CHAPTER II

THE WESTERN REVOLUTION

The lives of women in the Western countries represent a long history of struggle on individual level to establish their self-identity. Acquiring present status wasn’t easy. They have reached the present position through hard struggle for many years. Their achievement is a graph of hardships, perseverance, toil, suppression, conflicts and protests against set social norms. The struggle which began with the writings of Christine de Pizan, in 1405, in France proved to be the first step in the innovation of the various feminist movements. Women like Emily Wilding Davison martyred for the sake of the cause.

In Western countries, during the Edwardian period, women worked hard to obtain their rights. The suffragette movement was the first galvanizing force in the lives of a wide spectrum of women in the Western countries. The war in 1914 put an end to suffrage agitation, but it had brought a change in the social system. The Western women had to struggle for their rights due to the patriarchal type of family structure which is controlled, organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all aspects - cultural, familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek Philosophic writings to the present, the female is defined by a negative reference compared to the male.

The period from 1920-1960 is known as the period of intermission in the history of women’s right movement. The period made the silence vocal and the repressed to explode. In the West, New Zealand was the first country to offer the right to vote to women in 1893. In 1920 the suffragettes won the vote for American women. The French Assembly in 1789 declared that all human beings have rights and women should be given the right to vote. In the West, particularly in the U.S.A, the American women started breaking conservational norms and questioning traditions and objecting patriarchal rules. The deep hidden desires were stirred with the publication of books like Kate Millet’s Sexual Politics (1969) and Shulamith Firestone’s The Dialectic Of Sex (1972). However the seeds of the revolution were sown in previous century by the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792). In Great Britain the ideas were stirred by and had much stronger
influence by the publication of Juliet Mitchell’s *Women’s Estate* and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1975). They insisted that women should be considered as individuals.

Women are an integral part of human civilization. They constitute about half of the world’s population. But their share in various areas of activity has been totally disproportionate to their numerical strength. For centuries, women have been denied full justice in society and family because they are ‘weaker sex’. Women are marginalized creatures. Their status largely depends on the simple biological factor that they are the bearer of children. It is their responsibility to take care of the children. Therefore their sphere is generally restricted to their familial roles.

The question of relative status of men and women has often engaged the attention of the writers worldwide. In English literature there are many women writers who have come out into the light on the contemporary literary scenes with their abundant talent of writing. They have directly plunged into the world of the newly confronting situations from the point of view of women. With confidence, sincerity and courage, along with the remarkable felicity of language, they deal with the complex dilemmas of the modern world. They have given a new dimension to the genre of autobiography, by shifting the emphasis from outer to inner reality from extrovert to introvert.

Since a long time, women have suffered subordination. Even Aristotle, the great philosopher of 3rd century B.C. gives secondary place to women. According to him, a female is a female due to lack of certain qualities. Even Freud, the great psychologist, assumes that female sexuality is shaped by ‘Penis envy.’ Women critics like Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Ellerman and Kate Millett were among the first to reveal the literary history of women’s images and to discuss the dominant stereotyped images of female fictional characters, hence the history of feminist criticism goes back hundreds of years in time. It can even be traced back to Aristotle's declaration as given above and St. Thomas’ belief that woman is an ‘imperfect man.’ But, it is Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) which marks the first modern awareness of women's struggle for equal rights, and becomes the first milestone in the struggle for equality of the sexes. Wollstonecraft was influenced by the ideas of the French revolution concerning the equal rights of individuals. In 1825, William Thomson in his essay, “Appeal of one half of the human race” contended that there would be no progress until women were given equal opportunities for education
and equal political rights. Seventy seven years laterafter Mary Wollstonecraft, in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill expressed his views very powerfully which provide the women’s movement with a philosophic rationale and is a landmark in the long history of women’s struggle for political, legal and economic rights. Sixty years later Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) developed and enhanced these views with a strong female sensibility and criticism. *A Room of One’s Own* became an important precursor of feministic views where she argues that the male dominated ideas of the patriarchal society prevented women from realizing their creativity and true potential:

In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were…noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century…Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility.¹

As Virginia Woolf was especially emphasizing, in order to write, women writers had to work against the norms established by men. Yet writing was the only way left for women to assert their individuality and autonomy. Excluded from many social, political and economic activities, women turned to writing. But it was not an easy task. Women have both sustained and questioned the patriarchal pressures and the works of women writers show the resistances which the subordinated ones put up. The female authors had to adopt different strategies to avoid being judged by the male dominated publishing industry as the prototype of their sex like Charlotte Bronte had to conceal her identity as Currier Bell and Mary Anne Evans had to surface as George Eliot. The critical response was that if written by a man it was excellent but if written by a woman it was scandalous.

The gender inequities are not associated with any particular area. This evil has travelled in space and time from the primordial period to the present day. Since human civilization itself has evolved persistently ignoring the vital half of their race, i.e. women, the inequality are voiced in the modern feminist writings as relevant and momentous as the question of man’s existence itself. Helen Cixous rightly states: “If

---

women were to set themselves to transform History, it can safely be said that every aspect of History would be completely altered.”

Though men ignore women, nature trusts femininity. Nature bestows on women the maximum responsibility of advancing evolution towards progressive directions. Since the dawn of civilization, the male has been dominating as a phenomenal exploiter that sabotaged the female on all counterparts.

It is the fact that the feminine consciousness is one of alienation, non-recognition and loss of identity. The reason for this loss of identity takes us back to the history of family traditions in human society. The family head in joint families was the supreme authority since traditional times and women were expected to inculcate in themselves certain submissive and even slavish tendencies. They were to consider themselves as low and unequal partners of life. Women were conformed and confined into suffocating and narrow state of survival. As a result, the generations of women developed in themselves unquestioning submissive nature.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that one is not a woman by birth rather one becomes woman under the influence of culture and societal history. The patriarchal tradition in society turns women into nothingness. Women are unequal to men due to their poor economic conditions. Their poverty is the result of the nature of job or responsibility assigned to them. Their work includes household chores which does not give them money. So, they are economically dependent on men and as long as it goes on, the inequality between men and women will continue.

Only after becoming economically independent women were free to marry for the sake of love and not for status and financial support. The fact that women could not enjoy freedom cannot be ignored. They could not make their own decisions on procreation. In patriarchal society, child-bearing and household works are disproportionately forced on them. In such circumstances, they could not acquire the status equal to men. Men were regarded as mentally stable and women were regarded as manual workers. This kind of women portrayal is also found in literature, as literature is an imitation of society and the surrounding.

---

Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* observes: “The ideal of the average Western man is a woman who freely accepts his domination.”

Man has succeeded in enslaving woman. He thinks himself as master and woman his servant. She further states:

There is a double demand which dooms woman to duplicity: he wants the woman to be his and to remain foreign to him; he fancies her as at once servant, and enchantress. But in public he admits to only the first of these desires; the other is a sly demand that he hides in the secrecy of his heart and flesh.

Men, not only have enslaved women but they stress that she should be deprived of education. Education enables a woman to become independent psychologically as well as economically and teaches her to free herself from slavery. Rose Mary Agonito in her book *History of Ideas on Women: A SourceBook* (1977) has compiled how intellectually men have succeeded in retaining the secondary status of women in the society. She stresses that Immanuel Kant restricts women in the sphere of education. He extols the image of a lady in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beauty and the Sublime* (1764) as:

A woman therefore will learn no geometry; the principle of sufficient reason or the monads she will know only so much as is needed to perceive the salt in a satire which the insipid grubs of our sex have censured. The fair can leave Descartes…Fontenelle…Alagarotti…Newton. In history they will not fill their heads with battles, nor in geography with fortresses, for it becomes them just as little to reek of gun powder as it does the males reek of musk.

Kant, after restricting women to the sphere of beauty and holding out a stern warning that if women transgressed their limits, then they will bring misfortune to themselves. He adds that women are naturally attracted towards beautiful things. Thus he considers women a restricted category which is quite natural: “Women have a strong *inborn feeling* for all that is beautiful, elegant and decorated.”

Agonito further emphasizes, Kant warns women against filling their heads with battles, whereas Hegel

---

4. Ibid, p.221.
goes a step forward in his *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), and comes to the conclusion that women lack the efficiency to govern the State: “If women were to control the government, the State would be in danger, for they do not act according to the dictates of universality, but are influenced by accidental inclinations and opinions.” Therefore his conclusion is that the right place for women is the home and the sphere of woman is essentially marriage.

Although Kant and Hegel have warned that women cannot govern the state, women leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir and Hillary Clinton have done amazing work in leading their countries. Kierkegaard, as an existentialist gives his opinion that there is no single view of humankind, which could not resist the temptation to denounce women consistently. The only difference between Kierkegaard and the earlier writers described here is that he does it with infinite possibilities. In *Stages on Life’s Way* (1845), he sets a stage for many speakers to give their views on women but all of them, curiously deny that women possess any mental ability. Agonito quotes the views of speakers who underestimate women: “Woman is the weaker sex” and “woman’s significance is wholly negative.” These maxims, reverberating in the air even in the 21st century bear the proof to the argument that her male counterpart is the culprit who has been successful in rigidifying and bringing down to posterity several negative notions about her. Men have concurred in rigidifying the secondary position of women in all spheres.

Women depict the injustices imposed on them by men in their writings. They have explored the stance of male-chauvinism and atrocities committed against women. Victimized women assert themselves in different ways according to their perception of right and wrong which itself undergoes a change, resulting in a changed attitude towards morality and modalities of life, which come to be called modern. They are the victims against whom atrocities have been committed in the name of culture, tradition, religion, social acceptance, hypocrisy and man’s inhumanity towards fellow human beings. The importance of men and their superiority has been a part of society for generations. Thus a woman who lives in a male-dominated society obviously, undergoes many hardships.

---

9. Ibid, p. 178
The patriarchal system is the primary cause of women’s oppression. In the patriarchal system, man is elevated to the position of power through the notion of the grandfather and the father who get economic and social executive positions in the family, society, state and nation. The church is another factor which has declared women less important than men. Male-domination exists in family and the church has been a powerful force which can be considered the root cause of many social problems. Women have created a new culture of their own. The notion of women culture is quite different from patriarchal culture in society. This new culture thus creates feminist alternatives in literature, music, spirituality, health services, sexuality, employment and technology.

Through their writing women try to enhance the socio-cultural movement for the assertion of female identity and thus bring about a radical reorientation of life, culture and literature. The main focus in these writing is on women and the future of women in society. It is also important to look at women’s writing not as a monolithic whole dealing with the question of self and identity, because women are not a homogenized entity, but women’s writing must be viewed as specifically as determined by her socio-cultural background. Contemporary women’s fiction is a challenge to master narratives. At the manifest level, it is an attempt to read life and rewrite the notion of subjectivity of women in a dominant masculine culture.

Women writers seek to bring an end to women’s subordination and violence against women by empowering women and giving them control over their own bodies. Feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization, as philosophy of life, it seeks to discover and change the more subtle and deep-seated causes of women’s oppression. It is a concept of raising the consciousness of an entire culture. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Spivak, analyses the question of female subaltern. She describes the female subaltern as doubly marginalized subjects in colonially post-colonial discourse:

Within the effected itinerary of the Subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected...It is rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the
subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the female as female is even more deeply in shadow.\textsuperscript{10}

All over the world, men have been speaking about women in derogatory manner. The place of women in society has differed from culture to culture and from age to age, still the fact remains the same that women have never been considered equal to men and have been treated like a beast of burden and an object of pleasure. Man has always looked upon her as his property or servile to him. But after the suffragette awakening the ground beneath women’s feet has extended. There is an increasing awareness of the injustice done to them. This awareness made women raise their voice against inequality and oppression. In the 20th century, this female consciousness against male-domination led to the birth of Women’s Liberation Movement. It is a serious reform movement aiming at an upliftment of women in society.

The experience of pain, humiliation and traumas of the sexual violence has drastic impact on the material, emotional and psychic life of the victims, in the social sphere. They also suffer from humiliation, negligence, segregation and marginalization. They are treated as the fallen ones without their fault. The concept of emancipation of women did not confine itself to socio-political spheres. But it found its articulation in the creative arts, especially in literature. Literature has not remained unaffected by women’s problems. Though literature deals with women’s questions extensively in women’s literature, women’s experiences become the central concern. This type of literature seeks to demythologize the myth that man is the universal representative of humanity, leaving women in oblivion. There is an urgent need for women writers to write their own literature which provides centrality to women in every way- thematically, structurally and stylistically.

The genre of autobiography has altered the previous concepts. No other form of writing is capable of giving a special identity to the individual character. All human beings think themselves to be of great significance, to the world, which they feel, would be incomplete after their death. Therefore by writing an account of their lives


According to George Henry Lewes, women are more emotional than men, therefore their literature deals with “emotions, the whims, the caprices, and the enthusiasms.” Thus women’s autobiographies “promises a woman’s view of life, woman’s experience: in other words, a new element.” It is not possible for men to express life as women do. George Henry Lewes further states that:

Masculine mind is characterized by the predominance of intellect and the Feminine by the predominance of the emotions-Woman, due to her greater affectionateness, her greater range and depth of emotional experience, is well fitted to give expression to the emotional facts of life.

It is generally observed that women writers are seemingly more nostalgic in description.

The Western autobiographer, a lawyer and the First Lady of America during 1993-2001, **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (*Living History*, 2004) has strived for women’s empowerment. She is an international icon who has chaired many important posts. She was United States Senator for New York from 2001 to 2009. She is the 67th Secretary of State, serving in the administration of President Barack Obama. Twice she was listed as one of the 100 most influential lawyers in America. Recently as the U.S. Secretary of State, in December 2011 she made a speech before the United Nations Human Rights Council, she said that the U.S. would advocate for gay rights abroad and that “Gay rights are human rights” and that “It should never be a crime to begay.”

In spite of her high political career she has never failed her responsibility as a

---

mother of her daughter, Chelsea and she has always supported Bill Clinton as a senator, president and her husband.

Her first attempt of autobiography was in sixth standard where she has described her parents, school, sports and plans for the future which reveal her view of a politician which was inherent in her at a very early age. Forty two-years later, she began writing another memoir, about the eight years she spent in the White House living history with Bill Clinton. Her autobiography went on to sell more than one million copies in the first month following publication, and was translated into twelve foreign languages. Hillary Clinton’s audio recording of the “book earned her a nomination for the Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album.”\(^\text{14}\) She explains her life as First Lady when she walked into the White House on January 20, 1993.

She was born to a middle class family at Ellsworth. Her father Hugh E. Rodham was recruited in the army during the Second World War. He returned home to settle down, make a living and raise a family. Her mother Dorothy Howell Rodham was a simple house maker. Hillary Rodham grew up with two younger brothers Hugh and Tony. Her mother and grandmothers could never have lived her life. Her father and her grandfathers could never have imagined it. Although the Cold War with Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was just beginning, the generation of her father felt secure and hopeful. American supremacy was the result of military might, values and the abundant opportunities available for the common man who worked hard and took responsibility. He did not believe in credit system although he was not aware that the credit system would knock down American financial status and make it a bankrupt nation in the future. His ideology was based on self-reliance. Her father was a conservative Republican, whereas her mother was basically a Democrat. Hillary’s own political beliefs reflect both their views.

She remained leader at school and college level. Her parents conditioned her to be tough in order to survive whatever life might throw at her. This gave her a feeling that she was different than the other girls. She loved her school and was lucky enough to attend a fully equipped school with highly trained teachers and a full range of academic and extracurricular offerings. She was able to lead other students, therefore

she was elected co-captain of the safety petrol. As co-captain she learned to persuade the students as she says: “What you don’t learn from your mother, you learn from the world.”\(^{15}\) In her college she was appointed as president of the Cultural Values Committee. It gave her a chance to meet other students and discuss many issues like tolerance, American values of pluralism, mutual respect and understanding. When President Kennedy had been shot, Hillary Rodham felt sorry for the country and she wanted to help her country in some way, although she had no idea how. She cherished this feeling of helping her homeland throughout her life. She was lucky to have parents who never tried to mould her into any category or career.

The qualities of running an organization and the implementation of various activities through human manipulation were observed in Hillary at an early stage of life. She was interested in politics—she loved to hone her debating skills with her friends on various current topics from world peace to baseball scores. She was an active Young Republican. She was a Brownie and then a Girl Scout; she participated in parades, food drives, cookie sales and every other activity that would earn a merit badge or adult approval. She began organizing neighbourhood kids in games, sporting events and backyard carnivals both for fun and to raise nickels and dimes for charities.

Hillary Clinton is a religious minded woman. Her active involvement in the first United Methodist Church of Park Ridge opened her eyes and heart to the needs of others and helped instill a sense of social responsibility rooted in her faith. Hillary Rodham had faith in God. Prayer became a source of solace and guidance for her even as a young girl. She followed religious practices believing the Church supreme; John Wesley thought that God’s love is expressed through good works, which he explained with a simple rule: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”\(^{16}\) She remembered his teachings and worked for poor and handicapped children when she became First Lady. She attended the Bible School, Sunday school. Her quest was to reconcile her father’s insistence on self-reliance and her mother’s concerns about social justice.


\(^{16}\) Ibid, p.28.
Hillary felt under estimated at the Wellesley Women’s College as girls spoke in foreign languages fluently and she was not competent in many languages. She felt lonely and wanted to go back home. But her mother didn’t want her to be a quitter and she continued her studies. Wellesley Women’s College gave her lifelong friends and the opportunity that a women’s college could offer her to stretch her wings on the ongoing journey towards self-definition and self-identity. Her generation was obsessed by the Vietnam War. Hillary was always at the forefront, may it be a protest or a mourning procession.

Hillary gives credit to her Yale Law College, for its contribution in building her personality. When she joined the Yale Law School, she was one of 27 women out of 235 students to matriculate. It was the duration of the 1960s when women’s rights appeared to be gaining some traction. The education taken at Yale Law College is the root of Hillary Rodham’s success. With the knowledge acquired in the Law College she could guide Bill in the right direction; she herself took the right decisions as First Lady. Until today she is guiding her nation as U.S. Secretary of State. The decade of the 1960s had begun with hope, but ended in a convulsion of protest and violence. Yale also encouraged students to get out in the world and apply theories they learned in the classroom. When Bill Clinton arrived at the Yale Law School, Hillary Rodham was attracted towards him. He was tall and handsome. He was an eligible conversant. She loved the way he thought and the way he looked. He admitted that he loved her. After graduation, Bill Clinton had decided to go home to Arkansas and run for public office.

Bill Clinton opened an office for the sake of McGovern President headquarters with his own money. Hillary took a job of voter registration in Texas. But many things had gone wrong and the McGovern campaign failed. Looking back on their McGovern experience they realized that the knowledge they had acquired at the Yale School was not enough, they still had much to learn about the art of political campaigning and the power of television. Anyway it was their first rite of political passage and the experience helped them when Bill Clinton contested the Presidential election.

When Bill Clinton proposed her she had doubts about their marriage, concerning that her separate identity would be lost and that her accomplishments would be
viewed in the light of someone else’s. She considered Bill Clinton as a force of nature and wondered whether she’d be up to the task of living through his seasons. Bill Clinton was very persistent. He set goals and she was one of them. A mother-in-law very rarely appreciates her daughter-in-law. Bill Clinton’s mother did not like Hillary’s appearance, her short hair, jeans and Yankee ideas. Jeff Dwire, the third husband of her mother-in-law, quoted about their relations, “It’s hard for two strong women to get along.” Eventually both the women grew to respect each other’s differences and developed a deep bond. They figured out that what they shared was more significant than what they despised. The most important thing was that they both loved the same man.

Hillary’s first achievement towards recognition was by getting the bill-Education for All Handicapped Children Act, passed by the government, which allowed physical and emotional disabled children to be educated in the public school system. Influenced by her mother’s experiences of poverty, Hillary worked for women and children throughout her life. Through social work she entered the field of politics and established her unusual talents. Until today she is striving for the poor and downtrodden. Recently she has been successful in acquiring rights for gays.

Fate bestowed upon Hillary chances which increased her efficiency in political field. With her consent Bill Clinton had already entered the political world. She worked for John Doar, who had been selected by the House Judiciary Committee to head up the impeachment inquiry to investigate the President. She was paid very little, the working hours were long and the work was painstaking and monotonous. But the experience helped her when Bill Clinton himself had to undergo an impeachment inquiry in the future. Even after hard work, unfortunately Bill Clinton lost the election. His oppositions had played mischief. Other incidents of sabotage were also reported and the total result was negative.

Although Bill Clinton continued to court her for many years, she gave her consent for their marriage with the condition that she would retain her maiden name, Rodham even after marriage as she did not wish to change her identity. Their marriage was based on love for each other and love for their country. They belonged

to the same field of lawyers and were interested in politics. Their marriage can be considered as the ideal relationship in a marriage described by J.S. Mill. No laws can be constructed on an unequal foundation. The reciprocity of relationship which binds men and women can only result in personal and social pleasures:

What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinion and purposes, between whom exists that best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority over them-so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternately the pleasure of leading and of being led in the path of development…I maintain with the profoundest conviction that this, and this only, is the ideal of marriage.¹⁸

Hillary was enriched in experiences due to Clinton’s electoral campaign. Her marriage with Bill Clinton and his election campaigns were the most thrilling experiences in her life. Bill Clinton tried again and again and finally won the election as attorney General of Arkansas in 1976. Both Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham worked for Jimmy Carter, a Democratic nominee, who held the presidential contest. Bill Clinton was to head the campaign and Hillary was the organizer and administrator for local people. She learned a lot during this campaign which became useful for her when Bill Clinton contested the presidential election. Carter won the elections and Bill Clinton was elected Governor of Arkansas. He started his two-year term with the energy of a race horse exploding from the gate. He had made dozens of campaign promises, and he started fulfilling them in his initial days in office. Hillary Rodham was honoured when she was made the first female partner at the Rose Law Firm where she had been an employee.

Hillary attended ‘birthing’ classes when they decided to have a child. After their daughter Chelsea’s birth she began to plan for a more stable financial future. Financial stability was never Bill Clinton’s priority. But she believed in her father’s opinion, about financial independence through investment and came into trouble because of investment in commodity market but the allegations proved to be false. Bill Clinton

lost another election—an incumbent Governor. Bill Clinton had the resilient qualities to adjust with the surroundings. Hillary ensured that he became an iron man.

For politicians, their personal matters do not remain personal; they become matters of public interest. The people of Arkansas, who were raised in the patriarchal society, were unhappy as Hillary Rodham continued to use her maiden name. After marriage it is a custom to use the husband’s name because a woman is handed to her husband from her father:

Women have long been nameless. They have not been persons. Handed by a father to another man, the husband, they have been objects of circulation, exchanging one name for another.19

Hillary was not a common woman. She had created an identity of her own. Being a lawyer by profession she had her own professional interests and she did not wanted to create any confusion with her husband’s public career. In those days brides who kept their maiden names were criticized. She thought that it was her personal matter:

It was personal decision, a small (thought) gesture to acknowledge that while I was committed to our union, I was still me. By the time we married, I was teaching, trying cases, publishing and speaking as Hillary Rodham.20

Her friends suggested her to use “Clinton” as her last name. When Bill Clinton announced his run for another term, on her daughter’s second birthday, she began calling herself-Hillary Rodham Clinton. In his election strategy, Bill Clinton announced that he was going to form an Education Standards Committee to form the education reforms and Hillary Clinton would be the chair person. Bill Clinton was confident that Hillary was the right person to do the assigned work.

Hillary Clinton was always busy in policy making and never paid attention towards her external appearance, her dressing and her hair style, When Bill Clinton decided to run for the Presidency election in 1988, Hillary had to change her hair style and dressing as her life was under the media microscope. Her friends began a mission to spruce her appearance. The First Lady’s appearance was a matter of great importance for the American public. Until now she was representing only herself, her

own identity. But now she was asking the American people to let her represent them in the role of First Lady which conveyed everything from glamour to motherly comfort. She agreed to represent the total identity of the American women.

Her busy life did not prevent her from caring for her daughter. During the campaign the cover stories included the photographs of Bill, Hillary and Chelsea. Hillary Clinton believed that her daughter deserved her privacy which is essential for any child to develop and explore her own choices in life. Being a mother it was her most important duty to protect her child’s interest. She deliberately kept her daughter away from the media’s probing eyes. It was the best decision she made and stuck with it throughout the eight years in the White House.

The American people wanted a new leadership which was promoted by Clinton couple. The Republicans had increased the national debt and created a stagnant economy. The common man could not find a decent job or offer health care insurance for themselves and their children. President Bush had vetoed the Family and Medical Leave Act twice and backed off women’s rights. There was an increase in crime, unemployment, homelessness and debt. Bill and Hillary Clinton made the issue of health care their motto. With hard work and Hillary Clinton’s help Bill Clinton was victorious in 1992. Both prayed for God’s help before taking the awesome honor and responsibility.

She began to collect responsible staff for the office of First Lady and wanted to help Bill Clinton in any way she could. Henceforth, Hillary Clinton would have a “position” but not a real “job”. Without losing her own status she wanted to use the platform to help her husband and serve her country. Over the years, the role of First Lady has been perceived as symbolic. She is expected to represent an ideal-and largely mythical- concept of American womanhood. Many former First Ladies were highly accomplished but true stories of what they had done in their lives were over looked, forgotten or suppressed. Hillary has succeeded in changing this image. She is a strong, charismatic leader, legendary for sharp intelligence, political sensibilities and extreme diligence and persistence in pursuing her goals. In spite of being an international icon she never forgot her role as a mother.

In the year 2000, she published a book to describe the administrative staff of the White House entitled *Invitation to the White*, as a tribute to the permanent staff of the
White House. There were many new things in the White House for which Hillary Clinton was not accustomed like the secret service agents posted outside their bedroom. They had no privacy because they were living in a house that belonged to the nation. Whatever her public demands, Hillary Clinton has brought up her daughter as a normal child.

Bill Clinton gave the responsibility of health care reform plan to Hillary Clinton. Throughout her tenure, Hillary Clinton has looked towards “smart power”21 as the strategy for asserting U.S. leadership and values, combining military strength with U.S. capacities in global economics, development aid and technology. While Hillary was busy with her new responsibilities, she could not devote time to her father’s death due to heart attack. She took it in proper spirit as her duties as First Lady demanded her attention.

As First Lady, Hillary Clinton got large exposure to many incidents. She got a chance to meet the most important people of the world like Nelson Mandela. She enjoyed many thrilling events. She joined the five former First Ladies at the National Garden of Gala. She was the honorary chair of the event at the U. S. Botanical garden that would be a living landmark on the wall, dedicated to contemporary First Ladies and honoring their contributions to the nation. It was a wonderful sight, all the living First Ladies standing together on stage. She could not forget the moments in her life when she met ladies from the royal families when her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II invited her to spend a night in her palace.

She strongly supported against violence. Bill Clinton lifted a U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam in 1994 and normalized the diplomatic relations between the two countries. Both, Bill and Hillary Clinton personally were against war and they sympathized with the people killed in various wars as Rosenthal quotes:

We may reject uncritical adherence to any particular set of political attitudes but we cannot reject the inescapable tragic relevance it bears to the whole problem of what self is.22

As the Commander in Chief, Bill Clinton allowed gays and lesbians to serve in

the military. She wanted Bill Clinton’s Presidency to succeed as she quotes:

I wanted Bill’s Presidency to succeed not simply because he was my husband and I loved him, but because I loved my country and believed he was the right man to lead it at the end of the twentieth century.23

She had her own staff known as ‘Hillaryland’ and had office in the West Wing of the Government. No First Lady's staff had ever received a position in the government. Hillary, being an intelligent lawyer had acquired this position through hard work. Although Bill and Hillary Clinton worked hard for the welfare of their countrymen the people sent them a negative message during the mid-term election. The weeks following the midterm election were among the most difficult in her White House years. Hillary Clinton tried to view the defeat as part of the flow of the electoral cycle. But people thought that her Health Care Reform, which they called ‘Hillary factor’, was responsible for Bill Clinton’s defeat. She was disappointed and in the distressed moments remembered Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt’s wise words: “A woman is like a teabag” She had further said, “You never know how strong she is until she’s in hot water.”24 Hillary Clinton experienced that she was in hot water now and she was supposed to be very strong to face the oppositions as well as support Bill Clinton and raise his confidence.

Hillary Clinton was on an important mission to demonstrate to the South Asian countries that they were important to the United States, and to assure the leaders of these South Asian countries that Bill Clinton supported their efforts to strengthen democracy, expand free markets and promote tolerance and human rights, including the rights of women. Her daughter, a growing young woman accompanied her and she was amused to watch her react to the extraordinary world. Although Hillary was to spend only a short time in each country, she wanted to meet as many women as possible to stress the correlation between women's progress and a country's social and economic status.

Despite such traditions of prejudice, there were signs of change across the Indian subcontinent, in schools that educate girls and in micro lending programs that give women access to credit, enabling them to earn their own incomes. The U.S.

government had supported many successful projects for the benefit of women. As First Lady, Hillary Clinton was supposed to demonstrate the tangible impact of U.S.funded programs in the developing world. She believed that when women suffer, their children suffer and their economies become stagnate. When women are victimized the stability of families, communities and nation is eroded, jeopardizing the prospects for democracy and prosperity globally. The point of Hillary Clinton’s mission was to meet rural as well as urban women, to jettison the predictable itineraries and get into the villages where most of the people lived.

In Pakistan Hillary was received by Begum Nasreen Leghari, the wife of Pakistan's President, Farooq Ahamad Khan Leghari. Begum Nasreen was an elegantly dressed woman who lived in purdah, never seen by men outside her immediate family. Hillary noticed a striking opposite situation in the same country within Pakistan, when she was invited for a luncheon hosted in her honor by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Hillary Clinton thought like being rocketed forward several centuries in time. This change was due to education and social conditions abroad. Bhutto discussed on the changing roles of women in her country. She acknowledged the difficulties faced by women who were breaking with tradition and taking leading roles in public life. She could understand the challenges Hillary had to encounter during her White House tenure. Referring to Hillary’s and her own situation she made a comment: “Women who take on tough issues and stake out new territory are often on the receiving end of ignorance.”25

Hillary wanted to visit India ever since she was a freshman in college. When she visited Mother Teresa’s orphanage, she observed that girls far outnumbered boys because daughters were not as valued as sons in the South Asian countries. For too long, the voice of half the world’s citizen was not heard by their governments. The voices of women became Hillary Clinton’s motto. With a view that women and girls should not be dismissed as softer marginal but should be integrated fully into domestic and foreign policy decisions, denying or curtailing education and basic health care for women, restricting women's economic, political and social participation was a human rights issue, she further made the famous quotation on Women’s rights as Human rights at the Women's World Conference at Beijing.

When Hillary visited many countries of South Asia like China, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh etc. she had put down the opinion of the plight of women in her autobiography. She noticed the disparity between the Westernized Bhutto and the traditional wife of President Leghari, could understand the difference and felt aggrieved at the situation and status of women in South Asia in general. Her observations are noted in the forthcoming chapter. In Beijing, as the chair person, Hillary Clinton gave the message that women's rights are not separate from, or a subsidiary of human rights. Hillary Clinton addressed all the women in the world:

For too long, the history of women has been a history of silence. It is time to break our silence. If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women’s rights...and women’s rights are human rights, once and for all.26

For making the famous statement, Hillary was praised not only by the women delegates at the conference but by women all over the world. When Bill Clinton won the presidential elections for the second term she decided to work on issues affecting women, children and families.

As a political leader can be accused of anything, Hillary was also called, Lady Macbeth. The relationship that Bill and Hillary had built was rooted in love and respect, shared aspirations and accomplishments, victories and defeats. After seventeen years of marriage they were each other’s biggest cheer leaders, toughest critics and best friends. But, the Monica Lewinsky imbroglio was a vicious scandal which broke her heart. Bill Clinton told her that Monica Lewinsky was an intern he had befriended two years earlier. Bill Clinton said that she had misinterpreted his attention which was something which always happened with him. Hillary questioned Bill over and over about the story, but he denied any improper behavior. This sort of conversation between a husband and wife would be their personal matter, but Bill Clinton was the President and it mattered to the people of America. Hillary realized that they were facing the prospects of another horrible invasive investigation which may justify a demand for his resignation or impeachment. Bill and Hillary Clinton remained calm while carrying out their daily routines and proposed schedules. She was humiliated when she heard people whispering behind the doors but she chose to

remain silent. She was influenced by Eleanor Roosevelt's words that every woman in political life must “develop skin as tough as rhinoceros’s hide.”

Hillary denied the charges before the press reporters. The oppositions could not defeat Bill Clinton politically therefore they had begun to attack him personally. Bill issued a forceful denial that he had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. The investigations took its own time until Bill Clinton appeared before a grand jury which was nerve-racking. In the end he admitted before Hillary Clinton that there had been an inappropriate intimacy with Monica Lewinsky. Hillary Clinton was dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged. She couldn't believe that he would do anything to endanger their marriage and their family. After admitting the mistake Bill Clinton had to prepare his testimony and work on a statement to make to the nation. He told the people of his nation that he deeply regretted misleading his family, his friends and his country. Hillary Clinton was left with profound sadness, disappointment and unresolved anger. Her imperturbable press secretary made a statement on her behalf. “This is a time when she relies on her strong religious faith.”

She had faith in God and her religious faith helped her to overcome the most crucial moments of her life. She was wounded deeply when her husband, her best friend had cheated her. She was not sure whether her marriage would survive or not. “I would have to go deep inside myself and my faith to discover any remaining belief in our marriage, to find some path to understanding.”

In the American constitution, the impeachment of a President was not easy. It was reserved for treason, bribery or other high crimes misdemeanors. But there was a reference of sex and the oppositions used this clause to charge President Bill Clinton. Not only the Americans, but the whole world was anxious about Bill Clinton’s future as it affected the future of America. Most people thought it was his private matter. The list of impeachable offences included charges that the President lied under the oath about his personal behavior. Bill Clinton apologized to Hillary Clinton, Chelsea and the American people. He admitted his sins and pleaded for forgiveness. She decided to save her marriage in order to save the President’s position which was necessary for the benefit of America. In spite of being hurt, Hillary addressed the

people of America. “Certainly I'm not happy about what my husband did. But impeachment is not the answer.”

Norris Church Mailer, the sixth and the last wife of Norman Mailer wrote about the infidelity of her husband in her memoir *A Ticket to the Circus*. She managed to stay with Mailer self-obsessed and self-aggrandizing. She decided to leave Mailer when she discovered that he had cheated her with “a small army of women.” He persuaded her and she stayed with him for the sake of their children Norris too was a native of Arkansas. Norris decided not to break her marriage for the sake of her children and Hillary Clinton decided to continue with her husband for the sake of her country.

Hillary was able to persuade the people of America to forgive her husband. Bill Clinton got more votes on his side in the senate. He thanked the people and promised to serve faithfully until the last hour of his term. Thus Hillary Clinton saved her nation from mid-term elections. There was a variety of public reactions to Hillary Clinton after this: some women admired her strength and poise in private matters made public, some sympathized with her as a victim of her husband’s insensitive behavior, others criticized her as being an enabler to her husband’s indiscretions, while still others accused her of cynically staying in a failed marriage as a way of keeping or even fostering her own political influence.

Hillary Clinton’s election of U.S. senator in 2000 in the city of New York is her own major step in politics. She had worked as an advocate for nearly three decades, eight years as First Lady and had accumulated broad experience working on behalf of women, children and families. Throughout Bill Clinton’s tenure, Hillary had traveled the world supporting women's rights, human rights, religious tolerance and democracy. Thinking and acting globally would make difficult for Hillary to run a New York campaign. Her friends predicted that in her case there would be “the spouse problem.” It's always difficult to figure out the appropriate role for the wife or husband of a political candidate. Bill Clinton was a towering political figure of America and very popular in New York therefore her friends were worried whether she would be able to establish an independent political voice as she said:

If I were to announce my candidacy at a kick-off event, would the President of the United States sit quietly behind me on the stage, or would he speak too? Over the course of the race, would he campaign on my behalf, as he would for other Democratic candidates across the country, or would that consign me to being his surrogate again?33

By this time she had aided Bill Clinton in every way, but it was the first time she was to run the elections herself. The election marked the first time an American First Lady run for public office. She was also the first female senator to represent the state. Bill Clinton was anxious to help her. The tables were now turned, as he played for her the role she had always performed for him. At the end of her autobiography Hillary Clinton admits that the most difficult decisions which she had made in her life were to stay married to Bill Clinton and to run for the Senate from New York. She began meeting people and made new friends in every corner of New York and visited all places including schools, universities, union halls, churches, synagogues, shelters and penthouses also. The campaign was far hectic from the schedule in the White House. Instead of feeling tired she felt immense satisfaction as she was doing something for herself, as she says:

But instead of feeling tired, I found that I drew energy from the campaign itself. Not only was I getting a nonstop crash course in New York and its issues, I was discovering my capacities and limits for life as a political candidate34

After the voting process the result came with flying colors. When Hillary Clinton took the oath in the U. S. Senate Hall, her husband watched her with admiration. When she decided to write her experiences she was not sure whether her autobiography would be read by people. But Living History itself became a famous legend. People all over the world sent her messages about the success of the book.

Just like Hillary Clinton, Doris May Lessing (Under My Skin, Volume One Of My Autobiography To 1949, 1995) is another great woman writer who received the Nobel Prize in Literature for her novel, The Golden Notebook. She was described by the Swedish Academy as “that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism,
fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny."\(^{35}\) Lessing was the eleventh woman and the oldest person ever to win the Literature Prize. She is passionate about social and political issues. Her novel, *The Grass is Singing* (1950) depicts the brutalities of colonialism. As a member of the Communist Party in the United Kingdom, she was banned indefinitely from Southern Rhodesia where she was raised, and from South Africa. In her novels, Lessing writes about women who are cut off from the civilization in which they grew up, yet these women have to cope with post-state or post-apocalyptic realities. Her significance as a political writer is that she doesn’t just throw stones; instead she muses over the incidents and then asserts her own views on the incidents.

The daughter of an English banker, Doris May Taylor was born in Kermanshah, Persia, on October 22\(^{nd}\) 1919. In 1925, the Taylor family moved in Southern Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe] to a farming occupation which was meager. Here, Lessing describes the plight of women. She attended a Convent school until she was forced to drop out at the age of fourteen. At that point, her self-education began mostly with the reading of nineteenth-century, Russian, French and English novelists. Doris Lessing is a Persian-born, Rhodesian-raised and London-residing novelist. Her autobiographical writing has swept across continents and reflects her deep feminist engagement with the major social and political issues. She is one of the most important writers in British Literature.

As a woman autobiographer, she presents her life story and experience in *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography to 1949*. Here is the special emphasis on the central themes of the autobiography: effects of war on Lessing and her parents, mother-daughter relationship, education and political life and evolution of her identity. Relationships between men and women remain one of the most important themes of the 2007, Nobel-prize winning novelist Doris Lessing. The Feminist concerns are widely explored in her masterpieces, in her autobiography, in her novels and short-stories. Her heroines seek freedom during the age of sexual revolution. Lessing believes that sexual freedom does not necessarily lead to the direct liberation of women. If women seek freedom on the psychological level, it is important for them to establish their own identity than to have sexual freedom.

---

Under My Skin is the first volume of Doris Lessing’s autobiography. This volume recounts the first thirty years of Lessing’s life. It recounts from her birth in Persia in 1919, through her childhood and young adulthood in Southern Rhodesia to her departure, in 1949, for London. In London, she made her career as a writer with the publication of the book, The Grass Is Singing. She rightly states when she begins her autobiography: “I was born with skins too few. Or they were scrubbed off me by…robust and efficient hands.”36 This is the first volume of Doris Lessing’s autobiography. This volume begins with her childhood in Africa and ends on her arrival in London in 1949 with the typescript of her first novel, The Grass Is Singing. The second part of her autobiography is entitled as Walking in the Shade: Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949-1962.

Doris Lessing decided to write her autobiography to prevent her life from any misinformation. Her intention is definitely not to convey a message to the people. However, she faces with the first problem of the self-chronicler ‘truth’ which every autobiographer has to face. According to Doris Lessing, the problem of shifting perspectives is a bigger problem than telling the truth or not telling it. She asserts that people see their lives differently at different stages. Had she written her autobiography at the age of thirty or forty it would be different. It would be still different if she decided to write at the age of eighty-five. Lessing resembles this to climbing a mountain while the landscape changes with every turn in the path:

Had I written this when I was thirty, it would have been a pretty combative document. In my forties, a wail of despair and guilt: oh my God, how could I have done this or that? Now I look back at that child, that girl, that young woman, with a more and more detached curiosity. Old people may be observed peering into their pasts, …I try to see my past selves as someone else might, and then put myself back inside one of them, and am at once submerged in a hot struggle of emotion, justified by thoughts and ideas I now judge wrong… As you start to write at once the question begins to insist: Why do you remember this and not that? Why do you remember in every detail a whole week, month, more, of a long ago year, but then complete dark, a

blank? How do you know that what you remember is more important than what you don’t?\(^\text{37}\)

Lynda Scott describes Lessing’s work as:

more therapeutic than confessional…Psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and self-representational writing, all provide opportunities to reach the past, analyze past experiences, and perhaps re-invent them by experiencing them again, while living in the present. During a session with a psychoanalyst or a psychotherapist, an individual attempts to reconcile her or his present feelings and existence with the past which she or he may have suppressed. Doris Lessing is able to recreate past selves and commune in an inner dialogue with earlier and necessarily fictive selves while constructing a coherent text that represents a healed and unified self at a particular instant in time.\(^\text{38}\)

According to Scott, Lessing’s autobiographical writings resemble a therapeutic session because she invests herself with authority and distance through the literary positioning of herself as “author.”\(^\text{39}\) She is able to use power and command over the text. At the same time, she allows her own silent past to be recreated. Her self-representational texts for example, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* which Lessing subtitled “An Attempt at Autobiography” is a process of psychoanalysis which probe into the individual’s past memories.

Lessing inspired a generation of feminists with her famous novel, *The Golden Notebook*. Lessing wrote about the private lives of women and rejected the notion that they should abandon their own lives for the sake of marriage and children. *The Golden Notebook*(1962) tracked the story of Anna Wulf, a woman who wanted to live freely and was in some ways Lessing’s alter-ego. She frankly depicted female anger and aggression, she was attacked as unfeminine. In her work, Lessing drew upon her childhood experiences in colonial Rhodesia to write about the clash of white and African cultures and racial injustice. She criticized the white colonialists for a sterile culture and for dispossessing the native black citizens.


\(^{39}\) Scott, Lynda. 1996:3.
Under My Skin helps her to maintain a dialogue with herself and her past. Here, Doris Lessing makes an effort to create a unified self. This is an effort which is generally found in men’s autobiographies. Consequently, with Under My Skin, Doris Lessing does not let anybody to write about her life and manages to prevent her life from any misinformation. She also tells the story of the end of British colonialism from an alternative perspective. For Lessing, writing about her mother helps her to restore and heal the traumatic relation and thus she manages to heal the wounds of the past. Her mother repeatedly told her that, she had not wanted a girl, she wanted a boy. Doris feels pained when she states, “I knew from the beginning she loved my little brother unconditionally, and she did not love me.” Doris Lessing finds a chance to speak the unspeakable while writing her autobiography. She holds a mirror to other women’s lives. Most of the women autobiographers suffer from this type of hatred. She was not welcomed as she was born a girl, and her mother, unfortunately another woman hated her just because she was a woman. Brodzki asserts, “mother is the pretext for the daughter’s autobiographical project.” She is always in a state of accusation against her mother. For her, the problem with her mother is her obsession of raising a proper daughter. She puts a rigid system of rules and hygiene at home. In her autobiographical work, Doris rejects the role played by her mother.

Her autobiography is very distinctive. It is as challenging and original among the works written by Doris Lessing. It recalls the life of a child, with almost overwhelming immediacy, mapping the growth first of her consciousness, then, of her sexuality in adolescence. It later recalls her own mind as a young woman and of her political beliefs. The African landscape is described with great lyricism. Her often angry and combative relationship with her parents, her intense awareness of her own body, her passionate involvement with other people and indeed with everything around her are all very powerfully presented in her work.

There are a few modern autobiographies which reveal the mind of their creators. Under My Skin shows a woman uncompromising, in every aspect. She is a woman who breaks all the rules. She battles at every turn against her upbringing.

and environment. She is a woman who looks towards the world with a stern and clear outlook. Yet she also displays tenderness, a wonderful sense of humour and a compassion for human feelings. This is also abundantly evident that how her childhood and adolescent experiences were absorbed through those skins too few and how they made the personality that has produced the novels and stories which began with *The Grass is Singing* and ended with *The Fifth Child*.

*Under My Skin* shows the complete life and work of one of the great writers of the 20th century, on gender and colour discrimination. In this volume, she describes how her mother loved her younger brother, Harry, but not her. She also describes how she was not in love with her first husband, Frank Wisdom, a civil servant. She also recalls her mind how she left him with their two young children, with the intention of making the world a better place for them. She describes how she then married Gottfried Lessing, a German refugee and comrade, only because in those days, people could not have affairs. Lessing also describes the political scene of wartime at Salisbury. There she joined a group of Communists, selling their newspaper, *The Guardian*, to the local people. Here is a portrait of the developing writer, evolving author in love with books.

In the first chapter, Lessing introduces her parents and her grandparents. She also writes about the period before she was born. The devastating impact of the First World War on her parents is her main focus. A war does not end with the Armistice. Alfred Cook Taylor, Lessing’s father, loses a leg in the trenches. He marries the nurse who helped him in his hard times. Her mother had lost her young doctor lover in the World War when he was drowned in a ship sunk by a torpedo. Lessing tells the story of her birth as if she remembers all the details:

> I was born on the 22nd October 1919. My mother had a bad time. It was a forceps birth. My face was scarred purple for days. Do I believe this difficult birth scarred me–that is to say, my nature? Who knows.42

Her father was a victim of the World War I. He was the owner of a farm which was too small ever to make a profit. Her mother had lost her first fiancé in the war. She had lost a potentially satisfying career as a senior nurse, when she married on the rebound and started a family. Doris emerges unseen from the surrounding scrublands,

---

to see her parents smoking together with nicotine-yellowed hands, in mourning for lost lives. The experiences of stressed childhood are the main aspects of her writing. She is a child who is forced into early learning through self-awareness.

It is generally seen in women’s autobiographies that the writer relates herself with others. Doris Lessing identifies herself with her father and mother. She wants to draw attention towards the terrible war and its consequences. She tries to say that in such a bad condition, her birth becomes a sign of hope for the future. In 1990, she began to write *Under My Skin*, when she was still under the influence of World War I. She says: “All over Europe, in every city, town, and village is a war memorial, with the names of the dead of World War One.” She believes that her generation was made by war. In her autobiography, war plays an important role. The experience of war deeply affected her.

Another striking theme in this personal narrative is the relationship between Lessing and her mother. It is not surprising to see this relationship at the centre of an autobiography written by a woman. Lessing had a bad childhood. Her mother was a stern woman broken with the memories of the First World War.

Her writing is an act of self-representational writing. This writing resembles Doris Lessing’s relationship and situation created between an analyst and the analyzed. Lessing occupies the position of both while she is drafting, re-drafting, reading and re-reading *Under My Skin*. She is able to recreate past selves and commune in an inner dialogue with the earlier. She is also able to recreate fictive selves while constructing a coherent text. This text represents a healed and unified self at a particular instant of time. It is because an individual’s perception of her or his self is forever changing and the unconscious realm is a dynamic one. The self-representational text is also a historical fact. These are on-going records of therapy sessions. *Under My Skin* is a reference point in Doris Lessing’s personal life. The act of writing about her own self, and the resulting construction of a self-image or images, can be, for Lessing, a form of wish-fulfillment.

In *Under My Skin*, Lessing generally refers to the memories about her mother that filled her with hatred. She writes as if taking revenge on her mother. Neither her father nor her mother liked to display emotions. Her father is affectionate but he is not

tender. Both her parents were full of hatred for their parents and in turn Lessing too has the same feeling of hatred for her parents. If she had been like her mother, of the same substance, everything would have been well. According to Lessing, it is her mother’s misfortune to have an over-sensitive, always observant and judging, battling, impressionable, hungry-for-love child. Lessing hates her mother because she kept on insisting: “I always came first, because I had a good memory. You are just like me.” Her so frequent “You are just like me” made her “white-hot with rage.” 44 Lessing sees her mother as a threat in her life until her mother became old. Further when Lessing becomes a mother herself, she feels sympathy and pity for her mother.

In the following chapters, she tells her experiences in the school. Like most of the girls living in colonies, she attends the Convent school. The atmosphere in the Convent was unwholesome. Doris Lessing leaves the Convent, she knows how to set a hen, look after chickens and rabbits, worm dogs and cats, pan for gold, take samples from reefs, cook, sew, use the milk separator and churn butter, go down a mine shaft in a bucket, make cream cheese and ginger beer, paint stenciled patterns on materials, make papier-mâché, walk on stilts, made from poles cut in the bush, drive the car, shoot pigeons, and guinea fowl for the pot, preserve eggsand a lot else. Doing these things, she is truly happy and these are the few things which have given her great pleasure in life.

Doris Lessing’s autobiographical writing resembles a therapeutic session. It is because she invests herself with authority and distance through the literary positioning of herself as an ‘author’. She is able to exert power and command over the text. At the same time, she allows her own silent past to be re-created. The past revolves around the Lessing of the present; although Lessing’s self-representational writing is a form of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy which has therapeutic value. This may involve the process of wish-fulfillment or dreaming because Lessing uses the position of the author to act as psychoanalyst and a character simultaneously.

A dialogic process thus develops between both Lessing as an author and Lessing as a character. Another development is between her fictive selves, which exist in a variety of self-representational texts. Such an argument disposes her sense of selfhood as dialogical as well as teleological which concern with her past, memories and

---

mental state. These happenings, this process is psychoanalytic and also psychotherapeutic. This has appeared in her texts also.

With the influence of Convent School, Doris Lessing wants to convert to Roman Catholicism. She remembers the day when she goes home for the holiday. Her mother sees the holy water and the rosary under her pillow and explodes into reproaches. Lessing accuses her mother for the change in her thoughts about religion:

This marked the beginning of a rejection of my mother, like a slamming of a door. She called me out to sit with her in front of the house, set her chair opposite mine, and began on a history of the crimes of Roman Catholicism… I had become an atheist, but what I really did was to put an end to the conflict of being a Protestant in a Catholic school, the interminable anxious queries from both parents about whether I was being “got” by the RCs.45

Most of the women autobiographers like to tell the stories of pregnancy and birth. Lessing too tells the reader her gynecological history:

I was in a mood of triumphant accomplishment, and looking forward to the birth… I gave birth three times, normally, was never torn, stitched, forcepped, caesared… My periods ended in my early forties, as is common for women who smoke…Women with this kind of history—quite a lot of us—are sometimes made to feel guilty, as if womb troubles are the proper fate of females.46

Doris Lessing’s telling of her gynecological history makes this autobiography typically women’s. These are very private details of her life. Lessing argues that the women of her generation feel more confident and in control than new generation. Her generation is lucky because they are not bombarded with bleak information from television, radio, newspapers and women’s magazines.

In Under My Skin, Lessing describes her entry into political life and Communist movement as an important phase in her life. She divorces from Frank Wisdom. She leaves her two children with their grandparents. Then, she tries to justify her abandoning the children by saying that they will be brought up with much concern and love with their grandparents. Lessing explains the reasons of becoming a

46. Ibid, p.216-17.
Communist: “People became communists because of cynicism about their own governments... I became a Communist because of the spirit of the times, because of the Zeitgeist.”

Doris lives on heroic myths and fantasies. Lessing admits that she never committed herself completely to Communism. So, the loss of faith does not hurt her so much. But the loss of faith occurred when the Soviet Union invaded Finland and Hungary and Stalin made a pact with Hitler. Influence of World War One, Lessing’s relation with her mother, education and politics are the central themes explored in her work.

In the second chapter, Doris Lessing tries to explain why she chooses to write her autobiography. She confesses that the reason for writing autobiography was a “self-defense.” She did not want to let other people write about her life. She does not believe in biographers. The biographers were collecting material for a biography without interviewing her. In order to save herself from misinformation she decided to write her autobiography.

Lessing wants to stress that her autobiography is also an alternative history of the end of British colonialism. There is the process of self-representational writing. This process enables Lessing to sustain a dialogue with herself and her past as an attempt to heal the inner divisions and to create a unified self. Cora Agatucci provides a Bakhtinian explanation:

The Diaries and their implied author may be conceptualized in Bakhtinian terms as a new entry in the ongoing conversation represented by Lessing’s corpus, a confrontation with previous authorial identities readers have constructed from her works, an attempt to dialogize those conversations and reopen the debate.

Agatucci concludes that The Diaries is a deliberate meeting of Lessing’s identities and a construction of a new identity or self. Doris, often described as a feminist, is wise enough to love men. She just wants women to be recognized. Having relied on Virgin Mary, the literary classics, and the Communists, Doris

needed a new lighthouse to guide her life. Her life is guided by the spiritual disciplines of Buddhism, Hinduism, ideas of Shaw and Sufism. She focused on her work, her home, with its hospitable table, became a focus for young intellectual London – the Royal Court Theatre people and many others, as well as nuclear disarmers. Lessing became prominent in nuclear disarmament also.

About Lessing’s autobiography Glendinning says, “it is a very devious piece of self-revelation, and it reads like a novel.” 50 Lessing has provided an insight into her early childhood in Under My Skin. The Memoir is more literal. It is obvious that Emily’s childhood beyond the wall is indeed a vivid recreation of her own early years in Persia. The adolescent Emily in the ‘real’ world of the novel is recognizable as the clever, polite, uncommunicative teenager who grew up to become Doris Lessing. The ‘dreams’ in Memoirs are apparently her own life, part of the ‘attempt at autobiography.’ So the small girl who experiences the “prison” of the “personal” scenes is both the narrator and Emily. This oppressive childhood is meant somehow to represent a universal experience.

In the next part of her autobiography, Walking in the Shade Lessing concentrates on the intellectual and ideological forces that affected her during the 1950s. In 1949 she arrived in London with her young son Peter, after divorcing her second husband, Gottfried Lessing. She describes her mother’s lonely death in Rhodesia. Lessing worries about raising Peter as a single parent. She engrosses herself in the world of ideas, of publishing, of writing and of the theatre.

Other important figures in the society are celebrities who gain attention from the common man. People are interested in film actors and they like to have a peep in their lives. Everybody is interested in the life of the real person behind the glamorous face. Media and magazines give importance to their personal lives. There are many comedy actors but comedy actresses are very few. Goldie Hawn (A Lotus Grows In The Mud, 2006) is a Hollywood comedy actress who won the Oscar for Best Actress. She is not only an actress, but film director and producer and also an occasional singer. She makes people laugh.

Like Charlie Chaplin, Goldie expresses through body language, of slapstick, pulling sad face, pulling happy face and creating jokes through her action. She

became famous in her first T.V. series *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In*. She became better known for her films like, *Shampoo* and *Private Benjamin*, *Foul Play*, *Overboard*, *Bird on a Wire*, *Death Becomes Her*, *The First Wives Club*, and *Cactus Flower*, for which she won the 1969 Academy Award for best Supporting Actress. Unlike her movie persona her autobiography is a record of everything the actress has learned about life. It is a very optimistic book. In her autobiography she describes spiritual and mystical practices. She has taken experience of a guided meditation which she calls a rebirthing experience. Her children, Oliver Hudson and Kate Hudson are in the field of acting. Hawn has maintained a live-in-relationship with actor Kurt Russell since 1983.

Hawn was born in Washington, D. C. the daughter of Laura, a flower shop owner, and Edward Rutledge Hawn, a band musician who played at major events in Washington. She has a sister, Patricia. Hawn was raised in Silver Spring, Maryland where she went to Montgomery Blair High School. Her father was Presbyterian and her mother was Jewish, the daughter of immigrants from Hungary; Hawn was raised in Judaism. This influenced her to turn towards meditation in her later life.

The aim of Goldie Hawn in writing her autobiography is not to tell her life story, but to speak openly from the heart about the episodes in her life in the hope of explaining how they changed her perception and how they helped in the development of her self-identity as a humorous actress in various T.V. serials and pictures. The experiences also helped her to look at the world more clearly. Hawn solved her problems in her own way, as every individual does. She thinks that her road to discovery will continue until the end of her life. Generally people are afraid of obstacles in their lives but, Goldie Hawn calls the obstacles in her life as the greatest teachers she ever found. The principle aim of autobiography says Roy Pascal, must be a discovery of one’s inner understanding, which should be revealed in the process of the narrative:

The life is represented in autobiography not as something established but as a process, it is not simply the narrative of the voyage, but also the voyage itself. There must be in it a sense of discovery, and where this is wanting, and the autobiography appears as an exposition of something understood from the
outset, we feel it is a failure at any rate…self-knowledge is then a primary motive of autobiography.  

The theme of the book deals with the relationships which she thinks are gifts given by God, the people she came across were good souls which lighted her life, as well as, bad people who created obstacles in her life. She loves to understand each and every human being. She thinks that human beings are the most extraordinary creatures. She yearns to understand more and more about herself and the surrounding people. She is drawn to the process of self-discovery. An individual does not merely reflect on their past but they are involved in the historical surroundings which forms an integral part of their being. Perhaps the urge to write about their lives started from their own need to explain themselves. Self remains mysterious and subsequently increases the fascination for the self. The autobiographical writing, says James Olney, is indeed the result of “the lure of the self.”

This autobiography is not a simple straight forward narration but the author has adopted a different style, the style of short stories to reveal her ‘self’. In her autobiography, A Lotus Grows in the Mud she takes the chance to speak about everything from anger and fear, to love, compassion, friendship and the many challenges she has faced in her career. The memoir is made up of three individual stories which are separated by sixteen mini short stories called ‘Postcards’ consisting of poems, words of wisdom and personal reflections. The stories are in a chronological order. At the conclusion of most of the stories, Hawn goes on to relate how those particular circumstances and encounters with people taught her valuable lessons and values in life. She includes descriptions of how those pieces of knowledge could be passed on and used to teach children in the future. Hawn is more interested in the mind development of children.

In perfecting and performing the role of a mother, when interviewed by Marianne Schnall, she speaks about the project she has taken for the psychological development of small children which she calls the MindUP program, a curriculum that has already been implemented in classrooms by nearly 1000 educators throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. After the 9/11 she decided to focus on the

---

kids, because there was a lot of stress and a lot of uncertainty. In the program she took special efforts saying, “three times a day we do “brain breaks”. Every brain needs a break. They learn about the amygdala and how that is fight-or-flight—they learn that it can save us.” Hawn’s aim is to spread the “brain breaks” program throughout the world which would make children psychologically prepared for any type of shock. Children are the future of the country; therefore it is necessary that they grow into healthy and stable citizens.

First recalling her early days as the little girl who longed to be a ballerina but felt like an ugly duckling, Goldie Hawn then takes us on a whirlwind tour through her go-go dancing years. At school she was an average student, more interested in her dance classes. She found happiness in dancing as she says:

Dancing is my sport, my life, my purpose. Moving my body, challenging myself, sweat dripping from every pore, I feel the music vibrating within me, sending me to ecstasy. Competing with no one but myself, just moving molecules in the air, I reach such an emotional high in physical expression. Dancing is something I can do. This is where I belong. I am good at this and I know if I practice really hard I can make myself even better.

Hawn succeeded in getting rid of her shyness, at a talent show arranged in the school. Goldie was scared but her mother and her dance teacher boosted her. She decided to dance at the music ‘Sleigh Ride.’ In the beginning she was afraid but slowly gathered courage and made swift movements tuning with the music. She remembered all the great ballerinas she had ever seen and tried to imitate them. Everybody appreciated her dance, her parents, her teachers, her friends and the audience. She too was happy with her first stage show at school. Fortunately Hawn got a chance to become the last moment understudy for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. She was to support the famous ballet dancer Alicia Alonso, the goddess of her childhood adoration. Miss Alonso was blind but she danced magnificently. Her presence gave Goldie confidence. Goldie thought that she was the most graceful ballet dancer in the world by just being at the side of Alicia Alonso. The music seemed to leave Alicia physically and emotionally beyond her blindness. Hawn too danced

elegantly and the audience cheered her. She envied Alicia’s fame. But she was not aware that in future she would become more famous than Alicia.

Hawn could never excel academically at school, but dancing gave her something which she needed as a child. It allowed her to overcome the physical awkwardness as a little girl. Her mother had decided dance to be her future. Goldie too worked hard to fulfill her ambition. She learned about timing and personal discipline. She learned about her own physicality. Through rigorous exercise she developed muscles, posture and everything which was necessary for dancing. She describes her experience at dance as:

When I danced, I felt absolutely grounded, at the peak of my physical strength. The music went right through me. It changed the way I felt about myself. It lifted my heart and made me want to fly through the air, slicing and dicing it all around me. That’s what gave me everything. I was no longer disabled by my fear of being different. Just as Alicia Alonso rose above her disability, so did I. For me, dancing provided a physical euphoria that nothing else would ever touch.55

Goldie was lucky to have a mother who guided her in the crucial moments of life, in every good and bad experience. Her earliest sexual experience was a traumatic one. During her adolescence years once she was molested by a young man, a friend who had come for Christmas celebration fondled her private parts in the darkness of night. She cried for help and the young man ran away. She could not forget the bad experiences for many years. She decided to forget the horrible experience. Her mother instead of using the words abuse or molestation, which would have lodged in Hawn’s brain like a maggot, explained that the young man was unwell in his mind. She was never made to feel dirty. Many women are victimized and never talk about it because they feel ashamed about it. To be afraid or ashamed is to lock the door on the experience. Her mother opened the door immediately before she was able to distort the event of fear and failure. Hawn learned to forgive by putting her fears to rest although the experience was horribly frightening although it marked the end of her childhood, the end of innocence, it never married her to the point that later she shied away from a man's touch or had ugly flashbacks of being molested as a child. She never lost her trust in the male sex. Her mother helped her to take back control of her

life. Her mother always taught her that we may not be able to change what happened in the past but we can change the perception of it, all we need is the intention, and we have the power to change, face up to what happened, admit it and try to move on. Through understanding you should try to forgive not only yourself but the persons who hurt you. This is truly another path to happiness, a gift given by her mother.

Hawn always feared the cold war and the atomic bomb. In school the students were shown a movie on the effects of atomic bomb. Since then she lived in a mortal fear of the atomic bomb. Despite her mother's assurances she was afraid. Hawn says: “Looking for answers to my fear, I turned to God to try finding a sense of place, peace of mind and the nurturing of an inner life. I had such a sense of longing for a connection to the vastness.” From the time of the Cold War, Hawn actively sought a spiritual life she developed an inner yearning and a deep need to be grounded in some sort of faith which continued to shape her entire life. Goldie Hawn articulates from a very human perspective the healthful motives behind the peace movement, and as a practicing Buddhist she has been active in the movement. She founded and funded the Goldie Hawn Institute, which teaches technique of keeping the mind calm and peaceful to school children.

Hawn began to take ballet and tape dance lessons from the age of three. Goldie's mother was sure that one day Goldie would become a successful dancer. But Goldie was not confident about her looks. She thought her eyes were too big, her nose too flat, her ears sticking out, her mouth was too big and her face too small. The only thing she liked about herself was her hair. Her body was too thin and her ankles too skinny. Whenever she looked at her reflection in the mirror of the bathroom, she felt ugly and unloved. Her mother consoled her because she was confident that one day her daughter would be admired by everybody. Her uncommon looks made her blonde, bubbly, giggly, girlish and goofy in the future.

At the age of seventeen, Hawn went to Virginia to try her luck as a ballerina. She played Juliet in a Virginia Shakespeare Festival presentation of Romeo and Juliet. She was so afraid that her pulse thumped in her ears, thought that she was totally blank and had forgotten her lines completely. But while playing the role she felt completely at ease. Her nerves dripped away and there was no distance between

herself and Juliet. Hawn rolled her eyes, made funny faces and recited lines which were not included in the script but made the audience laugh. The audience appreciated her. That day unintentionally Hawn became a comedy actress, which was to be her destiny. She wanted to become a prima ballerina or a Broadway Chorus girl. In her school dramas also she had done comedy plays and made people laugh. To make people laugh became her strength:

Making people laugh is what we do. We're jesters; we help people forget their troubles. We're there to depict certain aspects of humanity, to mirror some truths. This was a lesson for me in authenticity, about finding my strengths and honoring them.\(^5^7\)

Goldie Hawn was introduced by one of her friends to Al Capp- a famous cartoonist who owned a national institution. For some time she took a job as a dancer. Knowing her limits which came from a sense of self-respect, she did not aim very high. At the Peppermint Lounge, she wore about ninety pounds of twisted steel, screaming every night, kicking, spinning, yelling and jumping to the four-four beat she tried the comic roles for many years. At the age of nineteen, Goldie met with an accident where almost she was dead. Her mother told her that she was saved by an angel. After the accident, her life changed as if she had survived to perform some purpose in life. She believes that god has sent every person on this earth with a purpose. Her purpose was to create comedy and make people laugh.

Hawn believed in destiny and she thanked God for meeting Art Simon. She had chosen the right path and thus she could reach the place she always dreamed. She struggled hard to stand up in life. She went on between a comedian and a ballet dancer. She had many bad experiences during her night shows when she was alone in the dressing room. Taking her father’s advice she went to Los Angeles, tried at the commercial studio, but was rejected by the producers. People thought that she had unusual looks. She felt insecure and tried to find her weakness. She was very happy when she was selected in the CBS studio for the famous producer, Andy Griffith.

At her trial, Andy Griffith stared at her dancing shoes which were full of holes. He presented her with a new pair which Hawn considered lucky. Since then her stars changed. She had a telephone call from the Art Simon's secretary, at the William

\(^{57}\) Hawn, Goldie. 2006:103.
Morris Agency. Art Simons took her trial and selected her for Good Morning World. When she read the lines for the trial she was not selected for that particular role. But they created a whole new character just for her. Art Simon discovered Hawn in a chorus line. He became her trusted agent and then he remained her manager forever. The choice which Hawn had made changed the course of her life. Instead of becoming a ballet dancer she preferred to become a comedy actress.

Sometimes the choices we make are good, and sometimes they are bad. Sometimes the fear of making a bad choice prevents us from making any choice at all. It is a question of doors opening and shutting in front of us along the way. Should we go through this door, or that one? Should we wait? Or move forward to the next door? Luck certainly plays a part in fate, but what gets us to that lucky place in the first place is a direct consequence of our own decisions.  

Hawn was lucky to meet Art Simon who was her Guru, and laughing partner. He protected her as a precious jewel which is a rare thing in Hollywood. Hawn realized that success does not always translate into personal happiness. When she became a famous comedy actress and began to earn huge amount of money her life changed. She shifted in a luxurious apartment in Hollywood Hills. She had always thought that fame, success and money would make her happy, which was her primary goal in life. But after earning money she mourned for her previous simple life, the life of a chorus girl. The real success is how you handle your success, where Hawn failed to handle. She believed that success only enhances what you are. It confronts you with the truth about yourself.

Unfortunately Goldie Hawn could not handle the success which she had gained. She was psychologically nervous with all that happened around her and she wanted to go back from where she came, she wanted to go back to her home, to her parents, to her chorus group. She worked the whole day automatically on the set of Good Morning World. Internally she was totally disturbed and had to take help of a doctor. At the age of twenty-one Hawn had gained success, fame and money, but she would have been shattered if her doctor had not helped her. She thought that he was like Lord Buddha who enlightened her life. Buddhism teaches that man is the highest

creature in this world. She thought that her doctor was the most important creature for her. Meena Sodhi opines about the truth that man is the most important creature in this universe. “I tell you this, the secret of the Brahma...there is nothing higher than man.”

After recovering from her depression and insecurity she again began to work. After the serial Good Morning World she worked for NBC's, Laugh-In. When she read the lines, she was mildly dyslexic and sometimes mixed up the words. When the red lights flashed...instead of reading, “Dick and Dan”, She read, “Dan and Dick... I mean Dick and Dan is...I mean, are...Oh.” After saying the lines Hawn started to laugh feeling herself stupid. She had screwed the simple lines. Her new producer George Scllatter appreciated her. Her new career as a comedy actress was born. By being a little bit absent minded and accidentally inverting her words, being nervous and then laughing at herself, a new character emerged. Goldie's show became so famous that every American watched it. At the age of twenty-three, at the peak of her career, in 1969, she got married to Gus Trikonis, a dancer and would be director who helped her to grow up. Afraid to tell her parents for fear of their disapproval, she eloped with him. He led her through her formative years in show business and helped her through the analysis of her own journey of self-discovery. He was patient, calm and kind. He taught her to take pleasures in the simple things of life. The most important thing he did for her was he opened up new worlds of philosophy and art for her. He introduced her to meditation, and taught her about the workings of the mind and the spirit. This habit of meditation helped her in her future life even after her divorce with Gus.

Hawn had never aimed to win an Oscar Award. She was shocked when she was nominated as the Best Supporting Actress for her first film Cactus Flower, in 1969. She never aspired to be a movie star, rich and famous. But she was proud to win the Oscar. Her mother had always dreamed of this kind of fame for her. She was honored when her name was announced as “Oscar winner Goldie Hawn.” Even after winning the topmost award she remained humble as she says:

Although these new words were now attached to me, I never considered them

part of my definition of me. I came to the conclusion that these kinds of iconic things are just what they are: icons. They shouldn’t hold any other power. They shouldn’t become a symbol of anything other than that special moment in time. Through my long journey of self-discovery, I have come to understand that my Oscar is not who I am. I am not my success; I am not my model; I am not my fame.61

Unfortunately, the fame ended her marriage with Gus 1976. They loved each other but stardom drove a wedge between them. There are very few men who can live with a woman who is more powerful than they are. They decided to separate and let each other go by their own paths. By this time, she had completed her famous pictures- Cactus Girl, There’s a Girl in My Soup, Sugarland Express. Before signing for the film-The Girl from Petrovka - a film based on a Russian ballet dancer, she went to Russia. It was the period when the cold war was in full bloom. She had to be alert. She learned much in Russia, about humanity, about the importance of family, about religions and spiritual repression.

The same year after her divorce Hawn’s mother arranged her second marriage with Bill Hudson. Their son, Oliver was a weak child and the doctor predicted his death. Hawn prayed to God. Mothers have the power to heal their children through their touch. Oliver recovered to be a healthy baby. She believed that miracles could happen. She believed in the power of prayer. Faith is something which is very important in life. From this incident Hawn understood the meaning of focusing on something and getting it done:

It was one of the first times in my life that I realized that by focusing on something and willing it with all my might, I could actually change or rearrange the course of events. This experience started me on a journey-investigating and exploring the new frontiers of consciousness.62

As all women autobiographers have described their happiness in being a mother, Hawn too remained happy with her son Oliver, nursing and caring him. Oliver always demanded for her instead of his nanny. She was too tired after the days shot to attend him. Although he cried during the whole night she cared him with affection. When

---

she gave birth to a girl child she named her Kate. She was happy with her kids and never complained even though Bill was always away from the house, playing music. Hawn doesn’t like to be unkind, it goes against her religion. She does not give any reason for their separation. She doesn’t talk anything nasty about him. One senses that what is left unsaid could speak volumes.

When her father died, she was shattered. She had lost her best friend. Hawn was in search of serene tranquility, which her soul deeply needed. She had lost herself in the Western world of pomp and show. Therefore she went to Africa, leaving behind her children. Goldie Hawn had inculcated the art of comedy in her blood; she could not stop herself from making people laugh. Although she did not know their language she made the poor tribal people roar into laughter, through her comical gestures. People all over the world do not speak the same language, but they share the common language of laughter. She spent quiet moments of reflection in the jungles of Africa. These experiences filled her with a light which skinned inside her. Whenever life got too hard she remembered these moments. She was in need of such pauses in her life. After such breaks Hawn could store energy for her future busy life.

She met her life partner, Kurt Russell on the set of the film- Swing Shift which they starred together. Hawn suggested some changes in the script. Her friends especially Jonathan, in the crew were offended. People thought she was becoming arrogant. When she gave suggestions to Jonathan he felt undermined, both creatively and as a man. Men do not like women’s domination. It was a Hollywood problem to underestimate women. Women are considered inferior in every field. The fact that women are not equal is seen, not a question of difference, but as a matter of the unequal distribution of power says MacKinnon. “Gender…is a matter of dominance, not difference…The difference is that men have power and women do not.” After Swing Shift Goldie Hawn acquired a reputation that she was difficult to work with.

When she divorced her second husband she began to think over what had gone wrong in those relationships. She did all the work mechanically, made movies, tried to be a good mother to Oliver and Katie, took her to dance classes and tried to keep her home happy without their father. She was devastated. She feared she would end her

life alone and lonely as all Hollywood stars end up. She was afraid nobody would accept her in her mid-thirties, with two children and the celebrity status. She also feared that nobody would love her children. But she was wrong. A miracle happened and Kurt Russell was sent by God. He loved her children. Her children flourished under his nurturing. His honesty, devotion and unconditional love bound everybody together in an inseparable state of familial bliss. His young son Boston, created from the union of his first marriage brought more joy to the family. Hawn did not marry Kurt, but he drew a circle around the family in the sand, and its powerful alchemy protected the whole family. Goldie believed in the rituals and ceremony of marriage, but her last two marriages ended in spite of performing all the rituals. Therefore, this time she did not insist in the marriage ceremony. Hawn had faith in human relationships.

Hawn took nearly one year to fully recover from the death of her loved mother. Her mother suffered from a severe heart attack and was paralyzed, but she was alive in the paralyzed state for ten years. For Hawn it was longest and the saddest year of her life. Nobody loved her as her mother did. She spent hours in meditation. She read books about death and mysteries of life. She read about Buddhism, she read about the Kabala and the mystics. She also read quantum physics to understand the nature of life. In this way her mystical journey began. She came to Varanasi as she considered it the most mystical land. At Varanasi, she recognized that her mother’s death was part of the divine process.

After the healing journey to India, Hawn attended a transformational breathing session to find peace of mind, in California, which she calls rebirth. Her breathing guide, a soft speaking lady, asked her to lie dawn on the bed and relax. She told her to go deeper and deeper with the breathing, until she had some strange physical sensations. Hawn loved the experience of being born. Whether it was true or false, whether it was read or imagined it did not matter, but she faced with a new perception of herself.

When her eldest son Oliver left the house to live his own life, Hawn was on the verge of tears. But she recalled the day when she had left her house, to grow and develop into an individual. She remembered the strength her parents had shown, when she parted from them. Now it was her turn to show strength as the roles had reversed.
When her daughter Kate left her she felt bereft. Hawn had left her mother at very young age and wondered whether her mother had felt abandoned. Girls are more attached to their mothers. When Katie gave birth to a baby boy, Hawn remembered the birth of her first son. Katie would become a loving mother of her children as she did. And the cycle of birth, caring of children and the death of parents would continue. She loved her new born grandson more than her children. She was filled with joy and exclaimed at the prospect of new opportunities for the most interesting segment of her life’s blessed journey. It shows that even if a person becomes internationally famous and embarks on a spiritual journey throughout the world, in the end the person finds that it is the simple things in life, the universal joy and sorrows of birth and death that matter the most.

Shirley MacLaine’s (*Don’t Fall Off The Mountain*, 1991) first film was Alfred Hitchcock film, *The Trouble with Harry* in 1955. She was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for five times: in 1958 for the film, *Some Came Running*, in 1960 for the film *The Apartment*, in 1963 for *Irma La Douce*, in 1977 for *The Turning Point* and in 1983 for *Terms of Endearment*. She also received a nomination for Best Documentary Feature for her documentary *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir*. Her film career is now in the fifth decade. She recently appeared as the maternal grandmother to Cameron Diaz and Toni Collet *In her Shoes*. Her own experiences in her life are strongly affected by her own strong desire of self-expression. At the age of three, she attended dance classes because she wanted to express herself physically. As a teenager, she went from dancing to singing which seemed a natural logical extension of that self-expression. As an adult, she carried that impulse for expression even further into acting, and experienced a greater form of expression. Then she found writing an outlet that enabled her to express more intricately and specifically her experiences as she quotes in her note to the reader: “I wrote to understand my profession, my travels, my relationships and in fact, my life.”

The autobiographical form concerns the self and not the external forces of the world; however, the outer world is taken into account as the selfhood is shaped and moulded by these external forces. The recreation of the past events is formed as a life-
narrative, which is a way of defining the self. They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and they provide answers to the question “who am I?” Karl Weintraub, the early critic of autobiography announces at the beginning of his book “how did I become what I am?” It is a case of the writer enlightening the self as well as the readers. MacLaine strived for two things in her life, self-realization and self-expression. She performed the duties in her life with this aim in mind, the aim of self-realization. Buddhism too supports this view:

Buddhism overemphasized inwardness and said that man, if he is intent upon self-realization, need not bother about pleasing Gods and ancestors. To a man of self-realization, God themselves pay homage, as they did to Buddha.\(^{65}\)

Shirley MacLaine is an outspoken thinker, a keen observer, a truly independent woman. She takes us on a remarkable journey into her life and her inner self through her autobiographical books, *Dancing In The Light, Don’t Fall Off The Mountain, Going Within, It’s All In The Playing, Out On A Limb, You Can Get There From Here, Dance While You Can and My Lucky Stars.*

MacLaine was born into a middle-class cliché-loving Virginia family who followed the Baptist faith. Her father was the autocratic head of the family, well-educated, a principal of a school, always thinking of the welfare of his family he kept a watch on his children. He not only knew the bad things his children had done but also the bad things they were going to do. His eyes were full of suspicion and he inspected everything.

Her mother was a tall thin woman with romantic nature. Her father was a disciplined man. MacLaine and her younger brother, Warren lived on exemplary life in the house. But they enjoyed the life outside, doing mischief, emptying garbage cans on other people’s front porches, punching holes in tires, setting off fire alarms, ringing doorbells and running away, stealing rough drops from the corner grocery, crossing busy roads with fake limps and even pretending to drop dead in the middle of the road until someone called the cop. But all these things were unknown to their stern father.

MacLaine’s mother told her that she was born with weak bone structure in her ankles. When she learned to walk she had problems, her ankles turned in and with a

slight misstep she would fall. At the age of three, for therapeutic reasons her mother took her to a ballet class. Her imagination took anchor and her energy found a channel. She found an outlet for expression. For the next fifteen years, she dedicated herself to endless hours of toil. She had two expert lady teachers who molded her professional attitude. She danced with her experts for various occasions. Her rehearsals ended at midnight. At a performance, she had terrible pain in the ankle, it was swollen. She tied her ankle with a ribbon and danced for two hours tolerating the pain. Her dance steps were so elegant that she felt a sense of triumph that gave her strength and she felt that she was roaring above herself although she was bedridden due to the pain in her ankles and could not walk for four months.

MacLaine thought a ballet performance had limitations. It was a mechanical art and thus gave her a feeling of a mechanical doll. During the ballet dance, she had to laugh with a certain limit. She wanted to make something of herself so that she could respect her own self. In New York, She was free to try her wings, at the age of eighteen, wide-eyed, optimistic, brave and certain that she would crash the world of show. She tried to find a job to earn a living for herself. There were no jobs, especially for dancers. She could not spare much amount on food as she had to spend more money on her dance classes. She ate very little and depended on lemon juice for energy. Her parents were ready to help her even though they could not afford, but she did not wish to take their help as she says: “I had chosen this life and I would handle it in the best way I knew how.” She did not blame anybody for the good and bad things in her life. She took the whole responsibility and tried to solve her problems without the aid of anybody. The power of decision making leads the women writers to take the responsibility of their deeds.

When she found a job, she felt sorry for herself when she remembered the iron discipline of the ballet dance, the money poured into the dance lessons and the grueling schedule. In the Servel Ice Box trade show, her job was to take turns around the ice-maker machine.

She met her husband Steve Parker in a bar. Four hours after meeting her he asked her to marry him. Anyway she married him after two years. After meeting him, she thought that her life had a new meaning. True tradition became courage and hard work became concentration for her. He seemed to be an extension of what she wanted.

to be, the more dependent she became on him, the more independent she seemed to become in her own life. She thought that he was the only person who knew her better than she knew herself.

She was hired in a company, Pajama Game, as the under study of a famous dancer Carol Haney. Just before the stage show Carol broke her ankle and Shirley was requested to dance instead of Carol. When the theatre manager apologized and told the audience that Shirley MacLaine would dance instead of Carol Haney, there was a chaos. But MacLaine knew that it was a break in her life and she should make the best of it. She gathered courage and spoke to the audience. The audience had gathered to see Carol Haney dancing and MacLaine was on the stage. It was the worst moment of her life because there was nothing worse than an audience which is afraid of the performer. Suddenly the flow of communication which she had longed for all her life was present between herself and the audience. She expected the audience to applause and laugh at her; instead, there was magnetism, a current, moving from one human being to the other end and back again like a giant pendulum. She was in tune with the audience, and not in odds with them. She was appreciated by the audience and a producer named Hal Wallis offered her a movie contract in Hollywood. There were more agents who wanted to sign a contract with her. Steve handled the agents and she relied on him for everything. On the same day, they got married with him.

Her newly married life as well as her new life in Hollywood began at the same time. She had become a star overnight after the release of her first picture, *The Trouble With Harry*. She had never thought in terms of being a star or a celebrity. For her stardom was not a goal, it was a by-product. She believed that if talent and individuality was there then it should be expressed. She had a fantasy for self-expression since very young age.

There were many things about stardom which she did not know and had begun to know slowly. The most cherished asset was the fact that she had started from the bottom, as a dancer in a group. The slow climb had given her time to learn to adjust, to adopt and to think. With impending stardom upon her, she had very less time for herself. She thought that she was slipping away from herself:
I didn’t like the feeling-slowly, slowly, I was slipping away from myself. Chunks…chunks…chunks…sliced away, gone forever, used by others for their own purposes…I didn’t want to give away myself.67

A woman is always happy with the progress of her husband. But a man cannot share the same feeling. He faces the ego problem when his wife exceeds him. While MacLaine was busy with her profession, her husband spent his time in loneliness. He was restless because his own potential was going unrealized. When he decided to go to Japan, she began to feel empty. When MacLaine visited Japan to shoot for the movie *Around the World In Eighty Days*, she understood his oriental thoughts.

MacLaine faced the days of her pregnancy with melancholy. She could not work and without work, she felt agony. When she delivered a beautiful daughter she forgot her pains. She had thought that fatherhood may retain Steve in California but she was wrong. She had brought the child into a world of two world—United States and Japan and wondered to which world her daughter belonged.

MacLaine could not stay idle for a long timewithout working. Her old producers were in search of new faces; therefore, she turned to the television. She began to dance and sing through several guest shots on musical shows. She felt good although her work was below her status. She did not hesitate to join a road company of a Broadway show.

Men think that a lonely woman can be easily attacked, thus the vultures began to hover around her. To the average male a good looking young mother who is married and alone is more attractive because they are safe as there is no risk involved. This is a very common thing among the Hollywood men. Men think that women are more emotional and they cannot live without the support of men.

Her old producer Hall Wallis offered her a role. To decrease her loneliness, she began to attend the Hollywood dinner parties, a unique phenomenon of the Western world. She tried to find more solace in work and her daughter, Sachie.

She found her life completed with the birth of her daughter. When Steve suffered from hepatitis she was working with a film and could not attend him. She sent Sachie to visit him. Shirley cried when she strapped her two years daughter alone, into the

seat of the airplane. She wished to go with her daughter but she was a ‘Hollywood mother.’ Whether a mother is a president or prime minister or an actress, her motherly instincts are stronger than any other relation. She had many commitments with her producer. She felt alone but the need to work and the urge to express her was more intense. “The need to make a recognizable contribution motivated me not only professionally but also as a woman. I was cut up into too many little pieces-actress, wife, mother.”68 The studio became her home and fulfilled her emotional needs of a family. Whenever she began the shooting of a scene the character which she played became her reality. She learned to suppress her real emotions and quickly slided into the heroine’s emotions.

For a woman, nothing is more important than her family. When MacLaine visited Japan, she learned ikebana, the Japanese floral arrangement, cooking and reading. But after a few days, she became restless. Her husband’s love was not enough for her. She needed something more. She could not live without working.

After a while I became fidgety and restless. I needed to do more with myself. I had worked all my life, using my energies to the utmost, and now, even though I loved being with Steve and Sachie, it wasn’t enough. It was more that I was living at only twenty percent capacity.69

Her husband who knew her better asserted that she was more of a woman than a housewife, and she should go back to her work. Her small daughter too understood her frustration. She took her husband’s advice and returned to Hollywood. Her daughter alternated between her nursery in Japan and America which confused her due to the difference in culture.

In her initial struggle she had signed a contract for nine years with Hall Wallis. He had picked her from the chorus girl role and she was grateful to him, although she knew that he gained huge profit and paid her very less. Suddenly, there was a turning point in her career. She got a break once again. Two famous producers, Frank Sinatra and Vincente Minnelli had seen her on a TV show and thought that she was right for the part of ‘Ginny’ in their picture. They offered her a huge amount but her old producer Hall Wallis gave her the money according to her contract rate and kept the

69. Ibid, p.100.
remaining amount for himself. She decided to do the picture as money comes after recognition.

Her new producers and their crew never questioned about her personal life. They had guessed that her life was complicated and she was trying to do something very difficult. She completed pictures like Can-Can, The Apartment, Children’s Hour, Tow for the Susaw and Some Came Running was nominated for an Academy Award. She found that in the past, she could never find the right part but now she was right for every part. Her presence was acknowledged in Hollywood. Her next picture Irna La Douce was nominated for three Academy Awards, which brought her huge amount of money and more important a sense of contribution to Hollywood.

Her contract with Hall Wallis went on extending due to the gaps created when she stayed in Japan. The five years contract stretched to nine years. Men try to suppress women in all spheres. Singh Sushilla quotes the statement of Janet Radcliffe Richard, “Women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex.”

Wallis ordered her to report for a picture but MacLaine felt the script totally offensive. Wallis was not ready to make any changes. Therefore, she decided to sue him under the California labor laws which provide that a contract to render personal service may not be enforced against the employee beyond seven years. Wallis who still considered her a small chorus girl did not expect that she would demand her rights.

Men try to suppress women thinking she belongs to the weaker sex. A woman can tolerate for many years. But when she decides to revolt it becomes very difficult for men. John Stuart Mill has a sympathetic attitude towards women and he believes in the liberty of women as individuals which is absolutely necessary for the development of the society. In The Subjection Of Women he wrote:

that the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes-the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement and that it out to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

In the society as well as in the family a man thinks himself superior than the woman. Thus a woman is subordinated at home as well as at her working place. The suffragists had thought that they had won freedom when they acquired the right to vote:

…when the suffragists won the vote for American women in 1920, many of them thought they had won the ultimate victory, but in the years that followed, social pressures continued to restrict women’s freedom as effectively as the barrier in the constitution.  

Along with Wallis she had to gather courage and fight with another man named Mike Connelly who was a famous rambling reporter of all gossip columns. He said many unwanted things about her. She had tolerated him for many years. When the law protected her against Wallis, her courage increased and she slapped Mike in his office.

She enjoyed being a successful actress because she had the excuse and opportunity to explore so many levels of life. She enjoyed the exploration more than acting. When she worked for the picture *The Children’s Hour*, she spent hours discussing latent homosexuality in women, which was the theme of the picture. When she worked for *My Geisha* in Japan, she lived in a *Caburejo* [Geisha Training School] for two weeks to learn the manners of Japanese people. When she played for *Irma La Douce*, she had to do a lot of research. She went of Les Halles and met the girls. She actually saw how they attracted their customers. The girls were happy that a famous actress had come to learn from them and they co-operated with her. She learned so much from them that her acting remained no more acting, and she lived the role of Irma. The picture was nominated for three Academy Awards.

She had acquired fame and recognition along with the Academy Awards. At the age of twenty, she was a successful Hollywood star. Success brought her immense amount of money. Her life had totally changed. In her early days of struggle, she never had more than fifty dollars. The money was enough to make a living. Even after earning large amount of money, she acted as if she had only fifty dollars, she did shopping in bargain. Along with money, she acquired power. With power, she could

hire and fire people; she could impose her opinions on others. She could decide whether to accept her co-star. The power of her position changed the people around her.

Her life expanded and opened up on still more levels when she began to travel. The money enabled her to travel anywhere in the world. The American movie screen had made her famous. People all over the world recognized her. She communicated with people in all countries as most of the people could speak English. Even if she did not understand their language, the real communication was non-verbal. It was the passion behind the words; sometimes their silences were more revealing.

She had a sense of social contribution. She met the lamas in the Buddhist temple of Thailand which itself means ‘land of peace’ For the Buddhists, death is a part of the cycle of life, and fate is their religion. Life and death is not regarded in terms of individual people; it covers a broader philosophic system.

When she visited Southern America especially Mississippi, she lived with the Blacks and tried to see the world through their eyes. Her father, who was a respected school principal, had a prejudiced mind about the Africans, Indians and South Americans. Anyone with a dark skin was a ‘nigger’ for him. In Issaquena Country, she met Mrs. Unida Blackwell a black woman who was a civil rights worker. She spoke about the suppression of women. She saw the plight of all women as a universal disaster. She felt that Africa was a harmonious voice of creation. The undulating plains were alive with wild animals.

She cared more about life beyond the camera than the life in front of it. The more she understood people the more she understood herself:

I began to get more of a distant, objective view of myself. My own truth became better defined. I understood more of me while trying to understand them. And it made me more compassionate, not only for others but for myself as well. 73

This objective of understanding the self is observed in most of the women autobiography writers. They write with determination how they understood themselves through the reactions of others:

73. MacLaine, Shirley. 1991:139.
It implies that each found in a public role the chief purpose of life; and thus they came to understand themselves mainly through the reflection of themselves that they saw in the reaction of others.\textsuperscript{74}

MacLaine was never satisfied with her acting only. She needed something more. After working for two months on a movie, she would travel some remote area as she says: “I still loved acting and enjoyed it. I was a professional, but basically I was more interested in the people I played than the movies played them in.”\textsuperscript{75} Due to her thirst to meet more and more people, she travelled nearly all the countries but she loved India most. She went to Bhutan to find the end to her search of finding something more and more. In Bhutan she found peace of mind which she was yearning for. She wanted to explore deeper and deeper in the subconscious mind. She was fascinated by the Buddhist philosophy. While returning from Bhutan, she thought that she had found the meaning of finding the self. On their returning journey the blowing wind reminded her that all human beings would always be part of each other. She thought that she was present everywhere in the world and every place and everything was present in her—the Masai in Africa, the babies in India, the whores in Paris, the blacks in Mississippi, her own mother and father in Virginia, her husband and daughter in Japan—all seemed to be everywhere like herself.

Betty Mahmoody (\textit{Not Without My Daughter}, 1989) is not a politician or Nobel Prize winner or an Academy Award winner. But she is a lady with remarkable courage and faith. The horrific situation in which Betty found herself would give nightmares to any loving mother. The title of the autobiography itself suggests her courage and devotion towards her daughter, a right of every woman and her identity as a mother. Betty Mahmoody and her husband, Dr. Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody and their four year old daughter, Mahtob came to Iran from U.S.A. to meet his family. She was appalled by the squalor of their living conditions. She was horrified when she saw that women were merely chattels in Iran. In the Khomeini savage regime Westerners were despised. She began to make plans of escaping from Iran. Along with her daughter she took the most difficult route to reach America, through the mountains of Turkey, a journey that few women had ever made. There were more

\textsuperscript{74} Cockshut, A.O. J. \textit{The Art of Autobiography in 19th and 20th Century}. England: New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{75} MacLaine, Shirley. 1991:185.
chances of death then escape. But she got through the perilous journey to win freedom for herself and her daughter.

It was the second marriage of Betty with Dr. Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody, an Iranian doctor, practicing in America for the last two decades. He was not particularly handsome but a scholarly person. He had a strong stocky build with appealing Arabic features. She was attracted towards Moody especially because he had Americanized his manners and personality.

Dr. Moody was not interested in her past. She was a divorcee at the age of twenty-eight. She had to lead an adult life of her own. She had married impulsively before completing her education at the Higher Secondary School and found herself in a loveless union that ended in an extended difficult divorce. She had to take a job in Michigan and earned a salary which was sufficient to provide a comfortable home for herself and her two sons, Joe and John. She was quite happy with her sons and her life until one day she was hospitalized for severe headache. The doctors suspected brain tumour or severe migraines. Dr. Mahmoody gave her a manipulative therapy which seeks to relive pain naturally.

Dr. Mahmoody’s treatment became the bright spots of her hospital stay. The incident did not have any physical after-effects, but it altered the course of her life dramatically. Her migraines rewarded her with a second marriage to Dr. Moody. When he courted her for the first time, she made him clear that she did not wanted to remarry as she did not wish to give up her freedom saying, “I want my freedom.” Her first marriage had ended in a divorce and Betty being a lover of liberty, had no wish to risk her own life and her son’s at the hands of an unknown foreign man. Moody tried to become the father of her children. Finally after courting for three years she married him.

Moody had a paradoxical personality. He was a loving father to Joe and John as well as their beautiful daughter whom Moody named Mahtob, which means moonlight in the Persian language. But she was like warm sunshine for Betty. Moody’s mind was a blend of brilliance and dark confusion. He was a mixture of East and West. For nearly two decades he had adopted many of the practices of Western

society. He kept himself away from politics. He found America a world far different from his childhood, one that offered affluence, culture and basic human dignity that surpassed anything available in Iran. He wanted to be a Westerner. He taught Betty Islamic cooking. He introduced her to some of the tenets of Islam and Betty was impressed that it shared many basic philosophies with the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Even though Moody liked the American comfortable way of life, he detested the Shah, the supreme of Iran, who had Americanized the country. In those days hordes of well-to-do young Iranians travelled abroad. Moody was one of such students. The Shah’s government encouraged foreign schooling, hoping that it would advance the westernization of the country. In the end the strategy of the Shah backfired. Iranians proved to be stubborn about assimilating western culture. Even those who lived in America for decades retained their Islamic faith and their Persian customs. When the Shah left Iran, and the following day, the Ayatollah Khomeini staged a triumphant return; Moody invited dozens of Iranian students to his house for celebration. The incident clearly indicated that Moody had his mindset deeply rooted in his Iranian culture. He belonged to the Shiite Muslims. He had faith in his Islamic religion.

After the death of his parents his relatives especially his sister Ameh Bozorg and her husband Baba Hajjii, as the name was bestowed upon him, had taken care of him. They belonged to the upper class. They were fanatical fundamentalists. They had a big house and a large family with many sons, daughters, daughter-in-laws and grandchildren. In America rarely Moody sat on the mat and offered prayers. He liked the leisure his job offered him. She lived happily with him until he was able to persuade her to fly to Iran, along with Mahtob, on a short trip of two weeks, to visit his relatives.

When they reached the airport of Tehran Moody asked Betty to handover their passports and birth certificates to his nephew. For a moment Betty was worried whether she had done a mistake in coming to Iran with her daughter, because the Iranians opposed Americans for supporting Iraq with whom they had a bitter war since many years. On the airport she was struck by a disagreeable sensation, the overpowering stench of body odour, exacerbated by the heat. When they reached his sisters Ameh Bozorg’s house she was given a long coat, montoe and a scarf, roosarie which was compulsory for a woman in Iran. Her sister-in-law also gave ornamental chadors to Betty and Mahtob for indoor use. She was worried about her dress.
Their eating habits offended Betty. Sitting on the floor cross-legged or perched on one knee, the Iranians attacked the meal like a herd of untamed animals for food. Within seconds there was food everywhere on the floor. It was shoveled indiscriminately into chattering mouths that spilled and dribbled bits and pieces all over the sofrays and carpets and back into the serving bowls. It was always an unappetizing scene. The kitchens were most dirty and unhygienic. Bugs and vermins were found in the rice. The fridge always had a foul smell. Betty and Mahtob ate very little due to the dirty habits of Moody’s relatives. Mahtob was always busy slapping vainly at the mosquitoes which raised large red welts on her body. They could not sleep properly during the night as the bedrooms had saggy mattresses, musty blankets and prickly pillows.

Betty felt lonely and isolated. Mahtob too was uncomfortable in a foreign land. Many times she had a cold fear that Moody might attempt to extend the visit. Betty and Mahtob counted the days and were very eager to return back to their house in America. To a Westerner, a normal Iranian conversation appears to be a heated argument, filled with shrill chatter and expensive gestures, punctuated with Ensha Allah. The noise level was so astounding which gave rise to severe headache for Betty. The morning prayers which began with an azan blared through a loudspeaker, the family members read the Koran for hours until their voices took a hypnotic tone.

Betty’s suspicion became true when Moody declared that they were remaining in Iran forever. The chilling fact was that Betty along with Mahtob was held hostages in a foreign country, in a foreign culture. Once Moody insisted that she should telephone her parents in Michigan and tell them that she was in Iran. Her father was suffering from cancer. Betty did not wish to trouble her parents and therefore lied that they were on a tour to Europe. She had left her sons with her ex-husband. Rather than a husband and father Moody had become a jailor. He left most of the time to themselves willing to give them time to accept their fate, to resign themselves to spending the rest of their lives in Iran. He believed that Mahtob who was appearing her fifth birthday, would adjust easily and happily to the upheaval in her life. The small girl was confused how her loving daddy suddenly became their enemy.

Betty began to think of escaping from Iran. She mustered the courage to plan her defense. But she had already handed the passport and birth certificate to Moody’s nephews. Without the passport it was impossible to escape. She realized that Moody
and his relatives had planned conspiracy. Betty saved a small treasure of money which she had forgotten in the course of their shopping frenzy. She hid the money under the thin mattress of her bed. The money became the sum total of her power, her lifeline. She was sure that she could buy freedom one day with the help of the money. Every day in the bathroom Betty and Mahtob prayed together “Dear God, please help us to get through this problem: Please help us find a safe way to go home to America together and be with our family.”

Her darkest fear was that Moody would take away Mahtob from her. Moody was ever-vigilant, paramount about Betty’s every action. She wanted to be with her daughter and at the same time with her two sons and that too in her own country, America. She was proud of her nation and loved her identity as an American. Unfortunately she had been captivated in a country which despised America. Many times there were sharp booming echoes of airborne explosions. People shouted Maagbarg Amrika, which meant ‘death to America.’ They were made to believe that America was the cause of their destruction. Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers were successful in spreading rumors and keeping the people ignorant. Although Moody was a learned doctor who had lived for two decades in America, he still believed in the rumors spread by the fanatic leaders. Betty realized that she had married a mad man. Betty had observed his madness during their stay at Detroit and Michigan. When they arrived in Iran recently he was fired from his job. She was trapped in a country where the laws decreed that he was her absolute master. In the Muslim countries women are given no importance. After marriage the husband is the master and woman remains his slave. As Tehmina Durrani says in her autobiography, My Feudal Lord, “a wife was honour-bound to live her life according to her husband’s whims. A woman was like a man’s land.”

Moody stressed that there should no problem in living in Iran, as a Muslim wife was supposed to be devoted to her husband. She had no right to property or children after divorce. Even after the death of the father, the custody of the children was not given to their mother, but the children were handed over to the relatives. This reminds the story of the celebrated poet of Great Britain, Caroline Norton, who was the

first women to raise her voice to seek the custody of her three sons, who had been sent to an unknown place by her husband to deny her any excess to her own children. She challenged the father’s right to the custody of the children. The mother’s claim to the custody of her children was overlooked and rejected. She turned to law, but in vain. She wrote a pamphlet in 1836 to move the sympathies of the public and the Parliament. To alter the custody laws, she got a Bill introduced in the Parliament by her barrister friend Thomas Talfourd, who was an M.P. People believed in:

that a women’s whole life and being, her soul, body, time, property, thought, and care ought to be given to her husband; that nothing short of such absorption in him and his interests make her a true wife.79

The Iranian women were at the mercy of their husband. Their religion as well as their government coerced them at every turn, the practice exemplified by their haughty insistence upon an antiquated and unhealthy dress code. Women in the Arab countries have very little access to education. Recently women of Saudi Arabia, after a long struggle, have acquired the right to vote on 25th Sept 2011. Betty despised using the chador, montoe and rosarie which she was forced to wear. It was asort of purdah. In Iran there were leady pasdars, the ubiquitous and frightening secret police who checked that women were always wrapped in chadors. It was an offence in Iran to keep the body visible. Once Betty was stopped by lady passdors because her hair was visible from the scarf she wore. She hated the heavy overcoat during the hot days.

The practice of purdah in the form of chador, burqha, ghungat is not merely a form of dress or custom, but is indicative of a whole social system. Purdah reinforce the idea of female subordination inbuilt in patriarchal societies, it also defines family and political structures and constitutes the basis of gender ideology. Ideologically, purdah is the oldest form of colonization, of domination and of control. It is based on the principle of inequality and establishes itself on the dual strategy of control and exclusion. The purdah is an instrument of masculine effort to keep low the spirit of independence in women. In Muslim society women have been assigned a subordinate role to that of men and the prevalence of the purdah has ensured the continuation of this subordinate role. The conformance to the norms of the purdah restricts and limits the roles of women, keeping them within the confines of the jenana apartments and

keeps their status low. The man is the protector and provider in the family. His role carries authority and higher status. Shabani Roy, in a study on The Status of Muslim women in North India states:

In the male-dominated Muslim society, purdah is a male imposed symbol of domination and seclusion symbolizing the eclipse of a Muslim Women’s identity and individuality. The woman by wearing it subscribes to male domination and gives up her claim to personal liberty. ⁸⁰

Wife beating was an usual occurrence in Iran. When Betty faced the problem she was full of rage. She was helpless in a foreign country where the law protected her husband. On their way to a pilgrimage Moody forced Mahtob to be with him along with other men. Mahtob did not feel secure with her father and she wanted to be with her mother, who was standing in a line with other women. For the simple reason Mahtob was beaten badly. When Betty ran to rescue her she was also beaten harshly in front of hundreds of people. Nobody intervened thinking it a domestic problem. G.M. Trevelyan in his History of England writes: “Wife beating was a recognized right of man and was practiced without shame by high as well as low.”⁸¹ When she asked the relatives why they did not help her, one of them said that all women in Iran had to tolerate beating, she was held captive in a country where the laws decreed that he was her absolute master and could do anything to her. She feared that one day he would kill her and her daughter. Countless miserable hot sickly, tedious, frightening days passed. Betty slipped further and further in to melancholy. She ate little and slept only fitfully. Moody continued to ply her with tranquilizers. She wished that somebody should help her.

Somehow, she reached the U.S. Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy and related her story to the authority-Helen Balassanian who promised to help her. But she stressed that after her marriage with Moody, Betty and Mahtob both were Iranian citizens. It was a chilling fact. She realized that along with Mahtob she was totally subject to the fanatical patriarchy. She had always loved her identity as an American and she despised to be an Iranian. “I don’t want to be an Iranian, I was born an American. I want to be an American citizen”⁸² in the lonely bedroom spending days

---

of nothingness always nauseated and vomiting due to the filthy surrounding, deeply depressed she remembered her father’s catchphrase ‘where there’s a will there’s a way,’ even if she had the will, who had the way to help her. Betty thought was there a single person who could help her and her daughter to get out of the nightmare. She realized that she could alone help herself in finding out a way of escaping. First of all she had to attend her health. Plagued by illness and depression, eating and sleeping little, she had taken refuge in tranquilizers. She ought to stop it first. The road to freedom would require her to become a supreme actress. She ought to make Moody believe that she still loved him even though she actually prayed for his death. But when she came to know that in Muslim law, after the death of the father the custody of the children was given to the relatives instead of the mother, she stopped praying for his death. Moody became sullen and imposing day by day. In a whimsical mood he beat her nearly half-dead. He threatened that he would kill her one day.

Betty and Mahtob lived in fear, helpless and hopeless condition. Mahtob was put in a girl’s school. Slowly Moody had to allow Betty to go out of the house for household chores-to buy bread, milk, eggs and vegetables. She found help in the form of Hamid, the menswear store keeper who allowed her to use his telephone. He appreciated the Western style of life. He helped Betty as she was an American. Helen from the Embassy, advised her to take divorce, to leave Mahtob behind and get out of the country. Betty sharply responded, “Not without my daughter!” She had no desire to return to America alone, Helen had not understood the depths of the mother-child bond. Helen was an Armenian who had been developed with a different philosophy. According to her, children always belonged to the father. She could not identify Betty’s maternal instinct.

Along with Moody his relatives also imposed hard rules and customs on Betty. They suggested him that Betty and Mahtob should attend the Koran study classes conducted for the English-speaking women. When Betty showed her willingness to study the Koran, Moody and his relatives were happy that she was becoming a dutiful Islamic wife. Betty read the English translation of the Koran by Rashida Khalifa, the Imam of the Mosque of Tuscon. In Sura (chapter) 4, Verse 34, it was related that:

---

The men are placed in charge of women, since God has endowed them with the necessary qualities, and made them the bread earners. Thus the righteous women will accept this arrangement obediently, and will honor their husbands in their absence, in accordance with God’s commandments. As for the women who show rebellions, you shall first enlighten them, and then desert them in bed, and you may beat them as a last resort. Once they obey you, you have no excuse to transgress against them. God is high above you, and more powerful.  

On the next page she read, “When a couple experience difficulty in their marriage, you shall appoint a judge from his family, and a judge from her family. If the couple reconcile, God will bring them back together. God is knower cognizant.” Betty argued that both their families should help them in the problem. But Moody cleared her that her family was not a Muslim and therefore they had no right to interfere in their problem.

Through the learning of the Koran, Betty found a chance to remain out of the house where she was captivated. She could think over her situation and find a way to escape. Betty thought of taking help of the police. But the police were Iranians, the administrators of Iranian law. Under Iranian law, Moody ruled his family. The police could help her but they would deport her, forcing her to leave the country without her daughter. Mahtob would be trapped forever in the crazy country with her insane father.

In Iran Moody prayed to Allah three times a day. He chanted the Koran. He took Betty and Mahtob, along with the other relatives to the holy masjed at Meshed. Three days she frequently prayed to Allah to grant her only one wish that he would allow Mahtob and herself to return safely to America, in time to see her father before he died. Allah was listening to her cries. She got a chance to speak with her parents and her sons. She could convey the message that along with Mahtob she was held captive by Moody and his relatives. Her mother who was working with the State Department promised to help her.

85. Ibid, p.79.
The head of the family, Baba Hajji asked Moody to vacate the house since his daughter-in-laws were not comfortable with his stay. In his presence they had to remain draped in chadors throughout the day. Moody had no money but his relatives lend him the required amount and they moved into a new rented apartment. Betty was happy because there were no relatives to spy her. She hated his relatives. They had played conspiracy against her. Along with Moody they too were responsible for her pitiable condition. He thought that his relatives especially his sister had betrayed him. His relations with his relatives nearly came to an end. Betty had traced that Moody could never settle in his life. He could maintain equilibrium only for a short time. He always blamed some external reason for his troubles. Betty knew that he himself contributed to his troubles. He was driven by a madness that allowed him no peace.

Moody began his practice in the parlour of their rented house. He had left his license, which permitted him to practice, in America but he did not mind it, although it was an offence to practice without the license. When Moody worked at the hospital Betty could use the telephone frequently. She could also visit Helen at the Embassy. She could post letters to her parents and receive them through the Embassy. Allah answered to her prayers through Amahl who made arrangements for people like Betty to escape from Iran secretly without passports. Amahl explained the plan of Betty’s escape. Betty and Mahtob would fly on an Iranian airliner to Bandar Abbas and then they would be smuggled by speedboat across the Persian Gulf to one of the Arab Emirates. The thought of speeding across the sea in an open boat was frightening, but it was a ticket to freedom. Betty was ready to do anything to escape from Iran. Betty had no money but Amahl was ready to pay for the ticket, and Betty was to return the money after reaching America. Betty loved Amahl secretly because he cared for them, and he was arranging for their escape.

Betty’s sister Carolyn called from America informing her father had a bowel obstruction which needed surgery. The doctors predicted his death. Moody decided to take advantage of the situation. He asked Betty to go back to America to meet her father, leaving Mahtob in Iran. He wanted Betty to sell out their house and other belongings and bring back the money. He did not care for her dying father, he was interested in money. He intended to hold Mahtob as a hostage which was a guarantee of her return. Before Moody could force her to go to America, Betty decided to escape along with Mahtob. Although Amahl had not made arrangements for them
Betty took the risk of leaving Moody’s house. Amahl gave them the address of an apartment where she could stay until he had made arrangements.

After making lengthy discussions and negotiations with the smugglers it was decided that she would be going to Turkey. Amahl had told Betty that it was dangerous to travel through Turkey and it had always been his last choice. Escaping through Turkey was not only the most physically demanding, but it was the riskiest because of the people involved. They were dangerous smugglers. Betty was desperate to get herself and her daughter to America or died trying. She had been captivated for one and half year. She could no more continue with Moody. She knew that whatever the perils of escape, they had to face it. She had heard Amahl saying that the smugglers of north-west Iran were terrible and sinister. Betty was sure that they would pose no dangers more frightful then those threatened by her husband. She had already been robbed, kidnapped and raped by him. He was surely capable of murdering her.

Her journey of escape began in a small car to Turkey. She travelled through open truck, taxi and on horse- back. Each time there were new drivers, but they were unknown of her mission. They were ordered simply to take her from one point to another. She had to take halts in courtyards with animals and in barns. Betty and Mahtob shivered as much from fear as cold, realizing their vulnerability. They were stuck somewhere in the vague, tattered edges of a nation where life was primitive under the best of conditions. If the people helping her decided to exploit her in any manner there was no way she could fight back. She was at their mercy. Moody had forced her to run and land in the horrible conditions. She remembered the faces of her sons and her dying father. The horizon of America was a tempting scene since she had been held hostage in Iran. She gathered all strength, remembering her father’s catchphrase.

Most of their journey was on horseback; up and down they went through the hills and forbidding mountains. The upward slopes were less difficult whereas the down slopes were treacherous. On the mountains, several times they came across the pasdors. Of all the fates that could befall on Betty and Mahtob, falling at the clutches of the pasdor was the worst. She had heard many bad stories about the pasdors. They raped women victims and even young girls, before they killed them. There was a
horrid saying in Iran: “A woman should not die a virgin.” To escape the pasdor’s suspicions Betty disguised in Kurdish skirts. A person named Mosehn who had driven her out of Tehran was back again. He changed the schedule of her journey. Instead of the main roads where there was a possibility of interrogation, they were to ride on horseback crossing into Turkey far from any road, in the barren, forbidding mountains. Mahtob starved, was exhausted and her body shook with spasms in the frozen winter air but with strong determination, she steeled herself. She was firm and tolerant like her mother. Moody had tried a lot to make Mahtob a submissive Iranian child. But she had remained Betty’s resolute American daughter.

Sometimes the horses could not carry their weight. At such times Betty and Mahtob climbed the mountains slipping, sliding stumbling. When they reached Turkey Betty remembered Amahl saying that if the Turkish border guards found them, they would simply fire the intruders. Dragging herself from the icy mountains she was almost unconscious. In Turkey they were at the mercy of a band of lawless smugglers. Their last destination was Van where the smugglers responsibility came to an end. Betty was at her own risk with Mahtob. At the various stations during the bus journey, she had to face a world of intrigue, a world of boarders and identification papers and interrogation for passports.

After a journey of five days, Betty and her daughter reached the American Embassy at Ankara. They were delighted to see the American flag. Betty’s mother who had been working at the American State Department had asked someone to help her. After reaching America, Betty related her story in order to warn other women from being trapped in a country of fundamentalists. She did not wish that her sisters should undergo the same horrified conditions which she had suffered. Near about one thousand women and children like her, were held against their will in Iran and other Islamic countries. She wrote the story of their horrible experiences in Iran.

Betty had always been a lover of freedom. For the sake of freedom, she had taken a perilous route out of Iran, a journey that few women or children had ever made. She acquired freedom after giving a tough fight. She realized that freedom could not drop from the skies, but it was found in the vast swamp of suffering and struggle. Moody had not realized that she was a firm resolute American woman who believed in individuality, liberty and equality. Her vengeance was as total as his. She had powerful friends in Iran and the United States who would never allow him to triumph. Through a relative, she got the information that nobody had seen Moody since her escape.