CHAPTER -IV
MEN-CENTRIC WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

4.1 MEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

George Gusdorf, the dean of autobiographical studies, in his famous essay *Condition and Limitation of Autobiography* (1980) talks about the invention of mirror and the major role it plays in a child’s gradual consciousness of his own personality. He sees himself as another among others. Autobiography, according to Gusdorf, is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image. However, it is only after Renaissance and Reformation that Man began to take an interest in seeing himself as he is without any taint of the transcendentalism. This virtue of individuality was particularly dear to men of Renaissance.

The author of an autobiography is usually narrating his own history, reassembling the scattered elements of his individual life and regrouping them in a comprehensive sketch. Autobiography requires a man to take distance with regard to his self in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his unity and identity across time.

Various motives of autobiography, the reasons for which an autobiography is written, according to Misch, are confession, glorification, self-justification and posterity. An autobiographer aims at providing a kind of posthumous propaganda for posterity that otherwise is in danger of being forgotten by the society which may fail to esteem him properly, for as Gusdorf notes: “One is never better served than by oneself” (1980:36). The autobiography that is exclusively devoted to the self-justification or glorification of a man, a career or a political cause is limited almost entirely to the public sector of life. The situation is altogether different when the private life assumes more importance. In Augustine’s Confessions, for example, it is
the history of a soul that is told to us. "Autobiography is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image." (Gusdorf: 33)

4.2 WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In Women's consciousness, Man's world (1978) Rowbothm, uses the metaphor of mirrors to describe the development of women's consciousness. But her mirror is the reflecting surface of cultural representation into which a woman stares to form an identity. Emily Carr Notes:

To show Mother, I must picture Father, because Mother was Father's reflection – smooth, liquid reflecting of definite, steel gold reality. (Carr: 4)

However, instead of reflecting her own self, a woman autobiographer's work very often reflects an image of a male member. According to de Beauvoir:

...Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the Other(de Beauvoir: 16)

More space is given to the rich, the titled, the famous and the powerful than to those who lack those attributes. This principle of the higher the status, the greater the space, when applied to males and females, suggests that even in the non-conscious of interpersonal distance, females have lower status than males. Man can think of himself independently but a woman cannot think of her existence without a man. They live dispersed among the males attached through residence,
housework, economic condition and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands.

The nature of public and private selves is for women, in some ways, the reverse of what it is for men. The experience that women share gives to their account of themselves often a characteristics subterranean tone and status. One hears a single note of complaint and feels the bitter tensions of passivity; a social condition, a fate, embodying the concealment rather than absence of force.

Moreover, the impact of gender-based oppression on women’s views of themselves and later on their ways of representing themselves in writing is to be best found in the life narratives of women, than in any other form. Carolin Heilburn’s Writing a Woman’s Life (1988) argues that the only way to fight patriarchy and create a space for women is to undertake life-writing. She advocates women’s life-writings as a sure means to creating a better empowered woman of the next generation. Her agenda is purely ‘gynocentric.’ Like Elaine Showalter, who coined the term ‘gynocentric, Heilburn too believes in fighting patriarchy by creating women’s tradition of sharing intimate information. Heilburn chooses autobiography/ life-writing as a tool for creating such a tradition. Both these criticizing and competing with man, or complaining against him, their shade feminism is all inclusive. Rather than remaining ‘man focused’ with anti-feeling they advocate woman-centred positive tradition. Interestingly, Kamla Bhasin in her What is Patriarchy? (1994) also argues on the same lines, so does Irigaray, a contemporary French feminist and Helen Buss, a contemporary Canadian feminist theorist on Women’s Autobiography. The answer to the questions, who am ‘I’? Where am ‘I’ located? Are not simple for woman. She confronts great difficulty in self-inscription. The difficulties faced by woman in her own inscription of ‘I’ are well expressed by Mary Eagleton in Working with Feminist Criticism (1996):

Difficulty of saying ‘I’
Finding the courage to say ‘I’
The intimacy of ‘We’
Saying ‘We’ when really mean ‘I’
The False unity of ‘We’. (146)

One of Helen Cixous’ most accessible ideas is her analysis of what we might call ‘patriarchal binary thought’ under the heading ‘Where is she?’ (1974) Cixous lines up the following list of binary oppositions:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Male</th>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<td>Sun</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Head</td>
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<td>Intelligent</td>
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Showalter in her essay *Feminist Criticism in Wilderness* (1981) has used Ardener’s diagram given below to highlight the ‘difference’ between men’s and women’s world.

Showalter explains Ardener’s diagram of the relationship of the dominant and the muted group as under:

Unlike the Victorian model of complementary spheres, Ardener’s groups are represented by intersecting circles. Much of muted circle Y falls within the boundaries of dominant circle X; there is
also a crescent of Y which is outside the dominant boundary and therefore (in Ardener’s terminology) “wild.” We can think of the “wild zone” of women’s culture spatially, experientially, or metaphysically. Spatially it stands for an area which is literally no-man’s-land, a place forbidden to men, which corresponds to the zone in X which is off limits to women. Experientially it stands for the aspects of the female life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men; again, there is a corresponding zone of male experience alien to women. But if we think of the wild zone metaphysically, or in terms of consciousness, it has no corresponding male space. Since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language. In this sense, the “wild” is always imaginary; from the male point of view, it may simply be the projection of the unconscious. In terms of cultural anthropology, women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it, because it becomes the subject of legend (like the wilderness). But men do not know what is in the wild. (Showalter: 262)

4.3 ANY WAY, ‘HE’ TAKES THE CENTER STAGE

In an autobiography penned by a man, ‘he’ is always at the center of the work. Unlike men’s autobiographies, women’s autobiographical writing goes in circles. She does not stand in the center: There is always a man at the center and she exists only in the periphery. Shari Benstock in her Theory and Practice of women’s Autobiographical Writings (1988) notes:
The self that would reside at the center of the text is de-centered – and often is absent altogether – in women’s autobiographical texts. The very requirements of genre are put into question by the limits of gender – which is to say because these two terms are etymologically linked, genera, itself raises question about gender. (Benstock: 20)

The view is echoed in Vijayalakshmi Pandit’s autobiography. The scope of Happiness (1979). In the initial stages, she was under a complete sway of her father as is evident from the following excerpt:

I was my father's child in all respects. He was the dominating influence in my life. I love him deeply and he was my ideal of all that was great and good and honorable. (Pandit: 40)

Later, the ‘role model’ changes as she associates herself with her brother and writes

A brother occupies a very special position in an Indian Family and the brother-sister relationship is a cultivated and meaningful one. He is the protector of his sister, and in many cases their hero. (Pandit: 55)

Another important observation is that autobiographers – both, male and female – focus more on their fathers than on their mothers. Franklin, Mill, Adams and Elizabeth Stanton concentrate on their fathers, whom they view as authority figures who relate impersonally to their children and ignored their mothers entirely. Also, many feel that women are less likely to focus on their mothers than men are: Augustine, Washington and Dahlberg write adoringly of their mothers.
Throughout the autobiography she refers to her father almost in all the chapters. In fact, her autobiography begins with her father's assassination. She gave a great importance to her father, and therefore it seems as if the whole autobiography revolves round her father. She was highly influenced by her father. Following his footsteps in the field of politics was indicative of the same. She was emotionally more closer to her father than her brothers were. He was her hero in all respect losing him had shattered her completely. It was unbearable to face that pain. She recalls:

I had seen my father for the last time the day before.
The pain of that meeting was close to unbearable.
No one had told him he was to be executed early the next morning. (Bhutto-6)

She further recalls the incident in detail, when her mother asked her to get ready to meet her father for the last time. He as very calm and asked to arrange for a bath and wanted to have a shave, as he believed the world was beautiful and he wanted to leave it clean. She and her mother had only half an hour to meet him for the last time. It was extremely difficult for them to face him. She writes
"Half an hour. Half an hour to say good-bye to the person I love more than any other in my life. The pain in my chest tightens into a vice. I must not cry. I must not break down and make my father's ordeal more difficult." (Bhutto:9)

Bhutto was lucky to have such a father, she always felt. He wanted to give his ring to her after he was gone. He was worried about other children. Moreover, he had a kind of possessive, male authoritarian nature which can be seen through the following passage. She writes:

Give my love to the other children, 'he says to Mummy. Tell Mir, and Sunny and Shah that I've tried to be a good father and I wish I could have said good-bye to them. 'She nods, but could not speak. 'You have both suffered a lot', he says. Now that they are going to kill me tonight, I want to free you as well. If you want to, you can leave Pakistan while the Constitution is suspended and Martial Law imposed. If you want peace of mind, and to pick up your lives again, then you might want to go to Europe. I give you my permission, you can go. (Bhutto:9)

Benazir had very strong reasons to get influenced by her father as she never faced discrimination from him as a daughter. He used to treat all his children equally. On the contrary he was more attached to her than his sons. He had far sightedness regarding the development of his country and his people. He would always put emphasis on education. She writes:

"In our house education was a top priority. Like his father before him, my father wanted to make examples out of us, the next generation of educated and progressive Pakistanis." (Bhutto-33)
Her father expected only one thing from them, that they study sincerely. He wanted Benazir to pursue her career with total focus. He would always inspire her for the educational achievements. Bhutto always admires his far-sightedness or vision. She strongly feels that he as much ahead of his time. She clearly remembers:

I ask only one thing of you, that you do well in your studies, my father told us time and again. As we grew older he hired tutors to instruct us in Maths and English in the afternoons after school, and he kept track of our school reports by phone from wherever he was in the world. Luckily I was a good student, for he had great plans for me to be the first woman in the Bhutto family to study abroad. (Bhutto-34)

Moreover she felt that her father was much more advance in his thoughts and actions. He was not only modern in his perspective towards life but also enlightened in true sense. He believed that his daughters have the right to choose their life partners. Her father did not want to impose his decision on his daughters. He was strictly against closed marriages. She recalls:

Will the children marry into the family? I overheard my mother ask my father one day. I held my breath for his answer. I don't want the boys to marry their cousins and leave them behind our compound walls any more than I want my daughters buried alive behind some other relatives compound walls, ‘he said to my great relief. Let them finish their education first. Then they can decide what to do with their lives. (Bhutto-36)
She had always had a great support and encouragement from her father even when he was far away in jail. He used to send letters to her in one of the letters he had written. He was her biggest source of inspiration. She quotes:

I am praying for your success in your O-level examinations, ‘my father wrote from Sahiwal prison on November 28. ‘I am really proud to have a daughter who is so bright that she is doing O-levels at the young age of fifteen, three years before I did them. At this rate, you might become the president. (Bhutto:43)

Bhutto was very close to both her brothers, Mir and Shah. She was a protective sister. After a long time in lockup, she saw them and she could see the evident change in them. She was very happy to see that both her brothers had become mature, Mir had a daughter too, whom she was seeing for the first time. She narrates:

Mir, Shah Nawaz. My brothers' voices and mine interrupt each other in our excitement. How are you? I shout over the line, pressing the receiver to my good ear......Mir looked so handsome, his dark eyes flashing one minute, genting the next as he lifted his eighteen-month-old daughter to give me a kiss.' Wait till you see Shah,' Mir laughed. Shah had been eighteen the last time I 'd seen him, just a boy. Now he was twenty-five with a longed-for moustache. (Bhutto:252)

She describes her brother Shah in detail. She was no longer worried about him and Mir. She states:
Shah and my mother sat in the front seat of the car and I in the back while we drove at speed into Cannes. Shah talked non-stop, looking as often at me through the rear-view mirror as at the road, his eyes sparkling under his long, thick eyelashes, his hair glistening with golden highlights from water-skiing. Dressed in a crisp white shirt and white trousers, he'd never looked more handsome and fit. I was relieved to see him looking so well. Shah had seemed very thin to me during our brief visits in the year and a half since I'd arrive in England. For the first time I could see that he was putting on some weight, as was I. (Bhutto:280)

She remembers her first meeting with her husband, Asif. She was little uncomfortable with the thought of getting married to a stranger. She was already 34, her sister was married and brother Mir was also married and had a child. Thus there was an indirect pressure on her to get married. She recalls:

Asif and I didn't have a conversation by ourselves during the entire evening. He was wearing glasses, and I couldn’t even see the expression in his eyes. I didn’t have a single feeling about him at all after the evening ended, even when he sent me a dozen roses the next day. The crate of mangoes he sent me from Fortnum and Mason, however, along with a box of marrons glaces, my favourite sweet, were delicious. So was the crate of cherries he sent was to Sunny. (Bhutto:357)

After meeting him, she was not sure of her decision. She knew that she had been asked to make up her mind about living her whole life with the
person, whom she had met just three days ago. She was not very sure of getting married to a stranger. She notes:

I introduced him to a few of my friends from Oxford. They liked him. I introduced him to a Pakistani school friend. She found him charming and told me to marry him. Asif took my family out to dinner and I had to sit next to him. I kept my niece Fathi, who talks non-stop, on my other side for protection. (Bhutto:357)

Though with each passing day, she became comfortable with him. She further adds:

My mother, Sanam, Asif, and I pilled into a car with some other Pakistani friends to go to dinner. We got lost. But, instead of getting irritable or impatient. Asif kept everybody laughing in the car. He was flexible and had a sense of humour, I noted as well as being caring. What's the answer, Pinkie?’ my mother asked the next morning. ‘Alright Mummy,’ I said. After seven days after I met Asif, we were engaged. (Bhutto:357)

4.5 DEVI
The society in which Phoolan was brought up was a highly male dominant society. Right from her birth she had understood the importance of men around her. Like Mead, Phoolan also narrates the story of her father's importance in her house.

Though her father was a weak person in many ways, he was the head of the house and therefore eligible to enjoy certain privileges as a man. She recalls:

The main meal was in the evening and father was always served first. Once he had taken his food, the rest of us were served from what was left. The last one to eat was the one who did the cooking.
(Devi: 9-10)

In some way or the other she was very happy that she used to look like her father. She had high regards for him till certain age, probably till the time she realized the fact that he was not capable of protecting his own family from the evil thakurs. Till then she would take him as a very intelligent person, somebody who knew all the answers. She states:

Father, I asked, ‘where does God live’? Deep furrows lined his brow above a large, flat nose, like my nose. His skin was dark like mine, too. It seemed to me he was always sad. Sometimes, he scratched his head for hours, as though he was trying to relieve it of thoughts that must have itched him like lice. But as he looked at me with my stick, the worried expression lifted from his face. ‘Where do you think God lives, Phoolan?’(Devi: 4-5)

Phoolan distinctly remembers that she had learnt the class and caste system from her father only. He was her biggest source of information. As a child, she had many questions, for which her father only had the answers.
Father tried to explain: the rich who owned land, and the poor like us who had to wait for the waters to go down to grow crops on their kachwari, land that belonged only to the river. A rich man can give orders, he can beat you and punish you, because he is a landowner, he has the power of life or death over us. He owns the fields and gives us work. If he didn’t, we would starve.

There were some rules which were followed by everyone, especially regarding the head of the family. The father was treated with great importance in whatever he would do. He was not answerable to anybody and was free to act as per his will, just because of his superior gender. She recalls:

I never asked my father where he was going when he left the house. It would bring bad luck. Our father worked all day long. Sometimes he rented the fields of the rich; he prepared the soil and bought seed and when he harvested the crops he was given a share. But it was never as much as he expected and, if the harvest was poor, it mason and carpenter. (Devi: 38)

Till the time she met Vikram, she had only one hero in her life. And that was her father. Ironically her father was lacking all the heroic qualities, which she realised only after meeting Vikram. She was aware of her father's weaknesses, but she got completely disillusioned later on. Besides her father, Vikram was a real hero for her. He saved her from Baboo and his men. She, for the first time felt protected by a man. The rest were almost like blood thirsty hounds. She had all the reasons to respect Vikram. She remembers:

‘Take your hands off her.’ he said. His voice sounded cold and menacing. Suddenly he was surrounded by five or six of Baboo’s men, pointing their rifles at him. Warily, he watched as Baboo, who still had me by the hair, stretched out like a fat bullock on the khat.

‘Why her? We’ve had so many other girls before. What is it about this one? You’re on her side, is that
it?’ ‘I told you not to touch her. She belongs to my community.’ ‘So what? Who cares? You don’t even know her. She’s not one of your family.’ If you touch her, I’ll shoot you,’ said Vickram. (Devi: 240)

Like Vikram, Raja was another man, who tried to save her from Baboo’s gang. ‘She’s just an infant, Baboo,’ said one of the men who had come on the motorcycle. Raja looked around at the gang. ‘Don’t any of you touch her,’ he said. ‘That’s what I told them,’ said Vickram. Raja tried to reason with Baboo. ‘She’s just a poor girl. She hasn’t done anything to you.’ Like Vickram, Raja seemed to have pity for me. He was well-spoken, and I thought he must have been someone very important. When they addressed him, both Vickram and Baboo used terms of respect, though Baboo was clearly irritated by Raja’s comments. She remembers:

I was watching Vickram, praying to him silently to save me. He came towards me, and shone the light from his torch on his own face this time. ‘Take a good look at me,’ he said. It was a handsome face; narrow, with a fine nose. He had a thin moustache and his skin was pale and soft, almost like a girl’s skin. Despite the scar over his left eye, there was something in his look that made me trust him. ‘I am Vickram, the mallah. Remember my name, and don’t forget my face.’ ‘What has got into you?’ bellowed one-eye. ‘What are you trying to prove? That you’re a mallah? Are you doing it to get at me?’ (Devi: 243)

After staying with the bendits for some days, Phoolan had realized that Vikram was different from other members of the gang. She had developed a kind of liking for him. She could feel something for him, All the womanly emotions had started overflowing. Though she could neither understood nor expressed them..She had started admiring his each and every move. She liked every little thing about him. She admits:
I had heard his men calling him Mastana earlier. It was a word full of warmth and admiration, a nickname for someone handsome and carefree, and I was surprised to hear anyone calling a bandit Mastana. Nor had I ever seen anyone smoke so much. He sucked on the cigarette with a serious frown and when he had smoked it down to the filter, he shook another out of his pack and lit it with the first. We should never have kidnapped her,' he said after a while. ‘We’ve been tricked.’ (Devi: 244)

She knew that Vikram was fond of her. Though, he had never expressed his feelings upfront, she could sense it from his behaviour towards her. From her past experiences, she was doubly careful about men. After much hesitation she could convince herself to get into a relationship..She gave enough space to Vikram in her life and thus in her life story. She frankly accepts the fact that Vikram was the only person who had saved her life. In that way he was even better than her father who miserably failed to protect her at every stage of her life. She remembers:

Vickram still hadn’t spoken to me directly. But I sensed he was watching me. Why, I didn’t know, nor did I care. He had saved me from humiliation and perhaps death. He was the first man who had ever been able to defend me. My father had only ever cried and begged impotently. Even if I was only the bait for their ambush, Vickram had avenged me! Even if I had to die, I thanked Durga and Kali and all the gods and goddesses for this one satisfaction. Vickram was the first man to treat me like a human being, not a slave, or a piece of flesh. If he let me go, I resolved to request one more kindness from him. ‘Brother,’ I decided I would ask him. (Devi: 259)
Phoolan loved Vikram’s fearlessness the most. May be because of this quality, he was loved by all his peers. He had asked all his men to stay away from Phoolan, and they were following his instructions very sincerely. He was the only one who was concerned about her choice. After killing Baboo, he did not claim Phoolan. He, on the contrary asked for her permission. He gave her a dignified life. She narrates:

He was younger than most of them, perhaps twenty-five years old, but even his uncle treated him with great respect. He was also the thinnest of all of them. I had never seen him close up in the daylight before. He didn’t look very strong. He was pale-skinned, and his long black hair was still wet from bathing. He was wearing a police uniform with his cartridge belt slung across his chest and his rifle, the one that had killed Baboo, strapped to his shoulder. He had a white cotton cloth tied across his brow. His black eyes narrowed on me. I saw that they were ringed with fatigue. ‘Do you like me?’ Nobody had ever asked me such a question. Surprise and embarrassment made me lower my head. I blushed with confusion. I had no idea what to answer. Around me, the others began laughing, teasing me and making remarks I didn’t understand. I giggled, and I began to cry. I couldn’t help myself. I was disappointed and excited all at once. I had expected him to say I was free to go, perhaps even to bring me back in triumph, but I was still his prisoner, and I had no idea what he meant by his question. He came towards me and stroked my hair gently. ‘Don’t cry,’ he said, ‘Why are you crying? I’m not going to hurt you.’ His gesture was new to me as well. Nobody other than my mother and father had ever shown me tenderness.
No one had ever touched me like that, certainly no man. ‘Well, Phoolan, do you like me?’ I tried to smile at him through my tears. The gang seemed to be encouraging him. ‘Keep her, Mastana! Give her lots of love, so she forgets all the rest! Give her lots of love!’ And I thought it must have been something sweet and delicious because they said it would make me forget the bad things that had happened to me.
(Devi: 263)

Vikram’s love was like a soothing balm which helped Phoolan forget all her pain for a while. For the first time in her life she was treated like a human being. He was the one who taught her to assert. He loved her unconditionally. He did not have a typical male ego, and he was never bothered about her past life. He wanted to live in present. Phoolan recalls:

He sat down in front of me and wiped the tears away from my cheeks with his hand. ‘I know everything that happened to you. I know what the thakurs did. Do you still hate them?’ ‘I don’t even know who they were.’ ‘Then forget the past. With us, nothing like that will ever happen again.’ I felt strange – happy, but still frightened. A man had touched me softly, he had stroked my hair and touched my cheeks. A hand had caressed me like my poor father’s hand, but a hand with the strength he never had. I felt I could trust him, something I had never felt about a stranger or a man before. Gradually, I stopped sobbing, and my tears dried. If I stayed with him, perhaps I would be happy: no more beatings, no more pain, no more humiliation. (Devi: 264)
Another important observation is that autobiographers – both, male and female – focus more on their fathers than on their mothers. Franklin, Mill, Adams and Elizabeth Stanton concentrate on their fathers, whom they view as authority figures who relate impersonally to their children and ignored their mothers entirely. Also, many feel that women are less likely to focus on their mothers than men are: Augustine, Washington and Dahlberg write adoringly of their mothers.

Unlike other female autobiographers, Mead was not highly impressed by her father. She had a complete clarity that her father had very little to contribute in her upbringing. On the contrary, she doesn’t hesitate to criticize her father in her *Blackberry Winter*. She writes:

> It is hard to me to differentiate what my father contributed to me as a person and what he contributed to me as a girl learning to know what a woman is and what a man is. (Mead, 1975: 40)
Following lines indicate that her father was not a man of character. She candidly accepts the bitter truth. It had left very poor impression of her father in her mind. Mead, probably did not respect him much because of the same. She admits:

Certainly there were occasionally very different women in his life. One of them had red hair, and one almost persuaded him to marry her. (Mead, 1975: 34)

Moreover, her father did not like her choice of a husband. He did not want her to marry Luther. In fact, one of the reasons why Mead chose to marry Luther was that he was blessed with some of the qualities, which her father lacked. This phenomenon was very unusual as compared to other women as most women loves to find their life partner who resembles their fathers. But unlike others, she chose exactly opposite personality. It shows that sub-consciously she did not approve of his lack of sensitivity towards others. She states:

Unquestionably, he sensed how much I valued in Luther exactly those abilities in which I felt my father was lacking – his precise physical skills and his sensitivity to other human beings. (Mead, 1975: 39)

We can see that things were different in case of Margaret mead so far as all the male members are concerned. She was in no way influenced by her brother. On the contrary, Mead was the one who influenced her brother. Within the domestic setup, Mead played a dominant sister and Richard, a recessive brother. In some ways she was stronger than him. As Mead puts it in Blackberry Winter:

Two years younger and far less strong than I, Richard was not only prevented from doing boyish things that I, as a girl, was not permitted to do, but he
was also kept from doing many of the rough-and-tumble things that I was allowed to do.
(Mead, 1975: 62)

For Mead the comparison of her idea of a ‘Perfect’ brother and the reality brought only ‘disappointment’, as she wanted someone to be protective and strong. She had a specific image of a brother in her mind, which as far away from reality. She wrote: “I longed for an older brother and also for a brother who would be a ringleader in positive wickedness…”
(Mead, 1975: 62)

Though, Mead was never so impressed by her father, she distinctly remembered him enjoying his power over other women in the family. She, as a child saw her mother and grand-mother running around the ‘man of the house’-her father. She recalls:

When my father entered the house, my mother's and my grandmother's absorption with the children was likely to be interrupted by his immediate demands. "Emmy-Tiny,' he would shout, "where is my....."-whatever he was looking for at the moment. Mother never was able to anticipate what he would ask for; it might be anything-a book he hadn't read for years, an issue of one of the Western magazines that were his favourite light reading, a telephone number or a name he had forgotten.(Mead:29)

She herself understood the situation in a better way when she got married to Rio. Though she did not have to be at his service literally, but he wanted her undivided attention, and Mead was giving him what he wanted. She admits:

Reo did not like to see me doing the housework, which he did not intend to help me with; yet he felt it
was a reproach to him that I had to do it at all. As a result, I became expert at tidying up on Sunday morning while appearing to give complete attention to what he was saying. (Mead: 197)

After getting separated from Luther, she realized the fact that she had probably married him with a hope of having a room full of babies, as Luther, according to Mead was a wonderful father material. When she came to know that she would not be able to have children all her life, her marriage with Luther seemed purposeless to her. She confesses:

And then, in 1926, when I was told that I could never have children, I took this as a kind of omen about my future life. I had married Luther with the hope of rearing a houseful of children in a country parish. But no he was giving up ministry and I was told that I could not have a child. I believed he would make a wonderful father, but this was no longer a possibility for us. On the other hand, I did not think that Reo, who wanted to marry me, would not make an ideal father. He was too demanding and jealous of my attention; he begrudged even the attention I gave to a piece of mending. (Mead: 267)

Mead had got attracted to Rio because of his carefree nature. She loved his style, and like any other woman, Mead also fell for him. Not only that she admired him, but she loved it when her father liked him, The fact was that Mead's father was not very happy when she chose to marry Luther, but she knew that he liked Rio. She notes:

My father was always amused, although at times a little embarrassed by his exotic son-in-law. Reo, striding along hatless, wearing a bright Emmanuel scarf twisted around his throat and a sweater under
his jacket instead of an overcoat, and carrying a handsome black carved walking stick from the Trobriands, made a conspicuous companion on a Sunday walk on Philadelphia. (Mead:196)

Mead was like any other student, was in the awe of her professor. Prof. Boas had been a great source of inspiration in her life. She chose the career because of him. Mead loves to give a detailed description of her teacher, he was strict but a good teacher. He had complete clarity of thought, which is the biggest quality of a teacher. She describes:

Boas was a surprising and somewhat frightening teacher. He had a bad side and a good side of his face. On one side there as a long dueling scar from his student days in Germany-an unusual pursuit for a Jewish student-on which his eyelid drooped and teared from a recent stroke. But seen from the other side, his face showed him to be as handsome as he had been as a young man. His lectures were polished and clear. Occasionally he would look around and ask a rhetorical question which no one would venture to answer. (Mead:122)

4.7 SLADE

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Slade, like other women writers likes to stay away from the limelight. She stays humble and submissive. She easily gets impressed by the men around her, Be it her Father, Grandfather of, Pruthvi Sigh or Mahatma Gandhi. She has kept her father, her Grand-father and Mahatma Gandhi at the centre of her autobiography, and she remains at the periphery. She, like any other girl, was under the awe of her father. She describes him as a strict but loving father. She writes:

With father it was quite different. He was a bit strict and correct in his nature, though at the same time affectionate in that reserved English way. Physically too he was unlike Mother who was thin and quick in her movements, whereas he was solidly built with an impressive mien. My earliest recollections of father were with a rather loose beard, but as the years went by Mother so groomed him that by the time he was Captain of Greenwich College his beard had become neatly trimmed, his cheeks clean shaved, and the mustaches short and smartly waxed at the tips. His dress too Mother watched and guided in every detail, and certainly the resulting ensemble was quite striking. (Slade:28)

Her Grand-father was her best friend. She used to get along with him so well that she did not want anybody else when he was around. Right from her childhood, she was comfortable playing different games with him. She remembers:

I was now twelve or thirteen years old, so my grandfather allowed me to start riding full-sized hunters, and before long I was actually going hunting. This became a regular passion with emit did not occur to me to think about the unfortunate fox. I took all that as a matter of course. What thrilled me
was the rough riding across country, to the sound of hunting horn and the voices of the hounds. The horses too used to be thrilled as their riders. What a fine feeling it was to have been out riding all day in the open country, and to return home well splashed with mud, hungry and delightfully tired! Here was a new bond between my grand-father and myself.

(Slade:29)

She very happily describes her maternal Grand-father. She remembers:

This hobby of doing manual work in the garden was a characteristic of my maternal Grand-father also. Besides the more gentlemanly jobs of grafting roses and the like, he delighted in sweeping the garden paths with a long besom broom, to which my Grand-mother strongly objected. But objection was of no use. He just loved fiddling around in the garden doing odd jobs on his off days.(Slade:19)

When she was a teenager, she was craving for the company of 'boys'. She used to look forward to the weekends. She admits:

Then the weekends were a thing I especially looked forward to, when "the boys" used to come down from London, and we all went out for long rambles on the North Downs. In the evenings we had sing-songs in "the smoking room", an old room in an out-house, with a log fire, a settle, and plain chairs. "The boys" were young men, some fifteen or twenty years older than I-Arthur Saunders, my doctor cousin. Robert Buxton, an artist, and usually one or two of their friends.(Slade:23)
Madeline Slade, a daughter of a British admiral, came to India and became a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi gave her a new name – Miraben. Thus Gandhi changed her identity. She was so devoted to Gandhi that she was ready to do anything to please him. She then took on completely a new identity. She was adapting to a very different way of life that she had ever known – the climate, the food, the clothes, the culture etc. she had to learn Hindi and the spinning of charkha. As a part of the ashram routine, she even swept the latrines.

“I was still wearing my white khadi dresses that had been made in England before I set out, and Bapu seemed rather against my taking to Indian clothes...One day Ansuyaben showed me how to wear a sari, and gave me one of her own khadi saris with a narrow blue border... I came before Bapu with considerable misgiving. He was definitely displeased but he restrained the expression of his feelings and said I could wear a sari if I was very anxious to do so, but it should certainly be a white one and not one with a coloured border like that.(Slade:80)

Ms Slade, then, keeps Mahatma Gandhi at the centre of her narration while she remains in the periphery. Though it was quite natural for her to be under the influence of Bapu, as he had such a powerful persona. The whole country was following his footsteps. He was a real life hero for the generations together. Slade was his staunch follower she had changed her lifestyle for him. Her world was revolving round Mahatma Gandhi only.

She quotes from one of the letters in which Gandhi advises her to practice detachment:

The parting today was sad, because I saw that I pained you. And yet it was inevitable. I want you to be a perfect woman. I want you to shed all
angularities. All unnecessary reserve must go...Do throw off the nervousness. You must not cling to me as in this body. The spirit without the body is ever with you. And that is more than the feeble embodied imprisoned spirit with all the limitations that flesh is heir to. The spirit without the flesh is perfect, and that is all we need. This can be felt only when we practise detachment. This you must now try to achieve. This is how I would grow if I were you. But you should grow along your own lines. You will, therefore, reject all I have said in this, that does not appeal to your heart and head. You must retain your individuality at all cost. Resist me when you must. For I may judge you wrongly in spite of my love for you. I do not want you to impute infallibility to me. (Slade: 93)

Her autobiography like most women writers is men-centric. The self remains in the periphery and men at the centre. Slade right from the beginning of her autobiography talks about her grandfather and great grandfather. She writes; “.....a special pal was my grandfather. Though there must have been about Fifty years' difference between us, we had quiet natural understanding like old friends...” (Slade: 12)

Slade was a hard core Gandhi follower, her devotion n dedication towards Bapu was remarkable as even after his assassination she could not imagine her life without him. It was extremely difficult for her to accept the fact that Bapu was not there. She admits:

“so closely had Bapu been interwoven in all the thoughts and actions of my daily life that at every turn I had to pull myself up and Remember that Bapu in flash was no longer there”
(Slade: 293)
A corollary of Ms. Slade’s strong association with Gandhi and his ideology was her association with India, Indian culture, and India’s independence movement. This association is especially noteworthy because India was a British colony at the time and Ms. Slade’s father was Admiral of the British Royal Navy. Madeline Slade, thus, associates with others to see individuation in The Spirit Pilgrimage unlike Gandhi who dissociates from others. Her autobiography presents an ‘i’ that is on the periphery with Gandhi at the center. Matters came to such a pass that Maganlal Gandhi one day gave me this notice: “We are out of funds and there is nothing for the next month.” I quietly replied: “Then we shall go to the untouchables’ quarter.” (Gandhi: 365)

According to Mary Mason, women tend to depict their lives as led by other's values and based on other's assumptions of their own. This ‘other’ may be represented as husband, children, even-God, but in all cases the female self depicted is profoundly influenced by the ‘other’ and this primary relationship structures their autobiography. Madeline Slade had brought Romain Ralland’s biography of Mahatma Gandhi in Paris one morning and finished it by that evening. She knew it was time for her to go to Mahatma Gandhi. For one year Ms. Slade trained herself to be a fit disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. She learned spinning, and sitting and sleeping on the floor. She gave up non-vegetarian food and alcohol. She took a course in Urdu grammar. She read the Bhagvadgita and some of the Rigveda. She subscribed to Gandhi’s magazine Young India and books on India. To learn manual labour, she worked with the peasant in their fields in Switzerland. In spite of her this complete devotion to Gandhi, the woman in her feels that she could have done more:

As I contemplated the past realized clearly how I had never been able to give Bapu full satisfaction, for there had always been something suppressed that caused the tension which Bapu noticed and against which he had warned me time and again. I realized too that ceaseless activity of the past ten years,
though an outlet, had yet left me with an unfulfilled feeling. I felt overwhelmed with a blinding melancholy, and for several months did not write another word. (Slade: 315)

Gandhi, like other male autobiographers, talks about himself In My Experiments with Truth, he dissociates himself from his family, community, colleagues, and even the Indian National Congress. Gandhi’s My Experiments with Truth is dominated by an egocentric ‘I’ and present him as the centre of happenings. He knows that the account of his ‘experiments’ will benefit the readers. Whereas, Slade highlights others and she remains inconspicuous.

The investigator brings to light that these four autobiographers have given enough space to the male members around them, in their autobiographies. It is not completely men-centric though, they all write about their fathers, brothers, husbands and other males who were positively or negatively associated with them.