CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
"Autobiography" is of Greek origin, and signifies literally the life of a person written by himself, one of the most fascinating, and, if properly understood, one of the most instructive species of composition.\(^1\)

This fascinating composition has become a common literary activity during the nineteenth and twentieth century in English. English autobiography may be classified into three categories; namely (1) "The spiritual confession, (2) the memoir, (3) the autobiographical novel.\(^2\)

For the spiritual confession type of autobiographical writing, the best example is *The Confession Of St. Augustine Of Hippo* (345-430). In it the autobiographer describes his conversion to Christianity in detail. In this kind of writing, there is no detailed account of events and incidents but they deal mainly with inner conflicts and emotional experiences of the autobiographer.

The memoir is of French origin. It originated mainly during the seventeenth century. It consists of extensive letter-writing. The autobiography of Thomas Whythorne, *A Book Of Songs And Sonnets*, is a fine example of this type.
"But the objective memoir and the subjective confessions come together in the Confessions of the French-Swiss Jean-Jacques Rousseau."  

There are various forms of this type of autobiographical writing. It may have a record of emotional struggles and experiences. For example, Thomas de Quincey's The Confessions of An Opium Eater (1822).

Another type may contain the history of the growth of ideas, conventions and beliefs. John Stuart Mill's autobiography belongs to this category.

A third type is the autobiographical novel, and it "begins with the novels of Charlotte Brontë: Jane Eyre (1847) and Villette (1853)."

During the twentieth century, two autobiographies of this type are well known: Samuel Butler's Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man and D.H. Lawrence's Sons And Lovers.

During the Restoration period, "Distinguished personages as varied in character and interest as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Sir Simonds D'Ewes and Richard Baxter wrote autobiographies, and in general this method of self-record is either designed to adumbrate history or, as in the case of Baxter and many other puritans, to reveal the
dangers and triumphs of spiritual life. Its techniques are varying and unsettled.

The autobiographical writing has received the impetus at the hands of such excellent men as David Hume, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Gibbon in the eighteenth century. It has gained much importance and prominence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The most recent production in this field is Sir Osbert Sitwell's autobiography entitled Left Hand and Right Hand. In the modern age there is a whole array of brilliant autobiographies by such eminent men as Viscount Morley, Viscount Haldane, Lord Asquith, W.H. Davies, G.K. Chesteron, E.V. Lucas, J.S. Mill, Ruskin, H.G. Wells, Lloyd George, Rudyard Kipling, Winston Churchill and Bertrand Russell.

Autobiographies in English by Indians

Autobiographies in English came to be written by Indians during the British rule in India. After the introduction of the study of English in the educational institutions, Indians took to the learning of English language and literature with diligence and deep interest. In due course, educated Indians became proficient in English and familiar with English literature. They also started writing in English, and autobiographical writing has become common and popular.
"With the introduction of English education in the beginning of the nineteenth century a favourable climate was, however, created for the growth of modern autobiography in India".  

The new system of education in the words of Nehru "opened the doors and windows of the mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts". Many were the reasons for the writing of such autobiographies. The ideas of the worth of individuals, the equality of men, and the primacy of conscience and reason, were mainly responsible for such writings. In addition, political ideas like personal liberty and the rule of law, and the study of European liberal writers like Mazzini stimulated the Indian mind.

By studying English and European literature they became acquainted with the autobiographical writings of Europeans. It created an impulse in them to write their autobiographies in English.

"This world-wide craze has also infected the Indians who have taken to this genre with gusto and vigour. This genre is not altogether new for them, though in modern India, in the period after the coming of the English with their new ideas and a new system of education, there has been a bursting forth of the autobiographical impulse...."
English education and the study of European literature paved the way for the growth of autobiographical writing in English by Indians.

"The literary renaissance that began with India's contact with England made a remarkable contribution in so far as it excited and stimulated the autobiographical impulse in Indians".  

So the Indians started writing their autobiographies in English, expressing themselves, their life and impressions and also about their time that was full of "revolutionary changes in the varied spheres of life".  

Writing autobiography is essentially an European tradition. Indians, after getting familiar with European autobiographies, began to write their own autobiographies. Roy Pascal says, "where in modern times members of Eastern Civilizations have written autobiographies, like Gandhi for instance, they have taken over a European tradition".

Some Indians were requested and encouraged by the English to write their autobiographies; Indians responded to their request by writing an account of their lives. They did so because they were well-versed in English and able to express themselves in that language lucidly and clearly.
"The first autobiographical writing in English by an Indian is that of Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833). Shortly before he left England for France in 1832, he wrote a short sketch of his career at the request of his English friend, Mr. Gordon of Calcutta. It is in the form of a letter addressed to Mr. Gordon writing about his life and education and other things.

In 1834, another autobiographical letter was written by Kasiprasad Ghose (1809-1873). He also wrote at the request of an English friend. It is nothing but a brief account of his own life.

"The first full autobiography, however, was written by Lutfullah in 1854. It was published in 1857 and became popular with English readers. It was his varied and colourful experiences that moved him to write his life.

It was Lal Behari Day (1826-1894) who wrote the next full-length autobiography (written between 1873-76). It was again followed by another autobiography, From Sepoy to Subadar by Seetaram, a retired armyman. It was published in book form in 1873. Towards the close of the century, in 1898, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) wrote his autobiography in Bengali which was translated into English in 1909.

During the twentieth century many more autobiographies were written by Indians who were eminent in various walks of
When the struggle for freedom became stronger and popular, the time was favourable for a rich harvest of autobiographical writings in English. National leaders like Gandhi and Nehru published their autobiographies. Others like Surendranath Banerjee, B.P. Pal, Subhas Chandra Bose also wrote their autobiographies. Later, S. Radhakrishnan, P.C. Roy, V.V. Giri, Moraji Desai, Sanjiva Reddy, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad published their autobiographies. It is highly interesting to read their writings in the shaping of Modern Indian history. They also provide glimpses into their private lives and their relations with their friends and colleagues. Thus the autobiographical writing has made a rapid progress during this period.

"The social and political forces that make the first half of the present century the most important in Indian history have undoubtedly helped in phenomenal growth. But the truth of the matter is that the awareness of self once generated cannot be put out and the practice of autobiographical writing in India is bound to grow as part of the world phenomenon which calls for an ever increasing production of autobiographical literature". 14

Men who wrote autobiographies in this century belonged to various walks of life like politics and public life, jurists, soldiers, journalists, diplomats, men of religion and
literature and civil servants. In all their writings, the common feature is their patriotism and their love for freedom, of their motherland and its progress and development. After Independence they wrote about various issues that they faced in their personal and public life and also about their devotion and dedication to the cause they cherished and to vindicate their stand on various issues.

The most important autobiographies written by men in politics, apart from those of Gandhi and Nehru are by M.A. Jayakkar, C.H. Setalvad, Bipin Krishna Bose, Bipin Chandra Pal and N.G. Ranga.

Another group of persons who also wrote their autobiographies are jurists like M.C. Chagla, M.C. Setalwad, Hidayadulla, P.K. Gajendra Gadkar and Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed. In their accounts, they sincerely narrate not only the course of their life but also the grim battle they waged in their career to achieve success in their profession.

Among the poets and men of letters who are well known for their autobiographical writings are Rabindranath Tagore, Nirad Chaudhuri, Ved Mehta and Dom Moraes. They are frank and charming in their writings and they reveal their personal life and their achievements. Men of religion were not lacking in their contribution to autobiographical writing. Important among them are Phrohit Swami, P. Yogananda and Sadhu Santhinatha.
Indian soldiers also wrote their accounts of personal and professional lives in English during this period. Among them the renowned soldiers are B.M. Kaul, J.N. Chaudhuri, Admiral Katari and Marshal P.C. Lal. They write about the battles they fought and the wars they conducted and the service they rendered to the armed forces of India. They also disclose how they conducted wars against Pakistan and China and about their political masters.

There are some outstanding journalists among the Indian autobiographers in English. Frank Moraes, K.A. Abbas, R.K. Karanjia and M.V. Kamath in particular deserve special mention. They state their views and impressions clearly and boldly and their style and diction are forceful, convincing, and charming and their contribution to this field of literature is praiseworthy.

Women's autobiographies form an important part of autobiographical writings. Famous among them are Sunity Devee, Maharani of Cooch Behar, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Krishna Hutheesing, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantra Sahgal, Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddy. The recent autobiographies written by women are those of Kamala Das, Indira Gandhi and Gayatri Devi. In their writings they recount the course of their lives. They seem to be sensitive, poetic and at the same time bold enough to overcome many difficulties in their personal and public lives.
K.M. Panikkar, Mohammad Yunus, N.V. Raman and P.N. Haksar are some of the diplomats who wrote their autobiographies in English. In their writings they narrate their experiences in the foreign countries where they served as ambassadors of India and also they explain and defend the foreign policy of India. They also explain how they tried their level best to maintain good relations between India and the countries where they served. In short, projecting the image and interests of India abroad was their main concern.

In addition to these, there are a bunch of autobiographies written by Indian Civil Servants who entered the service during the British Raj and served both the British Raj and Swaraj.

One of the autobiographies written in English by an Indian Civil Servant is Looking Across Fifty Years by S.V. Ramamurthy who entered the service in 1912 and it was published in 1964.

He was followed by a host of other Indian Civil Servants. In that series, in 1985, M.A. Quraishi published his autobiography Indian Administration Pre And Post Independence (Memoirs Of An I.C.S.)¹⁶. The latest are The New India 1948-55, Memoirs Of An Indian Civil Servant¹⁷ by Asok Mitra in 1991 and Bitter Sweet: Governance Of India In Transition By S. Sivaraman¹⁸.
From among these autobiographies written in English by Indian Civil Servants twelve specimens have been selected for the current study. They are the autobiographies of the Indian I.C.S. men who entered the service from 1920 to 1939. Given below is the list of those autobiographies with the names of their authors.

   *Memoirs Of A Mediocre Man* 22.
5. (a) S.K. Chettur, *The Steel Frame And Life In The I.C.S.* 23.
   (b) S.K. Chettur, *The Crystal Years! The I.C.S. In Free India* 24.
"Upto 1870 there was only one Indian among the 916 members of the service: This was Mr. Satyendra Nath Tagore, a member of a well-known Bengali family, who joined the service in 1864 and was posted to the Bombay Presidency. He was the first Indian who got into the I.C.S. by competitive examination held in England. The last Indian to retire from the I.C.S. was Mukharji in March 1980. "With the retirement of the last I.C.S. man, Mr. N.K. Mukharji, in March 1980 the handover was complete."

The year 1939 is the watershed in the recruitment to the I.C.S. by competitive examination held in England. Only "A handful of officers were recruited in 1940, 1941 and 1943 but the number is so small as to make no difference to the overall picture. There was no recruitment thereafter until the end of War."

These twelve I.C.S. men form a homogeneous group in many respects. They all entered the service by passing the competitive examination held in England (except one, S.K. Chettur who passed the examination held in India) and all of them studied in the universities of England during their period of probation. After 1939, no competitive examination was held in England and recruitment by competitive examination was almost stopped till the end of the Second World War. Afterwards a few were selected and trained in India.
These twelve I.C.S. men are those who entered the service between 1920-1939. The two decades are important in the history of India. Gandhi entered Indian politics in 1920 and started leading the Indian freedom struggle. He made the movement mass-based and got all people involved in the nation-wide fight against the British, using his own weapons of Non-violence, Non-co-operation and Satyagraha. There was a sea-change in Indian politics and almost all Indians came under the influence of Gandhi in one way or other. It may be called the Gandhian era and all these I.C.S. men moved into the service during this period. No wonder they were affected by Gandhi’s influence and national feelings aroused in them. They had sympathy for freedom struggle and respect for national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, and others. These I.C.S. men had to deal with them and their struggle. Some of them tried and sentenced them. This set of civil servants had the rare opportunity of dealing with the freedom struggle and in post-Independent India working under the same national leaders in their various official capacities. In this respect they are a unique set of autobiographies.

But yet one of the major hurdles that a literary researcher of biography or autobiography faces is that of defining the literariness of the genre, biography or autobiography. In fact this hurdle is faced by almost all the literary researchers of essays in prose because while there are well-developed arguments in favour of including a poem or a novel as a definite literary genre, such well-developed
arguments are absent for the inclusion of the essay, the biography, the treatise etc. under intrinsic literature. Ever since Rene Wellek and Austin Warren have assigned only an extrinsic status to biography and autobiography as literature, the problem has become a much debated one. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren have excluded autobiography from the literary domain and relegated it to a non-literary popular category.

The existing definitions of autobiography highlight this problem. For example, Roger Fowler, after defining autobiography as the story of a man's life and achievements written by himself for his own delight or for the public welfare, adds, "The autobiography also claims to tell the whole truth and nothing but truth." The same emphasis on the truth value of an autobiography is evident when Dr. Johnson says, "The writer of his own life has at least the first qualifications of an historian, the knowledge of the truth; and though it may possibly be objected that his temptation to disguise it are equal to his opportunities of knowing it, yet I can not but think that impartiality may be expected with equal confidence from him that relates the passages of his own life, as from him that delivers the transactions of another."

R.L. Stevenson did not like to tell his own story, but he said, "There is no truer sort of writing than what is to be found in autobiographies."
Many of the more recent formulations on autobiographic discourses also stress this truth-value. For example, Bruss lists the constitutive rules of autobiography thus:

Rule 1 An autobiographer undertakes a dual role. He is the source of the subject-matter and the source of the structure to be found in his text.

(a) The author claims individual responsibility for the creation and arrangement of his text.
(b) The individual who is exemplified in the organisation of the text is purported to share the identity of an individual to whom reference is made via the subject-matter of the text.
(c) The existence of this individual independent of the text itself, is assumed to be susceptible to appropriate public verification procedures.

Rule 2 Information and events reported in connection with the autobiographer are asserted to have been, to be or to have potential for being the case.

(a) Under existing conventions, a claim is made for the truth-value of the autobiographers' reports - no matter how difficult that truth-value might be to ascertain, whether the reports treat of private experiences or publicly observable occasions.
(b) The audience is expected to accept these reports as true and is free to 'check up' or attempt to discredit them.
Whether or not what is reported can be discredited, whether or not it can be formulated in some generally acceptable way from another point of view, the autobiographer purports to believe in what he asserts.

Stephen A. Shapiro, another critic of autobiography, claims, "Autobiography is a literary form but the aesthetic function of autobiography is not itself its major function: Education or reality-testing is its reason for being." Roy Pascal's approach to autobiography vacillates between 'design' and 'truth,' between fictionality and factuality. While "Memory can be trusted because autobiography is not just reconstruction of the past, but interpretation," yet "the linear narrative form of the autobiography imposes a distortion on the truth." Roy Pascal says further, "the autobiography has its points of reference outside the work, in real life, in the non-fictionality of the author."

All these definitions try to make a distinction between what is intrinsically literature and what is not. The definitions imply that there is a relationship between the world described in an autobiography and the external world to which it refers. Authenticity becomes the hallmark of an
autobiography. These definitions mean that an autobiography represents a "truth" about a given reality which is verifiable.

But fiction—by fiction is included all imaginative literary discourse—does not pretend to represent a "truth" about a given reality. The main difficulty in classifying autobiography as a literary genre arises out of the polarity between "Verifiable fact" and "Non-verifiable fiction".

But what is forgotten is that when an autobiographer is writing his own life, one hardly expects him to tell all that he knows about himself. There is no man but has some of the wild beast in him; but they are few who will honestly tell how they manage their wild beast. Also, there is no such flattery as a man's self. A man can not be disinterested or even a clear-sighted judge of his own character.

As S.Y. Krishnaswamy aptly observes in his autobiography,

"The hero of the book is one's own self, and while the author knows more about himself than any one else, he need not always be truthful about his failures. He rarely has the gift of seeing himself as others see him."
In fact, in terms of truth-value, the biography of a man written by another may be more dependable than the man's own autobiography.

Anyone who has read Morley's *Life of Rousseau* will feel that he has obtained much sounder knowledge of a man than he could have got by reading Rousseau's life as written by himself. Morley consulted a great many other witnesses and was a much better judge of Rousseau's life and character than Rousseau himself—a man of erratic temperament, who could seldom write dispassionately about anything. The other classic examples are Gandhi's autobiography *The Experiments with Truth* and Louis Fischer's *The Life of Mahatma*; Nehru's *Autobiography* and S. Gopal's *Jawaharlal: A Biography*. But even here it is quite possible that a biographer may be too lenient to his friend's failings and too enthusiastic about his virtues. Boswell has given us the best side of his friend Johnson; Johnson himself of his friends, Savage and Pope. Moreover, a man will seldom exhibit his secret heart, and least of all, his weaknesses and vices, even to his best friends.

In other words, the argument that the validity of an autobiography or biography depends upon its truth-value, which is verifiable and therefore cannot be considered as literary discourse is not fully tenable. The argument holds good only up to an extent. Exponents of literary theory in
their anxiety to define pure literature as an artefact based on fiction and not on factuality have given a borderline space to genres like biography and autobiography. But the question must be tackled from the other end. What is the difference between a purely non-literary discourse (for example, a scientific treatise written in prose) and a literary discourse like an essay, a biography, or autobiography?

In fact, the autobiography, the biography, the personal essay, the moral essay, etc. can all be considered as the sub-genres of the major literary genre, the essay. This classification is based solely upon the subject-matter of the essay and not much sincere effort has been taken to define the precisely literary nature of either the major genre, the essay or its sub-genres like the biography or the autobiography.

Only very recently (in 1988) Graham Good has made an honest attempt to define and to delimit the essay as a literary genre. His findings may be summarised as follows:

1. Empirical science aims to be cumulative and progressive, preserving and building only on proven observations and laws. The essay does not aim at a system at all; its empirical data are used in a much more limited way.
2. In so far as its utterances are not presented as fictional, the essay does not imply a claim to count as knowledge. But this knowledge is not part of an organised whole; in fact, as knowledge it is specially unorganised.

3. The essay is spontaneous and unsystematic, and accepts its occasional, even accidental nature. The essay does not try to organise a new discipline. In it an open mind confronts an open reality. An uncertain, unorganised world enters an unprejudiced awareness and the essay results as a record and provisional ordering of the encounter. In a sense, self and object organise each other, but only in a temporary way. Nothing can be built on this configuration; no rules or methods deduced from it. The self and object define each other, but momentarily: The self will go on to other definitions through other objects; The objects (whether places, works of art, or issues) will find other definitions in other selves. The essay makes a claim to truth, but not permanent truth. Its truths are particulars, of the here and now. Other times and places are not its affairs.

4. Whereas a non literary treatise governs tightly the content and the form the area of proper investigation is distinguished from other areas, and the border lines carefully watched. The proper method of investigation is defined in theory and practice. Access to the discourse is limited. It is meant only for a specialised
audience. Contributions are impersonal whereas the literary essay affords personal experience. The literary essay cultivates diversity. But the non-literary scientific discourses seek unity. They seek to derive general rules from specific instances. But such generalities cannot be deduced from the literary essays. When generalities do arise in the essay, they come as spontaneous responses to phenomena. The particular has priority over the general.

5. Lastly the essayist’s authority is not his learning, but his experience. Its claim is to yield flexibility to individual experience. Instead of imposing a discursive order on experience, the essay lets its discourse take the shape of experience. The essay is a professional reflection of an ephemeral experience of an event or object. The truth of the essay is a limited truth, limited by the concrete experience, itself limited, which gave rise to it. If one event followed another, we would have a narrative; if one object followed another, we would have a descriptive dialogue; if one thought followed another, we would have a logical argument. But in the essay, event and reflection, object and idea, are interwoven and limit each other’s development. The ideas are valid for here and now. This is the essential uniqueness of essayistic discourse. Neither the order of thoughts nor the order of things predominates. Each constantly interrupts and interpenetrates with the other.
Graham Good's arguments in favour of defining the essay as a literary genre are equally applicable to the defining of the autobiography as a literary discourse. The knowledge afforded by an autobiography is not a systematic and permanent knowledge in the nature of a scientific discourse. It is simply a narration of the autobiographer's self realising itself through various experiences and responding to these experiences. Neither the image of the self nor its reflections on events and experiences can be taken for their truth value. They do not add anything to a systematic discipline of knowledge. They must be taken as truths of the moment. And therefore the autobiography and biography despite their claim to factual representation belong to the fictional world of literature. As Richard L. Stein observes in his review of the book *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition Of Self Interpretation*, "After Carlyle, the fictionality of autobiography could never be dismissed."

Though the autobiographer's non-fictional status is again and again stressed by the literary theorists, its strong affinity with the novel cannot be easily dismissed; both the novel and the essay emerge from the same intellectual climate. Commenting upon the intellectual climate that gave rise to the novel, Ian Watt says: "The general temper of philosophical realism has been critical, anti-traditional and innovating; its method has been the study of the particulars
of experience by the individual investigator, who, ideally at least, is free from the body of past assumptions and traditional belief". 53

The insistence on the study of the particulars of experience by the individual gives rise to the autobiographical writings also. As Christopher Gille points out,

...prominent in works which are not strictly autobiographical from the early nineteenth C on; eg. Wordsworth's Prelude, or Growth Of Poet's Mind (First Version 1805), the periodical essays of Charles Lamb in Essays Of Elia (1820-3) and Coleridge's mixture of autobiography with philosophy and literary criticism, of Biographia Literaria (1817). It may be said that from 1800 on it becomes the instinct of writers of many kinds to use autobiographical material, or to adopt from time to time an autobiographical standpoint.

Thus we come to the auto-biographical novel; this begins with the novels of Charlotte Bronte (Jane Eyre, 1847, and Villette, 1853) and Charles Dickens's David Copperfield (1840-50). This method of writing a novel really came into its own, however, with Samuel Butler's Way Of All Flesh (1903), which led to many successors in 20th C notably James Joyce's Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man (1916), and D.H. Lawrence's Sons And Lovers (1913).
Thus philosophical realism is at the basis of both the novel and the autobiography.

The novelist's aim, according to Ian Watt, is "The production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals". 55

(a) The novel like Robinson Crusoe takes the form of a fictional autobiography in order to maintain the union of verisimilitude to the life experience of a marooned sailor in a lonely and deserted island. Similarly, in an autobiography because of the very unwritten understanding between the writer and the reader, the supposed authenticity of the account is maintained even when it is proved by other evidence that the autobiographer has brought fictitious details into his account. In other words, the autobiography as a genre exists only as a social convention. Both the autobiography and the novel aim at producing the verisimilitude to life experience.

(b) The world view of the novel, according to Ian Watt, is "A developing but unplanned aggregate of individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places". 56 The world view of autobiography is also essentially the same. The varied experiences in a novel are unified by either the plot or the hero of the
novel. The unifying factor in an autobiography is the hero of the autobiography, namely the autobiographer himself. The autobiography-novel conjunctur can be seen at work in the medieval and Renaissance quest romances and in the picaresque novels.

The quest romance is a narrative of ideal love or chivalric adventures. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is a typical renaissance romance. These romances took both poetic and prose forms. They narrate the adventures and experiences of different knights who went in search of the Holy Grail or the *Faerie Queene*.

The picaresque is a kind of realistic fiction which originated in Spain. Roger Fowler defines it as follows: "The Spanish picaro or picaron, the anti-hero of such a novel, was translated into English as the picaroon; he was a scoundrel of low birth and evil life, at war with society. He was on his own, and the form of the novel is commonly an autobiographical account of his fortunes, misfortunes, punishments and opportunism. The tales are episodic, frequently arranged as journeys. The endings are abrupt...." 57

The knight of the medieval and renaissance romance approaches his world armed with knowledge of the codes, conventions and traditions of his calling, as well as with his sword, shield and lance. All divergent and diverging episodes are knit into unity in the person of the knight who is the
hero of the romance. The Picaro is just the opposite; beginning as a naive and innocent person, he soon discards his credulity and acquires the skills needed to survive and prosper at the expense of others. The structure of both the romance and the picaresque novel is as loose and as episodic as the structure of an autobiography. In this connection the critical observation made by Krishna Pachegaonkar on R.K. Narayan's autobiography *My Days* becomes illuminating.

After wading through a few pages one gets the impression that one is reading not an autobiography but a piece of fiction. Indeed in many ways it is very similar to a Narayan novel .... in *My Days* we see, as we do in the novels, first the context of the town and the skills and problems of various kinds of works which fascinate Narayan; within this subtler circle of the family; and then at the centre a figure posing modestly but with an inward conviction, Narayan himself, another Narayan hero .... Narayan's memoir, *My Days* is really another Narayanesque tale which manipulates the elements of narrative and uses the moving first person exactly in the manner of Conradian fictional autobiography like *Heart of Darkness*.

This kind of a critical response is not peculiar to Krishna Pachegaonkar only; in fact, the reader of any autobiography gets the feeling that he is reading either a romance or a novel in which the autobiographer has portrayed himself as the hero.
The twelve autobiographies taken up for the present study are by Indians who had served as civil servants over a period of years. Their lives and adventures can be considered equivalent to the episodes or knightly adventures in romances because none of these autobiographies has a tightly integrated plot or systematic structure. Here are twelve Indians who had gone to England and acquired specified training to equip themselves adequately to the onerous task of playing the role of the hero in a fascinating manner, that of administering the revenue, the judiciary, the executive and the diplomatic affairs etc. of a vast country, India. Each one of them can be considered as a valiant knight of King Arthur's Court. They represent the famous order, the steel frame of India, the heaven-born service — the Indian Civil Service through which the British Government ruled and administered the distant member of the British Empire, India.

Taken together, the twelve autobiographies (representing different stages in the origin and development of the Indian Civil Service) give an interesting picture of the emerging modern India. The individual images of each of these civil servants coalesce and unite to recreate the ideal hero—the ideal knight or the typical officer in the I.C.S. cadre.

Similarly, their spontaneous responses to the varying relationships with the I.C.S. as an institution, when taken together, provides a fascinating picture of the Indian Civil Service as an institution, which has already become a legend in independent India.
A study of their responses and reactions as officers in pre-independence and in post-independence India gives us a very convincing view of the innate strength of the prestigious institution. Whether they served under the British Raj or under the Independent Indian Government, these civil servants made notable contributions to the making of modern India.

Of course, there are two approaches that can be made to these twelve autobiographies. They may be taken for their truth value and from out of the observations made by the twelve civil servants used as historical documents, a history of the growth and development of the I.C.S. can be traced. But such an approach will be purely historical and will go against the spirit of an autobiography as a literary genre. Viewed as a literary form, the value of autobiography is not solely based on its truth-value. The autobiography never relates the entire truth but chooses a few and rejects others. The principles of selection, omission and arrangement which go into the making of an autobiography make it a literary discourse, very near to novel. The picture of the I.C.S. Officer, the I.C.S. institution and their contributions to the making of modern India must be valued not for their factual validity but for their aesthetic validity. Subsequent research may repudiate the truth value of these autobiographies but yet their aesthetic value can never be superseded.
They form a class by themselves by their education, selection, training and service both in pre- and post-Independent India. They were the sons of middle-class families and their fathers belonged to professional classes like lawyers, engineers, teachers and Government Officials. They studied through English medium and their academic career was uniformly brilliant.

As students in English universities, they took part in many extra-curricular activities like sports and games, debates and discussions. They took to dancing also. They formed stable friendships and rubbed their shoulders with English families and were invited as guests to English homes. They toured England and continental countries widely. A fair account of the differences in the temperament and outlook between the people of England and those of the continent forms an important aspect of their autobiographies. They also record the interesting questions they faced in their viva voce examinations for the I.C.S. and the hurdles they encountered in practical training like horse-riding.

When posted in India, they were given further training at the District head-quarters by the European Collectors or Deputy Commissioners. They picked up the ropes of real administration only in the District Head-quarters under the guidance and direction of European Collectors or Deputy Commissioners.
These autobiographies uniformly deal with the club life in the districts and how colour bar was maintained by not allowing Indians into the club except Indian I.C.S. men. They describe some of their hobbies like versifying, tennis, hunting, reading, speaking, writing and bathing. In this respect they are distinct and different autobiographies from other autobiographies. They also provide so many excellent episodes and anecdotes about their bosses and subordinates.

Their training consisted of not only executive but also judicial, revenue and land settlement work. It is an interesting part of their autobiographical writing. They express their appreciation of British Officers' fair-play, impartiality, sense of humour and dedication to duty. Maintaining law and order, collection of land revenue and disposal of civil and criminal cases, land disputes are some of the duties they portray in their writings. Many humorous incidents are also narrated in their works.

They speak about fairs and festivals they witnessed; temples, historical places, mountains, lakes and shrines are also fairly described. Extensive tours, inspection of fields and deciding disputes of all kinds were given special importance and also the different modes of transport such as riding on horseback, on camels, and on a bicycle are interestingly narrated. The communal riots, Hindu-Muslim clashes, and dacoity are some of the important problems which
they frequently encountered in their official career. Social problems like caste, untouchability and the entry of Harijans into temples, the evils of dowry and prostitution, the undependable nature of the people are also explained in a detailed manner. They also pinpoint the evils of the feudal system. They draw attention to the sufferings of tenants and their exploitation by the landowners. The atrocities and barbarities of Zamindars, Taluqdars are well exposed in their memoirs. They did their best to contain such big and powerful persons and to protect the interests of the common peasant.

Famine, food problem, drought, procurement and rationing, floods, petrol rationing, control of Industry and trade, general health and education of the people are some of the other issues they analyse in their accounts.

Their account of life and living conditions of tribal people, their innocence, poverty, love of nature, their family and community life, their sex and marriage, honesty and integrity gives an insight into the world of tribes. They showed keen interest in protecting the interest of the tribals and their culture and land. Their love for national leaders and loyalty to the Government are sketched with lucidity and clarity.

While acting as political agents in princely states, they were able to patch the Native Rajas and the idiosyncracies of
their personal and public lives. They also provide a fair account of the people and their habits, customs, ways of living. Their keen interest in fine arts like music, dancing, drama and folksongs has come out very well. Interesting cases and disputes which they decided in their courts are brought out and their autobiographies are full of humorous episodes, anecdotes, parables, fables, events, incidents and their comments on them. Collection of war funds and war efforts are two matters that were widely discussed in their autobiographies. In this manner they are quite different from other writings and become a kind of their own.

These autobiographies discuss the functioning of Central and State Governments and the formation of ministries by majority parties. They provide an insight into the manoeuvres, manipulations, tricks adopted by the party leaders to capture power and some times even unethical steps they took to remain in power. The method of 'Ayarams and Gayarams' widely practised by Indian politicians is well exposed. They bring out also the plus and minus points of party politics and democratic forms of Government.

Interestingly but convincingly they disclose the rivalry among the national leaders and groupism that plays a vital part in party politics. Another interesting point one comes across in their writings is how they restored law and order.

* Floor crossing in legislatures for personal gains.
controlled the price of commodities and initiated many projects whenever the President's rule was imposed in any state. Their difference with political masters and clashes they had and their relation with such leaders are graphically recalled.

Corruption, 'Mamools' and red-tapism ingrained in Indian administration from time immemorial and the steps they took to curb, if not to eradicate them are matters that are fairly treated.

Though they are the autobiographies of individuals, they deal more with national matters like the fight between the Congress and the Muslim League, Partition, refugee problems and their rehabilitation, Overseas Indians and their Citizenship issues. The conflict between India and Pakistan, the war with China and foreign pockets in India and Kashmir problem are well discussed.

In the same breadth, other important national matters like the drafting of the constitution, the design of the national flag, bird and animal, the transfer of power from the British to Indians are all well drawn out.

International problems and issues like cold war between the two blocks of super powers, alliances and pacts like NATO,
SEATO, CENTO and Bagdad Pact are properly analysed and their importance is emphasised in international affairs. They also talk about imperialism, colonialism and racism.

In their accounts of persons and people, all of them provide an interesting sketch of their colleagues, both Indian and foreign, their relation with them and their idiosyncrasies. Equally they provide impressive pen—pictures of national and international leaders.

These autobiographies devote a fair part to India's foreign policy of Non-alignment, and Conferences like Colombo and Bandung form an interesting and enlightening part. Diplomacy is another important topic treated in an excellent manner. Equally they deal with the Foreign Office of India and its composition, functioning, drawbacks and peculiar politics. They outline the relations of India with other countries like the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A., the U.K., China, West Asia and South-East Asia and other nations.

These writers show as much interest in writing about their subordinates, peons, butlers, horses and pet animals as they do about great matters. Regarding their personal matters, they cover almost all their personal aspects (including diseases they suffered from and habits they could not give up like drinking and smoking). Sex is not left out in their works. They reveal their relations with men, women and
their attachment to it is given a fair treatment. Sex, both pre-marital and marital played a vital part in the development of their character and career. It is not considered as a taboo but an important aspect of life in general.

In the post-independent India, their contribution to the making of modern India deserves special mention. These autobiographies are distinctive in giving a fair account of the measures and steps taken by these civilians to improve the conditions of Indian society. Schemes like rural development, dams, Five-Year Plans, Community Development, National Extension Service, Rural Electrification, major projects like construction of dams for irrigation and power and industries both large and small scale were implemented by them.

They were highly interested in food production, land utilisation and development of irrigation and hydro-electric power. Introduction of modern techniques like tractor for increasing food production drew their main consideration. Research in grains like tapioca and groundnuts and horticulture were encouraged by them. Waste lands were also reclaimed for cultivation. They took steps to spray paddy fields to protect them from pests.

Their service in the field of census, development and planning is another aspect of their writings. Their yeoman service in these fields deserve special praise. They rendered
valuable service in various commissions like Famine Enquiry Commission, Food Delegation to the U.K., the U.S.A., and F.A.O. Commission at Washington. The interests of India were upper most in their minds in all these bodies.

The welfare of the common man and betterment of the life of tribals were their main concern and their keen interests in preserving the identity and culture of the tribal people were the special features of their works. Their service as members of various committees, as advisors to Governors, Prime Ministers and Native Rajas, their service in the field of voluntary agencies, educational institutions, social and monetary organisations, as chairmen of many boards highlight their broad-minded and service-oriented attitude to life at large.

Political, economic, social and foreign matters (apart from administrative issues) are neatly presented and properly assessed. As they worked in close contact with Ministers, they were able to see the seamy side of the policy-makers and their motives. They maintain esprit-de-corps in their profession and the halo of I.C.S. The dos and Don'ts evolved during the long period of the Raj to set an example were preserved by them.

Their autobiographies are interspersed with letters, diaries, committee reports, episodes, poetic quotations and
notes. These things make their writing a special type and quite different from other memoirs.

A few of these I.C.S. men were the first from their provinces or native places to have passed into the service. Some of these I.C.S. men were the "first Indians" posted to important departments like foreign, political, defence and finance. They did not even leave politics and after retirement contested elections and one among them became the Finance Minister of India in Nehru's Cabinet and another got promoted as the first Indian to the post of Chief Secretary in Pre-Independent India in Madras province. The first advisor to the Planning Commission in free India was selected from one among them. Hence they did possess the honour and credit of being the first in many fields in their career of service.

They were not merely cut-and-dry administrators but also knowledgeable persons and experts in many subjects like mathematics and finance. They were good at boxing, mimicry, bathing, gardening and dancing. As negotiators they brought about peaceful settlements to many strikes and hartals. They pleaded for good self-government.

They also form a set of forceful writers in English. Their style, diction, narration and analysis are a kind of their own. They are not only forceful speakers but also pleasant and interesting writers. To their credit, it must be
mentioned that they wrote many books of literary merit and published them.

In conclusion it must be noted that they form a homogeneous class. Their works have many common features, different and distinctive from any other group. Autobiographies in general deal only with the life of the individual writers but these autobiographies deal with as many matters regional, national and international other than personal. They are not only records of their views, impressions and opinions, events and incidents that happened during their career but also critical personal analysis of conflicts and controversies uppermost in public life. Their outlook and approach are cosmopolitan and free from any bias, partiality or prejudice of creed, caste or regionalism.

These reminiscences are a species of their own kind. They are not based on any records and evidences that are verifiable. They wrote from their memory since they never kept any authentic evidence or records or proofs. All of them express that they wrote relying mainly on their own memory and scattered notes. No material evidence have they produced to support their views and opinions.

C.D. Deshmukh says, "I have decided to try and set down the story of my life partly on memory... partly on both memory and on letters and other documents in my possession. I have kept no diaries."
Dharma Vira, another I.C.S. man expresses the same view: "I have kept no record or diary of the events and the times.... and hence had to rely entirely on my memory."\(^{60}\)

K.L. Mehta also says, "In fact there may well be some advantage, if I wrote from memory."\(^{61}\)

Memory is the main source of their writing. But when they wrote their autobiographies, their memory was not at its best. They were fading memories due to old age, and memory becomes weak in old age. For example, Y.D. Gundevia observes: "From my own scattered notes and diaries written over the years, from the pictures that remain imprinted on my fading memory."\(^{62}\)

The powers of one's memory becomes weak and blurred in old age and cannot be completely reliable. "Powers of memory decline as one gets older."\(^{63}\)

"Also, as Wardsworth (I.C.S., Madras) concedes at the beginning of his memoir, memories become blurred by the images of later days which lie over them."\(^{64}\)

Autobiographies are generally written in old age and when written depending on memory, they cannot be completely trustworthy as factual documents. And also their truth value
will not be much. "autobiographies are mostly written in old age. By then the past becomes pleasant in recollection .... trivial incidents assume a falsely romantic hue and the tendency to eschew the distressing and exaggerate the delightful unconsciously asserts itself".65.

The main purpose of these autobiographies is to present a fascinating picture of their authors' rich and varied experiences in their official lives. "My main purpose in writing is to present a general picture, based on personal knowledge and experience. "... The book is not just autobiographical, but a record of events and experiences.... I have relied mainly on my own memory and such notes as I kept from time to time.68.

Not only do these autobiographies narrate the events and experiences of the authors but also describe the various personalities and situations. E.N. Mangat Rai says that he tried to present "A description of the personalities and situations I experienced as a civil servant...."67.

In their autobiographies these civil servants write about their impressions, views, ideas and opinions and try to recreate the atmosphere of their days. "But I have tried to recreate the atmosphere of the times in which I worked and played."68
In short, they have given only their impressionistic account of events, experiences and persons whom they are able to remember and recall. No objectivity is possible in such writings and they cannot be relied upon for any truth-value. "By giving an impressionistic account of what I remember of events and persons who have impinged on my life. The latter has the advantage of being more spontaneous, since real objectivity in such accounts in any event is rarely attainable".

Hence these autobiographies stand as a class by themselves. No claim is made by them for the truth of their accounts and the statements made in their works. They have simply stated what they felt and understood during their period of service about various incidents, events, persons and problems. These books are of absorbing interest to read as literary compositions and their real worth lies in their literary worth and charm. And the present effort is to study them merely as fascinating literary discourses.

In Chapter two, an attempt is made to present the typical image of an Indian Civil Servant as it emerges from the twelve autobiographies under study.
In Chapter three, an effort is made to present as convincing a picture as possible of the Indian Civil Service as an institution as it has affected the lives of these twelve autobiographers.

Chapter four endeavours to summarise as briefly as possible the services rendered by the I.C.S. men in the making of modern India.

Chapter five concentrates on the purely literary qualities of these autobiographies and an attempt is made to assess their aesthetic worth and value.

In the concluding chapter, it is shown how autobiographies—though founded on facts—have an aesthetic side and value. Studied as a genre more allied to fiction than fact, the autobiography is as interesting as the historical novel or romance. This is not to belittle their factual value. This is merely to show the possibility of a literary approach to a genre considered to be non-literary.
NOTES


3. Loc. cit.

4. Loc. cit.


9. Ibid., p.4.


14. Ibid., p.84.


34. R.P. Noronha, p. 61.


38. Ibid., p. 196.


42. Ibid., p. 78.


56. Ibid., p.34.
57. Roger Fowler, p.142.
63. David C. Potter, p.16.