CHAPTER-V
WOMEN’S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, ‘HER STORY’
RATHER THAN 'HISTORY'

5.1 MALE VIEW OF HISTORY

Another distinguishing pattern is linked with the restrictive male view of history. Many critics concur on one point: A good autobiography not only focuses on its author but also reveals his connectedness to the rest of the society; it is representative of his times and mirror of his era. Numerous examples are available to prove the point. Augustine’s *Confessions* (400), an essential philosophical document of his time, depicts the vicissitudes of his spiritual progress until his successful conversation. Mill’s *Autobiography* (1873) revolves around the theme of his intellectual development by means of which he traces the social and economic history of his century in America. The theme of progress or success in the affairs of the world is propagated in Franklin’s *Autobiography* (1791), a history of the stages of his rise to the career of international diplomat. Many critics believe that Mead, inadvertently or otherwise, does not give enough space to the world wars in her books. She gives a passing reference of World War II while describing the birth of her daughter. However, Jane Howard takes the pain to see the other side of the matter. Women’s autobiography-writing, on the other hand, rarely mirror the establishment history of their times. They emphasize to a lesser extent the public aspects of their lives, the affairs of the world, or even their careers and concentrate instead on their personal lives-domestic details, family difficulties, close friends and especially people who influenced them. In *The Book of Margery Kempe* met on her pilgrimages rather than on her religious progress.

The traditional political and military chronology was largely irrelevant to the history of women. Women’s autobiographies rarely mirror the establishment of the history of their times. They tend to concentrate on their person rather than public lives and we are given domestic details, family
problems, close friends and the people who influenced them. This is seen even in the case of women whose political life in their claim to fame.

Patricia Meyer Speaks highlights this element of women's autobiography in her essay called 'Sleeves in Hiding'(1980). She discusses five most successful women's autobiographies and shows how these autobiographies are the' stories of unusual female achievement'. Emmeline Fankhurst, the English Suffragist; Dorothy Day, a founder of the 'radical catholic workers'; Emma Goldman, the feiry anarchist; Eleanor Roosevelt; and Golda Meir, all these five great women of public accomplishment, make the 'personal' more important than the 'public' In Spack's view, by doing so these great achiever women "use autobiography paradoxically as a mode of self-denial"(132)

The periods which are commonly regarded by the historians as the turning points in the human history are not necessarily the same for both the sexes. Men’s autobiographies were published in a significant number during the Civil War period while women's autobiographies increased as educational opportunities for women, which is during the progressive era-1880 to the First World War, an era of unprecedented public service by women and during the late 1960s and 1970s.Historian Gerda Learner notes:

The periods in which basic change occur in society and which historians commonly regard as turning points are not necessarily the same for men and women. This is not surprising when we consider that the traditional timeframe in history has been derived from political history. For example, neither during or after American Revolution nor in the age of Jackson did women share in the broadening out of opportunities and in the political democratization experienced by men. On the contrary, women in both periods experienced status loss and restriction of their choices as to education or vocation, and new
restraints imposed upon their sexuality, at least by prescription. Thus the traditional, political and military chronology is largely irrelevant to the history of omen (xxiv-xxv)

5.2 FEMALE VIEW OF HISTORY

On the other hand women’s autobiographies rarely reflect the history of their times. They emphasis, to a much lesser extent, the public aspects of their lives, the affairs of the world or even their career. Instead, they concentrate on their personal lives – domestic details, family difficulties, close friends and especially people that influenced them. Elizabeth caddy Stanton states in her preface to Eighty Years and More:

The story of my private life as a wife of an earnest reformer, as an enthusiastic housekeeper, proud of my skill in every department of domestic economy, and as the mother of seven children may amuse and benefit the reader. (Stanton: Preface)

Agrippina’s Memoirs from the first century AD highlight her inclination for her family members rather than the political affairs of state. We learn little about Lucy Larson’s work in the factory but much about her relationship with her friends and about their efforts to find personal diversions to their work in the A New England Girlhood (1869). According to Jelinek, women conceal their work lives even when their ‘claim to fame’ is at stake. She says:

Even in the autobiographies by women whose professional work is their claim to fame, we find omitting their work life, referring obliquely to their careers or camouflaging them behind the personal aspects of their lives (Jelinek: 8)
This emphasis by women on their personal, rather than on their professional success clearly contradicts the established criterion about the content of autobiography. Women’s autobiography projects an image of private strength and public passivity. It does not mirror the official history of the autobiographer’s time. Thus the belief that a good autobiography is always representative of its time and is a mirror to the era does not hold true in relation to women's autobiographical writing. Women's writings in this context, serve as reservoirs of social customs and traditions and can be treated as authentic data to do research in social sciences.

5.3 BHUTTO

Like other women autobiographers Bhutto also writes a lot of personal details in her autobiography. She was always conscious about her gender. She too loves to share all her joys and sorrows with her readers in her autobiography She proudly admits:

I am a woman proud of my cultural and religious heritage. I feel a special personal obligation to
contrast the true Islam – the religion of tolerance and pluralism . . . . . I am a female political leader fighting to bring modernity, communication education and technology to Pakistan. . . . The political battles that I fought were always for an end. The goals centered on liberty and social justice. And those values are definitely worth fighting for. But I do believe my career has been more challenging because I am a woman. Clearly its’ not easy for woman in modern society, no matter where we live. We still have to go extra mile to prove that we are equal to men. We have to work longer hours and make more sacrifices. And we must emotionally protect ourselves from unfair, often vicious attacks made on us via the male members of our family (Bhutto-XII)

There are more than one references of her pregnancy in her autobiography. Her pregnancy never stopped her in her active career. She was very happy to share the details of her health condition during pregnancy. Her mother helped her to overcome the blues of pregnancy. She was very active till the birth of her daughter she confirms:

I didn’t want to encourage any stereotypes that pregnancy interferes with performance. So despite my condition, I worked just as hard, and probably a lot harder, than a male Prime Minister would have. In the end, I chaired a meeting of my cabinet in the capital and then left for Karachi. (Bhutto-XIV)

She was physically and mentally much stronger than any other male around her. It was her very strong will power which enabled her to go on facing all challenges. She never felt weak because of her gender. Her physical pain never stopped her from performing her duties.
Although the two may be unconnected, after this tear–gassing incident, I began suffering from gall-bladder pain. I took homeopathic medicine but the pain continued. It was often excruciating. If I had an operation to fix it, I risked losing my child. I didn’t want to take the risk. As the pain got worse and worse, I flew to London. The doctors advised that I should have a caesarean as soon as possible followed by keyhole surgery to remove the gall bladder. (Bhutto: XIX)

She has given very minute details of her painful ear drum. It seems she was taking pride in fighting against all odds and focusing on goal. Her troubles made her stronger and she succeeded in defeating all. Though, she had to face a lot of difficulties, she came out as a winner. She distinctly remembers:

January, 1980. In our third month of detention at Al-Murtuza, my ear starts to bother me again. Click. The noise begin as they had during an earlier detention in 1978. Then the doctor called in by the Martial Law authorities in Karachi had diagnosed the problem as a sinus condition aggravated by the plane flights I’d taken every two weeks to visit my father in jail, and he would Caughterised the inside of my nose to open the Eustachian tube......‘Ouch, I cry out ,You are hurting me. "You are just imagining it, ‘he replies ;I’m just taking a look inside your ear.’ When I woke up the next morning, there are three drops of blood on my pillow. (Bhutto:69)

She shares all the girlie details about her relationship with Asif, especially about their courtship period. On the face of it, Bhutto seems to be a tomboyish girl, since she likes to talk about her husband's feelings for her. He liked her right from their teenage. She remembers:
He gave me a heart-shaped ring of Saphires and Diamonds. He sent me roses every day. We talked and talked. Our marriage really wasn't between strangers, he told me. When we were teenagers, he'd watched me enter and leave the cinema his father owned. Two decades later, it had been his idea to marry me, not his parents. 'If you ant me to marry, then propose to Benazir, 'he'd told his father five years before. He had waited patiently ever since. ‘Are you in love with her? A journalist asked him. Isn’t everyone? 'he replied. (Bhutto:359)

Bhutto had clear idea that it was patriarchy that was responsible for the discrimination against women not the religion. She knew that being a woman her journey would be more difficult than any other man. But it did not stop her from achieving her goal in life. She was somehow prepared to face the consequences she writes:

I have spent long years in exile. Despite the difficulties and sorrows, however, I feel blessed that I could break the bastions of tradition by becoming Islam’s first elected woman Prime Minister. The election was the tipping point in the debate raging in the Muslim world on the role of women in Islam. It proved that a Muslim woman could be elected Prime Minister, could govern a country and could be accepted as a leader by both men and women. (Bhutto: XI)

She herself could not believe that people of Pakistan had elected her as a Prime Minister. As there was a general notion that women are not suppose to step out of the house, and leading the country was not at all
Bhutto was overwhelmed with joy and felt greatly honoured when she was given this opportunity.

She recalls:

On December 2, 1988, I took my oath of office as the first woman Prime Minister elected in the Muslim world. . . . The people of Pakistan had rejected the bigotry and prejudice in electing a woman Prime Minister. It was an enormous honour, and an equally enormous responsibility. (Bhutto:392)

She was tortured like anything in a cell that was five by four feet. She was six feet tall and therefore it was not possible to stretch herself in such a small cell. They used to threaten her that they could keep her in the lockup for twenty five years. She writes:

I spent three months locked into a cell five feet by four feet. Being six feet tall, I could never stretch out day or night. There were four identical cells in my block with the open bars facing West. From noon on, the sun would blaze on us with no relief, the temperature often reaching 115 degrees. There was no way to get away from the heat. Fans were installed on pedestals outside our cells, positioned to blow through the corridor of heat until the air reaching us seemed to be on fire. My lips swelled and were so painful I couldn't swallow any water. My skin blistered and round, dark circles spread all over my body from my face to my toes. I had sores all over. In desperation, I tied my shirt to the bars one afternoon to block the sun, and the guards snatched it away from me altogether. I didn't get my shirt back for three days. (Bhutto:184)
Phoolan gives detailed description of her physical pain, humiliation and sufferings in her life story. Right from her childhood, she had to face a great amount of insult from the upper class. She remembered how painful it was to have an abscess, and for days together, she had to live with it.

The abscess grew bigger each day and it burned as though it was eating my flesh. Soon I couldn’t even walk. I had to lay on the khat and I couldn’t even go to the field to relieve myself. When he came back from his trip, my father was horrified. The days turned into weeks, until one day, as I was trying to sleep on my right side so as not to touch the enormous violet ball that pounded with blood under my skin, I felt a sudden need. I screamed to my father for help. ‘A giant dog! He wants to eat me!’
My father rushed in with a large stick, shouting at the
dog, who ran into the stable. In a few seconds, he
had killed two baby goats and torn their bodies to
pieces, before scurrying out of the shed. I began to
sob, and my father tried to comfort me. (Devi: 42-43)

Phoolan's case was little different from other girls in her village, as they
all were excited about getting married whereas Phoolan did not have any idea
of marriage till the time she was forced to get into that relationship. Unlike
others, her marriage turned out to be a complete disaster. Her husband was
much older and he wanted her only for physical pleasure. She recalls:

‘Phoolan! Where are you hiding, my little pigeon?’
It was Putti Lal’s voice. ‘Now that we are married, I’ll
show you what married people do . . . Don’t be
scared. I’m going to teach you a new game . . .’ A
game? I was wary, but curious. If it was a good game
I could teach Choti. There was a glint in his eye but it
didn’t seem malicious, I didn’t think he wanted to hurt
me. Nobody had ever looked at me like that before. .
He forced me to go in that room and there was
nothing I could do. I had seen the old man leave so I
knew we were alone, but I didn’t scream. After all, I
thought, it was only a game. Apart from the door to
enter there was only one other door in that room, and
it led to a store where the clay jars full of onions,
grain and oil were kept. What game did he want to
play there in the dark? I wondered. He closed the
door and made me sit on the ground. There was no
concrete on this floor; it was hard, bare earth, and
the room was unkempt and dusty, like all the rooms
in the house. Putti Lal unbuttoned his kurta and took
it off, then he untied his dhoti from around his hips
and let it fall to the ground. He was naked! Was he
insane? I wondered. He was utterly naked in front of me! In our village, we would take our clothes off when we were with our sisters or cousins to bathe or play in the water, but never with men. (Devi: 97-98)

She was shocked with this kind of behavior. She got scared when he tried to undress her. She was only a child who was totally unaware of the intimate relationship. For the first time a male had tried to touch her that way. She adds:

My yellow sari fell in a heap on the ground, and he kicked it away. Then he tried to take off my blouse, but I wrapped my arms tightly around me. I drew back as I felt his hands on me, but he gripped my legs between his knees and I couldn’t move.

That was when I felt something slithering against me . . . It was a serpent. There was a serpent attached to his body! He wanted me to touch this serpent. I was petrified. Then he started nibbling at my skin, trying to bite me. He was going to eat me! He was a man who are women! ‘Don’t touch me!’ I screamed. ‘Don’t eat me!’ He put his hand over my mouth to choke me. With the other hand, he began to squeeze my chest under my blouse, gripping me even tighter between his knees – so tight I thought he was going to break my bones. The demon was so strong I was imprisoned by his hairy limbs. He was sweating now and he smelled disgusting, like a hyena. I thought the hyena was trying to devour my flesh. I struggled desperately to get free but I couldn’t. And then he started trying to do things with his nauseating serpent, things that were unimaginable to me. The pain was unbearable. I begged him to spare me. (Devi: 99)
This domestic rape left her shuddered. She as tortured like anything by her cruel husband. His lust had no limits. He had beaten her up like an animal. She as stuck in a bad marriage. Her first night was a biggest nightmare of her life. This unfortunate event added to her hatred for men. She narrates:

He shook me hard by the shoulders and angrily twisted me around, and then he pushed me down with my face against the earth. I felt his weight on my back, heavy as a buffalo. He began beating me in a way I had never been beaten before. I couldn’t even scream at the pain of the serpent pressing at my flesh. He was beating me inside! I thought the serpent was going to tear me apart! It tore me and began to devour me... The demon carried me to the bottom of a deep dark pit, where I couldn’t scream and I didn’t have the force left to fight. It was going to eat until it was bigger than me, and I would die... Then he said he couldn’t do anything with me, and he was going to get a knife to open my belly to put his serpent in. I blindly scratched and pinched him as hard as I could, but it was no use. When I saw the knife-blade shining in his hand, I froze. He held it to my belly, playing with it, showing me the part of my body that was making him angry. I'll open it a little and then it'll be easier,' he grinned. 'It's a very nice game.' I tried not to tremble, not to flinch, and I gritted my teeth to stop myself screaming again. He hadn’t hurt me enough. He wanted to do something else to me. He wanted something horrifying from me, and I still didn’t know what it was. (Devi: 100)
She adds:

He turned me around and punched me hard in the face. In my mouth I could taste the blood flowing from my nose, and the taste of dirt from the ground. I felt more blows, but my terror of his serpent was greater. He was trying to use it to choke me, to stop me crying out! Suddenly I could no longer feel any pain from his punches and slaps. Seeing his vile dark face in front of me, the thick, slobbering lips and black moustache, I felt my strength returning; I wasn’t trapped with my face in the dirt any more. I began to scream, and to fight back. Still holding me by the arm, he picked up his knife again and held it in front of me, making me stand up. ‘You little bitch! I can do whatever I want with you. I’m your husband, your master! Do you hear! Now shut up!’ He was painting and his eyes were wild. (Devi: 101)

She gives clear account of her exploitation by the Police. Without her fault she had to face the humiliation on the bases of her class, caste and gender. They ill-treated her in the cell. She was confused as the protectors were exploiting her. And thus she realized that women were not safe anywhere in the society. She says:

They didn’t take me anywhere. They stripped me right there in the cell, tearing off my sari, my blouse and my petticoat. They made me stand there naked in front of my father . . . He shut his eyes and turned his face against the wall. They pushed me to the ground and began to beat me again. ‘Admit it was you! Say it! Damned bitch! Say it!’ (Devi:194)
She could not imagine that the police would do such an injustice

Then the officers dragged me naked out of the cell and down the corridor into another room. They flung me to the floor. It was a cell like the first with a small, high window, concrete walls and a dirt floor. There was nothing in the room. I heard the heavy iron bolt slide shut outside. I was alone, sitting there with my knees drawn up and my arms wrapped around me to hide my nakedness. I was trembling so violently, I could hear my teeth chattering, but something prevented me from crying. Then the policemen returned, carrying chairs. The bolt slid shut again with a terrifying screech. I closed my eyes. They put my hands under the legs of the chair, and one of them sat down on it. Some of the others stepped on my calves with their heavy boots. I couldn’t say how many of them there were. They didn’t see my face and I didn’t see their faces. My eyes were shut like stones. I was a stone. The next day, when I opened my eyes again, I found I was still there, naked and alone. Then I heard them returning. . . (Devi:195)

She was not treated like a human being. She was so much hurt and disturbed that she wanted to kill herself. She was not in position to take the insult anymore. At that point in time she was not capable of thinking about revenge. She admits:

I was still shivering with cold. I trembled so much I could hardly stand up. If I could have escaped from there at that moment, I would have thrown myself down the first well – or found some petrol in the first house and burned myself alive. The horror and humiliation had left me with just one thought in my
head . . . I wanted to die. I didn’t even care about vengeance this time. Revenge was utterly beyond my grasp. They wouldn’t even let me out to go to the toilet. I had to relieve myself right there in the cell, like a dog. And now they were making me rinse away the evidence of their torture. I wanted to die. That was all. When I had wrung out my clothes, one of the police officers picked up the bowl and poured the water over me. ‘Cover yourself with this.’ (Devi: 196)

Phoolan was humiliated like anything in the cell itself. She wanted to forget everything but those sad memories did not leave her. She started banging her head against the wall so that she could forget all the insults. She was treated like an animal. They all tortured her physically and mentally both. She writes:

But I couldn’t keep still. I banged my head against the wall on one side of the cell and then I banged my head against the other wall, and then I did it again. I did it because I was beginning to remember what they had done to me. I began to remember who I was, and what my body felt like. One by one, the memories returned: the pain, the groans of the policemen, their insults. I wanted to see them roasted alive! I wanted to hear them beg for mercy. ‘Don’t you dare set foot in the village again, bitch! Don’t you dare go into Mayadin’s house. Don’t you dare insult the Sarpanch!’ (Devi: 197)

Phoolan had faced the cruelty of the world more than once. She felt very ashamed of her being illiterate. She could not read or write. She honestly admits the fact that she had to be the laughing stock for people in the court, when she was not able to understand some questions of the lawyer. She recalls:
All the people who know how to read and write and speak English had been right to laugh at me in the court. Compared to them, I was like an animal, startled and terrified, like all the poor people of my caste. All we had to protect us was our fear and mistrust. Ignorance, I realized, could be every bit as cruel as hunger. (Devi: 210)

She further narrates the ugly incident when Baboo was trying to rape her, and Vikram could not take it so he came to the tent where Phoolan was being victimized by that blood thirsty hound called Baboo. He, in no time, shot him. Phoolan could feel his blood on her body. She explains:

I opened my eyes and saw Vickram and Bare Lal in the tent. Baboo was on top of me and he hadn’t seen them. ‘Where’s my cigarette?’ he growled. Vickram was carrying his rifle. ‘You miserable dog! Get up from her, or it’s not a cigarette I will give you but a bullet in the back of the head.’ The ogre scrabbled frantically to get up but his legs were twisted around mine. Vickram fired...... I screamed. I thought I was dead. I heard two more shots, and I felt something warm touch me. it was blood! ‘I’m dead,’ I screamed, ‘I’m dead!’ I tried desperately to crawl from under him. Somebody tried to pull me out. They lifted the ogre’s body but he fell forward on his belly with a thud. My legs were still pinned under him, I was unable to get up. I heard the cracks of more rifle shots outside the tent. There were shouts and the sounds of people running, and then silence again. (Devi: 256- 257)
According to her, Margaret Mead, like Adams, skips twenty years of her life in her *Blackberry Winter* (1975), which are her most active professional year – the time between the birth of her daughter and granddaughter.

However, not many subscribe to the aforementioned view. *Blackberry winter* (1975) is divided into three parts, out of which the second one – the biggest – is completely devoted to her field trips.

Hence there is no reason to believe that Mead omits her professional life in order to focus on her personal life. Mead intentionally skips a particular portion of her life – the period from her daughter’s birth to her granddaughter’s birth – as her chief intention as an anthropologist is to outline the proper training of children. Mead writes in her autobiography:

> As a girl, I knew that someday I would have children.
> My closest models, my mother and my grandmother,
both had children and also had used their minds and had careers in the public world. So I had no doubt that, whatever career I might choose, I would have children too (Mead, 1975: 265).

She explains:

Mead’s Blackberry winter is understandably vague about her “Web of Wartime Activities” people who worked for wartime agencies either were not supposed to say exactly what they were doing or did not chose to. (Howard: 224)

Mead has candidly given the details of her relationship with Luther in the following paragraph. She married Luther with an intension to have at least six children when her intention was not fulfilled, she got this illusion with Luther also. She was facing a lot of health issues and that was a phase when she was feeling very low. During this time she decided to get separated from Luther. And she says:

My picture of my own future was changing also. Luther and I had always planned to have a lot of children-six, I thought. It had been our plan to live a life of great frugality in a country rectory with a whole parish of people who needed us and a house full of children of our own. I as confident of the kind of father he would make. But that autumn a gynecologist told me that I never would be able to have children. I had a tipped uterus, a condition that would not be corrected; if I attempted to have a child. I was told, I would always miscarry early. (Mead:177)

She mentioned about her break up with her husband Luther. She spent a whole week with him before he went to get remarried. They both had
decided to give that much time to each other before final separation. It shows that they value their relationship even when they did not continue their marriage. She says:

I returned to New York to say goodbye to Luther. We spent a placid week together, unmarred by reproaches or feelings of guilt. At the end of it, he sailed for England to see the girl whom he married and who became the mother of his daughter. (Mead:178)

She remembers the episode when her mother gave her the freedom to choose her dress by herself. She made all the girlish stuff. She as like any other teenager, was very fond of frills and lace. She writes:

Mother let me plan my own clothes for a dressmaker who came to the house to make them. I designed an evening dress that was to represent a field of wheat with poppies against a blue sky with white clouds. The skirt, made of a stiff silver-green material, accordion pleated and decorated with poppies; the blue blouse was made of blue and white georgette crepe. The idea was romantic but the dress was dreadful. (Mead:92)

Mead was allowed to design her room for the first time. She was excited about the whole new experience. As a young girl, she was highly excited about the freedom of choice. There was a sense of responsibility and independence...Mead had kept Tagore and Bushvoka in her room. She says:

I also planned my college room carefully. I picked the material for the curtains-the room was to be done in old rose and blue-and chose pictures to go on the walls, among them a picture of Rabindranath Tagore
and a portrait of Catherine Bushovka, the 'little grandmother' of the Russian Revolution. (Mother had danced for joy at the outbreak of the Revolution, when the word came that the Russians, who had been enslaved by the evil Czars, ere free at last) (Mead:92)

Mead like Bhutto too, depicts her pregnancy and delivery details. She was out with her father for dinner and when they came back, her water was broken, she felt uncomfortable in the presence of her father. She admits:

The following night my father came over from Philadelphia and took me out to dinner. Soon after he brought me home, the water broke. It is astonishing how seldom things of this kind, which are apparently inertly determined, happen in the wrong time.(Mead:276)

Mead has given a detailed description of her labour pain. She felt as if she was down with Malaria, as the pain was similar. She had really experienced worst cramps ever. She describes:

All night I felt as if I were getting an attack of Malaria, but I did not know whether the sensation of having a baby might not feel like Malaria. And I was fascinated to discover that far from being "ten times worse than the worst pain you have ever had" (as our childless woman doctor had told us in college) or "worse than the worst cramps you ever had at least you get something out of it" (as my mother had said) the pains of childbirth were altogether different from the enveloping effects of other kinds of pain.( Mead:277)
She was happy to be pregnant after much efforts, when she had almost lost the hopes of having a child. She says:

I was rosily healthy and happy and had on my cheeks the rare 'mask of pregnancy'. I did not experience the extreme dimming of mental activity that effects some women- I suspect particularly women who were very much enjoy carrying a child. (Mead:274)

5.6 SLADE

Unlike Gandhi, Madeline Slade focuses more on the personal than the public/political in The Spirit’s Pilgrimage. In spite of being at the helm of affairs because of her close association with Bapu she focuses on the domestic and personal affairs instead of political developments of the time. The Spirit’s Pilgrimage testifies the belief that women tend to concentrate on their personal rather than public lives. Madeline Slade provides us with the minutest personal details of not only herself but also of Mahatma Gandhi.

Madeline Slade begins the autobiography with her childhood recollections. As a child, Ms. Slade was very fond of her mother and her nurse, Bertha. Her best friend, however, was her grandfather with whom she
had a natural understanding. She never got tired of playing with him. She even recollects the games they used to play together. She also gives a very fond description of Milton Heath, her father’s country home and the centre of all her earliest recollections. She recollects that her grandfather had especially bought Milton heath for its charming view:

The house stood in some twenty acres of land on high ground, beautifully laid out in gardens, paddocks for the cows, and a rich collection of shrubs and trees. Motorcars did not exist in those days, so there were stables full of fine horses, some for the carriages and some for riding and hunting. At the bottom of the sloping paddocks was a cowshed with four or five Jersey cows, chicken house and pigsties.  

(Slade: 11)

*The Spirit’s Pilgrimage* records how the introduction of the modern motorcars on the British roads caused anguish to Madeline Slade’s grandmother. The grandmother had been in the habit of going out for a drive in her victoria with a pair of horses. To allow the engine driven motorcars to go along the roads at a terrific speed of 15 to 20 miles an hour, an act of the Parliament repealed the law that required a man to walk ahead the carriages with a red flag. Moreover, the horses, being unused to the new machine, jumped over the hedge out of fright. This put an end to the grand old style in which Miss Slade’s grandmother used to go out in her victoria:

The anguish that the coming in of motorcars caused my grandmother has remained imprinted on my mind. One day at Milton Heath a number of people were in the drawing room discussing something very seriously. I was trying to make out what was the matter when I suddenly beheld my grandmother throw herself down in an armchair and almost burst into tears. “I'll never go out again in my carriage –
never!" she exclaimed. This is awful, I thought to myself, what has happened? By listening and inquiring I discovered that the law, which made it illegal for engines of any kind to go along the highroads without a man walking some way ahead with a red flag, was going to be repealed, so that these new things called motorcars, which had begun to be heard of, might go along the roads at the terrific speed of 15 to 20 miles an hour! It certainly was an alarming idea, and I felt very sympathetic toward my poor grandmother, who was in the habit of going out for a drive almost daily in her Victoria with a pair of horses, and coachmen and footmen on the box in good old style. But regardless of what agonies it might cause grandmothers – or granddaughters for the matter of that – the law was repealed by an act of Parliament, and to go out along the roads, either in a carriage or on horseback, became a nightmare. No horses had ever seen such things as these outrageous-looking contrivances pop-pop-popping along the roads without animals to pull them, and they became absolutely terrified at the sight and sound. I remember one day when we were out riding and met a motorcar, one of the horses jumped over the hedge. When the monstrous machine had gone by the poor creature was streaming with sweat, every vein on its body standing out in ribs. After a few years, of course, the horses began to settle down. But the quiet English country roads had lost forever their former charm. (Slade: 19-20)

Young Madeline enjoyed solitude and was perfectly happy playing all by herself under the trees in the garden. She gives an intimate description of her relationship with nature. She had a feeling of fellowship with trees and
plants. She had a special affection for trees and they were like personalities for her. As a young girl, she loved to throw her arms around trees and embrace them. Madeline did not care much for toys. However, she had two special playthings – a little monkey and a little squirrel – made of hairy leather with stuffing. She describes these toys in human terms and feels the same respect for them even as an adult as she did in her childhood:

I did not care much for toys, and as for dolls, I could not bear them. But I had two special playthings – a little monkey made of hairy leather filled with stuffing, and a little squirrel of the same material. I called them Nippy and Squilly and got Bertha to make clothes for them. Nippy was the husband and Squilly the wife. They had a little house and a servant, Imply (also made of leather), and they became such defined characters that even now I can clearly recall with what interest and respect I regarded them.

(Slade: 13)

Another aspect of her personality of Madeline Slade was her love for music. She was especially fond of Beethoven and procured one Beethoven sonata after another. Almond, a Scotch concert manager, was conducting a concert in London. Ms. Slade had already gained considerable knowledge of concert management and offered her help. The concert was a huge success but it led to an inner turmoil in her mind regarding her relationship with Lamond. She candidly shares it with her readers:

outwardly everything went well, but before long an ordeal of inner turmoil developed. The joyous association of friendship with Lamond in the cause nearest my heart was developing into something else, something I had never pictured to myself. Now I came face to face with it. I never ceased to pray to God with all my heart and soul for guidance, not in
the orthodox way, but as the spirit moved me. Time and again I would enter a church or cathedral, if I found it empty or with only a few other seeking souls in prayer, and there pour out my heart in silence. It could be Church of England, Roman catholic or Greek Church. I was not concerned with the denomination, but only with the spirit. I said not a word to any human being about all this. It was a sacred communion in which I trusted all alone – and not in vain. (Slade: 49)

Later, in course of her autobiography, Madeline Slade also tells the readers how, after she settled in India, she came to greatly admire one Prithvi Singh and considered marrying him, however without any materialization of her plans.

On reading Rolland’s biography of Mahatma Gandhi, Madeline Slade decided it was time for her to go to her ‘guru.’ For one year she trained herself to be a fit disciple of Gandhi. After her arrival in India, it is Gandhi who is at the centre of her narration. She followed Mahatma wherever he went. In spite of being in the midst of India’s struggle for independence because of her association with Gandhi, her autobiography focuses more on the personal rather than the political aspects. The extent of her personal devotion to him irritated Gandhi. She felt that Bapu was getting fidgety about her being with him. He often got annoyed with her over trifling matters. Once when Bapu got really upset she left Borsad for Sabarmati Ashram without his telling her to do so. Then a letter from Bapu reached her with an explanation:

You are on the brain. I look about and miss you. I open the charkha and miss you. You have left your home, your people and all that people prize most, not to serve me personally but to serve the cause I stand for. All the time you were squandering your love on me personally, I felt guilty of misappropriation. And I
exploded on the slightest pretext. Now that you are not with me, my anger turns itself upon me for having given you all those terrible scoldings. But I was on a bed of hot ashes all the while I was accepting your service. You will truly serve me by joyously serving the cause. “Cheer boys, cheer, no more of idle sorrow.” (Slade: 127)

In a sharp contrast to Gandhi’s *My Experiments with Truth*, Madeline Slade’s autobiography highlights the personal aspects of her life rather than the political. This emphasis by Ms. Slade on the personal, rather than the political; her connectedness to current political or intellectual history clearly contradicts the established criterion about the content of autobiography. *The Spirit’s Pilgrimage* describes some interesting personal incidents, which would rarely find a place in an autobiography by a male political leader of the time. She gives details of a romance between Bapu’s son Devadas and Rajaji’s daughter Lakshmi in the backdrop of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931. While the political discussions were going on, Devadas arranged to talk to Lakshmi in an open veranda before she left him for Madras. The young lovers were asked to remain separate for five years as a test of constancy:

While the great political drama was in progress, a quiet and earnest romance was going on behind the scene. Bapu’s youngest son, Devadas, and Rajaji’s little daughter Lakshmi, were deeply in love with one another, but the two fathers had disapproved of immediate marriage. It was an intercaste attachment between Gujarati Vaishya and Madrasi Brahmin, and it was better to test the constancy of affections and compatibility of temperaments, so the stem parents – Rajaji was there as a member of the Congress Working Committee – had set a probationary period of five years. Ba, with her old-style orthodoxy still strong in her veins, looked with considerable
misgivings on the match, but her great devotion to Devdas, and his to her, softened her heart.

(Slade: 123)

Thus, all these women give all sorts of personal details in their autobiographies. Be it their happiness or sorrow, they like to give the full account of their personal experiences. They do not prefer to hide anything to their readers. Moreover, they like to give detailed description of whatever they feel or experience. Unlike men, they do not shy away from sharing the ugliest truths and showing even the darkest sides of their lives. They are, in many ways more honest in their style of writing.