be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle. (357)

These lines show that Gandhi found a new weapon ‘Passive Resistance’ to fight against British. He looked behind the history and found that, many of the movements were fought with gun and bullets. In the same way Gandhi’s narrates “anyone who wishes to consider these experiments in their strict chronological order will now do well to keep the history of Satyagraha in South Africa before him” (168). He wanted to replace those weapons with *Satyagraha* where one does not use any violent kinds of weapons to fight against the system. This is the idea of Mahatma Gandhi who planned to chase the Europeans from the Indian land. This is the most powerful weapon for struggling. He wants less death of minimal people and loss of their property in Indian— movement. So, his personal narrative is not only his own history, it is the history of public.

In addition, historians Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf write about Indian history where they talk about the *Satyagraha* which is an important aspect of Gandhi’s autobiography. This *Satyagraha* is a concept originally propounded by M.K.Gandhi. It does not only become part of Gandhi’s narration but this incident represents Gandhi’s work that followed by many people. Fighting without arms and weapons and using no high voices against the opponents is known as passive

resistance as defined and practiced by Gandhi. Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf state “Fighting in passive is not violent way that is passive resistance fought from the soul. Gandhi states “violence was not remedy for India’s ill and that her civilization required the use of different higher weapon for self-protection” (291). Thus, the concept of *Satyagraha* which is his own concept as mentioned a several times in Gandhi’s autobiography is an important aspect of Indian and world history. So, this autobiography serves more as a historical document than a personal one.

In the same way, when we go through Gandhi’s autobiography we will find the same history which has been written in Metcalf’s history book. The historians illuminate:

In 1919 the All-India Khilafat Committee was formed. In the harsh repression that followed the war, Gandhi, other Congress leaders, and the Khilafatists would come together in a shared moral vision that saw British perfidy in policies that denied Indians their rightful rule, exploited the poor, and created a new domain of European imperialism in the Muslim lands of the Middle East. (201)

The above lines depict the unity of Indian people who are ready to fight against the British for the betterment of marginalized people. After the end of the World War I, the British Empire reached in its climax. So, this empire wanted to rule over the world and exploit it and this English desire affected India too. Therefore, Gandhi, Muslim brothers and other Indian desired to be free from the chain of English ruler. They unified in one chain which was known as *Khilafat* Movement in India.

In 1919, in India, Khilafat committee is made to fight against English legislature. It is because in the First World War, Ottoman Empire (the empire of Muslim) loses to England and England wants to redraw the boundary of Turkey and

wants to make Turkey a secular nation. There Muslims wanted to save Islams. So, in India Ali brother, Mohomad Ali and Shaukut Ali Muslim leader protest against the British rulers. British rulers arrest the protesters. In that time, Mohan Das Karamchanda Gandhi had a passion to bring Muslim brothers to his camp to work together to chase the English rulers. That was the unity of Hindus and Muslims. So, he meets Ali brothers to release them and promises to boycott government school, court, college and council committee and vows for the, promotion of khadee, prohibition of Alcohol and not to practice of untouchability.

For the first time in the Indian history, Muslim and Hindu participated in mass movement against the English ruler. That was choice to include the Muslims in his movement. He is successful in uniting Muslim to chase the British from India. That is solely his personal story but it is associated to the history of whole Muslim and Hindus. So, his personal narrative is a public history.

The autobiographer is an authoritative person to say any things which he has written in his autobiography. The narrator's experience is the primary kind of evidence asserted in autobiographical acts, the basis on which readers are invited to consider the narrator a uniquely qualified authority. The globe knows him and his philosophy is followed by many people in many nation. Therefore, his words are valid, transparent, subjective and truthful. Life narrative's theorists Sidone and Julia Watson "the experience represented in an autobiographical narrative seems simply personal; it is anything but merely personal. Mediated through memory and language, "experience" is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present" (24). It means, if anyone worked in those organizations which are mentioned on very definition, than only his/her voice can be

heard. Gandhi is one of them, who had an authoritative person to claim his words because of his Experience. Gandhi claims:

With the permission of the court I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order passed under section 144 of Cr. P.C [...] I have no other motive, and cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differently. (467)

Here, many of the political leaders follow his principle to overcome the turmoil by the means of *The Satyagraha*. The same incident is matching with Gandhi's narratives "Gandhi in time abandoned 'passive resistance' as a description of his strategy in favor of the more active satyagraha, or truth force. For Gandhi, the pursuit of satyagraha involved a range of behaviors that together would create an India, both of individuals and as a nation, capable of self-rule".(173) These lines depict how the leader around the world follows his principles to overcome the situation in a calm way.

Sidone Smith and Julia Watson define 'experience as authoritative as one of the subjects of autobiography wherein the autobiographical subject is the most authoritative individual to describe his/her experience. So, the narrator has ethos to prove that the incidents are factual and transparent. "The narrator's experience is the primary kind of evidence asserted in autobiographical acts, the basis of which readers are invited to consider the... narrative authenticity; it validates certain claims as truthful; and it justifies writing and publicizing the life story" (Smith 27). The name Gandhi written in the cover page of the autobiography authorizes the experience of Gandhi. The reader feels that his words in the text represent the experience of Gandhi. So, they read that piece of writing to know their history or to know what had had

happened in his time. Gandhi's autobiography presents incidents where he participates personally for the betterment and the welfare of the nation. For example 'Case Withdrawn' (467), 'The Birth of Khadi' (551) 'My Part in the War' (389) and the like incidents.

Similarly, Peter Fritzsche in *The Case of Modern Memory* claims that "Both national history and autobiography gave unity, coherence, and priority to the particulars of time and place. Nations are thought . . . to have definite historical origins . . . to be bounded in space, as indicated on current maps" (97). In the similar way, Gandhi offers his experiences that are valid, transparent and factual which unites the national history and his own life. Even he has ethos to say what he has done in his life. His experience is authoritative in his text. When Gandhi saw the *Chamaparan* incidents, many casualties were happening that were against human race and he decided to take case withdrawn that is the only way to save his own people. The incident was related with Gandhi's personal life, but his personal life saved many lives. These incidents which are written in his autobiography are written even in the history of India.

If any person works in temporality, it comes in his piece of writing. Narrator sheds light upon his life as well as others life. At that time, he/she includes his time in his piece of writing. Temporality shows how single work represents entire nation's work. One of the autobiographers Peter Fritzsche in *The Case of Modern Memory* argues that "personal acts of remembering relied on general structures of temporality; texts in the private sphere were in large part constituted by the texture of the public sphere" (111). Even in Gandhi's autobiography chapter 'The *Birth of Khadi* (551), he explains how he strengthens India in his time. In India, *Khadi* is the indigenous custom which is made from cotton, which was used seen in Gandhi's life time and

even at the present. He thinks that there is only one medium to alleviate poverty from the nation. That is *The birth of Khadi*.

He recalled the citizen of India and told them, “I do not remember to have seen a handloom or spinning wheel when in 1908 I described it in *Hind Swaraj* as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India. In that book I took it as understand that anything that helped India to get rid of the grinding poverty of her masses would in the same process also established Swaraj” (551). These lines show the contemporary history of the people of India. During the colonial time, India was living on utter poverty, was dependent upon British colonies and most of the people lived in countryside where many of the people took debt from the federalist. They were not free. They were like the slaves. So, Gandhi came from South Africa and saw Indian people’s living standard which was not worth a man. They were living a hellish life in their own nation. He thought he can empower the countryside’s economy. That was *the Birth of Khadi* which helped to save money to buy western cloth. So, Gandhi was the pioneer of *The Birth of Khadi*.

In additions, “the Birth of Khadi” brought the change on thinking pattern of the rural innocent people. They have a sense of nationality. So, most of the people burnt the English cloth and wore the Khadi cloth, and so did Gandhi. There is a saying in English ‘If you want a change, change yourself’. Mahatma Gandhi had also done the same. *The Birth of Khadi* is not only the personal narrative but the history in relationality of Mahatma Gandhi. The Historician, Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf in his book *A Concise History of India*, write about Indian history where they claim:

The khadi movement, through the All-India Spinners Association, took on organizational form. For Gandhian nationalists, khadi’s significance extended

far beyond its role as a signifier of swadeshi production... whose varied clothing styles visually announced their unfitness for self-rule, khadi constructed an India that was united, disciplined, and cohesive. (220)

This above paragraph also shows the same thing which is seen in Gandhi's autobiography. It also reflects how Gandhi helps to make the *Khadi* in India and strengthens Indian people strong in his own way.

In this autobiography, the autobiographer represents culture and low culture which carries that personal history and others history. About it, George Misch argues that "on the autobiographer roles as public presence is a part of his scheme of division between the 'high culture' of achieved and elite civilizations and the 'Low culture' of achieved and elite civilization and 'Lower culture' of popular of everyday forms" (qtd in Smith and Watson 114). It means, autobiographer represents the mixture of both public and private sphere events. So, in Gandhi's autobiography also, he states that "I wrote a letter to lord Crewe, acquainting him with these facts, and expressing our readiness to be trained for ambulance work, if that should be considered a condition precedent to the acceptance of our offer" (393). He was the man who inspired the world to remain far from the war and lead the universe to blend the human heart with these qualities of harmonization, brotherhood and reconciliation. He indirectly involves in the war but, he prepares for the soldiers welfare. At that time, the condition of soldiers were very pathetic and predicament. So, he wanted to prevent from that horrendous war result. He makes an agreement with the English and sends Indian soldier to fight from English side.

In the same way, Gandhi plays a vital role in public sphere in the Second World War where he follows path of peace and non- violence. His philosophy of non- violence and peace is spread all over the globe. Many renowned political leaders like

Martin Luther King Jr, mentions in his autobiography about Gandhi's philosophy Roger Burns in *Martin Luther King, JR. A Biography* claims: "February 1959 visits India for to month to Study Mohandas Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence" (xii). Nelson Mandela too in his autobiography *Long walk to Freedom* mentions about the Gandhi's philosophy. "We explained that we thought the time had come for mass action along the lines of Gandhi's nonviolent protests in India and the 1946 passive resistance campaign, asserting that the ANC had become too docile in the face of oppression. The ANC's leaders, we said, had to be willing to violate the law and if necessary to go prison for their beliefs as Gandhi had" (72). The theorists Sidoine Smith and Julia Watson argue in their book that *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for interpreting Life Narrative* that "The "inside," or personally experienced, self has a history. While it may not be meaningful to an objective "history of times," it is history of self-observation, not a history observed by others" (5). It means that can a single autobiography even influence the people of contemporary time. Gandhi's autobiography also influences the people of his time. His ideas are that reflect in the people of that time. Therefore, a person's story can influence the whole people and the nation and make a historical impact.

As we know that, agency is the medium to transfer any kind of idea, news, money and even people from the source to the determination. So, here agency is also the medium to make one single entity turn into public a figure. The well-known critic Louis Althusser argued: that "subject is a subject of ideology-not in the narrow sense of propaganda but in the broad sense of the pervasive cultural formations of the dominant class [...] the power of coercive state institutions to conform subjects to particular behaviors, beliefs, and identities –such as the military and the police" (qtd in Smith 42). Here, these lines talk about how the subject of

ideology is transferred from place to place and person to person. In Gandhi's ideology of 'non-violence', 'spirituality' and 'Do or Die' are disseminated among the mass through autobiography. These very words are frequently used in his autobiography and as a result maximum of the people use them in their life. If we see these words from the lens of agency, it opines his personal narrative is a public history through the medium of language. His language is his agency.

In the wake of the revisionist historiography presented by the new historicists in the United States, a significant change has occurred in the method of interpretation of literary text. A historical approach is a new trend to see the text through the contextual way. The other approaches such as new criticism only emphasizes that the text itself has sufficient meaning, and post-structuralism focuses on the linguistic stylistic which created a gap between interpretation and literary text. But new-historicism fills all gaps and it helps to re-write the history through re-reading any piece of writing. Those pieces of writing, thus uncovers everything such as culture, custom, language and politics of that time.

The status given to the autobiography of Gandhi has also shaped a whole way of life the contemporary people. His historical truths and sacred reservoir facts have helped to realize the precious values of the text. Emphasizing deep interplay between text and Context, Stephen Greenblatt, pioneering critics of New Historicism, defines new historical perspective in his text "The New Historicism", "the redefinition of the context-text relationship through the dynamic of their 'negotiation and exchange'" (112). This lines state that, history comes from the context. It is against official history. As such New-Historism talks about "Alternative history" which fills remaining laps and gaps of Archeological history. This quotation is useful to define Gandhi's autobiography which carries a large portion of history. It is because that

official history does not tell or include all aspects of Gandhi life. But, when we go through Gandhi's Autobiography from the New-Historical approach, we can see many laps, gaps and silence of that time through the text. Gandhi exemplifies "In the opinion of the caste, your proposal to go to England is not proper. Our religion forbids voyages abroad. We have also heard that it is not possible to live there without compromising our religion. One is obliged to eat and drink with Europeans!" (45). These lines show the history of the then Indian people when they want to go in aboard for reading. It means that if any Indian wants to go there, he/she should be outcast from the society. It is because Indian and English culture is different. Their cultural procedures do not match. So, people thought that if someone goes to England, s/he eats beef , drink smoke and forget his/her culture. This kind of history found in the Gandhi's autobiography. This is the experience of Gandhi but he is only one representative of all Indian who want to go England for Reading. So, his personal experience represents all Indians who thought to go England. In this way, his personal narrative becomes a public history of that time.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for interpreting Life Narrative* argue that: "In their autobiographical acts, narrators claim the "authority of Experience" both explicitly and implicitly. Implicit can be unobtrusive as the appearance of the autobiographer's name on the title page" (27). It means famous persons and author get authority of their experience in life narratives by their name. If any, writer belongs to the marginal background, she/he will identify him/her with their community. The public figure and celebrities who have names on the front cover ensure credibility for the reader who wants to know him vividly and read that piece of writing. Thus, Gandhi's experience is deemed as credible by his readers because of the title of the book and his name in it. The

following line shows his credibility to say about the imbalanced situation of Hindu and Muslim. At the time of partition, he was main person to decide what to do. So, he writes, his dilemma in the chapter ‘passion for unity’. We reader believes what he writes because of his identity, experiences and his memory provides validity. In his text, Gandhi says “My South African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my Ahimsa would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in Ahimsa. The conviction is still there. Every moment of my life I realize that God is putting me on my trial” (500). These lines talk about the passion of Gandhi to unify people Hinduism and Islam. He is eye witness of partition of India and Pakistan. So, he is right person to talk about the partition in his life writing. It is because, he is one of the members to decide what to do with both religion at one stage. He had the passion to unify but he is unable to do so. So, he thinks that God put him on a trail at a difficult situation. In this way, his experience on the moment of Partition of the nation is experience of whole India. Other citizens feel what he feels in the time of partition. Therefore, his personal narratives become a public history.

An autobiographer often different models of identity in succession or in alternation to tell the story of serial development. Rousseau in *Confessions* presents himself as a eager schoolboy, “a man of very strong passion” (qtd in Smith and Watson 35). It means, an individual is eager to create oneself as right in all situations. In the same way, Gandhi’s autobiography also has a strong passion. Gandhi claims himself as corrected. If one follows his principles one will get the 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 labor in writing these chapters to

have been in vain” (567). Gandhi then we see that every path shown by Gandhi in his life narratives will be useful for all human races, if they follow it.

Susan Engel theorist of autobiography in *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory* suggests that memory comes as a context. So, she claims: “Acts of remembering take place at particular sites and in particular circumstances. We remember the history of a relationship in of the sexual intimacy or as we celebrate anniversaries” (qtd in Smith and Watson18). Here, context helps to remember our past particular sites and particular circumstances of the past. Not all the event of context is used for life narrative but certain moment and ideas are memorized according to their meaning associated. In the same way, Gandhi’s autobiography also has context which carries the times history of Indian society, as presented in *A Concise History of Modern India* by the professor Alice Freeman Palmer the Professor of History at the University of Michigan and Ann Arbor the Director of the Center for South Asia Studies. They argue: “It is these institutions which have helped bring about the social, cultural, and economic changes... In response to these dilemmas, the book grapples with questions of caste and religious identity, and the very nature of the Indian nation” (3). These lines explores context is seen in Gandhi’s autobiography in part 1 chapter “Preparation for England”. The thinking pattern and the way of day to day lives of the Indians are reflected in his autobiography. The condition of the colonized India and Indian people was pathetic and controlled. It is because at that time, India was run by alien power. Educated urban Indians were controlled and were dependent on the colonized power.

I passed the matriculation examination in 1887. It then used to be held at two centres, Ahmedabad and Bombay. The general poverty of the country naturally led Kathiawad students to prefer the nearer and the cheaper center.

The poverty of my family likewise dictated to me the same choice. This was my first journey from Rajkot to Ahmedabad and that too without a companion.

(41)

These above lines depict the contemporary Indian history through Gandhi's life narrative and show how the Indians lived in the horrendous situation. Many of Gandhi's contemporaries left their study. It was because no one could afford the money for the studying in England. Maximum citizen lived below the poverty line. Even, they could not fulfill their basic needs which brought chaos in the Indian society. This was the history of Mahatma Gandhi which is written in his autobiography, but this was the problem of all helpless Indian who were deprived from the day to day life too. Therefore, Gandhi's personal narrative has the trace of the Indians history, implicitly as well as explicitly. His personal narrative presents a public history of India of colonial time. Gandhi is a father of nation of India. It is because, he was the personification of non- violence which made him popular among the people. People thought that, he was the only man who related them from the British authority. Therefore, his personal narrative carries the public history of that time of India.

In the same way, when we look at Gandhi's autobiography through the lens of Linda Anderson's book *Autobiography: the New Critical idiom*. She claims that

The text of the oppressed', articulating through one person's experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition. (104)

These lines show how one person's experience articulates the rest one. In the same way, Gandhi's autobiography is experience of Gandhi's himself but that is related with other marginalized group who were suffering from many way like poverty, colonial oppression and lack of education. That is found in Gandhi's autobiography where he shades light on hidden history of India. He depicts: "India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him. Various people sought to interest him in different things" (258). The lines show the plight and predicament of the Indian people who were compelled to pay tax in different subject matter. This is the not only the history of Gandhi only rather it was spread all areas.

Again Linda Anderson talks about how an autobiography carries the constructed history of self-hood, which he/she learns by the subject he/she knows. She states: "The texts which have helped to form the dominant tradition of autobiographical writing and the way they have both drawn on and helped to construct a history of selfhood, a paradigmatic narrative through which the subject has learned to know who s/he is" (31). In the same way, Gandhi's narration talks about his self-hood what he had known and then persuade to us. Gandhi claims "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" (xii). Here, Gandhi wants to pursue the reader to read an autobiography. And, the events which were carved in this autobiography.

Finally, Individual self-needs to express one's own feeling. He/she needs the public narratives. Here, one of the theorists Peter Fritzsche, in *The Case of Modern Memory* asserts "At the same time, individual selves did find means of expression through public narratives The nation, in particular, can be usefully thought of as a

memory system that enabled individuals to recognize their lives in no repeatable, historical time” (108). Likewise, Gandhi’s narration is also the example of his feeling, the time of colonial period. Gandhi also mystifies his feeling in his autobiography:

“Much as I wish that I had not to write this chapter, I know that I shall have to swallow many such bitter draughts in the course of this narrative. And I cannot do otherwise, if I claim to be a worshipper of Truth. It is my painful duty to have to record here my marriage at the age of thirteen” (9). Here, the writer expresses his pain and the pain of those people who were also made scapegoat at that time. He is only the representation of all victims of that time when their parents force fully married their child. His own felling is one example of that time but his narration uncovers many unheard and untold narratives of the people of that time. Therefore, we can say that one single person carries many people’s history at a one time.

In Conclusion, the incidents which were inscribed by Gandhi in his life narrative carry his personal as well as public history. His Experience, Memory, Embodiment, Identity and the Agency made him a subject of self-hood. Gandhi’s self-hood is not only his self-hood, but that is linked with large portion of the Indian history. He was not only known in India but he was and inspirational for the world like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther king Jr. and so many were influenced by him. His events, which he inscribes in his autobiography like *The Birth of Satyagraha*, *The Khilafat Movement*, *The Birth of Khadi*, *Non-violent movement*, *Dandi March* were the circumstances where he as well as other people were participated in his action. Therefore, his personal narrative becomes the public history of the large portion of people.

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