Chapter 6

"It is strange but true;
for truth is always strange,
stranger than fiction."

Lord Byron

Don Juan
Conclusion: the comparative analysis

The historical period during 1950's and 1980's was crucial for the spread of ideas concerned with nation-building and consequent decolonization. In India, the writers were conscious of their 'different voice'. In Europe, the writers perceived and reconstructed life through varied experimental literary forms. The literature produced by women writers during these years, was spirited by a desire to clarify rather than justify, to propose rather than demand and to understand rather than claim or blame. The sexist bias had no central place in enjoyment and interpretation of such literature.

It is remarkable that most of the women writers tried to satisfy their urge for self-identity by writing autobiography. Right from Sunitee Devee's *Autobiography of An Indian Princess* (1921) to Kamala Chattopadhyay's *Inner Recesses Outer Spaces* (1986) in India and from Harriet Martineau's and St. Teresea's autobiographies to the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein, in the West, women have offered confessions of their private feelings as isolation, insecurity, loss of love, home, warmth in relations and want of emotional, moral support. Estelle Jelinek talks about this lack of authoritative voice in women's writings, while saying that

> The theme of accomplishment rarely dominates the narrative...indeed to a striking degree they fail directly to emphasize their own importance though writing in genre which implies self-assertion and self-display.1

Autobiography is the genre that implies self-assertion and self-display. It reveals past life of its writer with insights of his present self. Metaphorically it is a journey of mind towards the inner recesses of the writer, with a perceptive vision of his growth of personality from past to present. For women writers, the genre occupies a very specific place for two obvious reasons: one is the opportunity it offers them, to explore, explain and exorcise their past and other is that it happens to be an indivisible part of their creative work. Women enter a sensitive process of assimilation and identification, through their act of writing autobiography. In this age that looks at women, as Simone de Beauvoir said “if not a defect, as at least a peculiarity”, women need a form like autobiography for assertion of their 'peculiar' self. As Spacks wrote in her views on ‘*Imaging A Self*’:

> Autobiography assures the author, of her existence beyond all possibilities of philosophical denial.
Through in it, she comes to terms with her past or exorcises it. As a document for psychological findings, women's autobiographies are very significant. On the primary plane of experience, they offer a searching analysis of social and personal sources of expression and suppression. On a deeper level, they manifest the mechanism of female mind, and demonstrate its complexes in process of growth.

A woman's autobiography has a wider purpose to serve than mere discovery of individual self. It has an appeal for reformation of attitudes. It has on instruction of need for broader, more positive and progressive approach to life. It has an evidence of necessity for knowing the functioning of women's sensibility and their expressions.

The study of women's autobiography can proceed to further analyse the themes like middle-class or social morality, fusion of realism with romanticism in self narratives, psycho-religious or spiritual aspects of feminine sensibility or exploitation of the form for self-defence, self-preservation, self-discovery or self-assertion by women. Self-confidence in narrative flow of the autobiographer's story, results mostly from self-realization, self-defence and need for self-identification. The inner urge for freedom to establish one's identity is one of the sources for autobiography.

This project had chosen three representative women writers from different geographical and social ethos, to compare and contrast their autobiographies and to bring out some general plausible and possible principles related to the genre. Apart from bringing out similarities and dissimilarities, the project attempts to draw some useful inferences about women writers and their autobiographies. These inferences are the notions derived from close study of these three writers. One can glance at them through the conveniently divided sections as:

i) Life, career and quest – as writers.
ii) Similarities and dissimilarities – in life and autobiographies.
iii) Marriage and morals – as observed and expressed by them.
iv) Womanhood and religion – as important factors in their lives.
v) Creativity and autobiography – as inter-related factors.

The writers studied herein are Amrita Pritam through her autobiography The Revenue Stamp, Kamala Das in My Story and Jean Rhys with her Smile, Please.
These autobiographies are valuable as the study of female psyche in its interaction and co-relation with the male mind and the world. The confessional mode and personal tone authenticizes them as records of gender and genre-constructed, traditional and non-traditional images of womanhood. The three women writers portray inner and outer lives of women with their visions of creative sources in life. Their autobiographies are important socio-historical documents showing how women have been both the victims and the agents of social change. Being urbane, sophisticated and intellectually alert writers, they have been innovative, experimental, confessional and realistic. Their creative efforts have been free from the narrow divisions of class, region, race, gender and language. Their literary skill helps them in depicting the encounters between an individual self and the world.

In brief, this project is designed to infer not verdicts on the selected works but to arrive at a set of ideas with commentary, both critical and analytical. It attempts to bring into light various plausible observations and to establish certain convincing reflections. Through the approbation and ascertainment of the findings, the study aims at the accuracy of ideological exactness through the compare and contrast method of interpreting the three texts. The purpose of directing this analysis by such a method is to achieve a poised ending.

The final chapter of conclusion considers the three chosen writers with their texts side by side, to compare and contrast. The affinity of gender-experience brings them closer to each-other in their ideas of revolt and themes as love and isolation, death and disillusionment in relationships. The difference of their impressions, ethos, thinking and responses is brought out simultaneously while glancing at their views on death, religion, society, values and human relationships. Their limitations as writers, as women and as autobiographers are analysed to end the project with important insights.
6.1 Life, career and quest

Women writers, in general, find some objective in their lives and career; it happens to be the quest for the objective that motivates them to write autobiographies. Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Jean Rhys are the women who have recorded their experiences in the spirit of objective and academic impulse for self-expression. These women are excellent, innovative writers, with full-fledged career and historical life-events. The choice of such women for this project is not prompted by any feminist sympathies but by genuine appreciation of their personality as distinguished writers and their self-image as projected in autobiographies.

In life, full of struggle and suffering these three women have rebelled against the gender-biased ideas of pseudo-moral social structure. They have been aware of their limitations as women in patriarchal families and male-oriented communities. It is their creative spirit that empowered their minds to survive all traumatic episodes in their lives. They could overcome what Anita Desai called “the terror of facing single-handed the ferocious assault of existence”.

For Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Jean Rhys, life as content, flashed back into their autobiographies, is not their glorious past. They undertake a process of self-discovery in the enterprise of writing the life-story. For this process, the major role that becomes instrumental in their self-knowledge, is that of beloved. More than wife, sister, daughter or mother, these women pined for response in their role of beloved. Their self-scrutinizing efforts in autobiographies, to probe deeper into the subtle moves of female psyche are desperate and visible. Their self exploration demonstrates the dependence on some male agent in their vision of life. Amrita Pritam’s autobiography moves around Sahir and Imroz, her father and Sajjad for self-evaluation. Kamala Das’s story revolves round her husband and lovers to arrive at the confessional self-estimate, she thought of offering before death. Jean Rhys’s autobiography vaguely outlines the husband, the lover while her biography proves that her life was actually depressed by those males including Ford.

The life of these women had the commonality of certain features that one can notice through their autobiographies; these features are as the followings:
These three women had a troubled childhood. They missed one of the parents so strongly that it resulted in a sort of fear or want of emotional security in their adult life. Amrita Pritam lost her mother and suffered her absence especially in her adolescent years. Kamala Das felt the lack of attention and care from her mother and could never forget how her mother was 'distant' and 'cold' to her. Jean Rhys too, longed for warmth and affection that she missed in her mother.

All of them surrendered to social taboos and norms initially and rebelled after they suffered the negative results of their own conventional conduct. Amrita Pritam married according to her father's wish, and realized afterwards how she was a victim due to the mismatch. Then she revolted and broke away after a long period of conflict and suffering. Kamala Das accepted her husband everytime, though she always felt rejected by him. She moved out of the conjested domestic walls to breathe freely into a circle of friends and lovers. Her extra-marital affairs were a gesture of her revolt though implicit. Jean Rhys accepted not only the neglecting husband but also the exploiting lover, as Ford, and extricated herself out of the entanglement as soon as she could after the realization.

The three writers sought relief in the art of writing. Amrita Pritam and Kamala Das started writing poems in their early age, to elude the loneliness they suffered. Jean Rhys started writing a diary when she was disillusioned in her first love-affair in her early twenties. Professionally these women became writers, to get some source of earning. Amrita Pritam wrote novels for earning. Kamala Das wrote the very autobiography for an amount that she wanted for her surgery. Jean Rhys wrote stories and novels to support herself and her husband, economically. The act of writing, thus, was both economic and emotional way of relief and support.

They started their careers as writers and reached the top by their own merit. Amrita Pritam finally won the Award Gyanpeeth and other innumerable awards and honours. Kamala Das was awarded the Kerala Sahitya Academi award and acquired international fame as great poet. Jean Rhys was re-discovered and was awarded the Smith award for writing. Along with their wide and revised contribution to the treasury of
literature, these writers also worked as social agents of welfare; Amrita Pritam could successfully influence the outlook of her community and contemporaries through her writing, specially through her stories about women and their problems. Kamala Das directly worked in the areas of children’s and women’s health care centers and also for magazines and other literary columns. Jean Rhys did not work much for social or community welfare, because she could not. She was always so weak, economically and emotionally, that she sought comfort and consolation in alcohol, and writing.

v) These three women did not take any pride in their being talented writers. They suffered as women but never despised their womanhood. In fact, these women suffered at the hands of male agents in society but they did not despise the male. Apparently feminists, they never followed any feminist principles in their lives. Jean Rhys is slightly bitter than Amrita Pritam and Kamala Das, in her attitude as a writer but all the three accepted the realistic mode of expression in their mildest possible forms. They challenged the contexts that assumed the male authorship, but did not demonstrate anti-male sense in their expressions. These women lived by their convictions fighting with the mistaken notions regarding womanhood and female excellence.

vi) Working in a critical network of censorship, these women successfully created their own structures of ideology. Aware of the established tradition-bound structures, their contribution is not simply a new expression of the gender-generated distress and disorientation but it is, above all, a new form of living outside the conventional, social institutions with a painful and courageous honesty. They had the courage to tell what they know about themselves. Tracing the history of their own poetic lives, looking at the source of development of their psyche, these women achieve reciprocity with life in their re-shaped visions of experience, in autobiographies.

vii) All the three autobiographies are primarily the literary documents exposing socio-cultural construction of gender. They reflect the deconstructed feminine sensibility against the culturally produced elements of womanhood. Suggesting the psychological disturbance and
subversion, the self-portrayals of these autobiographers reach beyond the world of kitchen and children, finally to depict the far-reaching implications of gendered cultural selves in society, on personal and massive scale.

viii) Autobiography, for these writers, constituted an outlet and solace from the difficulties they faced in socio-historical constraints. As women they are positioned at the locus of complicated, collective and individual constrains of living. Nevertheless, their actively involved sensibility found their consistent struggle, the genesis of their creativity. Representing themselves in man's world, these women have been triumphant at the expense of their female solidarity to which their autobiographies seek to give credibility. Their texts have been the expression of their emergence as personalities in the literary world. They all suffered as literary artists and went through the experience of bitter criticism of their works but they did not give up. The contemporary world assaulted their boldness of expression and openness in outlook but they did not change. These women persisted in the art of writing with such commitment and sincerity that the world finally acknowledged their greatness as writers. In life and career as women and as writers these women share the following qualities:

i) They wrote about the life they lived as women and as individual in orthodox communities.

ii) They reflected the realities of private self without any kind of inhibitions or complexes.

iii) They performed the role of true artists in demonstrating their truth by dealing with the woman-subject in their poems, fiction and writing.

iv) They did not divert their attention from the feminine concerns, the gender consciousness and issue of women's lives in their writing but they write with humanist outlook rather than the feminist one.

v) The interpretations that these women offer in their life-narratives, are not linear. They focus the diverse individual and collective dimensions of life. They reflect shared and exclusive, identified and implicit aspects of their lives.

vi) They demonstrate the vision of their lives creating an order and tracing the growth of their creativity in lucid way.
vii) The creative spirit of these women is linked with their gender-orientation and womanhood.

viii) It is the feminine consciousness that enables them to know and grow in their self-aspired creativity.

ix) Neither apologetic nor aggressive, these women writers maintain their privileged sense of womanhood without feministic voice, without any arrogance against socio-moral standards.

x) Autobiography involves a complex system of thought and expressions in both men and women. Specifically among women, it moves around the woman writers’ self and identity, as expressive of their personal, familial, socio-historical, emotional and psychological issues. These women emphasize their truth in the process of re-interpreting their past and re-living their lives through their art.

An autobiography, in modern critical sense, is a document of quest: the quest for truth, the quest of the writer for his lost moments of past, the quest for self and its identification, the quest for egoistic proposal of objective evaluation of one’s life and the quest for discovering and locating the private self as different from the public or the social one.

The quest of these three writers has been the same as women writers; they longed for reformation, justice, creation of order and pattern and preservation of their self integrity. As women, however, their quests have been different from each other. Amrita Pritam went on searching the truth, from personal and emotional aspects of life to the socio-historical, universal and spiritual ones. Kamala Das’ art depicts her longing for love. She started her quest for love from her husband, parents and lovers and transformed her love into an ecstasy for Krishna the Supreme lover and for the whole human race. Jean Rhys’s quest was for identity that she missed in her life cut off from her native land, and tried to relive in her nostalgic and fictional comebacks to origins. The life, career and quests of these writers, in this way have been through various moral, social and religious pressures that they successfully transcended. Finally these women emerged out of all narrow barriers of personal and social consciousness and the only bond they cherished is their aesthetic positivity and creative spirit. These women fit very well in Roy Pascal’s definition of great autobiographers. As he defines:

The great autobiographies are the works that stand by themselves, and are appreciated without
reference to the actual lives and works of the authors. It would seem that this quality of truth must emerge from the text itself. We do not judge an autobiography solely upon the evidence of facts but also upon our intuitive knowledge of the distinctive character...their consistency, the manner in which they are told.

These women reveal this 'quality of truth' and 'the distinctive character'. Their consistency blends their struggle with the social network and their literary kinship. Their autobiographies are great for their sincerity in expression and distinctive courage in revelation of their truth.
6.2 Similarities and dissimilarities

The purpose of this dissertation is not to pass judgments on the concerned autobiographies but to relate the textual content with the formal, generic limitations and with the limitations created by the gender-conscious elements for women as writers of autobiography. Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das And Jean Rhys share a set of features as women, as creative writers and as modern autobiographers. These common features are as the following:

i) These writers lived unconventional lives and followed controversial ways of thinking. Amrita Pritam and Kamala Das defied the socio-cultural norms of Indian set of values. Jean Rhys exposed the duplicate and hypocritical attitudes in West-Indian and European context. These women defied and subverted the traditional expectations from a woman and demolished the myth of feminine roles and ideas.

ii) These women did not follow the established puritanical and orthodox ways of life. They had their own approach to life, relations and creativity. They did not accept the subordination or suppression in their personal lives. Amrita Pritam challenged the very taboos of community and culture by breaking her marriage on her own and leading her life independently. Kamala Das followed her inner urge for love, self-assertion and autonomy at the cost of her prestige, respect and security. Jean Rhys worked in theatres and lived in hotels rather than in family, to preserve her independence and self-respect.

iii) These women looked for values in relationships. They could not attain the level of pure form of love and true relationship and shared a sense of contingent regret and loss. They expressed their agonizing feelings of isolation in their writings. Amrita Pritam tried to find her idealistic vision of love first in her relationship with father and then in her dreamy bond with Sahir. She failed in both and finally went to take refuge in compromises. She accepted Imroz and made herself happy by strengthening that relationship. Kamala Das failed to acquire a sense of communion with the indifferent husband and tried to find it in various love-affairs. But she could never escape the sense of failure. Jean Rhys married thrice in the hope of emotional and social security but her mind remained in the same chaotic world of 'fear and distrust'.


iv) These women share a set of convictions which encouraged their rebellion against
the established social, cultural, and sexual patterns. Amrita Pritam believed in the
power of truth and never changed herself for the pseudo-moral norms of community-
life. Kamala Das cherished her strong faith in human response to love and
relationship. She continued, without requital, to seek the purity and truth in her
relationship and finally in her diversion to religion, and social work. Jean Rhys
believed very strongly in the individual’s capacity of self-knowledge and exploration
of mind. She reflected such faith in her women in fiction.

v) Autobiography for these women writers, was a source of mental relaxation,
emotional outlet, social exposure, material improvement and, psychologically, the
preservation of memories of their past. Amrita Pritam confessed in her autobiography
that she felt haunted by the shadows of past memories and writing was the only
source of relief for her. Kamala Das announced in the preface that she had written her
self-narrative for the money she needed for her operation. Jean Rhys wrote her
autobiography outraged by the wrong opinions about her. She was provoked mentally
to tell the truth about herself. Autobiography thus, was an important way, a solution,
for these women writers, of their problematic emotional, economic, psychic or
existential suffering.

vi) In autobiography, these women do not devote much place for their siblings and
friends although they offer considerable details of their childhood life. Amrita was the
only child and had no brother or sister. Her loneliness was the result of the want of
close friends in her life. Kamala Das includes some memories of her brother who was
her only friend and companion in childhood. But she also narrates how she felt
isolated despite his company, and how their sense of reciprocity was short-lived. Jean
Rhys writes a few references of her sister but never talks about her brother or any
close friend. She suffered the same sense of isolation as Amrita Pritam did.

vii) For these women, the root of their suffering and struggle was grounded in their
own conflict of romantic idealism and the realism they learned as lesson from their
experience in this world. Amrita Pritam could never overcome her idealism and her
strong sense of decency and grace of womanhood. She kept quiet when she suffered
and her only way of expression was her art of writing. Kamala Das wrote about the
ideal love for Krishna but experienced the torture of uncaving husband and deserting
lovers. Jean Rhys pined for perfection in love and marriage but was exploited and
deserted by her companions in real life.
viii) These women were criticized and misunderstood by their relatives, contemporaries and were denied the honour they deserved. They paid price through their sacrifice; for the delayed justice in their career and life. They were misunderstood in the social and literary circles, as adulteresses and were disrespected just because they loved or married more than once. The double standards of society were not acceptable to them. They openly spoke about what they accepted as the truth of their lives. They suffered but they did not surrender their honesty and truth. It is because of this self-integrity that these women proved themselves greater than the rest and successfully overcame their conflicts after they went through all their trials and tribulations.

ix) These women writers are passionate, subjective and intense so much so that apart from their autobiographies, the poems and stories, the fiction and non-fiction they contributed was also self-occupied and self-exploring. They could not evade their autobiographical voice in writings.

x) The autobiographies of these women make people rethink about woman, her position in family and society and her conflicts. They exposed the 'cunning' side of male by boldly reflecting their feminine self and experiences without any inhibitions. Their autobiographies reveal their submission and loss of domesticity resulting from their struggle under male-domination. They write about their inner urge for freedom and self-assertion, autonomy and independence, loss and search for identity. Their writings depict the universal predicament of feminine self. Their attitude, to love, sex, money and life is at loggerheads with from the puritanical one.

xi) Nostalgia, contemplation, analytical vision of experience, thought and the world are the typically romantic features cultivated by these women in their writings. Amrita Pritam writes of the dreams she felt were suggestive of some reality of life. She interprets those in her aesthetic way and links her own world of romantic ideas with the real one she lived in. Kamala Das creates the sense of fear, self-pity and loss that she actually experienced as a child, an adolescent and a young woman. Jean Rhys, too recalls her childhood fears that affected the growth of confidence in herself. In a way these women proved their aesthetic sense and delicate idealism as a force creating conflicts in their lives. Their greatness as writers is in fact, caused by their weakness as women. As writers they have been cautious about language. They have explored their feminine selves in their creation. They have strengthened their self-image in autobiographies and without caring for the pseudo-moral standards of
community, they have explored the truth about family-life, relationships, religion and spirituality.

Although these writers are similar in the features mentioned above, they basically belong to different socio-cultural ethos. Their geographical and linguistic backdrop has been different. They differ widely as individuals and their responses are very much distinct and unique in themselves. They did not exist in isolation, although they did not belong to the community they lived in. Involved deeply with the surrounding social ethos, nation and literary traditions, these women participated in the intense interaction of culture, ideology and religion. They provided a new set of illustrations, regarding individuality, to change the moral vision of the world.

The activating force in these three women is their quest for freedom of self-expression, pushing them ahead to reject the standards of morality that keep altering according to place, time and milieu. They belong to the different cultural ethos but their refusal to find fulfillment in the so-called ideal womanhood, the conventional roles of women as domesticated sacrificing 'godwomen', pushed them into the option other than domestic world.

Apart from their zeal for life, these writers present their vision on different planes of perception. Amrita Pritam is romantic in the reflection of her life, literature, men and women, in the very concept of human relationships. Her platonic world signifying dreams is not shaken by the disillusionments that life brought to her. Kamala Das is rather sensuous. She exposed pretensions and her shocking expressions created the scandalous reactions in public and a controversial image for her. Jean Rhys is neither romantic nor sensuous. She is comparatively more pragmatic and plain, sympathetic and realistic than the other two. Amrita treats love as religion, as a sacred principle directing life. Kamala Das appears slightly gay and flirtish and inexplicable in her vision of love. Jean Rhys is compassionate and emotional about love but her expression takes a bitter form because of the harsh reality she exposes by showing how mind and body, money and love, existence and economy are dependent on each other and controlled by each-other. The differences in these three women writers can be brought out on a broad plane as the following:

i) As writers these women follow different channels of reformation. Amrita Pritam is objective and principled in her quest for truth. She aims at the evolution of thinking patterns of the people. Kamala Das believes in activating the thought flow of society by her own way of emotional and revolutionary provocations. She creates a new
vision about everything she writes and her vision happens to be anti-traditional
necessarily. Jean Rhys wished to bring transformation in the attitudes that she felt
painful. Her only instrument is the fiction wherein she bursts forth to bring out the
falsehood and irony of attitudes.

ii) As autobiographers these women traverse the conventional regions of the genre.
Amrita Pritam wrote her autobiography as a philosopher whose thoughts overshadow
her feeling. Kamala Das wrote it as a poet interested in ideas, illusions and makes her
story coherent with those, with her life as woman. Jean Rhys wrote her autobiography
like a novelist, describing the fictional episodes of her life in it and her
autobiographical events in her fiction. Being creative women, these autobiographers
chose to pay more attention to their art of aesthetic expression. They did not write for
material gains and did not bother about comforts of life despite the economic crisis
they suffered in their lives.

iii) As poet and writer Amrita Pritam had a lofty approach to life and the world. She
sublimated language, values, even her feminine sensibility. She talks about woman as
‘Shakti’ and questions the supremacy of male in philosophical way by illustrating the
myth of ‘Ardhanarishwar’ whose body is half-male and half-female. She looks at life
from ever-rising point of human individuality. Kamala Das, as a poet and writer is
gripped so much by sensory perceptions, sexual consciousness and gender-bias that
she is not able to overcome her sense of failure, weakness and dependence, in the
context of Indian society. She has been living and writing as a woman. She also talks
about the goddess ‘Durga’ as ‘Shakti’ offering power to women like herself. Jean
Rhys, being always a victim of economic tension and worries of sustainance, wrote
about the harsh realities, especially in the life of a homeless woman.

iv) Failure in marital life and discontent in the relationship with husband is a
common feature of these three women’s lives but the effect of it upon them and their
responses varied. Amrita Pritam was disillusioned so disturbingly that she did not
marry again although she accepted the last man in her life, Imroz, as her mate.
Kamala Das suffered the lack of communion and love in her marital life, but she
neither broke her marriage-bond nor had any desire to remarry. She sought temporary
relief in her fleeting lovers and created her own world of poems, ideas and
controversies, to live with. Jean Rhys frustrated once in marriage, separated from her
husband but she could not live alone, unprotected and independent. She remarried
twice and tried to console herself in her alcoholic self-destructive paranoia.
v) As women, these three writers present different forms of female roles, feminine predicament and women's life. In their writings one can find different phases of women's life as critically theorized by Elaine Showalter. The first phase-'feminine' and delicate phase of imitation, surrender, sacrifice, submission and acceptance of the dominant traditional modes is depicted in all these three writers' works. Amrita Pritam however, is impartial to her characters and shows the feminine tendencies even in a few male characters like Dr. Dev and Sanjay. Kamala Das's art demonstrates the 'feminist' phase of protest and cry against the absolutism and domination of male-oriented social standards. She wrote satirical and bitter poems manifesting the irony of man-woman relationship. The third phase-'female' is the phase of self-discovery and search for identity. This is very well illustrated in Jean Rhys. Rhys herself suffered the quest for identity. She portrayed in her women protagonists, the predicament of self-regarding woman, within and without family, husband's protective support and community-life.

vi) Amrita Pritam's style in writing is evocative, philosophical and intellectual. She idealizes and romanticizes. She creates a dignified and dreamy world of positive and inspiring ideas. Kamala Das's style is provocative, sensational and startling. She satirizes and ridicules. Her poems reveal the failure of man to understand woman and the failure of woman to adjust herself with the male culture. Jean Rhys's style, neither evocative nor provocative, is more analytical, critical and psychological. She advocates the necessity of man in woman's life as provider, preserver and protector.

vii) Amrita Pritam transcends the consciousness of minor physical and material aspects of life. She probes deeper into mythical past of social, cultural, and religious heritage. She 'looks beyond the vision' and sees what others cannot. Kamala Das demonstrates a romantic thirst for allegories. She pines to touch the glories of love but realizes how the truth is bitter and low. Her optimistic move, nevertheless, remains unaffected by her depressing realizations. She continues her search for pure form of love and ideal relationship. Jean Rhys displays the gap between an uprooted individual and a woman's quest for merging into the community-life. She exhibits how a dislocated self, a displaced person, especially woman, struggles for identity and settlement unto the last.

viii) In Amrita Pritam's autobiography, one can easily notice the grace of mind that governs physical. She uses very dignified language and communicates very delicately selected details from her life. Kamala Das's writings and her autobiography is
haunted by the presence of body rather than mind. Her language is natural and her
expression sensational. She seems also sentimental to some extent. Jean Rhys’s
autobiography shows a distinct sense of rationality and pragmatism that overshadows
both-mind and body. Rhys is neither as aesthetic as Amrita, nor as sentimental as
Kamala. She is concerned more with the bond between money and sex, survival and
protection, psychic and existential sustenance than with love, beauty or ideals.
ix) In Amrita Pritam’s quest for truth, her self-expression touches the heights
spirituality. In Kamala Das’s self-occupied voice, the urge for some bond, is similar
to Rhys’s search for emotional warmth; Kamala, however, refuses to accept the defeat
and wishes to remain within the circles of love. In Rhys’s quest for self-identity, the
reformative zeal to eraze the labels of disintegrating relations, is visible. Amrita
Pritam lamented the incompleteness of relationships; Kamala Das regretted the
absence of warmth in those and Jean Rhys bewailed the dejecting futility of those. All
the three, suffered the sense of loss, isolation and exposed the pretensions in life.
Emancipated and self-assertive, these women fit into the image of ‘New Woman’
after they have paid for their identity and independence.
x) The responses of these women to criticism were quite clearly varied. Amrita
Pritam’s reaction has been slightly matured yet sensitively sharp. Kamala Das tried to
induce a kind of sympathy among readers by presenting herself as a suffering woman.
Jean Rhys was so alive to her criticism that she dared record the truth as she felt it
was. Amrita Pritam lived like a poet. Kamala Das lived more as a woman and was
never free from her gender-conscious self. For Jean Rhys, however, the economic
crisis in her life was serious and disturbing. She lived, fiercely like an animal
fighting for life. She thought economic dependence to be slavery and hated it.
Amrita’s autobiography is imagist representation of literary life of a poet. Kamala’s
‘Story’ is a sensational best seller creating controversies about her. Jean Rhys’s
autobiography is a commentary on her lifelong struggle for self-sufficiency and
protection. Jean is neither poetic like Amrita, nor dramatic like Kamala. She is rather
plain, realistic, philosophical and analytical.
xi) The responses of these women to old age have been different. Amrita Pritam
matured and mellowed to become a mystic and a philosopher. She moved in the
direction of spirituality and mysticism to further develop her knowledge of truth in its
universal form. Kamala Das, on the virge of old age converted to Islam and started
her religious voyage, trying to perceive the spiritual sources of existence. Jean Rhys
was not so religious, or spiritualist even in old age. She was afraid of the weakness and suffering that the old age brought and like W.B. Yeats, she wanted to get rid of the old age. It was one of the horrors that led her towards the self-destroying alcoholic isolation.
6.3 Marriage and morals

Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Jean Rhys have suffered intense involvement in marriage and morals, the order and disorder of society they lived in. They maintained their creativity despite all social obstacles and agonies. As self-educated women, their love of books, of Nature and of men led them towards their quests. Cutting across the public assumption of womanhood and chastity of women, they moved ahead towards spirituality, isolated but not unnoticed, anguished but not defeated. They report their inter-personal relationships with realistic insights into the making of their own psyche. They do not hesitate in recording the dissociation of value-system they observe inside and outside their experience. Towards the institution of marriage and ideas of morality, their attitudes are neither radically modern nor submissively traditional. Love and marriage, domesticity and womanhood, morality and feminine virtue are considered by them innovatively as elements dependent on personal rather than social outlook. Like modern writers they satirize the concept of supremacy of bodily virtue for women. They satirize the ironic value-system that creates odd compromises and embarrassing expressions of mismatching ideas in the name of marriage and morality. Insisting upon the autonomy of female would make these writers feminists but they conceive the solutionlessness of the problem of humanity. For all their innovations, revolutions and perceptions, they are not radical or extremists; they instinctively settle on the border of compromise most of the times. Their sense of justice is always behind their protest and they express it with aesthetic polish of creative and reformative zeal. Amrita Pritam pays special attention to the question of morality in her writings. She points out very accurately the conflict between individuated women and socially sanctioned values. These writers place themselves outside the central social judgments because of the deep human need for something more than eros, for which society provided no possibility in marriage. Bernard Shaw offered an appropriately rational comment on the value of pretension in marriage when he states:

Those who talk most about the blessing of marriage and the constancy of its vows, are the very people who declare that if the chain were
whole social fabric would fly asunder. You cannot have argument both ways. If the prisoner is happy, why lock him in? If he is not, why pretend that he is?  

Eros and an ideal marriage, are not related to the degree of love. Ironically they are related to the degree of adjustment, sacrifice, suppression of self. Marriage only requires the co-existence of man and woman irrespective of their mutual responses to life and hence reciprocity. A happy marriage, in the social and cultural sense, is based on the shared problems rather than the shared interests. Amrita Pritam refused to adopt the pretension of happiness forever in the name of marriage. She left her husband not simply because she suffered the want of ideal love and freedom but also because she felt it not justifiable to continue the relationship without love. Kamala Das attacks marriage as “an intrusion into the privacy of an artist” and states that marriage brings damage to creative minds. She narrates her own suffering of marital life in her autobiography so vividly that people brand her as anti-social or anti-marriage agent of modernity. She brings out how marriage becomes a means of woman’s slavery and suppression. For Jean Rhys, however, marriage had two-fold value. One was the need for economic stability and the other was for emotional protection. Rhys finds a very obvious bond between money and marriage, money and sex, to some extent also money and love. The struggle for survival overtakes the idealism of Rhys’s creative mind and she demonstrates through her fiction how women are the victims and the ‘accommodating sufferers’ outside marriage and family. 

For these three women writers marriage and domesticity performed a significant part in life. They observed and experienced how the impulse for communion, togetherness and sense of harmony does not necessarily exist in marriage. Amrita Pritam believed that disappointing marriage is not worth living in it and it is not so significant as to waste the whole life for the sake of it. She stepped out of the domestic walls when she felt her creativity would cease within those due to suffocating relationships. Kamala Das rejected the conventional order of conduct and speech and irked the lords of culture. She celebrated beauty and passion, even womanliness in queer ways to shock the socio-moralistic masters of orthodoxy and tradition. Jean Rhys was not able to take any drastic steps like these two. She tried to live in the marriage and out of it according to the need of time. She explored the brutal side of reality and exposed how the creative visions of female mind are at the
mercy of this harsh and bitter, hostile world. A fine combination she offers of what she lived and what she thought. In her own response, she is neither platonic as Amrita, nor sensational as Kamala. Her outlook is plain, transparent to some extent but very closer to the experience she received.

Moral order has been a great pressure and force in the lives of women writers. For obvious social, cultural and other reasons, women have always suffered more restrictions than men, in making public claims of their private truth. There has been a growing dissatisfaction among women due to their conscious or unconscious repression of self. Their dependent status in the family, and the society, has been instrumental in crushing their personal feelings and their restlessness for expression. Their identity and individuality had no other way out for expression in the male-patterned systems of relationships and life. Memoirs, diary, even letters and autobiographical writings become vehicle for such women's expression. Their intention appears to use the genres of writing for the investigation and affirmation of female identity.

The moral pressures created tensions in the lives of these women; they could not help the natural part of their writing, especially in autobiographies, wherein the walls between private and public life collapsed. These women offered in their autobiographies, their dialogue with 'self' Amrita Pritam lived the life in a way others dreamt of living. She made her characters too, tragic rebels like herself, whose 'iconographic existence' advances them to the exposure of social duplicacy of standards and pseudo-moral, degrading pretensions around them. Amrita herself experienced the individual's struggle between two opposite emotions inherent in her own personality. She waged a relentless war between her private authentic self and social self. She celebrates the fall of woman for the sake of her man-oriented roles, as she wrote,

She was two women, not one......the daughter,.......a wife......a Hindu.......and the other was just woman, daughter of the earth, pining for the sky as her bridegroom.6

Amrita had known by experience that woman's life is torn between private and public, familial and social, moral and mental forces. "Love was her creed, the world her home, and her quest was the only law that bound her." 7 As a sensitive individual she struggled with her fate and tried to participate life also in society. Amrita's intense involvement with the creative self in her replaces her personal
relations which also throb with the energy of deep passion. She evinces a deft handling of the issues in life from dreams and desires to real relationships.

The questions that plague her as a social being arise more from the poetic mind observing the life and world with a focus on women and their life-problems. For her it is vain to write anything without the concept of social morality, the sense of justice, equality and honesty of individual’s share in society. Social sense of existence is for her, the expansion of the personal identity of an individual. This idea is not uniquely of her view, or of women’s but it distinguishes her from others sharply. Amrita is amoral. She is conscious of others moral outlook. She articulates lucidly how the sense of social commitment is related to solidarity and self-integrity rather than to the showy conduct or speech in public. Unlike other women writers, Amrita has a very deep liking for mythological allusions, clarity of images and vision. She is above all, an objective artist.

In *Ek Sawal* Veera has to get married to an old man for the sake of money she would earn from him so that her father and brother may live comfortably. Her father doesn’t think of her future but she is prepared to sacrifice everything for the good of her family. Amrita’s focus is thus on the repressed feelings of women, their agonies and self-scarifies, resulting in the injustice to then. This injustice is a compulsion or self-imposed sacrifice but the consequence of it bothways, is the exploitation of women.

Amrita’s social revolt through her pen is a part of her general revolt against the surfacial or superficial beliefs and wrong sense of values. In the light of her views on self, she perceived that ‘Atma-Vichara’ that is ‘self-inquiry’ is the only source of fulfillment and knowledge to a creative mind. It is a type of ‘Gyana-Yoga’ the yoga of knowledge, to think and analyse the self. For Kamala the question of morality was a part of one’s own conscience. When she talked about her moral consciousness, it was the humorous, ironical, ridiculing and satirizing way of her expression that startled the people. Kamala is not as sober as Amrita, in her expression. She suffers, as an artist, the absence of sublime sense of consistency and proves herself an eccentric, impulsive, dramatizing agent. The sentimental vision of her fragmented psyche turns to create controversy by mixing love with sex, marriage with devotion, womanhood with motherhood, artist with beloved and finally Krishna with Allah. The only permanent feature of Kamala is her change in ‘attitude and expression, behind her ‘Let-me-change’ credo, however, there is an impulse to contribute juicy bits of gossip
to the literary public. The high level of enthusiasm that she owns, neither short-tempered nor vindictive, helps her to overlook the critical attacks and objectionable comments that the authorized moralists shower upon her. She is the mistress of natural human feelings. With her sharp focus and obsession on sex and love, she reigns through poetry and lingers in the minds of her readers. Amrita is known for her flawless perfection and clarity of thought. Kamala, for her keen observations and spontaneous wit; she never created sensation desperately but in the process of describing her lingering tensions and stimulating by her gift of the gab, she created steady circle of admirers. Her extramarital leanings brought her in serious isolation and she suffered so much pressure on her heart that she fell sick. It was this sickness that got cured by her act of writing autobiography in confessional mode. It was the text she had been reflecting upon, in her isolated life. Her physical consciousness and recurring images of body, depict the moral norms of the community she has lived in, as based on the physical rather than the mental responses of individuals. In her marital incompatibility and violent eruptions of emotions, she explosively forced the sexist assumptions which were socially imposed upon women. Her emotional maladjustment with the husband, the lovers and the relatives, made her attack the wasting and wasted moral system. She attacked the established practice of sexual politics in marital existence.

Jean Rhys, nevertheless, is distinct from the two Indian women. Being a West-Indian, she shares their sensitivity and creative urge but the ‘Western’ touch in her vision is enough to distinguish her from them. The question of economic settlement, racial identity and nativity were so obsessively significant for Rhys that she did not find any place to consider specifically: the moral or pseudo-moral judgments. But she could not evade her own consciousness of moral values so much so that she felt passive, guilty and trapped in the cycles of love, even marriage. Her neutral stand made her a more objective artist, in the chaotic world of uncertain ties and fearful distrust. The hysteria and suffocation of ironical existence, wherein she belonged to no man, no race, no place, no community, created in her an urge to become black to share the lifestyle of the blacks. She was fascinated by the blacks due to the sturdy and fearless, rough and careless pattern of their lives. The financial insecurities of Rhys’s life distorted and directed the course of her living. From her involvement with Lancelot Smith and Ford Madox Ford, she inferred that money happens to be the determining force of human ways. Her fiction conveys subtle remarks on the faulty
structure of communal life wherein a lonely woman is forced to accept her own victimization. Her novels are her satires on such socio-moral pressures.
6.4 Womanhood and religion

A woman’s urge to write an autobiography originates from the inevitable experience of being disillusioned, displaced or dislocated. Such an experience can be in the private world of self, in the human world of relationships, in society or it can be in one’s own personality and character. Patricia Spacks offers a comment for women autobiographers when she talks about British autobiographies: “happiness,” she states, “as women implicitly or explicitly evoke....derives from relationship, a point of view ...often considered particularly feminine.” Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das, and Jean Rhys have suffered mentally and emotionally for three different reasons. Amrita’s quest for truth made her wander in the ways of creativity and experience, of dreams and illusions vs realities of life. Kamala’s unfulfilled quest for true love pushed her from one extreme to the other- from the physical and the sensational to the religious and the spiritual. Jean Rhys’s desire for secured and ordered life made her compromise with whatever she received instead of searching for what she longed.

A woman, accustomed to the tendency of being in protection, shadow or support of man in the roles as father, husband, brother or son, needs the sense of security all through her life. She needs man since she is taught dependence as a way of life in the family- from childhood to girlhood and then to womanhood. The very concept of womanhood is the product of patriarchal format and man-generated creed for woman. This system changes her home from the father’s to the husband’s by way of marriage but it does not allow her the sense of independent existence. Moving from one person to another she may suffer the feeling of uprootedness but she is expected to adjust and find her happiness in the happiness of man she depends on. The socio-cultural ethos creates the need for security, protection for woman, and promises that in man. Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Jean Rhys are the women who dared to shake off this stereotyped pattern and lived isolated and agonizing lives rather than the unwanted, unheeded life of hypocritical relationships. The thematic similarity among the three is rooted in their focus on womanhood, the predicament of women and the exposure of gender-biased social set-up. They lived as writers, observed life as individuals and wrote as women, with the ideas and convictions of human beings.

In their lives, Amrita, Kamala and Jean tried to seek fulfillment through the roles they played as women. Amrita Pritam felt rejected as a daughter. As a wife she
felt indifferent and as beloved she appropriated her passion in creative and literary life. She revealed an extraordinary sense of dignity and graceful codes of relationship in her expression. As a mother and grandmother she has been enjoying her role and felt contented. Kamala Das felt ignored as a child and deprived of her self-respect as a young woman. She suffered the lack of warmth and concern as a wife and tried to compensate through motherhood. She believed in spontaneity and preserved that at the cost of her consistency. In her writings she ventilated the painful realization of woman, with the awareness of individuating liberty. She had a sense of failure at times but she did not cease involving hopefully in the contacts of personal and social world. The failure of marital life she compensated by talking openly of love, of man-woman relationship. Jean Rhys was very passionate as a woman and very analytical as a writer. Because of her continual struggle and loneliness, she became a passive and self-destructive alcoholic.

Religion has been a determinant force in the life of Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and to some extent in that of Jean Rhys. These women have studied and followed their religion with the artist's aesthetic sense of commitment. Their convictions have been dependent on their creed and their conduct and character were shaped by their religious, spiritual consciousness.

Amrita Pritam being a Punjabi by origin, was married in her young age to a man from her community. She had disbelieved in God as a child when her mother died. She rebelled against the faith of her father and refused to offer prayers. She had also argued with her grandmother who kept the utensils used by Muslim visitors, untouched. As a writer she emerged above the conflicts of faith and doubt. She wrote stories and novels demonstrating all religions equal. Her men and women in the world of fiction, do not hold the narrow outlook of religion as the fanatics did. She suffered for this broad and matured view. Her writings were criticized and banned. She was boycotted by her community for a while, for allowing a person of another religion stay with her. But Amrita fought for the truth for her own choice and freedom. She patiently proved her self-preserved values. Amrita's motto 'Look a bit higher' is always her inspiring principle for life. She looks a bit higher than others do. She does not confine herself to one religion or community. She belongs to the universal world of humanity, and follows human values in her conduct. Since she is a creative writer, religion does not overshadow her aesthetic sense of life. It is only in the old age that Amrita has turned to spirituality and mysticism. She claims the study of certain
cosmic principles that control and direct human life. By religion, she means spirituality rather than ritualistic or fanatical principles. For Kamala Das religion was a matter of obligation in her childhood and youth. Being a member of Hindu Nair family she followed the religious principles that were a part of life for the family. Her loneliness and depression due to failure in marital life resulted in her drastic diversion of interest. For a while she tried painting and politics. For a longer while she consoled herself in motherhood and social work. But her self-conscious mind could never escape the sense of persecution she suffered. In her fifties, she felt a fascination for Islam and wanted to convert. Her husband convinced her not to do that for the sake of children. It was after the settlement of her sons, and the death of her husband that she converted to Islam. Religion, is a matter of personal feeling she believes. She considers love as greatest religion and justifies her conversion on the reasons as follows:

i) She believes that Islam is the religion of love.

ii) She felt that Islam offers protection to women through purdah. Apparently an excuse, this reason has deeper sense for her. She longed for a bond promising warmth and protection, in her past life but did not receive one.

iii) She felt that there was a person who loved her and wanted her to convert. This she confessed in her answer to the questionnaire by the researcher.

iv) In a suggestive hint at sunset- evening, she attained the revelation of a need for conversion, when she was coming home from a journey. She felt a divine gesture in that message.

v) Apart from her claimed reasons, there is implicit faith that she demonstrates, in her talk and writings. People misjudge her conversion as a drastic response since she had been writing in drastic expressions to startle. Some consider it a publicity stunt. Being a well-known international poet, she already had earned enough publicity. Conversion is not the way to that for her.

Jean Rhys was exposed to the drabness of a lonely and helpless woman's existence. Her writings reflect the world of schizophrenic struggle of woman in her existential angst. Her incurable loneliness and oppressive lack of comfort created a void in her life. She was obsessed by this sense of void throughout her life. In her roles of mother, wife, and beloved she pined for reciprocity and harmony. In the chaotic world of shapeless reality and uncertain ties, she wished to create order and shape by some literary revolution. Vijayshree C. points out that Rhys had a
revolutionary spirit from the very childhood. The very first text she countered in her revisionist reading was the Bible itself. Her revolutionary writing began with her provocatively titled essay, “The Bible Is Modern.....” 9 In her writings, she created men and women victimized by socially-conditioned relationships. Her bitterness resultant of isolation proved her to be stubborn at times, as she had experienced the debasing realities. Her protagonist Sasha, like herself, with “no pride, no name, no face, no country” 10 and no religion to follow, confines herself to articulate an intelligent self-mockery different from her early impulsive self-absorbing and self-pitying passivity. Rhys’s journey is from the personal to the universal. According to Blodgett,

Rhys’s perspective on life, being based on the wisdom that you keep your injured heart alive by giving to yourself to humanity rather than licking your wounds. 11

Rhys as a writer realized that there is a spiritual sort of pleasure in self-discovery and self-revelation. The creative mind enjoys the memorizing and recording past life in one’s own vision, expressions and selectively focused events to shape the shapeless life.

Estelle Jelinek studies the intense features of women’s autobiographies and brings out that,

Apart from the interpersonal relationships, the other area in which women could operate with relative freedom was religion, for one thing.....it provides an-explanation, and consolation for the grief, pain and loss that were inevitably associated with life in that period but most particularly with child bearing..... 12

Jelinek talked about eighteenth century women’s autobiographies among which a large number was of Quaker autobiographies. Over all, the intrusion of religion and spirituality in autobiographies suggests that introspective women whose lot is less favored, tend to retreat to religion. Their feminine sensibility undergoes the changes corresponding to the economic developments, social dislocations, Industrial revolutions, and other disturbances bringing disparity in their lives.
Autobiography for women, as for men, is a verbal mode of communication. Women writers are inclined to evoke their 'feminine' point of view. Walking down the memory lane, as autobiographers, women try to recapitulate the process of their mental growth, the development of their personality and character. It is the uncertainty about their identity, security and self-image that inspires them to write autobiography. Confusion about motivation is natural but generally women write to fulfil their need for self-expression. They write autobiography to fulfil their necessity of self-revelation. The investigation of an autobiography as an act of writing down the life-story begins with the writer's ideology, life-experience and personality. It continues through the choice and selection of events, episodic experiences, and the analysis of those by the author. For this project three writers are chosen and three different ways of analysis are adopted. The first autobiography by Amrita Pritam is analysed in thematic and semantic way. The second, by Kamala Das, is analysed with the updated information about the author and her life. The third one, by Jean Rhys, is discussed to focus on the writer's vision more than as a textual appreciation. Her fiction is also taken into consideration as and when it is relevant in the scheme. The purpose of the variation of these methods as to suit the writers, is simple. Every individual text should be comprehended in its proper way although it can be categorized into certain generic and structural classes. These three women share an enlightened and alert mind that is sensitive to life and sensible in living.

Biologically being weaker, the women always find themselves in the need of a helping hand of the stronger male or female in their life. If they receive a supporting relationship to satisfy their thirst for human sharing and to gratify their normal sense of self-respect, they do not go astray in the path of life. If no relation in their life, is gratifying being creative writers, the women can even try to find their fulfilments in their career, but the private side of their life cannot be compensated through their public life.

It is paradoxical to find that the form of autobiography though being inherently incomplete since the author continues the life that he narrates in it, is a woman's instrument for the search for completion, a sense of fulfilment in her life. The very fact that she writes an autobiography offers her the satisfying sense of having lived a life 'narratable' through the form.
It is essentially feminine tendency to adjust, to compensate or to replace the positive sense of some worth and meaning and value-instead of 'minding' what is negative and challenging its influence.

Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Jean Rhys are the three women who created their alternative world of ideas and tried to relate it to the real world they inhabited. Three dominant motives operated behind the act of writing an autobiography in case of these three women:

i) Quest for truth, self-esteem and self-knowledge worked so strongly in Amrita Pritam that she desired to write a self-narrative "of mind voyaging from one reality to the other."

ii) Quest for love, need for sympathy and unfulfilled desires inspired Kamala Das along with her necessity of money for her treatment, to write her autobiography even when she was in the jaws of death for a while.

iii) Quest for identity, belongingness and loss of security created a sense of senseless existence that Jean Rhys wanted to make meaningful through her creatively shaped life in her autobiography. She was anguished by the incompleteness of relationships.

Consequential to their struggle and suffering, these three women writers faced life with their own convictions and suffered on account of their spirit of revolt. Their autobiographies are their revisions of the long ordeal of experience. Being creative women these writers appropriately link their personal experiences to the universal world and harsh realities of social, cultural, communal life, in general. As women, these writers do mirror the socio-moral structures through their self-narratives. They also explore and uproot the domestic and cultural structures binding and blinding women. Their effort transcends the economics of their costly freedom and invents new forms of self in varied spiritual, intellectual and psychological analysis. The self for these writers is not incomplete in the sense that the social and communal barriers are crossed by their self-generated courage and creativity. In his explanation of creative writers and autobiography, Roy Pascal comments:

What one can expect from the imaginative writer is an unusual skill in the evocation of scenes and characters, and more delicate self-observation, especially in respect to obscure inner urges, imaginings, to modes of perception and apprehension..................... an artistic arrangement of the whole...... since ........ they are good at verbal self-expression, the imaginative writer's autobiographies show
It is true that creativity helps the writers in autobiography. In case of these three women their creativity has helped them in the following ways:

i) Imagination of these women and their love of words beautified their language, style and expression-ability.

ii) Literary experience of writing poems and fiction helped them in shaping and forming a patterned vision of their lives.

iii) Instead of over-writing of self-descriptive or irrelevant story of individual, these writers offer proper judgments and the self-analytical vision of their lives with a strong sense of consistency and appropriateness.

iv) Memory plays a very crucial role in production of the accounts of selves, through which these writers evoke actual cultural representation of their individuality as socio-historical element in the making.

v) Their self-narratives become a coherent record of their physical struggle for survival, mental conflicts in existence and spiritual agonies of rejected selfhood.

The autobiographies of these three women, are their effort to organize the progressive order of their emerging self from the past to the present. It is the unfolding of a mature and completely actualised unique self that makes them preserve the pact of individual with the socio-historical canonical status. Narcissus blessed them in viewing the self-image and discovering the positive elements in their lives along with the bitter ones. “As soon as one is able to rise above the day-to-day mundane activity, one is able to discover the intuitive, non-mediated experience of the self.” ¹⁴ It is in this sense that autobiography helped these women to unravel the dark recesses of their beings. The writing of self-story, for them, is equivalent of breaking a spell by which they attain a deep sense of peace and self-justice. Their self-observation becomes an instrument of their self-improvement.

Amrita Pritam’s creative ability affected her life and actions as her expression in fiction, poetry and also autobiography. Her inwardness is her private reality. The world is a place for her to pause in self-realization and to proceed towards that private reality. The uniqueness of one’s feelings of being oneself is stressed by Tagore in Sadhana:

I am absolutely unique. I am I. I am incomparable. The whole weight of the universe
cannot crush out this individuality of mine. I maintain it inspite of the tremendous gravitation of all things.  

It is this feeling that motivated Amrita and sustained her energy in writing. The great philosophers all over the world followed the principle ‘Man know thyself’. Amrita also, is conscious of the necessity for ‘knowing the self’ i.e. ‘atman’, again and again in her writings. Her self-exploration is essentially spiritual and closely linked with her creativity. Even in her relationship to man she is so intensely philosophical that she states:

Baap, bhai, Khavind  
Kisi labz ka koi rista Nahee  
Lekin jab tumhe dekha  
Sare labz gaadhe ho gaye  
Sare akshar gahre ho gaye!  

She means to convey the unique form of spirituality even in the relationship of woman and man. In her words, “Father, brother, husband- no word could mean any relation. But when I saw you, all the words become profound, all the terms formed depth of the relationship.” Thus, the creativity of Amrita is a significant source of her self-story.

In Kamala Das’s autobiography, creativity played a very different role which was mostly situational. She was on the death-bed when she wrote her story. The drugs given to her by doctors and the fits of conscious unconscious and sub-conscious memory voyages helped her in the process of writing My Story and she sensationalized it. According to Pascal, in the reconstruction of past experiences, the writer’s poetic talent is exploited in a better way, although he states that the “feel is always composite ……….a command over the linguistic nuances and idiomatic jargon, in expression.” Kamala Das, being a poet, has a sensitive refinement in expression and her comprehensive vision of life is intensifies due to that. She could interpret the simple events of her past with the aid of her imaginative faculty, thought-pattern and the various shades of meaning. Being a poet and a passionate human being, Kamala reveals the decisive, more intimate impressions and responses that were important, not in themselves, but for what she put into them. A striking element in her self-narration is the higher degree of transparency and honesty of expression. Her consciousness about her self-identity in past and the one in present enables her to understand and to fill the gap between the two. This gap occupies a progress
according to the creativity she employs. In her objectified self-vision she does what Lyn Hejinian expects in autobiographer:

The personal is already a plural condition. Perhaps one feels that it is located somewhere within, somewhere inside the body - in the stomach? In the chest? The throat? The head? One can look for it and already one is not oneself. One is several, incomplete and subject to dispersal.

As an autobiographer and writer Kamala could never escape her self-consciousness as woman. In locating her historical self, she analyses the past, discovering and improvising the consistency that she missed in living.

Jean Rhys, the Caribbean master of modern novel, is different from the above two Indian poets, in her creative sensibility. Being a novelist she does not much poetry as such in her expression on apparent level, although her sensibility is not less poetic in any sense. Thomas Staley infers that Rhys possessed a self split between the West Indies and England. Rhys's strategy to invent the pattern for chaotic and orderless world of her characters as well as for her own world, is to explore the domination of surrounding forces and the helplessness of an individual to such an extent that "the only form of survival is total retreat: from the relationship, from the feelings it evokes, from herself."

Living life as a solitary woman, walking the streets of helpless existence on the edges of respectability, Rhys had known the kinship between power, money and happiness as the central dictum of life. She had known that a woman like her, did not belong to the masculine world of business, to the racial world of European diplomacy, to the public world of political power and to the domestic world of economic comfort. She wanted to belong to some force and did not know what it was. Sexual ambivalence was central to her social experience. Disrupting the illusions of love and ideas, moral and narrative order, she always felt displaced, lost and insecure in the world. Her self-narration was prompted by her longing to tell the truth. As she put it,

> If you want to write the truth you must write about yourself...... I don't see what else you can do. I am the only real truth I know.

Her heroines are more than simple projection of herself. By her own admission, she has always used her creativity to relieve the emotional distress. Her novels are the stories of unfortunate women,
Reproducing her sensibility rather than her biography, they are 'transposed autobiography.' Rhys reproduces experienced reactions, sensations, and attitudes, more consequentially than she does events or circumstances. 22

Rhys was exposed to the violence of poverty and social exclusion. Her life was a story of struggle to 'come into being.'

These three women, above all, have fought the silences that pervade women's history. They have rebelled against the intrusions on female space. As Roy Pascal viewed, that "true autobiography can be written only by men and women pledged to innermost selves, and the form requires dedication to internal as well as external events." 23 The writing of autobiography for these women has been an act of affirmation of faith. Their broad visions of feminine sensibility and assertion of female self can be sensed without any feministic arguments, for, they constituted a natural and organic part of contemporary life.
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7) Ibid.


16) Pritam Amrita, in the Interview by the researcher, on 29.10.2000 at Delhi.

17) Translated by the researcher.


20) Roe Sue, (ed.) *Women's Reading Women's Writing*, Harvester, Britain, p. 239.

