My first love was for history and politics, subjects I specialised for my graduation. My first exposure to biography and autobiography, diaries etc. were only as handmaids to historical research. By a quirk of fortune, I took to the study of English literature for post-graduation and I started my collegiate career as a member of the Faculty of English. Thus exposure to the field of literature gave me a new vision regarding biographies and autobiographies. These are not just sources of evidence for the historical research; they can be approached as autonomous literary artefacts in themselves without any reference to the validity of the factual information that they convey. Moreover, the fact that autobiography and biography are relegated to a borderland by eminent literary critics and theorecticians set me thinking on the subject. Some of my initial discussions with scholars in the field suggested that the possibility of approaching autobiography as a piece of literature using the methods of analysis that are used for literary discourse. I needed for the project a set of autobiographies written by a well-defined group (and a closed one) so that they may be read as fiction re-creating a past.

It was then that I happened to go through the autobiography of C.D. Deshmukh. The jump from C.D. Deshmukh to other Indians who had served in the Indian Civil Service and who had left autobiographical accounts of their tenure
in the service was easily made. Here was a set which I needed and I started reading these autobiographies as chapters of a romance re-creating the glorious images of the I.C.S. Institution, the I.C.S. Officer, his service to the making of modern India, and his literary ambitions. The study, fascinating in itself, made me conclude that autobiography is a peculiar mixture of historical facts and literary grace. They serve to exemplify the definition of literature as a work of art that entertains and instructs.

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