CHAPTER-VII
CONCLUSION

7.1 THE ETERNAL FIGHT

After all these arguments and counter arguments, we can finally conclude that both the genders, men and women are the integral part of this world, and therefore, any one should not be given more importance than the other. Ultimately they both are human beings and thus treated with equal dignity and respect. Fighting over the superiority of one over the other is futile.

In her *Second Sex*, De Beauvoir says:

> My idea is that all of us, men as well as women should be regarded as human beings... Surely woman is, like man, a human being; but such a declaration is abstract. The fact is that every concrete human being is always a singular, separate individual... (de Beauvoir:14)

De Beauvoir, strongly believes that this tension will always be there between the two sexes because they do not want to take each other as equals. Women are still struggling to get the desired status, and men are struggling to maintain the superior position. Both men and women do not wish to change their outlook towards the other gender. It has become almost impossible to come out of this vicious circle. De Beauvoir writes:

> The quarrel will go on as long as men and women fail to recognize each other as equals; that is to say, as long as femininity is perpetuated as such. Which sex is the more eager to maintain it? Woman, who is being emasculated from it, wishes none the less to retain its privileges; and man who in that case, wants
her to assume its limitations. ‘It is easier to accuse one sex than to excuse the other,’ says Montaingne. The truth is that if the vicious circle is so hard to break, it is because the two sexes are each the victim at once of the other and of itself...(de Beauvoir: 728)

The advantages of women’s liberation were not confined to women alone. Mead believed that the society too gained from it. The future of our society may depend on whether women, with their special gifts and talents, are integrated into a world previously reserved for men. We have seen how a male or a female becomes a man or a woman. Each sex position is projected as the surer one; with the other sex a pallid or compensatory or imperfect version of the other and of less importance. We have also seen that the girl imitating male achievements as a result a feeling of inadequacy, or ‘penis envy’ as Freud puts it. That equally the boy may feel himself incomplete and spend his life in symbolic and far-fetched imitations of the girl's maternity - or 'womb envy' according to the critics. Each sex may be given a fuller sense of sex membership. Either solution is possible, neither is inevitable. As Mead writes in her Male and Female:

If parents define one child as less complete, less potentially gifted, less right to be free, less claim to love and protection, or less a source of pride to themselves than the other, the child of that sex, in many cases, feel envy. (Mead, 1955:272)

The divisions of human kind into male and female and their myriad definitions have existed since time immemorial. With the passage of time, however, these definitions only grew complicated as newer views from different cultures were introduced. As Mead in her Male and Female notes:

Throughout history, the more complex activities have been defined and re-defined, now as male, now as
female, now as neither, sometimes as drawing, equally on the gifts of both sexes, sometimes as drawing differentially on both sexes. When an activity to which each could have contributed - probably all complex activities belong in this class - is limited to one sex, a rich differentiated quality is lost from the activity itself. Once a complex activity is defined as belonging to one sex, the entrance of the other sex into it is made difficult and compromising.

(Mead, 1955: 277)

Mead cites the example of Bali, where there is no heavy taboo against a man or a woman, if either wishes, practising the special arts of the other sex. In citing the example of Bali, Mead has a point to promote. She believes that there is still light at the end of the tunnel. But the fact that each camp is giving aid and comfort to the enemy adds to the already prevailing complexity; woman is pursuing a dream of submission, man a dream of identification. Want of authenticity does not pay: each blames the other for the unhappiness he or she has incurred in yielding to the temptations of the easy way.

For women patriarchal power works at three levels – domestication, prescription and expectation. Domestication of women is done by prescribing norms for them. Patricia Meyer Spacks, in her *Imaging a Self: Autobiography and in Eighteenth Century England* (1975) notes:

There is no feminine nature, only a feminine situation which has in many respects remained constant through the centuries. . . The notion of ‘femininity’ is a fiction created by men, assented to by women untrained in the rigors of logical thought or conscious of the advantage to be gained by compliance with masculine fantasies . . . Man offers freedom – which
includes freedom to play as feminine a role as they are able to play – frees men too” (Cassidy: 101).

Patriarchy does not allow equality. This means that one sex - women - has always remained a dissatisfied lot. This dissatisfaction amongst one sex cannot allow one to go scot-free. It is bound to reflect on men, too. For example, men suffered a lot during the phase of radical feminism- and extreme reaction to patriarchy. The discriminating upbringing has only added to the women's woes. In schools, for instance, they are taught equality- a phenomenon starkly absent in real-day life. Such double talk has always perplexed women. As Mead expounds:

Enormous contradiction our society imposes on young girls: in school they are taught to aspire to the same values as boys, variety, choice, freedom- but when they become adults, the only option is marriage and motherhood. (Cassidy,87)

7.2 FEMINIST WRITING?

Hence, to categorize writings of Bhutto, Phoolan, Mead and Slade into feminist or non-feminist types is, in fact, a daunting task. Reading these four autobiographies, with keeping the implications of gender on their writings, leads the investigator to conclude that the lives of Bhutto, Mead, Phoolan and Slade, as portrayed in their texts, put forward the fact that; gender is not ‘natural’; it is ‘given’. If so, then gender can be overlooked, can be redefined. That is what they do. They as autobiographers redefine not only the gender and create new space for themselves but also redefine the genre. As we proceed further, one very important question arises, can we call these four autobiographies ‘Feminist Texts’? Though, it would be improper to tag them under a particular label, the concern for women in general is clearly reflected from their writings. According to Wendy Martin and Register, a piece of feminist writing is the one that has the following characteristics:
- Presents female role-models
- Demands subject position
- Raises consciousness
- Portrays independent woman
- Depicts female bonding

Mead, once, found herself in a catch 22 situation after authoring Male and Female (1955), as women squarely accused her of being anti-feminist and men indicted her of indulging in rampant feminism. As she herself confides in her Blackberry Winter:

When I wrote Male and Female, a book in which I dealt carefully with cultural and temperamental differences as these were reflected in the lives of men and women and then discussed characteristics that seemed to be related to primary sex differences between men and women, I was accused of anti-feminism by women, of rampant feminism by men, and of denying the full beauty of the experience of being a woman by individuals of both sexes (Mead, 1975: 242-43).

However, such a criticism notwithstanding, Mead despised being tagged. As it is often said that Mead was a humanist first and a feminist when necessary. She claimed:

In a sense I was never a feminist. I made friends of women. I stood by women, and if I was asked to do something that might improve the position of women in general, I did it. But I've never had a chip on my shoulder (Cassidy: 102).
Mother-daughter relationship is the most special bond in any woman's life. Though, Bhutto was following her father's footsteps in political career, she was taking her mother's advice very carefully when it came to her personal life. She was the one who used to guide Benazir as and when needed. She helped her in clearing out all the myths about pregnancy. Bhutto acknowledges:

I am grateful to my mother for teaching me that pregnancy is a biological state of being which should not disrupt the normal routine of life trying to live up to her expectations. I almost ignored any hint of physical or emotional limitations during my pregnancies. (Bhutto: XIII)

Like any other girl, Bhutto too was highly fascinated by her mother's beauty. She was her role model as a woman. Bhutto felt that her mother was not only beautiful, but also very strong-willed person. She used to face all the ups and downs of her life brave-heartedly. She further adds:
I have watched my beautiful, glamorous mother, so charming, so graceful, slowly turn frail and weak. This strong woman, who battled military dictatorship and was a pioneer for women’s rights, now hardly recognises anyone and cannot speak. She cannot tell me whether she is hungry or whether she has a toothache. It is heart rending for me to see how helpless my determined mother has become. But I am blessed to have her live with me. Her mere presence gives me strength. (Bhutto: XIX)

Phoolan belonged to a different world altogether. She was under the impression that women are supposed to follow the female stereotypes. Though, she herself never did that. She was expecting her mother to be submissive, and tender. Phoolan, as a child, always felt that her mother was not loving enough. Though she realised that she was wrong. She used to compare her mother with other mothers in the village and used to get disillusioned. She says:

In the village there were mothers who kissed and cuddled their children and gave them nice things to eat, but our mother couldn’t have loved us the way they loved their children. ‘Our Amma is a demon,’ Choti said. ‘She’s always angry with us.’ We had mouths and stomachs, so we were always hungry, and we were girls. (Devi: 19)

Very unusual fact about Phoolan’s family was that her mother was stronger than her father. Her sufferings had made her stronger. Her father on the other hand her father was not capable of protecting his family. The mother felt that it was better to kill the daughters instead of giving them to the woolves like men around them. Phoolan when looked in retrospect, could understand her mother’s emotions in a better way. Though, Phoolan’s mother as not her
role-model, but she had inherited the strength from her mother. She remembers:

She really was trying to choke me! But what else could a woman do? What could a mother do in our village to defend her daughter from these men? No matter how viciously she chastised me at times, I had always believed my mother could protect me from danger. But I saw in that moment that she was alone. She was powerless before the man I still couldn’t even bring myself to look at. I begged my father to help us. He was the head of the family, he was supposed to be our protection against the world, but all he could do was weep hopelessly, harassed from every side. (Devi: 132)

Mead in her *Blackberry Winter* (1975) reiterates that her mother and grandmother were her all-time role models, whose footsteps Mead always followed – consciously or sub-consciously. She was very clear that just like her mother and grand-mother, she too wanted to have a perfect balance between personal and professional life. She writes in her autobiography:

At different times I wanted to become a lawyer, a nun, a writer, or a minister’s wife with six children. Looking to my grandmother and my mother for models, I expected to be both a professional woman, a wife and mother (Mead, 1975: 86).

She further adds:

As a girl, I knew that someday I would have children. My closest models, my mother and my grandmother, had both had children and also had used their minds and had careers in the public world. (Mead, 1975: 265).
Her life too, inspired women of all ages and backgrounds. They could look at her as a model of professionalism – the consummate career women. However, she was not a solitary crusader, tilting at the windmills of male dominion. Women could identify with her as a wife and mother, if a somewhat unconventional one, given her three divorces. Cassidy argues in her *Voice for the Century*:

She herself was thrice married and thrice divorced, a mother, and a grandmother, seemed only to add to her credibility among her readers. (Cassidy:14-15).

On the subject of husbands Mead was often asked how she could counsel people about marriage when she herself had been married and divorced three times. She told an interviewer from Cosmopolitan in 1977, “I don’t consider my marriages as failures! It’s idiotic to assume that because a marriage ends, it’s failed – it was simply the end of a union.” (Cassidy: 15).

Moreover, her ex-officio role as a critic and commentator upon contemporary mores – in such diverse areas as the family, the generation gap, sex, religious and moral issues, male-female relationships – transformed her into a kind of a grandmotherly figure whose views were eagerly awaited by millions of Americans – and equally scorned by her detractors. No wonder, time named her “mother of the world” in 1969. Mead was more than a brilliant exception. She liked being a woman and wanted more than anything to be a mother, a goal she achieved relatively late in life and only after much suffering and torment. She confessed in her *Blackberry Winter* (1975): I had no doubts that whatever career I might choose, I would have children, too (Mead, 1975: 265).

Slade had a great respect for her mother’s ability to take care of every little demand of the whole family. She was very good at decorating house. She was totally different in temperament, as Slade as restless while her
mother was calm. Slade learnt a lot from her mother. For Slade, she was the epitome of 'Nature'. She describes:

A naval officer's appointment is usually for two years in one place, so we were continually moving, and wherever we went Mother made a perfect home, as if we had lived there always and were going to go on living there for the rest of our lives. It was the direct outlet for her self-expression, and, as she had a quiet genius for house decoration and furniture, the homes she made us, one after another, bore the stamp of her nature. And who can describe that nature? It is as impossible as it was for an artist to paint her or a photographer to photograph her. She came and went, a beautiful, unique and unknown spirit - unknown, I think, to herself as well as to others. We came very near to one another, but I was young and restless, and she in her deep affection watched, and let me go my way. (Slade: 28)

7.2.2 WOMEN TAKE SUBJECT POSITION

Bhutto, was highly under the influence of her father, as he was her real life hero, and therefore she was much dependent on him. But soon after his death, she took the command of her life with the help of her mother and sister. These ladies were really strong enough to face all odds of life. Bhutto, has tried to keep herself and her mother in the limelight while giving enough space to other men in her autobiography.

My mother was a Shiite Muslim, as are most Iranians, while the rest of the family was Sunni. But there was never a problem… during Muharram, the month of commemorating the massacre of the profits
of the grandsons Imam Husain at Karbala in Iraq. I would sometimes dress all in black and go with my mother to join other women in the Shiite rituals. ‘follow closely’, Mummy would say to me, for the Shiite ceremony were more elaborate than those of Sunnis. (Bhutto: 35)

Phoolan, was a fighter, she was unexpectedly strong and stubborn. Though, circumstances had made her such strong headed. The more she suffered, the more confidence she gained. She was the only woman among the gang of decoits, and therefore she was getting all the attention of the other gender. Phoolan had managed to keep herself wanted throughout her story. She on one hand has given a lot of importance to other men, and yet she was not in the periphery.

She was even confident at the time she surrendered. She recalls:

‘Hand me your knife’, said a prison guard to me: I had refused to hand over my knife at the ceremony in front of the C.M. I wasn’t going to hand it over now, that I was there in prison. ……There must have been at least 20 guards around me, keeping a careful distance. I was cornered and suddenly overwhelmed with doubt and desperation. I regretted having signed the paper from the Government of India. If they hadn’t dragged my family in front of me to blackmail me, I wouldn’t have been there. (Phoolan: 477)

Mead comes up with some interesting observations here. Throughout the centuries, a woman was expected to be married, to be part of a couple first and a mother second. Even in her own autobiography she was always given the secondary position. Women during their whole life are not supposed to enjoy the subject position. But in a feminist writing, as a pre-requisite, women have to be at the center of every affair. Mead said:
She was not expected to be a person in her own right but had to learn to prune and pair her personality, to make herself the less demanding, less individual member of a couple. She had, in other words all the basic rights, except the right to dedicate to any task other than homemaking. (Cassidy: 92).

Although hampered by their condition as wives and mothers, they still pressed for social reform for women, in chief the right to vote. The feminist movement, according to Mead was:

primarily a movement of women who were reduced to being nothing but consumers, making consumer choices and having no chance to be productive at all (Cassidy, 93-94).

As a result of the various roles that women play throughout their lives, the focus of their autobiography is more on the surroundings than on the self. Since autobiography is an art of self-life writing, it goes without saying that ‘I’ is at the helm of affairs. However, unlike other female autobiographies, where a male remains at the center and a female in periphery, Meads’ autobiography revolves round women only. Besides Mead herself, her mother, grandmother, daughter and granddaughter are at the center stage of her life story.

The contrast is evident by juxtaposing Mead’s Blackberry Winter (1975) and Gayatri Devi’s A Princess Remembers (1982). Some critics allege that A Princess Remembers revolves around Maharaja Jaysingh’s life than Devi’s own life. Along with her husband, Devi’s brother too, finds abundant space in her life story as she was very much impressed by him.
She has written:

Bhaiya was for me, a natural hero, so handsome, so
good at games, so entertaining and above all so
protective in a most unobtrusive way (Devi:1982, 56).

Mead was always in favour of women keeping their own identity. She herself
was an independent woman, who lived her life on her own terms and
conditions. As an anthropologist, she knew the importance of one's own
unique identity. Besides this, all the women characters that Mead delineates
in her book have their own identity. Mead before the birth of her daughter
wrote:

I felt deeply – as I still feel that this is the most
important point about bringing into the most
important point about bringing into the world a child
that will have its own unique and clear identity
(Mead, 1975: 274).

In January 1947 she wrote a poem for her daughter. From the birth of
her daughter, she had tried to let her to be free to choose her own path. As
she wrote in her poem:

That I be not a restless ghost
Who haunts your footsteps as they pass
Beyond the point where you have left
Me standing in the new sprung grass,

You must be free to take a path
Whose end I feel no need to know,
No irking fever to be sure
You went where I would have to go.

Those who would fence the future in
Between two walls of well-laid stones
But lay a ghost walk for themselves,
A dreary walk for dusty bones.

So you can go without regret
Away from this familiar land,
Leaving your kiss upon my hair
And all the future in your hands
(Mead, 1975: 297).

As four Mead said, “I was treated as a full person whose opinions were solicited and treated seriously” (Howard: 22). By the time she was five, she had already had “most of the experiences other people wait for until they are in college” (Howard: 22). Right from her childhood, Mead was treated as a full person. She had an identity of her own, which was not overshadowed, at any point of her life, by any male.

Slade, throughout her autobiography, seems confused and lost. In the earlier chapters, she projected herself totally dependent on her parents and grand-parents. She was not allowed to break the rules of the family. And after coming to the Ashram, she had tried to adjust with the surroundings there. She herself was not assertive at all. Right from her childhood she only had to adjust to the others will. She just camouflaged herself in the background wherever she had gone. For example, she did not like the aristocratic atmosphere of her house, as she found it very monotonous and artificial, but she never even tried to retaliate against it.

There were definite times for meeting my elders. After nursery ‘Tea’ Bertha would tidy me up, dressed me in a simple silk smock and then bring me downstairs where I would either play games with my grandfather or be taken to the drawing room, where my grandmother, who was of scotch talk, would be sitting knitting. The only meal I attended downstairs
was Sunday lunch, when I sat next to my mother, who kept careful control over everything I had to eat.
(Slade: 14)

7.2.3 FEMALE BONDING

Bhutto shared a great bonding with her sister Sanam. She had always got an unconditional support from her sister. She had to leave her kids to her sister Sanam's house for some years, as she was not in position to keep them with her due to some political disturbance. Moreover she was very close to her mother at every stage of life. She acknowledges her contribution to Bhutto's upbringing and writes:

It was my mother who taught me the rituals of prayer. She took her faith very seriously. No matter where she was in the world or what she was doing, she prostrated herself five times a day prayer. When I was nine years old, she started including me, slipping my bedroom to lead me in the morning prayer. Together we would perform the wazoo, the washing of our hands, feet and faces so that we would be pure before God, then prostrate ourselves facing west towards Mecca. (Bhutto:35)

Phoolan clarifies that her mother was not insensitive towards her and her sisters. When Phoolan was married to Puttilal, the mother as crying inconsolably, as she was perhaps aware of the brutal reality. Phoolan herself was blissfully ignorant about her future destiny. She confesses:

I assumed he must have had cattle to feed, clothes to wash, the sort of chores I did every day like all the other girls in my village. Why was my mother in tears?
'Don't cry, Amma,' I said, 'I'll be back.'
Then father started sobbing too. He put his head in his hands. He kept on saying I was too young to leave the family home. I didn’t understand. Of course I would have preferred to stay in our village with Choti and all my friends; of course I was a bit frightened by this man and his ageing father, but I was less afraid of them than I was of Mayadin.

(Devi: 88)

Phoolan frankly accepts that she then was unable to decode her mother’s behavior. At times she was encouraging her to fight for her rights, and at times she would ask her to be tolerant. In many ways she moulded Phoolan to fight against injustice. She writes:

My mother was a mystery to me sometimes. She would encourage me to fight back at times and at other times she would just tell me to cover my head. The humiliation I had suffered was hers too; the danger she had tried to protect her daughters from for so long had happened. I wanted to shout out the name of the man responsible for this crime, and she wanted me to remain silent. But for me, the shame was harder to endure in silence. (Devi: 178)

Phoolan was always very much concerned about other women around her, just because she had suffered a great deal because of her gender. When Baboo and his men were trying to rape another girl from the village, she was feeling totally helpless. She wanted to kill Baboo and his gang and save that innocent girl. Powerless just like the victim, Phoolan ran out of the room as she could not see any other woman being exploited by men. She remembers:

He lifted her head to see her face and gave a nod to his men. They took her outside. I heard her
screaming and pleading with them to stop. They were raping her. I covered my ears, unable to bear her cries. She was begging for mercy; she could do nothing to stop them and I could do nothing to help her because I was a prisoner just as she was. Baboo had picked her up with one hand like a hunk of meat and given her to his men. I, too, had been helpless prey like her. I couldn’t bear it any longer. I ran out of the room, but one of the bandits caught me in the yard. (Phoolan:250)

One of the reasons for Mead’s popularity among women was her easy accessibility. Having faced the trials of pregnancy and childbirth, she too was just another mother. She could speak with a degree of credibility – as she herself was a wife, a mother and a professional – to women about the problems of rearing children and running a family. She did all this minus any bitterness.

As years passed by, the bond between Mead and her women followers turned even more intimate as she became a benevolent grandmother-like figure, an interpreter, an analyst of matters for concern to women – birth control, the population explosion, the generation gap, their position in the home and in society.

From her autobiography and other writings, we can make out, that Mead throughout her life was emotionally attached to different women, in addition to her mother, grandmother, daughter and granddaughter. June Howard in her biography notes:

Another of Mead’s close friends contented that she “fell in love with women’s souls and men’s bodies.” She was spiritually homosexual, psychologically bisexual and physically heterosexual (Howard: 367).
In her student life, she had developed a strange bonding with girls around. Mead recalls:

We firmly established a style of relationship to other women. “Never break a date with a girl for a man” was one of our mottos in a period when women’s loyalty to women usually was as it usually still is subordinate to their possible relationship to men (Mead, 1975: 117).

During this period, she learned loyalty to women, pleasure in conversation with women, and enjoyment of the way in which all of them complemented one another in terms of their differences in temperament, which they found as interesting as the complementarity that is produced by the difference of sex.

Judge from the perspective of her whole body of thought on the status of women, Mead emerges as more than a mere feminist. Her eye was not merely on obtaining rights for her sex, but for their exercising responsibility, too. She looked beyond the narrow concerns of her sex.

When Slade was in jail, she had developed a strong bonding with her new companion. At first she was asked to share a cell with a woman who had killed her kid, Slade was not comfortable staying with her, another one was a woman who had killed her husband, though she was quite, Slade was little
scared of her. Then she was asked to stay with this twenty year old country girl, whom she liked at once. Slade writes:

My new companion was a nice little country girl of about twenty, and from all she told me, and from what Matron had related, it seemed she had been wrongly convicted. I tried afterwards to help in getting her case reconsidered, and I believe that ultimately, her wrong term was reduced.

(Slade: 169)

Though Slade was Mahatma Gandhi’s disciple, she was very close to his wife, Kasturba too. Everybody at the ashram used to fondly call her Ba. Slade was having very good equation with her. She depicts an incident when Ba was watching everybody playing board games. And after much insistence, she was ready to play with them. Slade was her partner, and they all had a great time at the ashram. She recalls:

For some days Ba had been coming on and off to watch the game, and evinced quite a keen interest in it. One day, as she was looking on, Bapu happened to pass, and he laughingly told her she should join in. At first Ba protested, but Bapu was earnest in his suggestion, and finally she agreed. I was to be her partner. Of course, dear Ba had never in her life played any such game, and we all coached her. It became a merry party, and with luck, when Ba's shots did not go too much astray, we used to win. Bapu, every now and then, would come to have a look, and was delighted to see Ba getting some distraction.( Slade:25)
7.2.4 WOMEN TAKE SUBJECT POSITION

Mead's case was little different from other women. Mead was never so impressed by her father. She was very clear that her mother and grandmother had a great contribution in her upbringing. She projects her mother and grandmother in a positive light. She believed that both the ladies showed her the right path and that is why she gave all the credit for her success to them. She writes about her grandma:

I think it was my grandmother who gave me my ease in being a woman. She was unquestionably feminine – small and dainty and pretty and wholly without masculine protest or feminist agreement. She had gone to college when this was a very unusual thing for a girl to do, she had a firm grasp of anything she paid attention to, she had married and had a child, and she had a career of her own. (Mead, 1975: 55)

About her mother she opines:

…but for me she had two outstanding characteristics. One was her unfailing and ungrudging generosity. In my life I realized every one of her unrealized ambitions, and she was un-ambivalently delighted. The other was that she was absolutely trustworthy. (Mead, 1975: 28)

Mead was very much inspired by her mother, who was of the opinion that women should retain their own identities after marriage. Thus her mother taught her to have her own name and fame rather than just being somebody's wife or daughter. She explains:
I had decided to make my own name. This made a flutter in the press, partly because I had stated my decision as a matter of preference rather than principle…. But I was merely acting on my mother’s belief that women should keep their own identities and not be submerged. (Mead, 1975: 126-127)

Though, Slade’s autobiography revolves round the life of Mahatma Gandhi, she gives enough space to other women in her life story. Here, she very happily describes the time that she used to spend with her mother and sister. She feels alive with them, and she recalls:

We went round all the way by the sea, and Mother and I, being very bad sailors, did not enjoy ourselves at all, especially in the Bay of Biscay. I do not remember much about the voyage except that Rhona, being very attractive, was sought after for games and dances by young men, who took me to be the elder daughter on account of my serious manner, and were nervous about approaching me - which I enjoyed as a good joke, especially as I did not want to dance. (Slade: 36)

7.2.5 INDEPENDENT WOMEN

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Benazir Bhutto was a very independent woman, who preferred to take her decisions on her own. Her people were also aware of her worth and therefore she was elected the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan. She knew that she was given a great responsibility and she always maintained her dignity and pride. She was inspiration to many Pakistani women. She admits:

As I took my oath as Prime Minister, I believed that now the government could solve the people’s problems without hindrance. I quickly realised I was wrong. Those that had opposed my election, including the President, were bent on destabilising me. One incident set the tone. At the swearing-in ceremony, the President started reading the oath of office in a peculiar way, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, and not pausing at commas. It was as if he was trying to trip me up, to embarrass me before a worldwide audience. Realizing what he was up to, I recited my oath with dignity, pride, and determination, so that the people of my country could hear me make my pledge to them to fulfill the responsibility they had placed on my shoulders. (Bhutto: 393)

Mead’s personal life was also perfectly integrated with her work. She inspired others by her own example, not just in the simple things she did, such as keeping her own name after marriage, but in the substantive aspect of her life and work as well. As Cassidy puts it in Voice for the Century: She carried her message in thoughtful essays and books, and in the way she lived her own life (Cassidy: 155).

Her daring and courage in venturing half way around the world proved inspirational to countless number of young people, particularly women, many of whom took up anthropology because they had read one of her books and
had been thrilled by her adventurous spirit. She was a liberated woman who made headlines when she kept her maiden name after her first marriage.

Mead’s idea of real freedom was liberating both the sexes – both men and women, she said, “need liberation from a lifestyle that is stultifying and destructive to both sexes” (Cassidy: 101). According to her, every time we liberate a woman, we liberate a man.

The first cries for reasonable treatment of women, according to Mead, were made by two groups of women who fell outside the normal range of lifestyles. One was that group of homeless spinsters who had to fend for themselves. Without a system of support, these women were forced to work under discriminatory conditions. Thus, securing certain rights and protections for this group became part of the emerging women’s rights platform of the late nineties and early twentieth centuries. The other group was the activists, “women who wanted to get out there and fix things, who were concerned about peace, prohibition, anti-slavery, who wanted to take their ideas from the home out in to the community” (Cassidy: 90).

Mead viewed the entire movement in a more liberal light than many others. according to her, to blame men entirely for the problems of women, was, “a vast oversimplification” (Cassidy: 95), for women “cannot build on the fantasy that (they) have been held down by a conspiracy” (Cassidy: 95). But for all her sympathy with the cause of women’s liberation, Mead thought it too anti-male. “The emphasis is stridently on women’s rights for women’s sake,” (Cassidy: 95), she said, labeling the more radical members of the movement “conspicuously self-centered and hostile to men” (Cassidy: 95).
Phoolan never wanted to be subdued, she was very upfront and independent, who did not want anybody’s control over her mind and body. The more she was exploited, the more she wanted the freedom from the boundaries of caste, class and gender. After the death of Vikram, she was tortured by the thakurs in Behami village, when she survived that shock too, she decided to have her own gang .She wanted to be the leader. She did not want to follow anybody else’s orders. She says:

Balwan had about a dozen men. He offered to let me join him, saying we could run the gang together, but I didn’t want to get into a situation like that again. I didn’t need anyone’s protection this time and I wasn’t going to take orders from anybody. I was going to be the leader, I was the one who was going to be obeyed from now on. I knew that having two factions in one gang could lead to case rivalries and infighting (Devi : 388)

Reading Bhutto’s Daughter of the East, Mead's Blackberry Winter: My Early Years Phoolan's I, Phoolan Devi and Slade’s Spirit’s Pilgrimage with keeping Wendy Martin and Register’s pre-requisites as touchstone in mind, it can be observed that the writings are certainly gender-conscious if not entirely feminist.
7.3 ANDROGYNY A BETTER OPTION

Growing Together by Jignesh Brahmbhatt
Simon de Beauvoir feels that the eternal fight over inequality can be if girls, right from their childhood were given equal opportunities as their brothers. The equality of both the genders could have diluted the problem. If girls were brought up the same as boys, things would have been better. She says:

If the little girl were brought up from the same demands and rewards, the same severity and the same freedom as her brothers, taking part in the same studies, the same games, promised the same future, surrounded with women and men who seem to be undoubted equals, the meaning of the castration complex and of the odeipus would be profoundly modified…(de Beauvoir:735)

Here we must accept the fact that both are God’s creations and that the gender-bias is only man-made. God instilled physical dissimilarities in His finest creation. However, His objective, believe Mead and de Beauvoir, must have been to create two complimentary bodies, which operate in tandem. Unfortunately, that was not to be, as the physically stronger lot – male – used their strength only to suppress the other- female. Gradually the suppression became systematic. And the system came to be known as patriarchy. Patriarchy has imposed certain social standards on female. According to Simon de Beauvoir, a woman is not born, but she is made. (de,beauvoir:16)Putting forth the case of Tchambuli society, Mead says that though it appeared that women here had less power, they exercised quite a lot. Yet, in a ritualistic way, women had to differ to the men. She goes on to assert that the number of primitive or developed societies in which women exercised more power than men is still very few. Mead remarked: This world must be reshaped, by both sexes, to suit the need of both sexes. (Cassidy, 87)Mead prescribes the following remedies to ‘reshaped the world’. According to her, if boys are harder to train, train them harder; if girls grow faster than boys, separate them, so the boys won’t be damaged; if women have a little
less strength than men, invent machines so that they can still do the same work. But every adjustment that minimizes a difference, a vulnerability, in one sex, a differential strength in the other diminishes their possibility of complementing each other, and corresponds – symbolically – to sealing of a constructive receptivity of the female and the vigorous outgoing constructive activity of the male, muting them both in the end to a duller version of human life, in which each is denied the fullness of humanity that each might have had. Guard each sex in its vulnerable moments we must, protect and cherish them through the crisis that at some times so much harder for one sex than for the other. But as we guard, we may also keep the differences. Simply compensating for differences is in the end form of denial.

A world where men and women are equal is not that difficult to visualize. Mead in her *Male and Female* opines: The more whole the culture, the more whole each member, each man, each woman, each child will be. (Mead, 1955: 272) Right from the birth, each sex is shaped by the presence and behavior of both the sexes and each sex is dependent upon both. According to Mead, the myths that conjure up islands of women who live all alone without men always contain, and rightly, some flaw in the picture. She argues in *Male and Female*:

A one-sex world would be an imperfect world for it would be a world without a future. Only a denial of life itself makes it possible to deny the interdependence of the sexes. (Mead, 1955: 272)

If each sex realizes sex membership to the fullest, each boy and each girl must also feel as a whole human being. Mead believes that we are human beings first. According to her, while sex membership very quickly overrides race feeling, boys would prefer to be male of the inferior race than to be females in their own. A psyche quite reflective of Milton’s Satan: it is better to rue in Hell than to serve in Heaven. Simone de Beauvoir in her *Second Sex* writes:
as matter of fact, man, like woman, is flesh, therefore, passive, the plaything of his hormones and of the species, the restless prey of his desires. And she, like him, in the midst of the carnal fever, is a consenting, a voluntary gift, an activity; they live out in their several fashions, the strange ambiguity of existence made body. (de Beauvoir: 737)

Sooner or later women will arrive at complete economic and social equality leading to an inner metamorphosis. However, many object that even if such a world is possible it is certainly not desirable. When woman is ‘the same’ as her male, life will lose its salt and spice. This argument, also, has lost its novelty: those interested in perpetuating present conditions are always in tears about the marvelous past that is about to disappear, without having so much as a smile for the young future. Drawing upon Coleridge’s concept of androgyny Woolf articulates her own views on creative production: It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. (Woolf, 1954:99)

Though, these women: Bhutto, Mead, Phoolan and Slade, write in their own style, their writings somehow match the prescribed criteria of ‘feminist texts’ partially, if not fully. They all have concern for women around them, have many female role-models, in spite of having a mighty influence of several men in their lives. Though, they have given enough space to men in their self-life-writing, they have displayed female bonding too. Here, the investigator has observed that on one hand, unlike the usual autobiographies by women in which they portray de-centered self, they mix the characteristics of male and female writings, and on the other hand at the same time they develop their own unique style, which is closer to the concept of ‘Androgyne’.

Thus after reading these four autobiographies, putting them under the tag of ‘Feminist writings’ is not fair. As, judging them with one single yardstick
would be improper. Ultimately, as a researcher, and as a woman as well, I feel that these free spirited women and their writings should not be controlled by the boundaries of caste, creed, religion, or gender. Their creativity, devotion, talent, attitude and passion are a way beyond any such set parameters.