Chapter 1 A- Introduction

Born and bred up to the strictest seclusion, and married whilst yet a child, she is devoted to a domestic quietude, varied only by the rites of religion and the ordinary events of the family. Of the world around her, she can know little or nothing and the world knows little or nothing of her. Her mental faculties are either underdeveloped altogether or wasted upon frivolities, whilst her notions of right and wrong are overlaid by superstitions and credulity, until they have become as devoid of moral meaning as the instincts of an animal.

This description of the contemporary Indian woman, which appeared in the ‘Friend of India’ in its issue of 31 August 1866, shows the pathetic condition of the Indian woman in around the middle of the Nineteenth century. Being denied access to formal education and the outside world, the woman of the 19th century was groping in the darkness of ignorance and superstitions. Her very birth was frowned upon—she was considered to be an unwelcome addition to the family or an unwanted burden on it. As a child, she was often neglected or discriminated against. As she was married off at an early age when she could hardly understand the meaning of marriage, she had no voice in the choice of her life-partner. After the marriage, she just lived as a ‘dasi’ of the husband and the elders in the family, silently suffering at their hands. Her voice was totally suppressed—she was never consulted while taking any decision. After the death of the husband, she was either supposed to immolate herself with the husband or lead a pathetic existence as a widow, who was not supposed to ‘defile’ any auspicious occasion with her
‘inauspicious’ presence. As widow remarriages were strictly prohibited, never could she dream of leading a happy married life again.

This condition of the woman underwent a lot of changes in the second half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. As the book Women in India: Past and Present by Rekha Pandey and Neelam Upadhyay informs us, after the establishment of the British rule, there was revival of indigenous ideals as a reaction against the Western impact. In the Nineteenth century, India began to discover her long-cherished ideals and cultural self-consciousness. Some social reformers tried to restore women to their respectable position in the Vedic period. This came to be known as the period of Indian Renaissance. The father of this Renaissance was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who got the ‘sati’ custom legally banned. He was followed by other eminent thinkers and activists from different parts of the country. In Bengal, Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar vehemently advocated widow remarriages. In Maharashtra, Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule tried to spread girl’s education by setting up a number of educational institutes for girls. Similarly, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar heavily came down upon practices like child marriages in his editorials of the daily ‘Sudharaka’. In Punjab, ‘Arya Samaj’, the organization established by Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, tried to provide women with opportunities of participation in public life. The Freedom struggle played a highly significant role in the emancipation of women, especially after Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene in 1920. Bringing the women out of their narrow, domestic worlds, the Gandhian movement made them active participants in social
and political life. It made them aware of their own strengths. Besides, as Madhu Kishwar points out,

- Participation in public and political life brought with it a new prestige and status vis-à-vis their male partners.²

In the post-Independence period, the condition of the women further improved because of the spread of girl’s education. As Rekha Pandey and Neelam Upadhyay observe,

The rapid strides in education during the last forty years have affected women in a number of ways. It has created awareness among women and enabled them to be self-reliant. It has brought women in contact with the philosophy of liberalism and the democratic traditions of the West. It has given rise to new equations in the relationship between the husband and the wife and enabled them to exercise their choice in the selection of the life-partner.³

The rising of career opportunities for women enabled them to be financially independent. In the Nineteen Sixties, the philosophy of Feminism, advocated by writers like Simon De Beauvoire, Kate Millet and Elen Showalter influenced women’s thinking all over the world. Based on the principle that women are basically individuals and that they should have an equivalent position as men, this ideology made women aware of their rights. As a result of these factors, some women found their own voice and developed individual personality.

The present study proposes to study the life-narratives of some Indian women to explore the women’s evolution from a ‘dasi’ to an independent individual. It seeks to prove that the Indian woman’s discovering the self and the development of that self have enriched her autobiography in various respects.
In the process, the study will seek to demonstrate that literature and society are inextricably linked with each other and so long as a particular section has been denied opportunities of development, it can not be expected to create mature works of art. Literary works are products of the writers’ period. Autobiography is a personal history which also documents social history. The selected works provide the opportunity to trace the improvement in women’s status, their expanding world and coming to the centre from the margins of the society. Women’s writings give the ‘other’ side of the culture which is essential for the complete picture of the society. These works display the signs that the hold of patriarchy is breaking. Also women are not perceived as ‘dolls’ to be played with- they become equal partners at every level.

The texts chosen for close consideration are Ramabai Ranade’s *Ranade- His Wife’s Reminiscences* (1910), Lakshmibai Tilak’s *I Follow After* (1934), Krishna Hutheesing’s *With No Regrets* (1934), Kamla Das’ *My Story* (1976), Amrita Pritam’s *The Revenue Stamp* (1976), Suneeta Deshpande’s *...And Pine for What is Not* (1989), Shobha De’s *Selective Memory* (1998). These seven autobiographies have been selected because they reflect a gradual development of the personality of the Indian woman and its effects upon her autobiography. The autobiographies cover a long period of 88 years and the most significant representatives of this period have been chosen. Out of these seven autobiographies, those of Ramabai Ranade, Lakshmibai Tilak and Suneeta Deshpande have been originally written in Marathi and then translated into
English. Even though the present researcher has read the original Marathi books, it is their English versions that are going to be closely examined in the present study.

The chapter-division of the study will be as follows-

Chapter 1A- ‘Introduction’

This chapter will define the hypothesis and justify it. It will also discuss the archetypal theories of C.J.Jung, which will be used as parameters for the analysis of individual texts.

Chapter 1B- ‘Autobiography as a Literary Genre’

This chapter will discuss the definitions of autobiography, comparison between the autobiography and other literary genres, the motives behind the writing of the autobiography, the strengths and limitations of the autobiography and the forms of the autobiography.

Chapter 2A- ‘A historical perspective on the position of the woman in the Indian society’

This chapter will trace the history of the Indian woman from the Vedic age up to the post-Independence period. It will show the respectable position of the Indian woman in the family and society in the Vedic age, when she was treated as a ‘devi’, and the subsequent loss of it in the following centuries and how the Colonial interaction and the National Freedom struggle helped her to regain her position.
2 B- ‘A History of the Indian autobiography’

As the study is primarily concerned with the autobiographies of women, it is considered relevant to discuss the genre of autobiography. This chapter will show the development of the Indian autobiography from a mere life-history to self-reflection and linguistic innovativeness in the style in the process.

Chapter 3- ‘The Silent Self- Ramabai Ranade’s Ranade-His Wife’s Reminiscences’

Ramabai Ranade’s autobiography Ranade-His Wife’s Reminiscences was originally published in Marathi as Amachya Ayushyatil Kahi Athavani (1910). In the early 20th century, women lived in the shadow of their husbands. The book reflects the patriarchal system of the age and focuses more on the life of the husband than the wife and delimits the scope for the self-portrait. The text registers the writer’s struggle to find a ‘voice’. The book also presents a frank and balanced portrait of the husband and her relations with him. The narration is very candid, considering the taboos on the Indian woman of the age, who was not supposed to talk about the husband.

Chapter 4- ‘Articulating the Self- Lakshmibai Tilak’s I Follow After’

Lakshmibai Tilak’s autobiography I Follow After was originally published in Marathi as Smruti Chitre in 1934. As the book was published 24 years after the publication of Ramabai Ranade’s autobiography, it registers a change in the life of the woman. Here we find a definite change that Lakshmibai Tilak found some
space to speak about herself as well as the husband. From the shadow of the
husband women are coming into the open. The book is silent about the political
restlessness associated with the Freedom movement, led by Lokmanya Tilak,
which was at its height in the period when the book was written. It means that the
social and political upheavals of the age did not affect the inner world of the
woman. The text is important because the husband-centred narrative of the early
decade is slowly shifting to ‘wife’ at the centre.

Chapter 5- ‘Projecting the Self in a socio-political context- Krishna Hutheesing’s With No Regrets’

Krishna Hutheesing’s autobiography With No Regrets was published in
1944. Being a part of the Nehru family, which was politically active, she was a
freedom-fighter herself. Krishna Hutheesing’s autobiography reveals political
consciousness, which is absent in the earlier women writers. The book reads more
like reminiscences of the times she has spent with the family members, who have
parted with her due to death or imprisonment and this has naturally delimited the
scope for self-exploration. The autobiography delineates a full self-portrait. The
portrait of the husband has been overshadowed by prominent figures of the father-
Motilal Nehru- and the brother- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The other characters in
the book include criminals and even they have been treated with sympathetic
understanding. Her experiences of imprisonment and criminals are similar to
other male political activists. The text has showcased the expanding world where
women stepped out of domesticity. The text shows that women share political consciousness equal to men, which is unique about With No Regrets.

Chapter 6- ‘Writing the Unspeakable- Kamala Das’ My Story’

Like her poetry, Kamala Das’ autobiography My Story (1976) is confessional. Kamla Das has the courage to talk about experiences which were a social taboo to speak about in the open - her first menstruation, love-making, giving birth to a child, having extra-marital relations with different men in search of self-discovery. She uses these experiences to sensationalise her writings for commercial success, which introduces the fictional elements in My Story. One may call it as ‘autobiographical fiction’.

Chapter 7- ‘Inventing the Self- Amrita Pritam’s The Revenue Stamp’

Amrita Pritam’s autobiography The Revenue Stamp (1978) was originally published in Punjabi as Rasidi Tikat. In this autobiography, we find a different narrative-technique used by the writer, which is unexplored by the earlier autobiographers. While narrating the incidents, the writer does not follow chronological order. She has tried to probe the link between her writings and her subconscious mind. The literary form of autobiography has been handled with ease and the narrative-technique has been experimented with by the writer.

Chapter 8- ‘Discovering the self- Suneeta Deshpande’s And Pine for What is Not’

Suneeta Deshpande’s autobiography And Pine for What is Not was originally published in Marathi as Ahe Manohar Tari (1990). With a keen
psychological insight, Suneeta Deshpande has tried to explore the inner recesses of her mind more profoundly than Amrita Pritam. She has presented a very objective portrait of the husband- the late Mr.P.L.Deshpande. The objectivity in this presentation is admirable because at the time the book was written, her husband had become a cultural icon of Maharashtra. Suneeta Deshpande has showed his human weaknesses and portrayed him as a normal human being at the risk of inviting the wrath of his blind admirers. She has also tried to probe his mind. Like Amrita Pritam, she has done away with chronology in the narrative-technique.

Chapter 9- ‘Treading on Different Walks of Life- Shobha De’s Selective Memory’

Shobha De’s Selective Memory (1998) reveals experiences of different walks of life. A model, a writer, a columnist, a short story writer, Shobha De has treaded on different paths of life. Her exposure to different fields and especially with media has made her personality and autobiography multi-dimensional. The writing reveals self-confidence and control over the narrative and mastery of the medium where she can dare experiment with the coinage of new words. The subject as well as the medium of expression exhibit the freedom of choice and voice. This text exemplifies the independent identity achieved by a woman in the last decade of the twentieth century, which was denied to Ramabai Ranade in the first decade of the twentieth century. From the shadow of the husband, within nine decades, a woman has overshadowed her husband. She has crossed the threshold of the
kitchen and ‘Laxmanrekha’ of domesticity to come out in the outer world, achieving equal status with men in every field.

Chapter 10- ‘Conclusion’

All the autobiographies under study show that the change in the woman is parallel to the image of the woman in her autobiography and this has enhanced the quality of her autobiography. So the study will conclude that it is necessary to provide all social segments with equal opportunities of development for the maturing of their literary works.

Thus, the autobiographies chosen show different aspects of the Indian women’s autobiographies- the self being silent, the self finding voice, reflection of socio-political consciousness, innovativeness in the narrative-technique, boldness in self-projection, psychological exploration and linguistic innovations as well as reflection of varied areas of life. The innovativeness in the narrative-technique of Suneeta Deshpande and Amrita Pritam and the linguistic innovations of Shobha De show that the modern woman is no longer content with narrating her life-history as it happened but she is strongly conscious of the literary genre and willing to experiment with it. Thus, these autobiographies show the maturing of the Indian woman’s autobiography.

The Parameters for Studying the Autobiographies

Indians have always lived collectively- Indian women have always lived in relationships, as pointed out by Shashi Deshpande in her novels. Naturally enough,
the autobiographies of Ramabai Ranade and Lakshmibai Tilak reflect the collective consciousness. However, the autobiographies of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Das, Suneeta Deshpande, Shobha De show that with their getting educated and crossing over the domestic threshold, women have progressed from the collective consciousness to the individual one. The parameters of archetypal criticism will be appropriate for this study, as archetypes are parts of the collective consciousness. Except Suneeta Deshpande’ autobiography, which has been considered from the archetypal point of view by Mr. M. S. Patil, the rest of the autobiographies have not been analysed in this way. Hence this will be a unique approach to the study of women’s autobiographies. In this context, it will be pertinent to consider archetypal criticism.

Archetypal criticism owes its origin to the theory of C. G. Jung, who was a social psychologist. According to C. G. Jung’s psychology, the collective consciousness is a part of the psyche that does not owe its existence to personal experience and so it is not a personal acquisition. The collective consciousness owes its existence exclusively to heredity. While the personal unconscious consists for the most part of ‘complexes’, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of ‘archetypes’. This idea of ‘complexes’ will be useful in studying the autobiographies of Krishna Hutheesing, Kamla Das, Amrita Pritam and Suneeta Deshpande.

C. G. Jung defines archetypes as ‘the most far-fetched mythological motifs and symbols’, which can appear ‘in dreams, fantasies and other exceptional states
of mind'. Their appearance is ‘the result of particular influences, traditions and excitations working on the individual, but more often without any sign of them’. This idea of archetypes will be useful in analysing the dreams and mythological motifs that appear in the autobiographies of Ramabai Ranade, Kamla Das, Amrita Pritam and Suneeta Deshpande. C.G. Jung has also defined archetypes as ‘the self-portrait of the instinct’. This definition of archetypes will assist in explaining the ‘animus’ of Amrita Pritam.

Archetypal criticism tries to look for such archetypes in literature and to interpret them. It believes that it is because of the archetypes occurring in a classic literary work that we can relate ourselves to it. The following are some of the major archetypes, which will be applicable to this study-

1] The archetype of the self- According to C.G.Jung, the self is made up of varied- even contradictory- conscious and unconscious, individual and collective elements, which one inherits from both the parents. When the individual grows up, he comes to know all these elements, brings about a reconciliation among them and gives a particular shape to the self. In the process, he discards the undesirable elements inherited from the parents and keeps only the valuable ones. Excessive attachment to the parents can be detrimental to this- it can make the person ‘imprisoned in infantile relationships’. So one has to overcome excessive attachment to the parents in order to properly get through this process, which is called as ‘individuation’. Jung defines it as ‘the process by which a person
becomes a psychological ‘individual’, that is, a separate indivisible unity or ‘whole’. It is an arduous process- something like a ‘sadhana’, a penance.

2] The archetype of the mother- According to the archetypal theory, in the womb of the mother, one identifies oneself with her but in the process of individuation, one gets away from her. Of course, the world of the womb being very secure, one feels like regressing back to it at times.

The mother has two forms- the good mother and the terrible mother. While the good mother believes that her child’s getting away from her is beneficial for his development, the terrible mother does not tolerate it and so she tries to raise obstacles in the way of his development. One has to surmount these obstacles- one has to kill the terrible mother and absorb the good mother, which means that one has to do away with the bad part of the mother and absorb the good one.

The idea of regressing back to the mother’s womb will shed a new light on the autobiographies of Suneeta Deshpande and Shobha De. The concepts of ‘the good mother’ and ‘the terrible mother’ will put the autobiographies of Ramabai Ranade, Lakshmibai Tilak, Kamla Das and Shobha De in a new perspective.

The mother-complex can take the following forms in a daughter –

a] Hypertrophy of the maternal instinct- In a woman, the mother-complex may lead to the exaggeration of the feminine side, which means an intensification of all female instincts, above all the maternal instinct. The only goal of such a woman’s life is childbirth. She considers the husband to be an instrument of procreation and an object to be looked after. Even her own personality is of
secondary importance for her and she remains entirely unconscious of it, as her life is lived in and through others. She lives in more or less complete identification with all the objects of her care. She has a strong will to power and she often fanatically insists upon her maternal rights. Such a woman destroys her own personality and the personal lives of her children.

b) **Resistance to the mother**- This complex may lead a woman to strongly resist maternal supremacy. As all her instincts are concentrated on resisting the mother, this complex can be detrimental to all instinctive processes- either sexuality does not function properly, or the children are unwanted, or maternal duties seem intolerable, or the demands of marital life are dealt with impatience and irritation. Hatred for the mother as the representative of the family (or clan) may lead the woman to either violently resist or be totally indifferent to anything that comes under the head of family, community, society, convention, and the like. Hatred for the mother as ‘materia’ (matter) may make her clumsily handle objects or have a bad taste in clothes. Such a woman can have some masculine qualities in her character because when she rejects the mother, she rejects all that is illogical, irrational and obscure in her and becomes rational, objective in thinking. With the development of masculine qualities, such a woman can attain greater consciousness at a later stage in her life and she can also be a good administrator and a good advisor for the husband.

This theory will help in bringing out some unexplored features of the personalities of Lakshmibai Tilak, Kamla Das and Suneeta Deshpande.
3] **The archetype of the father**- Like the archetype of the mother, the archetype of the father also has two forms- its positive form being the good, protective father and the negative one being the terrible father. According to the archetypal theory, the father often stands for patriarchal values. All social, political, religious institutions are overruled by those values. So long as the son or the daughter blindly accepts those values, the relations of the father and the son or the daughter run smoothly. When these patriarchal values dominate social life, it becomes stereotypical, without any place for creativity, innovativeness or experimentation. In such a situation, a son or a daughter with high consciousness often rebels against these values. Then the father becomes ‘terrible father’ – he tries to crush that rebellion with all his force and the son or the daughter has to fight against that ‘terrible father’. At times being unable to fight against him, the son or the daughter may simply give in to him and blindly adopt his values. In another form of this process, the son or the daughter identifies herself or himself with the father and voluntarily adopts his values. In either case, the son or the daughter ends up as replicas of the father- their consciousness gets merged with the collective consciousness and creativity withers away. ‘The terrible father’ peeps through the autobiographies of Krishna Hutheesingh and Shobha De.

As per the Jungian theory, the father-complex in a woman can be both positive and negative. While the positive father complex can induce ‘the liveliest spiritual aspirations and interests’\(^9\), a negative father-complex may mislead her
into considering the father to be ‘eternally right in everything’. The positive father complex is felt in the autobiography of Amrita Pritam.

The archetype of ‘animus’ is related with the archetype of the father. The ‘animus’ is the image of an ideal man, which a woman forms after coming of age and which is strongly influenced by the father. She generally projects this image upon other males. The ‘animus’ can be an obstacle in the way of a woman’s establishing good relations with the husband or the lover if he does not fit in with her ‘animus’. This idea may explain the failures of the married lives of Kamla Das, Amrita Pritam and Suneeta Deshpande. If the woman gets possessed by the ‘animus’, she becomes ‘obstinate, harping on principles, laying down the law, dogmatic, world-reforming, theoretic, word-mongering, argumentative, and domineering’. This theory may elucidate the behavior of Suneeta Deshpande as an adolescent girl.

4] The archetype of the wise old man- C.G.Jung points out that the archetype of the ‘wise old man’ is a form of the archetype of spirit, which makes man creative and gives him inspiration and enthusiasm. The ‘wise old man’ performs precisely the same kind of work. When the son or the daughter with high consciousness rebels against the father, the father becomes ‘terrible father’ and raises obstacles in the way of his development. As it may be difficult for the son or the daughter to surmount the obstacles on his or her own, he or she may receive help from ‘the wise old man’. This ‘wise old man’ is a person or a human manifestation of the unconscious part of the self itself, which comes up with
solutions to the problems confronting the self. As this archetype is a part of the archetype of spirit, the ‘wise old man’ often has something spiritual about him or he is somehow connected with the Divine in one way or another. This theory will bring to light some new aspects of the autobiographies of Ramabai Ranade, Lakshmibai Tilak and Krishna Hutheesingh.

5] The archetype of the trickster- C.G.Jung defines the trickster as ‘a primitive ‘cosmic’ being of divine-animal nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other inferior to him because of his unreason and unconsciousness’. He can get into a number of ridiculous scrapes and even though he is not really evil, he can do the most outrageous things. This ‘trickster’ exists in the collective unconscious of every person and he may come up, especially when one finds that there is something wrong with one’s own self and the outside world. In such a situation, the best way out is to improve oneself and then to try to improve the world. However, this arduous path has been shunned by many people, who choose the easier route of being a ‘trickster’. One can outgrow the stage of a trickster and his consciousness may develop in the course of time, but the trickster may keep lurking at the back of his mind. He has merely withdrawn into the unconscious due to loss of energy and may come up again. Some shades of the trickster may be found in the personality of Shobha De.

6] The archetype of persona- C.G.Jung defines ‘persona’ as ‘the individual’s system of adaptation to, or the manner he assumes in dealing with the world’. At another place, he defines ‘persona’, with a little exaggeration, as ‘
the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is'. According to him, every calling or profession has its own characteristic persona. Even though such personas are necessary in life, the trouble with them is that at times people get so much used to them that they begin to identify themselves with them. The superiority complex of Amrita Pritam can be explained with the help of this theory.

These aspects of the archetypal theory have been selected because they will bring out possibility of new meanings from the autobiographies and within the framework of these parameters, the autobiographies will be studied.
References


5 Ibid.33.

6 Ibid. 138.


9 Ibid. 214

10 Ibid. 124.

11 Ibid. 16.

12 Ibid. 285.

13 Ibid. 123.

14 Ibid. 123.
Chapter 1B - The Genre of Autobiography

As the genre has been borrowed from the West, most of the ideas discussed in this part of the chapter are Western.

The literary form of memoirs evolved from letters, diaries and autobiography evolved from memoirs in the West in the eighteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century, the word ‘autobiography’ was firstly employed in a review of Isaac D’Israeli’s book Miscellany by William Taylor. In that review, Taylor pondered whether ‘autobiography’, though pedantic, might not have been a better word than the ‘hybrid’ word ‘self-biography’ used by D’Israeli. Since then the name ‘autobiography’ came to be applied to this literary genre. Initially considered to be a part of biography, autobiography gradually evolved into a distinct literary genre.

Defining autobiography

Autobiography has been defined in various ways. Philip Lejune has defined autobiography as ‘a retrospective account in prose that a real person makes of his own existence, focussing on his individual life, in particular the development of his personality’. However, we learn from Linda Anderson’s book Autobiography that Lejune himself remained
dissatisfied with this definition as it did not seem to provide a sufficient boundary between biography and fiction.

*Encyclopedia Britanica* defines autobiography as ‘the account of an individual life, written by the subject himself’. 2 According to the *Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, it is ‘the art and practice of writing a narrative of one’s own life’. 3 In the view of the *Webster dictionary*, ‘It is a biography or narrative of one’s life written by oneself’. 4 Mr.James M.Cox defines autobiography as ‘basically a factual rather than a fictional narrative of a person’s life written by himself’. 5 E.Stuart Bates has raised the following objections to such kind of definitions—

To begin with, the idea that it must be written by the person concerned must be abandoned at the outset. Many are the work of editors or amanuences working uncontrolled, even in a language unknown to the original person, or on behalf of illiterates, while others consist of posthumous patchwork by loyal friends. It need not take narrative form, and de Maupassant in *La Horla* wrote an account, not of his past but of his future. 6

Besides, as James Olney observes, the word ‘bios’, which is a constituent of the word ‘autobiography’, does not simply mean a life-history. It may also mean ‘consciousness, pure and simple, consciousness referring to no objects outside itself, to no events, and to no other lives’. 7
Autobiography, then, does not necessarily tell us a life-history, it may project consciousness only.

William L. Howarth defines autobiography as ‘a self-portrait’. Though autobiography is basically a self-portrait, it can be a portrait of many other things as well – the writer’s contemporary times, his social and political milieu, the persons he met in his life etc. Besides, the definition does not make it clear what kind of self has been portrayed by an autobiography – the self projected by the autobiography is not exactly identical to the writer’s original self. That self is always colored by the writer’s present-day perceptions, memory, imagination and sense of propriety. The autobiographer does not simply ‘project’ his self but actually creates a new self when he writes the autobiography.

James Olney argues that if all selves are unique and if they are constantly evolving and transforming, then it would be difficult to define such a self and even more difficult to give a sense of it to anyone else. The only way to communicate such a self to others is to do so by discovering or creating some similitude for the experience that can reflect or evoke the same experience in others. So Olney defines autobiography as ‘a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the self at the summary moment of composition’. According to Olney, such a
metaphor should be ‘unitary’, specially human and personally unique. Rajana Harish has objected to this on the grounds that these three preconditions for the metaphorising self are luxuries of the privileged and they can not be met with by minority autobiographers like women. The women’s autobiographies do not project their unique, personal selves but collective identity as women. We have shown in this study that though the Indian women’s autobiographies have reflected the collective identity of women, the individual identity of women has slowly emerged in the autobiographies.

Mr. Roy Pascal has defined autobiography in this way-

Autobiography is a shaping of the past. It imposes a pattern on a life, constructs out of it a coherent story.

A modern autobiography may experiment with narrative-techniques- it may not be expected to impose any pattern on a life or tell a coherent story.

On the Indian scene, according to Mr. D.G. Naik,

The details of any given life...when accommodated in a story or a narrative inevitably take a shape or form, which, in literary terminology, is called the form of autobiography.

Autobiography is certainly far more than the details of a life taking a shape or a form in a story or a narrative it.
The present researcher would like to attempt a new definition of autobiography, which may cover most of the aspects of autobiography-

'Autobiography is basically an honest and artistic projection of the self, coloured by the autobiographer's present-day perceptions, memory, imagination and sense of propriety and it can also be a portrayal of the autobiographer's contemporary as well as past times and the people he came across in his life'.

Some modern critics have tried to expand the frontiers of autobiography- according to them, autobiography can be found in any other literary form. Mr.Bats E.Stuart claims,

I find autobiography in everything and everything in autobiography.  

According to him,

Autobiography is not so much a species of literature as an idea.  

If taken as an idea, autobiography can be certainly found in any other literary form. When taken as a literary genre, autobiography is bound to remain distinct from other literary forms. The following comparison of autobiography and other literary forms will bear this out. The comparative approach will also clarify the definition.
1) Autobiography and memoirs- There is a thin line dividing autobiography and memoirs. As Roy Pascal observes,

There is no autobiography that is not in some respect a memoir, and no memoir that is without autobiographical information.  

Margaret Butrell has stated the following distinctions between memoirs and autobiographies- while the memoir is based on verifiable facts, autobiography is self-analytical. Similarly, manners and modes change so rapidly that memoirs soon acquire a period flavour but autobiography is less affected by the passage of time. Writing an autobiography is more difficult than writing a memoir because it is the recording of spiritual growth and so it requires a finer discrimination than writing a memoir. The motives behind the writing of memoirs may be ‘the desire to leave to friends or descendents authentic historical testimony’ or ‘the wish to increase and assure an already achieved reputation’ but ‘the motives behind introspective autobiography may be less easily discernible’. 

Michael Beajour has made some distinction between autobiography and self-portrait. According to him, books like St.Augustine’s Confessions, Montaigue’s Essays, Gardan’s Book of My Life, Rousseau’s Reveries are self-portraits, which he calls as ‘anti-memoirs’. According to him, while autobiography can have a continuous narrative, the writing of
an anti-memoir is ‘associative, weaving facts, memories, fantasies, analyses, arguments, following a kind of dream logic’. 17

2] Autobiography and private diaries/journals - The major difference between autobiography and private diaries/journals is that autobiography can deal with a larger span of life than a diary or a journal. Similarly, as Mr. Roy Pascal notes, while autobiography is ‘a review of a life from a particular moment in time’, ‘the diary moves through a series of movements in time’. The result is that ‘the diarist notes down what, at that moment, seems important to him, its ultimate, long-range significance can not be assessed’. On the other hand, the autobiographer can ‘alter earlier judgements and detect significances’ that escaped him at the time. 18 Besides, as Sarojini maintains, while the autobiographer is selective in giving details, diaries and journals are marked by the lack of selectiveness, which ‘impedes movement and inhibits the growth of anything like a plot’. 19 As noted by Margaret Butrell, autobiography gives the autobiographer wider scope for self-deception and falsification because ‘the less pre-meditated record is truer to facts than the planned review’. 20

3] Autobiography and biography - The major difference between autobiography and biography is that – to put it in the words of Roy
Pascal- the autobiographer ‘exists for himself as something uncompleted, something full of potentiality, always overflowing the actuality, and it is this indeterminatedness and unlimitedness that he communicates to us as an essential quality of being’. On the other hand, biography projects ‘a defined personality’. Biography can be more objective than autobiography. As Paul Kendall tells us,

The biographer recreates the life out of evidence, whereas the autobiographer recreates it out of memory- and memory, unlike paper remains, is plastic, is itself creative. The autobiographer gives us a special truth, a life as reshaped by recollection, with all of recollection’s conscious and unconscious omissions, distortions and illusions.

Besides, the truths presented by autobiography are also colored by the writer’s present-day perceptions, sense of propriety and imagination. So the truth projected by autobiography is often distinct from the historical truth. While the historical truth may be expected from biography, it can not be expected from autobiography. The autobiographer enjoys a far more intimate knowledge of the subject than the biographer. Autobiography is more subjective in nature than biography and so in the view of Paul Kendell,

the autobiographer may know more but tell less on the whole than the biographer.
While biography can tell a life-story till the end, autobiography can tell it only to the point of writing. It naturally mars the comprehensiveness of the self-portrait in autobiography. Biography can portray a more comprehensive portrait of the person concerned than autobiography.

Autobiography has some advantages over biography. In the first place, while some of the inner impulses, motives, feelings of the person concerned may remain unknown to the biographer, the autobiographer may reveal them. A biography of Nehru may not project all the conflicts that raged in his mind at various points in his life but Nehru's autobiography may present them. So it is autobiography which can reveal the inner man far better than biography. Dr. Johnson's remark—every man's life may be best written by himself—

is pertinent in this context.

It is the life of a famous or eminent person that has been generally chosen as the subject-matter of a biography. On the contrary, even the life of a supposedly ordinary person can be the subject-matter of an autobiography.

4] Autobiography and fiction—According to some critics, autobiography and fiction are one and the same thing. A critic like Alferd
Kazin believes that autobiography is another form of story-telling.

Northorp Frye claims,

Autobiography is another form which merges with the novel by a series of insensible gradations. Most autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional, impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer’s life that go to build up an integrated pattern. 25

So he calls autobiography as ‘prose fiction’. E. Stuart Bates declares,

There is, in fact, no dividing line between autobiography and fiction. Some writers find the direct form more congenial; others the indirect form. All autobiography contains a percentage of fiction, and the fiction best worth attention tends to be autobiographical. 26

Some critics even go to the extent of considering autobiography as ‘mediocre fiction’ as autobiography does not have the flexibility of the novel.

Of course, autobiography and fiction are akin to each other in certain matters. As Barret J. Mandel notes-

Certainly autobiography and fiction are to some degree similar. After all, as James Joyce knew so well, any human verbalizing is a process that by its very nature fictionalizes experience. 27

Some fiction techniques may also be employed by autobiography. Still autobiography and fiction are always bound to remain distinct from each other.
Fiction is a complete product of imagination, which is not the case with autobiography. Autobiography is supposed to record ‘truths’, even though the autobiographical ‘truth’ is often distinct from the ‘historical’ one. Right from the beginning till the end fiction is considered to be imaginary while autobiography is taken as true. All the characters in the novel are completely governed by the writer’s imagination— they are, in fact, just puppets in the hands of the novelist. The autobiographer has no such control over his autobiographical characters. The novel has got a particular structure, which may not be the case with autobiography. Similarly, as Roy Pascal states,

In the novel, events occurring outside the range of the author may be evoked and imaginatively relieved, not merely adduced, postulated or explained... The hero may be described from outside, or through the refractions of other persons, and thus become rounder and more clear-cut, while there is always a core of darkness in the hero of the autobiography.  

The novelist is supposed to relegate his self to the background and become one with his characters to a certain extent. He is not supposed to let his personal opinions, predilections, ideological preoccupations influence his characterization, plot-construction etc. On the other hand, the writer’s self can find an uninhibited expression in autobiography.
The Forms of Autobiography


According to William Spengeman, Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by Rousseau, Wordsworth’s The Prelude, De Quincey’s Confessions of an English Opium Eater fall into the category of ‘philosophical autobiography’. In these autobiographies, the self moves inquisitively through its own memories and ideas to find some conclusion about them. The writer has not reached any ‘achieved self’ from which he can look back. Instead, he has to discover that self by moving through his memories and ideas. Naturally, the past experiences that he presents do not have any kind of pattern.
The motives of autobiography

There can be various motives behind the writing of an autobiography. As Mr. Anand Yadav has observed in the Marathi book Atmacharitra mimansa, autobiographies may have as many motives as many human tendencies and temperaments. However, the following may be considered to be the prime motives of autobiographies-

1) Recording a particular history- Mr. Nirad C. Chaudhari’s autobiography *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* aims at being a significant contribution to contemporary history.

2) Reveiling in recalling the past- Krishna Hutheesingh’s autobiography *With No Regrets* was written to recall the days spent with her near and dear ones, as death or imprisonment had taken them away from her.

3) Propagating a particular point of view, an ideology, a movement, an organization, a principle or a technique- Paramhansa Yogananda’s autobiography *Autobiography of a Yogi* seems to propagate Indian yoga, the technique of Kriya yoga especially.

4) Expressing gratitude for the helping hands- *Watevarlya Savlya*, a Marathi autobiography by Mr. G.D. Madgulkar, an eminent Marathi writer and poet, was written to express gratitude for all the helping hands.
5) Debunking a particular person or persons- Mr.N.B.Khare’s autobiography *My Political Memoirs* aims at debunking the Mahatma.

6) Self-exhibition or self-glorification- *Mine Kampf* by Hitler has been written for self-glorification.

7) Self-justification- *Gandhihatya ani Me*, a Marathi autobiographical book by Mr.Gopal Godse, the younger brother of Mr.Nathuram Godse and an accomplice in the assassination of the Mahatma, has been written to justify the assassination of the Mahatma.

8) Self-assertion- Many Dalit autobiographies as well as women’s autobiographies in Marathi and Black autobiographies in English have been written with this kind of motive.

9) Recording one’s life for the posterity- Dom Moraes’ autobiography *My Son’s Father* has been written to tell the son what kind of life has been led by the father.

10) Commercial purposes- Kamla Das’ autobiography *My Story* was written as the writer was in need of money to pay the hospital bills.

11) Self-exploration- Mr.Gangadhar Gadgil’s Marathi autobiography *Eka Mungiche Mahabharat* tries to explore the relationship between Mr.Gadgil’s personality and his writings.
The strengths of autobiography

The writing of autobiography does not require imagination, as that of fiction or poetry does. Nor does it require the kind of research that the writing of a historical or a scientific book does. So this literary form may be easily handled by anybody. Even the life of a loser can be the subject matter of an autobiography. People ranging from kings to criminals- law-makers to law-breakers- can write their autobiographies. Autobiography recognises the truth that there is something unique about every life and personality and so every life deserves to be recorded. Age, educational qualifications, financial or social position are no bars for an autobiographer, which has been demonstrated by a Marathi autobiography like Me to Hamal by a porter called Mr.Appa Korpe. Even a person without literary background can also write a good autobiography. Krishna Hutheesingh’s autobiography With No Regrets has a lot of literary value even though the autobiographer had no literary background.

The autobiographer may know the inner motives behind his own actions and decisions or the conflicts that raged in his mind at various points in his life and so he may easily project them. So the autobiography may have a lot of psychological value. As Mr.D.G.Naik says,

…the modern age is deeply interested in psychology; the curiosity and quest to understand the highly complex
mind are growing...this growing demand can be satisfied
... by autobiographical literature. 29

The same writer claims that as the autobiography can give
uninhibited expression to the self, it can greatly help us in understanding
the self of the writer. Besides, as the autobiography throws light upon the
writer’s contemporary life, it can also help us in assigning the writer a
right place in his contemporary world.

The autobiography may clear up some misunderstandings
regarding the writer and some of his actions or decisions. It may offer
some explanations regarding the points in his writings. After reading
Joseph Conrad’s autobiography A Personal Record, one comes to know
why there is some kind of disorderliness in Conrad’s novel Almayer’s
Folly- there was a large gap of months or years in the writing of the
chapters of the novel.

Being a very flexible literary form, autobiography has far more
independence than any other literary form. Unbound by generic rules or
conventions, this literary form can offer a wider scope for
experimentation and innovation than any other literary form.

In spite of being the story of an individual’s life, autobiography can
be universal and so it can bring out certain universal truths, which may
enrich the reader’s understanding of the world and life. In fact, being
closer to the realities of life than fiction, autobiography can afford more practical wisdom than fiction.

Autobiography gives the writer a unique opportunity of exploring his past. It may put things in perspective, clearing away some of his misconceptions regarding himself and others. As Mr. Georges Gusdorf maintains,

Autobiography is a second reading of experience, and it is truer than the first because it adds to the experience itself consciousness of it. In the immediate moment, the agitation of things ordinarily surrounds me too much for me to see it in its entirety. Memory gives me a certain remove and allows me to take into consideration all the ins and outs of the matter, its context in time and space.

Of course, at times present day perceptions may distort the experience or completely change it altogether. Yet a second reading of experience may enable the autobiographer to understand the experience in a dispassionate way.

Autobiography can have some historical and sociological value, as it may shed some light on the autobiographer’s contemporary life and the social conditions of his times.

Everyone has a natural, innate urge to share his experiences, feelings, pleasures, sorrows with others, which has been consummately fulfilled by autobiography. Unlike fiction in which the writer’s feelings or
experiences may find an expression in disguised forms, autobiography can reveal them in an undisguised way.

The writing of autobiography can give vent to some of the writer's pent-up feelings and so it may have a cathartic effect upon the writer.

As autobiography is primarily concerned with the self and as nothing can be more intimate to the one than the self, autobiography can have more intimacy than any other form of literature.

As this genre can be easily handled by all, autobiography can be a far better vehicle of self-assertion for the weaker sections of society than any other literary form. As Dr. Leena Chandorkar mentions in her still unpublished thesis 'I Across the Boundaries- A Feminist Approach to the Study of Three American and Three Indian [Marathi] Autobiographies written by Women, The autobiography has always been an important genre for marginalised people. We learn from her thesis that the blacks, the ethnic minorities and the women in America have made extensive use of the autobiography to put forward their viewpoints. Autobiography has played a similar significant role in projecting the viewpoints of the Dalits and the women in India.
The limitations of autobiography

Autobiography can never draw a complete self-portrait. If the autobiographer’s personality or views have undergone changes after the writing of the autobiography, we have no means to know about them unless and until the autobiographer writes a sequel to the autobiography or adds a postscript to it. Khushwant Singh’s autobiography *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* projects him as an atheist. The postscript he has added to the book tells us that his views regarding God and religion have changed after writing the autobiography. We would not have come to know about these changes if the postscript were not added to the book.

Autobiography may not be always written for aesthetic purposes. It may be written for self-exhibition, self-defense, vilification or blackmailing. Such motives can mislead the writer into drawing a one-sided self-portrait.

Besides, the writing of an autobiography demands a strict, rigorous self-examination and it is often very difficult to subject the self to such an examination.

Similarly, unlike fiction, autobiography is supposed to be true right from the beginning till the end. So publicly confessing one’s faults, mistakes or weaknesses in an autobiography is running the risk of getting
down in the public estimation or inviting public censure. Very few people have the required courage or honesty to run this kind of risk. In his autobiography Satyano Prayog or Atmakatha- translated in English as My Experiments with Truth- the Mahatma has honestly admitted some unsavory facts of his life. Very few autobiographers have this much honesty and courage- the general tendency is to glorify one’s positive aspects and play down the negative ones or to ignore them altogether. This also naturally makes the self-portrait in an autobiography one-sided. By comparison, the self-portrait in an autobiographical novel can be more rounded, as in the novel, confessing one’s faults or mistakes does not mean getting down in the public estimation. Similarly, in an autobiography, the writer has already reached a vantage point, from which he looks back upon his life. The self-portrait in an autobiography is led to reach that pre-determined vantage point- all his actions and decisions have been explained in its light. That is not the case with the self-portrait in an autobiographical novel. So the self-portrait in the autobiographical novel can be more convincing than that in an autobiography. According to Albert Thibaudar,

Writing an autobiography means limiting oneself to one’s artificial unity: doing a work of art, creating the characters of a novel is feeling oneself in one’s profound multicity.
Another problem with autobiography is that as it is supposed to be true, the characters in it may not be dealt with as objectively as those in a novel. Bringing out the negative aspects of a person in an autobiography may mean defaming him or inviting the displeasure of the person himself as well as his relatives, followers, admirers, well-wishers etc. This naturally makes it difficult for an autobiographer to objectively deal with his characters.

Besides, a good autobiographer has to be selective in giving details. However, the details that may seem important to the autobiographer may seem trivial to the world and those that seem trivial to the world may be significant for the autobiographer.
References


3 Ibid. 15.

4 Ibid. 15.


10 Ibid. 163.


14 Ibid. 2


23 Ibid. 30.


