CHAPTER-III
NON-INDIVIDUALISTIC SENSE OF SELF

3.1 MALE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The critical literature on autobiography began in 1956. To begin with, we have Georges Gusdorf, whose “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” with its philosophical, psychological, literary and more generally humanistic concerns have preoccupied students of autobiography from 1956 onwards. Gusdorf, describes autobiography as “a solidly established genre” notes:

Autobiography exists, unquestionably and in fine state; it is covered by that reverential rule that protests hallowed things, So that calling it into question might well seem rather foolish. Diogenes demonstrated the reality of movement simply by walking, and thus brought the Scoffers with the Eleatic philosopher who claimed, with reason as his authority, that it was impossible for Achilles ever to overtake the tortoise. Likewise, autobiography fortunately has not waited for philosophers to grant it the right to exist (Gusdorf, 1980:28).

However, Gusdorf points out that the genre of autobiography is limited in time and space it also has a very specific range. autobiography writing is not to be found outside the Western culture since it expresses a concern that is associated with the Western man only:

The concern which seems so natural to us, to turn back on one’s own past, recollect one’s own life in order to narrate it, is not at all universal. It asserts
itself only in recent centuries and only on a small part of the map of the world. The man who takes delight in thus drawing his own image believes himself worthy of a special interest (Gusdorf, 1980:29).

Gusdorf’s concept of autobiography, thus, is premised on a model of the ‘self’ that he identified as endemically Western and individualistic. One starts dissociating one’s self from the others and tends to think of himself as the center of a living space. He thinks that his existence is significant to the world and that his death will leave the world incomplete. Gusdorf further asserts that autobiography is not possible in a culture where this consciousness of self does not exist – a culture which exists in India for example, where individual ego is looked upon as an illusion and salvation is sought in depersonalization.

Autobiography, thus, becomes possible only, under certain metaphysical precondition. It is after the Copernican revolution that the humanity, which previously aligned its development to the great cosmic cycles, finds itself engaged in an autonomous adventure, and now man knows himself as a responsible agent; gatherer of men, of lands, of power, maker of kingdoms or of empire, investor of laws or of wisdom, and so on. With this cultural resolution our interest is turned from public to private history.

Autobiography, especially a woman’s autobiography, is a complex interplay of social structure and social content in the multiple network of relation through which the ‘I’ must compose, a ‘self’. To transform the private ambition into public record is always difficult for women. There is a special relationship between women and convention. It is demanded of a woman to be very meek and apologetic. She has to display her timidity and ask for assistance. As Freud defines, the term ‘masculine’ in psychology means ‘active’ and the term ‘feminine’ means passive. Women writers were confined to follow the social order that limits them.
The impulse to speak of the self must find forms for its fulfillment; literary conventions provide categories of interpretation. In women's autobiography the operation of social convention could be seen in purer form. According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, society makes women dwell in a state of internal conflict with necessarily intricate psychic consequences. It is like a double positioning of women between public and private, between their own expectation and those of others.

3.2 FEMALE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In a sharp contrast to the theories of Gusdorf and Olney, the psychoanalysts like Freud and Lacan focus on the development of the female self through an intense interaction with others, particularly like mother and father. The concept of autobiographical self-consciousness is profoundly different for women and minorities. This kind of intense interaction with others, be it family or society, is evident in Vijayalakshmi Pandit's The Scope of Happiness.:

We were all one family living together in the manner of these days. The joint family has ceased to exist, but it had its uses since it was a form of social security and insurance and no one was abandoned. Every boy was provided with an education and a job, a suitable husband was found for every girl, and widowed aunts, grandmothers, and others belonging to the family were integrated into it. They were wanted and respected. There was as always, another side of this picture that was less pleasant. Many a young men who could have made good on his own was content to remain a parasite under the sheltering care of a more prosperous relative. (Vijayalakshmi:29)
Women’s autobiographies, on the other hand, display quite a different orientation towards the self and the others as compared to the typical orientation found in the autobiographies by men. Women write out their inner life in autobiographies. As Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, "they define for themselves and their readers, women as she is and as she dreams" (17). Shari Benstock, in her essay “Authorising the Autobiographical” examines the reigning attitudes toward autobiography in theory and practice that often do not take women into account as the writers of autobiography. Very often the accounts of the most crucial features of womanhood are left out: how woman is situated under patriarchy; how metaphors of self and writing write her out of the account; where she is placed with regard to the subjectivity – the “I” that structures autobiographical accounts.

Shumaker’s observation about the autobiographers who write about their mates applies for the most part to female autobiographers also. However, though fewer autobiographies have been written by married women than by married men, of those who covered the period of time of a relationship, more women than men discuss their mates to some degree. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his autobiography, doesn’t even mention his wife’s name in the chapter ‘My Wedding and an Adventure in Himalayas’.

Even after marriage, autobiographers give us little or nothing about their courtships. Mill briefly discusses Harriet Taylor’s influence on him, but only during their short life together. Adams excludes all mention of his wife before or after their marriage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton describes the joy of adolescent awakening and the fine impression. Harry Stanton made on her as an orator or horseman, than her wedding in the next paragraph. Besides this, women are more likely to write about their children in their autobiographies. The emotional and physical needs of children are essential aspects of female life studies. While male authored autobiographies mostly overlook personal life, especially details regarding wives and children. Male autobiographers mention their children but very briefly.
3.3 YES TO INDIVIDUALISM, NO TO ASSOCIATION A PRE-REQUISIT

Gusdorf’s concept of autobiography is deeply rooted in individualistic self. According to him, an autobiography is ‘the celebration of self’. Gusdorf asserts:

Autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, property speaking, exist. (Olney, 1980: 30)

According to Gusdorf, concept of autobiography is based on model of the self that he identifies as endemic western and individualistic.

Hence, the classic critics of autobiography dismissed all the marginal writers like Jews, Dalits and Women; as “Consciousness of self” never existed for them in any society worldwide. Chodorow suggests that the concept of isolated selfhood is inapplicable to women due to socio-political, biological as well as psychoanalytic reasons. Chodorow argues:

The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.

(Friedman: 41)

Nin explores and defines here identity through relationship. When a male friend advises her to become more egoistic and to live for herself, write for herself and work for herself, she responds:

But I feel alive only when I am living for or with others. (Diary I 223)

The mother-daughter relationship remains central to the ongoing process of female individuation. According to Chodorow:
Mother tend to experience their daughters as more like and continuous with themselves. This means that a girl continues to experience herself as involved in issue of merging and separation, and in an attachment characterized by primary identification and the fusion of identification and the object choice (Chodorow : 166).

Basing an examination of women’s autobiography on the relational model of female self in Chodorow’s work, we can anticipate finding in women’s texts a consciousness of self in which “the individual does not oppose herself to all others nor feel herself to exist outside of others but very much with others in an independent existence” (Benstock:41).

A woman cannot, Rowbothm argues, experience herself as entirely unique entity because she is always aware of how she is defined as a woman, that is, as a member of a group whose identity has been defined by the dominant male culture. There is always this dual consciousness – the self as culturally defined as a self as different from cultural prescription as Rowbothm notes in her Women’s consciousness, Man’s world (1988):

But always we were spilt in two, straddling silence, not sure where we could begin to find ourselves or one another. From this division, our material dislocation, came the experience of one part of ourselves as strong, foreign and cut-off from the other which we encountered as tongue-tied, paralysis about our own identity the manner in which we knew ourselves was not variance with ourselves as an historical being woman. (Rowbothom: 31)

Sucheta Kriplani, like Vijayalakshmi associates herself with others in An Unfinished Autobiography. She associates with parents,
friends, fellow workers, Acharya Kriplani and even with the refugees who came from Pakistan to India after the partition of the country. For her, individuation lies in association. She writes about her family:

In the evenings, mother gathered her children round her for a hymn and a short prayer, suited for the children. In this we followed the true Brahmo tradition. I am sorry that by the time we reached college, evening prayers were discontinued. Mother was a good singer with a rich, melodious voice.......I was fond of music and singing. My youngest sister had the sweetest voice in the family. (Kripalani:5)

3.4 BHUTTO

Bhutto, was a perfect daughter, a sincere sister and a proud mother. She was very happy and blessed to have a daughter. In fact she felt accomplished when her first child, her daughter Bilaval was born. In spite of having an active career as a politician, she never refrained from her duties. And at the same time, she did not wish to leave her career behind. Though
Asif wanted a large family, she had decided to wait. They wanted the time to adjust to married life, and to each other. And her political priorities had not changed. She had an ability to convince her near and dear ones for anything. She knew that besides family, her career was also very important, and therefore she did not neglect either of the two. She knew how to maintain perfect balance between her personal and professional life. She writes:

I have three lovely children, Bilawal, Bakhtwar and Aseefa. They give me much joy and pride when I was expecting my first child, Bilawal, in 1988. . . . . . . Bilawal’s birth was one of the happiest days of my life. (Bhutto-XIII) She was overwhelmed to be a mother. She felt as if she herself was born again as a mother. She was extremely excited in a new role. Her husband was also equally excited to have a daughter. Bhutto’s mother had a glow on her face when she heard the news of having a granddaughter. They all believe that the girl brought good fortune to the family. She writes: I heard my husband say, It’s a girl. I saw my mother’s face beam with pleasure. I called my daughter ‘Bakhtwar’ which means the one who brings good fortune. And she did. (Bhutto-XV)

Mahatma Gandhi has expressed a great regret that he could not focus much on his sons’ upbringing. During the active phase of freedom fight he could not contribute to their development. He could not give them an ideal education because his priority as the service of the community. In ‘My Experiments with Truth’ he writes:

My sons have therefore some reason for a grievance against me. Indeed they have occasionally given expression to it, and I must plead guilty to a certain extent. The desire to give them a literary
education was there. I even endeavoured to give it to them myself, but every now and then there was some hitch or other. As I had made no other arrangement for their private tuition, I used to get them to walk with me daily to the office and back home—a distance of about 5 miles in all. This gave them and me a fair amount of exercise. I tried to instruct them by conversation during these walks, if there was no one claiming my attention. All my children, excepting the eldest, Harilal, who had stayed away in India, were brought up in Johannesburg in this matter. Had I been able to devote at least an hour to their literary education with strict regularity, I should have given them enough literary training. The eldest son has often given vent to his distress privately before me and publicly in the press; the other sons have generously forgiven the failures as unavoidable. I am not heartbroken over it, and the regret, if any, is that I did not prove an ideal father. But I hold that I sacrifice the literary training to what I genuinely, though may be wrongly, believe to be service to the community. (Gandhi: 286)

Bhutto on the other hand did not neglect her children. Even if she did it unknowingly, she tried to make up for that. She realized her mistake when she had to leave her kids at her sister’s place in London. She was not able to take both the kids along and she therefore she chose to take her daughter who was not comfortable without Bhutto.

I flew to London and could hardly wait to get to my sister Sanam’s flat. As soon as I knocked on her door, I heard my daughter crying, the same cry that had sounded in my dreams. I quickly gathered her in my arms and pulled my son towards me. I have
decided to take Bakhtwar back with me, I told my sister. She was relieved. ‘I didn’t want to upset you, ‘she said, but that child has not stopped crying for months. (Bhutto-XVI)

Bhutto had a very special feminine quality of being connected to the people around her. She remembers the episode when her husband Asif was taking her and her family out for dinner, she observed that Asif had a great sense of humour and he was caring too. When she was convinced that he would be able to connect with her family well, she said yes to his proposal. Moreover, she agreed to marry him because of his virtues.

My mother, Sanam, Asif and I piled 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. (Bhutto:358)

She never forget her father’s words said to her when she was going to the U.S. for studies. He only taught her to stay connected to her native land and value it. He wanted her to be connected to the soil. She understood the fact that she really owed something to her own people. He gifted her the Holy Quran and said:

Never forget that the money it is costing to send you comes from the land, from the people who sweat and toil on those lands. You will owe a debt to them, a debt you can repay with God’s blessing by using your education to better their lives (Bhutto-45)

Bhutto was utterly committed to the people of Pakistan. She wanted to serve her countrymen, and that was her dream since her childhood. Her father had taught her to be devoted and committed to her own land and
people. She never forgot her father's advice. She did not hesitate to make any sacrifice for her Nation. Even after her marriage, her priorities were not changed. She claims:

Today, on an occasion so personal and solemn for me. I want to reaffirm my public pledge to the people of Pakistan, and restate my most solemn vow to devote my life towards the welfare of each citizen and the freedom of this great nation of ours from dictatorship. 'I'd written in a statement released the morning of the wedding. ‘I will not hesitate to make any sacrifice, be it large or small, as in the past. I will work shoulder to shoulder with my brothers and sisters – the people of Pakistan – to create an egalitarian society that is free from tyranny, from corruption and from violent tensions. This was my goal yesterday, this is the dream I share with you, and this will remain our unwavering commitment forever.’(Bhutto: 365)

She was very close to her cousin sister Fakri. She, though could not meet her frequently, was always there for each other. She also talks about her childhood friend Samiya Waheed. She remembered both of them mourning on the death of her father. She recalls:

My mother’s niece, Fakhri, was permitted to come to Sihala to mourn with us, as was my childhood friend, Samiya Waheed. They were relieved to find that, although we were grief-stricken, we had not fallen apart, ‘We had heard you were so depressed you were going to commit suicide.’ said Samiya, recounting another rumour the regime was spreading. Fakhri, who is quite emotional, rushed to embrace my mother, consoling her in Persian.
'Nusrat joon, I wish I had died. I wish I had never seen this day,' she cried. 'People are saying hanging is too good for Zia.' (Bhutto: 15)

Bhutto was highly impressed by Mrs. Gandhi. She used to accompany her father to most of his diplomatic missions. She got to meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi there. Bhutto could easily associate with her as a daughter of another statesman. Even Bhutto's father wanted her to be like Indira Gandhi. As she was very firm and bold. Bhutto was a great admirer of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She praised her personality, her ability to take right decisions at right time, her wisdom, and her firmness. Bhutto's father was also having good equation with Mrs. Gandhi on personal front. Bhutto sub-consciously connects herself with Mrs. Gandhi. She was wondering how Gandhi was able to handle her life so well. She asks:

Perhaps she was recalling the diplomatic missions on which she had accompanied her own father, I thought to myself. Was she seeing herself in me, a daughter of another statesman? Was she remembering the love of a daughter for her father, a father for his daughter? She was so small and frail. Where did her famed ruthlessness come from? She had defied her father to marry a Parsi politician of whom he had not approved. Their marriage had not worked and they ended up living separate lives. Now both her father and her husband were dead. Was she lonely? (Bhutto: 63)

Bhutto was not only attached to the people around her, she was attached to her father's home too. She was missing her home so terribly when she was in Karachi Central Jail. She was lucky to get home-made food in the jail though. She was not able to have much of her favourite delicacies, as she used to get emotional by the thought of her mother's love and care. She narrates:
Karachi Central Jail, August 15, 1981.

Flaking cement. Iron bars. And silence. Utter silence. I am back in total isolation, the cells around me in the locked ward all emptied. I strain for the sound of a human voice. There is only silence. In the mornings I hear the jangling of keys and clicking of locks which signals the arrival of my food. Without saying a word, the grey-uniformed prison matron who sleeps in the courtyard at the far end of the cells brings me the tiffin boxes of food which the authorities allow to be sent from 70 Clifton. My throat tightens the first few times I open them to find carefully prepared creamed chicken with mushrooms, kebabs and chicken *sheeks*. Though I have little appetite, and can only take a few mouthfuls, I keep thinking of the care my mother has taken to have the food made in our kitchen at home. (Bhutto: 202)

3.5 DEVI

Phoolan's life-story has many characters, as she was living in a big family and then in a big gang of decoits. She was attached to everybody around her. Phoolan first associates herself to her father. She was tomboyish
and resembled her father more than her mother. She had inherited all her father's features. Though, her temperament was very different from him. She states:

Deep furrowes lined his brow above alarge, 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. (Devi:5)

She always loved nature. She was connected to her village, the soil, the trees, mountains, rivers, etc. She was a free soul and did not like any inhibitions right from her childhood. She remembered her mother giving her scoldings for playing in the mud and sand. She felt one with the mother earth.

When I was little, I loved the smell of wet earth. I used to gather up handfuls of mud from the riverbank and eat them. My mother always scolded me. She even had to tie my hands to stop me eating the rich red clay. It nourished the crops that grew beside the river and covered the walls of the houses. Its smell overwhelmed me, but you couldn't eat it. (Devi:9)

Phoolan used to be with her best friend Kusumi and other girls in the village. They would do all the adventures stuff. Phoolan was a kind of leader who could climb the trees and do difficult stunts. They especially enjoyed playing the funeral game, for which they used to get beatings from their parents. Phoolan recalls:

My friend Kusumi, who lived two houses away from us, said she was very glad I didn't die. Kusumi and I often played together. She was thin and tall-much
taller than me, though she was the same age as me and dark skinned like me. She said she was happy I would be back to play with her and the other girls. When the others tried to climb the tree, sometimes they couldn’t find a way, but I always could. (Devi:45)

Phoolan was always surrounded by her siblings. First it was Rukmani, then it was Choti, with whom she spent some beautiful years of her childhood. When she went to her husband’s house, Phoolan was left alone with her much younger brother Narayan and sister Bhuri. She was not able to do all the fun things with them as they were too young to do so. Though, she tried to train Bhuri a bit. She writes:

Choti had gone to live with her in-laws and only returned to see us occasionally. My little brother Shiv Narayan was too small to defend me. There was only little Bhuri. She was about five years old, with a little round face and big black eyes. She followed me around like a puppy. ‘if you see anyone trying to hurt me,’ I told her, ‘run and hide if it’s a woman. But if it’s a man, run and tell Amma as fast as you can!’ (Devi:168)

Phoolan was not only attached to her family, but also to her village, and every. She and her who little thing of it. She and her whole family was very upset for days together when the Banyan tree was cut by Mayadin and his men. She becomes emotional while remembering the episode, and narrates:

The trunk of our tree was so big it took three of us to reach around it holding hands. Father was very fond of the tree. He had planted it and watched it grow, but he as happy to cut it down to pay the dowry to the husband my mother had found for me. We didn’t eat for many days. We felt grief for our murdered
tree; it was like a member of the family who was no longer with us, and we were in mourning. One evening, not long afterwards, the whole family went and sat where our neem used to tower the sky. My father told us, 'Concentrate children......Close your eyes, look, see...Our tree is still with us. It's there above our heads, smell it, touch it.' We sat there-Choti, little Bhuri(who was just starting to walk), our brother Shivnarayns, father and myself-in a circle under the white moon, remembering the smell of the leaves. Against my cheeks I thought I could feel the rough bark.(Devi:64)

3.6 MEAD

Mead, being an anthropologist, was always very keen on mixing with new people of different tribes. In her autobiography, she loves to associate herself with her mother and grand-mother in her autobiography. She minutely observed their habits and followed them with care. In many ways they were her role-models. She learnt the lessons of motherhood from them. She admits:
Pictures of me as a baby show me in the arms of my mother and my grandmother, with their hair down and earing wrappers, dressed in a way I have no memory of seeing either of them. Only now, after so many years, I realize that it was for her children's sake that my mother pinned up her hair so carefully every morning as soon as she got up. Earlier when, I was too young to notice, she let it fall softly around her face—but later, never. In turn, the first thing i do in the morning is to comb my hair, and hen my daughter was young I put on something pretty—as I still do when I am staying in a house where there are children. (Mead:18)

Mead used to love her Grandma a lot. As she was a very good teacher who would teach the ways of life through her interesting stories. She had numerous stories for each and every occasion. As a child, Mead got to learn many lessons of life from her Grandma, through her stories. She points out:

Grandma was a wonderful storyteller and she had a set of priceless, individually tailored anecdotes with which American grandparents of her day brought up children. There was the story of a young boy who had been taught absolute, quick obedience. One day when they were out on the prairie, their father shouted. "fall down on your faces!" They did and the terrible prairie fire swept over them and they weren’t hurt. There was also a story of three boys at school, each one of whom received a cake sent from home. One hoarded his and the rat ate it; one ate all of his and fell sick; and who do you think had the best time?—why of course, the one who shared his cake with his friends.......And there was one about a man who was so lazy that he would rather starve rather
than work. Finally his neighbours decided to bury him alive. (Mead: 50-51)

Another huge influence on her life was her friend, philosopher, and guide Ruth. She was the assistant of Prof. Boas. Mead considers herself lucky to have a friend like Ruth. She helped Mead in every possible way, so far as her career was concerned. Mead shared a great bonding with Ruth all her life. She honestly admits that Ruth had been her pillar of strength throughout. She notes:

By electing anthropology as a career, I was also electing a closer relationship to Ruth, a friendship that lasted until her death in 1948. When I was away, she took on my varied responsibilities for other people; when she was away; I took on hers. We read and reread each other’s work, wrote poems in answer to poems, shares our hopes and worries about Boasabou Sapir, about anthropology, and in later years about the world. (Mead: 125)

Mead had sisters, with whom she was quite attached. She describes her sister Elizabeth, in the following paragraph, she was an architect. Mead liked her abilities to learn everything and make the most out of it. She writes:

For my sister Elizabeth, college never was more than a background-and not a very relevant background at that-for the development of her gifts. She willingly left college to go to Italy with my mother and spent a happy year in Rome studying architecture. Afterward she continued to study architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University, and still later, took courses both in fine arts and in education at New York University. When it was necessary to write papers, she wrote them. When it was
necessary to read books, she read them and knew how to get a great deal out of them. (Mead:94)

Mead writes about her younger sister Priscilla, who was very talented, she started reading at the age of five. She was totally different from Elizabeth, but Mead loved them both for what they were. She says:

And there was my younger sister Priscilla, who was so responsive to the standards of the wider society. Having begun to read at five, she read what she chose, reached out for science fiction and formulas of dissent and assent, and used her reading as a weapon against the rest of the family. (Mead:94)

Mead had a big gang of girls at Barnard college. She shared a great friendship with all her girlfriends. Though they all belonged to different financial backgrounds, they had to adjust with one another, which they all happily did. Their friendship was special and remained life-long. Mead proudly declares that all of them became successful in their own respective fields. She notes:

At that time Barnard had only one large group of students had been permitted to live in an apartment and do cooperative housekeeping. They were unusual girls, most of whom became well-known in later life-Margaret Myers, Dorothy Swine, Thomus, Betsy Anne Schelhase, Agnes Piel, and Leonie Adams. When I arrived on the scene the group had dispersed and the Coop had been abolished, but the overflow of students still was housed in apartments. Although the space in which we lived as unusually very confined, the fact that the cost of rooms varied-the kitchen and the maid's room were the least
expensive-meant that a group with unequal financial resources could live together. (Mead:110)

She further adds that in no time their group had become famous in the entire college in its own way. Many people did not like them for obvious reasons, as they all had a very strong opinionated views. They did not care even if some derogatory terms were used for them. She claims:

Each year we adopted as a group name some derogatory and abusive phrase that was hurled at us in particular or at the students at large. The first year Miss Abbott, the head of the dormitory apartments described us as 'a mental and moral muss' and we accepted it with a kind of wicked glee. The second year we adopted the phrase "Communist Morons", from the angry words of a commencement speaker. "Ash Can Cats," the name that finally stuck was an epithet bestowed on us by our most popular professor, the vivid, the colloquial, contemporary minded Minor W Latham after whom Barnard's theatre is named. (Mead:110)

Mead, fondly remembers her daughter's birth. She was longing to be a mother for a long time. She, as a mother wanted her daughter to resemble her, but as an anthropologist, she knew the importance of one's own unique identity. She consciously did not fall in the trap and preferred to give her the right of her own identity. She says:

Mary Catherine Bateson was born on December 8, 1939, and looked very much herself...Three days after her birth; a package arrived in the mail addressed to Ms Mary Catherine Bateson. Reading this, I started the process of learning to treat my
daughter as separate person with an identity completely her own (Mead: 278-279)

She further adds:

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

3.7 SLADE

Unlike Gandhi, individuation for Madeline Slade lies in association with others. In *The Spirit’s Pilgrimage* Ms. Slade associates herself with one or the other- her family, her house, the trees and plants, pets, the cattle, the mountains, the Indian masses etc. her strongest association was, evidently,
with Bapu (Gandhi). It is more than association; it is the total surrender to his will. She feels the presence of Gandhi’s spirit even after his assassination.

Like Vijaylakshmi Pandit and Sucheta Kripalani, Madeline Slade associates herself with others. As a child, she associates with her mother, her nurse, and her maternal grandfather. She used to play together regularly with her grandfather on the floor. He was like her friend and they shared a very good understanding:

I was very devoted to my mother and my nurse, Bertha, and a special pal was my grandfather. Though there must have been about fifty years' difference between us, we had a quiet natural understanding like old friends. We used to play regularly on the floor together. It was always the same old picture puzzle, but I never got tired of it, and felt the same delight each time that my grandfather would say, “Now you finish it off by putting the hoopoo right in the middle”; and I would take the little hoopoo, well worn with fingering, and place him in the empty hole in the centre of the picture. From this we advanced to building with wooden “bricks” of all lengths. (Slade: 12)

Ms. Slade associates with her mother by relating a story about a great-great-grandfather on maternal side. Her mother’s family was unusual and never a slave to convention. Her father’s family was, however, conventional, and had an aristocratic touch which, she confesses, did not quite suit her temperament. An unusual strain had come down through several generations in her mother's family. While he was on duty abroad, this great-great-grandfather had fallen in love with a dark gypsy-like beauty, possibly of Eastern European origin. Thus, Ms. Slade too was blessed with the exotic characteristics running through the maternal line:
He married her and brought her home to England. Her exotic characteristics passed into the succeeding generations of that English family, showing sometimes more, sometimes less – but there it was, and it had come again strongly in my mother, and from her it has come to me in many a blessing. Mother’s family was unusual and never a slave to convention, but Father’s family was decidedly conventional, with an aristocratic society touch about it which did not quite suit my temperament.

(Slade: 18)

Ms. Slade took great delight in music. She was especially fond of Beethoven. She procured one Beethoven sonata after another and went on playing and listening to them. She developed a strong association with music in general and Beethoven in particular:

I went on playing and listening, and my whole being stirred and awoke to something which had remained unknown to me consciously till then. Yet unconsciously known it in nature, but now it came to me through the medium of another human source . . . I was contacting the spirit’s speaking through sound, the spirit of Beethoven. Yes, I had found him. But now an anguish seized me – oh, what an anguish! I threw myself down on my knees in the seclusion of my room and prayed, really prayed to God for the first time in my life. (Slade: 31)

Ms. Slade even learnt French to read Romain Rolland’s biography of Beethoven. She met Rolland in Paris. Rolland had also written a biography of Gandhi. In his discussion with Ms. Slade, he described Gandhi as another Christ and encouraged her to travel to India. She arrived in India in 1925. Madeline Slade feels intense reverential love for Bapu and this association is
so strong that she surrenders her own will to him by becoming his disciple. She became a vegetarian and teetotaler and learned to spin on charkha. She took on an Indian name – Miraben and made India her home. She feels the presence of Gandhi’s spirit even after his assassination:

The next morning I went about my work as usual – outwardly as usual, but inside there was a new and unknown world to which I was trying hard to adjust myself. 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 flesh was no longer there. Now there would be no more letter-writing, no more building of cottages with the hope of Bapu coming to stay in them. The very cottage that was then growing up on the sacred bank of the river Ganga I had pictured being a perfect spot for Bapu to come to for rest from time to time, and it was hard to bear that morning when I went to supervise the construction work which was going on. Tempting as it would have been to turn to Bapu in thought, seeking him and asking him to help and guide, something within me peremptorily forbade any such thing. “Bapu must be left in perfect peace, and you must stand on your own legs.” From the very first hour this feeling seized me. (Slade: 293-294)

Because Madeline Slade was drawn to Gandhi, it was natural for her to get actively involved with the Indian freedom movement. On her part, she associated herself with Indian women for the common cause. She was highly impressed by their devotion towards the freedom fight movement. She writes:

A most remarkable characteristics of this movement was the way the women came out of their seclusion and joined in the Satyagraha. From rich ladies of
Bombay making salt out of sea water to poor peasant women scratching salt off the ground near their villages, they everywhere joined in the fray. (Slade: 112)

Another important association of Madeline Slade is with nature. She consciously associates herself with the trees and plants, pets, the cattle, and the mountains and seeks solace in them. She affectionately narrates her attachment to a cow called Jamuna. She established an ashram called Pashulok in the lap of the Himalayas. She went to live there “in a real jungle.” Early in her life, Ms. Slade had developed a strong intimacy with trees and plants:

Out of doors the twenty acres were a whole world for adventurous exploration. I got to know every nook and corner, and from the beginning I had a feeling of fellowship with the trees and plants. There were some trees for which I had a special affection and some I was not very fond of, but one and all were for me personalities. Later on, as a young girl, I can remember throwing my arms around trees and embracing them, and to this day that feeling remains. (Slade: 12)

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’s Pilgrimage unlike Gandhi who dissociates from others.

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)

The investigator, here, notes that all the women autobiographers, unlike male autobiographers, associate themselves with the others to seek individuation. Moreover, all the women writers, unlike men have the tendency to connect to the world around them. The genre of autobiography is also not an exception. Here these four autobiographers too follow the path of other women autobiographers. They all, like to be connected, in their own respective ways and capacity. They did it in their autobiographies, which is pretty evident in their writings.