Chapter 1

"A well-written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one."

Thomas Caryle

Richter
was that there are no specific volumes on comparative analysis of any two or three autobiographies, especially by women. A few critics have contributed to the formal and theoretical analysis of the genre with exemplary references by men and women but none ever tried to look into the feminine concerns, relating those to autobiography or gender-consciousness, in the form.
Autobiography as a Literary Genre

Autobiography is one of the most appealing forms of writing. For the present readers, it is no more a subject critically neglected; nor do we have a paucity of the writers. It is popular, on the contrary, in such a way that everyone likes to read and loves to write autobiography, right from a servant in a house, to a vice-chancellor of a university. Autobiography is written by clerks, soldiers, actors and actresses, dancers, housewives, ministers, army-officers and also farmers and labourers. As an interesting genre, it is not simply a literary proposition of life; more than that, it is a form of creative vision in literature. It is the only genre that holds a singular arena of veracity and intensely personal insights of the individual. It is directly concerned with one person, as a distinct ‘I’ peeping into the ‘self’ and private life. The author of autobiography seeks and attains a discovery of self. In this sense of the most concentrated version of life, autobiography is a unique form.

On one hand autobiography satisfies the curious fascination for the ways of human mind, and on the other it introduces the link between one’s external behavioral pattern and inner psychic functioning. It passes as an interesting self-narration of a person who is representative of a class or section of society. Each autobiography happens to be the vision of one person’s life in one way and the reflection of a community, class or society in another. The questions like what do we mean by ‘autobiography’ and how it can be studied, need a series of various discussions, which are involved in the meaning and process of writing it. One has to know the position, the placement of autobiography and consider its meaning only after going through some useful definitions offered so far by various critics. Similarly, one cannot proceed further to examine the process of its writing without marking its identification as a form, distinct from biography, diary, memoir, letters, even the ‘autographical’ writing. The process of writing autobiography and writing about it involves the questions of motives, types, the position of the autobiographer, the principles and the limitations.

In this chapter all these units of the topic are examined separately in the way to sketch an analogous composition. More attention is paid to the aesthetic and academic connections among all units than to the theoretical or conjectural threads. The form is treated as a literary genre a literary creation rather than a qualifying documentation of truth, life, person or self.
1.1 Definition and meaning

The traditional method of beginning a discussion on a certain topic is by defining it as a term and one is easily tempted to follow the tradition for the purpose of looking, and of course being acceptable. Initially, when one refers to 'autobiography' as a genre, the effort to explore its complexity, validity and other such issues is required. One cannot really proceed with this inquiry unless one has been through a series of definitions contributing to the meaning of the form. At the same time, it is obvious to supplement these definitions with essential remarks, explanations or clarifications, keeping in view that rigid definitions can prove misleading and can sound useless generalizations.

The issue of defining autobiography in accurate terms is a matter of unending dispute. Being the most personal mode of expression, it includes many stages like freedom of selection and of expression, choice of vagueness and clarity, framing of identity, editing and designing of truth, independence of egotism, mode of confession and using honesty as the best policy. The form autobiography, for this reason, has different and varied definitions. Of all those sets of definitions, this discussion refers to the selective ones that are felt essential since the very aim of this project is representative and not exhaustive in its literary claims.

Autobiography, literally means, "the story of a person's life or a book containing it, written by that person...". Autobiography, is a 'book', containing the 'story' of one's 'life'. The story-like presentation in the book-form makes it a part of literature and the content 'life' brings it so close to life-realities that its position becomes ambivalent. Autobiography is the only form that holds such ambiguity because it affiliates life with literature. Apparently it is an aesthetic story of life and conceptually it is the micro-scopic vision of life. It is both, dramatic and authentic. Like Arnold's description of a 'disinterested endeavor' it is, in fact, an objectified personalizing. Autobiography is a book on one hand, a story of life on the other, and a personal mirror of reality on the next. It is a reflection of life, revelation of mind and a representation of reality.

In critical terms, autobiography is defined etymologically as "derived from the Greek elements" referred as, 'autos'-the self, 'bios'-the life and 'graphe'-the writing. This is the simplest clarification. 'Autos' indicates the significance of 'self'. It is the self of the writer who is both the narrator and the chief participant of his life-
story. Being the first unit in the term ‘autos’-self, occupies the foremost position; if somebody else narrates the life-story it can be ‘bio-graphy’ and not ‘auto-biography’. For deeper perceptions about self as element, one has to concentrate upon it separately in further structural analysis of the form.

‘Bios’-the life is the subject, the central theme of autobiography since it is not possible to find an autobiography without its portrayal of life. ‘Bios’ necessarily conveys the ‘biographical’ details, the mention of events and happenings in the moves and making of the author’s life as individual. One cannot really escape one’s life-events and especially in autobiography, the past becomes an important constituent. For, the ‘bios’ really means life that is lived, the past as life-experience of the author. The involvement of memory with the past, creeps in the process of life-presentation. It is this reproduction of past-life through memory that creates half of the complexity in the form. The sense of past and the role of memory are significant components of structural analysis.

‘Graphe’ means ‘writing’ that confines life to the ‘book’ and past to the ‘literary record’ in a document. The process of writing implies the author’s entanglement in a triple-role. The autobiographer has an assignment as a writer, the narrator and the protagonist of his life-story. It is necessary to discuss the position of autobiographer to examine the process of writing autobiography and this is to be done in further analysis wherein the ‘edition’ of life-story can be scrutinized.

James Olney’s definition, as revealed above, explains that three constituents of autobiography are self, life or past and writing. This definition communicates that oral narration of one’s life may not be appropriate for what is strictly referred is autobiography. Written or in-print version is essential.

There is a formal definition that tries to confirm the focus of autobiography:

An autobiography is the account of an individual human life, by the subject himself......... above all, its principle must be security of the self

Autobiography, as the account of individual’s life holds the genesis of individualism in this sense of ‘security of the self’. It is self-narrated self-experience. It is self-representation by the ‘subject himself’ and its self-discovery has to follow the principle of ‘self-security’. Self is omnipresent in autobiography, so much so that it sounds something closer to ‘self-centred’ or ‘self-complacent’ to sceptic minds.

Nevertheless, it is always an interesting venture to enter into a person’s private life; to peep into an individual’s emotional involvements; to know about
one's convictions and secrets, passions and prejudices, personal and social codes of conduct. Roy Pascal, the exponent of criticism on autobiography, begins his scanning of the genre by pointing out that there is a problem of continual contrast between man's work and life for us and for him. That is the 'likeness' we make and his own image of himself. The link between self-image of an individual and the public image of his self contributes to the ambiguity of autobiography's structure. Pascal observes that we "underestimate the importance of" an individual's 'life-illusion' and autobiography is the record of this personal life-illusion. Pascal writes:

It is not at all arbitrary, but presents itself to reflexion as a 'daemon' or 'personae' or 'life-illusion'. In every case, this dynamic creative element is as true as anything else about us, though it may be invisible to others, and is the driving force of a life as seen from inside by the man living it.

Autobiography, in Pascal's view, is the vision of life 'as seen from inside by the man living it'. The 'inside' necessarily connotes the mental, intellectual, spiritual in association with the 'biographical'.

Autobiography, then, is not a mere statement of what a person used to be and what one is but it also means the view of one's inner mind as a 'driving force'. It aims at a sort of wisdom from the self-knowledge and self-exposition. Autobiography, to speak in philosophical manner, is a compensation against the bias that creates a gulf between what one appears to others and to oneself.

The word 'autobiography' was not used for a differentiated literary form till the end of the eighteenth century. Earlier than that 'autobiography' was simply known as containing a part of author's life. Thereby Augustine's Confessions, Montaigne's Essays, Collingwoods Story of My Thought, and Nabokovi's Speak Memory did really suffice to demonstrate the sense of autobiography. Today we know the form as a coherent vision of one's life wherein it's possible to estimate the past and interpret the self. It is the author's introspective analysis of both, the past life and the present self. But the autobiographer may write essays, theology, philosophy, the story of mind and thought, even with the banner 'autobiography'.

"The emphasis on ideal self-revelation that informs the mass of critical efforts, to define autobiography, derives from an urgency to legitimate autobiography as an aesthetic genre in order to distinguish it from mere historical document," remarks Estelle Jelinek. In her comment one finds the 'cause and effect' formula of autobiography. As an aesthetic genre, autobiography is caused by 'urgency to
legitimize' itself, in effect, achieving its ultimate 'emphasis on ideal self-revelation'. Thus, by legitimizing the expression of ideal-revealed-self, autobiography fills the gap between the self-image and the public-image of the author. Then, the question of nomenclature as confessions, letters, essays, story, psychology or philosophy critically requires the textual investigation to see whether it justifies its name and how far. The only certain point about autobiography is that it is created 'of life' but so are many other literary works. Olney observes this problem when he states:

in *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche remarked, "little by little it has come clear to me that every great philosophy has been the confession of its maker, as it were his involuntary and unconscious autobiography".8

Further Olney goes on to argue that literary criticism, too, can be seen as autobiography 'reluctant to come all the way out of the closet' that the literary critic, like Nietzsche's philosopher, is a 'closet-autobiographer',9 and that the spirit of confession, can be found in psychological writing, lyrical poetry or even history.

Autobiography thus, invites questions and doubts more than the explanations or answers it offers. Instead of locating autobiography in essays and letters and wherever it can be found, we should make it a point to accept the form in a straightforward way only where the writer claims, its being so either in the title or elsewhere. The author should accept his particular work as his autobiography voluntarily created and consciously composed. He should agree that it is knowingly delivered and has its own design and scheme. What creates the complexities of its form, content, structural & functional mode is the conventionally settled concept that the writer must narrate truthful account of his life-events with honesty. It has to be there but the question how far one can hope to be honest, and appear so, in the account of life, is very difficult to answer. One cannot escape the truth of one’s life in past, and the question of truth, again needs a separate discussion in further units of this chapter.

Dr. Johnson, who was known for his fastidious thinking, preferred autobiography to biography when he mentioned that:

Everyman’s life is best-written by himself...
The writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of a historian - the knowledge of truth.10

The historicity of content and the knowledge of truth are emphasized in autobiography. It is accepted by almost all scholars, that autobiography is a narrative
of life recapitulated by a self-conscious writer. The writer's ability in the detection of
his past is viewed skeptically, and the questions of truth or honesty are raised by
critics more fastidious than Dr. Johnson.

For such scholars, it is necessary to remember that autobiography is defined as
the 'story' of life despite its inclusion of the 'history' of life. It is a transformation of
history into a story, of life into literature, of experience into a text. The past
memories become the present reflections and the private life merges into the public
life, in autobiography. It is both a part of life and a reconstruction of life - the life in
actual circumstances as lived by the author.

An autobiography, in a sense, is a conversion of lived experience into a
literary experience re-lived. It reflects life as an intensely personalized vision. It has
the inherent appeal to readers and intimate bond of trust with them. The
autobiographer shares the hidden and unknown details of his life with readers. This
bond of trust between the autobiographer and his readers is what Lejeune Philippe
names 'Le Pacte Autobiographique' the autobiographical pact.11 such a pact creates
a sort of mutual acceptance on the part of both, infers Lejeune. Autobiography,
thereby, is accepted as an artful representation of life more than a transparent
reflection in a mirror-like-manner. It is a thoughtful mental liberation of life into art.

The process of reconstruction of life, obviously, implies a choice of matter
with a sense of selection. In Olney's discussion, he regards that autobiography,
"transcends the shifting, changing realities of mundane life."12 Like Dr. Johnson,
George Gusdorf, too, compares autobiographer to a historian who narrates his own
history:

Autobiography requires a man to take a distance
with regard to himself in order to reconstitute
himself in the focus of his special unity and identity
across time.13

Autobiography that combines the 'special unity' and the 'identity' claims
coherence of objectively viewed truth of life. It displays the temper and reveals the
mind of its author. It exhibits the vision the author holds and theorizes his
perceptions. Pascal quotes Bonamy Dobree to explain that the "autobiographies are
the most entrancing of books and sometimes they are works of art".14

Autobiography, is a literary construct. In the self-narrative, the writer speaks as an
author, a narrator and also a sharer of the experience narrated ; his first person voice
offers authenticity to the form.
Andre Maurois agrees that autobiography is to be singled out as a form with no parallel. He remarks:

Autobiography is... as interesting as novels and as true as the finest life. It has...fidelity and impartiality in portraiture of a very high quality indeed...since it has...the direct link of truth from life.\textsuperscript{15}

Many critics consider autobiography a self-oriented pamphlet of one's ideology or a chronicle of philosophical life. Such a prejudice springs from their undue emphasis on subjective and righteous nature of autobiography. In a truthful autobiography the inner self of writer is depicted through the life-narrative. Gusdorf in this reference, suggests that autobiography, “is an effort to recapture the self in Hegel’s claim, to know the self through consciousness”\textsuperscript{16} Shari Benstock believes that autobiography is initiated into the ‘act of writing’; is directed towards ‘self’ that is presumed to be knowable. She makes it clear that the form stands between the crossroads of ‘writing’ and ‘selfhood’.\textsuperscript{17}

Away from the controversial statements about certain elements in autobiography as truth, authenticity etc., the fact remains that it is an attention-capturing form of literature. It happens to be a creation that offers a kind of knowledge enlightening both, its author and readers. Before writing autobiography even the writer does not know himself so well as after having written it. William C. Spengemann hints this by observing that autobiographies, “despite their fictiveness, grapple with the problems of self-definition”.\textsuperscript{18}

It is in this sense that autobiography has no rival in literary creations. The experience of involvements, dilemmas and conflicts make the writers offer a sort of dramatic monologue of self in autobiography. It may or may not seem logical to others but it holds the pressure of self from within, for the author. Its core is pre-occupation with self that the cousins of sceptic critics may see as a sort of Narcissism or self-love. One has to consider that an experience may not be quite a similar thing as a reflective, retrospective or philosophical statement of it.

Autobiography is no less than what is described by a term ‘buildungsroman’ in novel. Derived from the German literary store, the word means ‘formation-novel’ i.e. a novel that traces the formation of a central character, the development of the protagonist. M. H. Abrams calls it the account of protagonist’s growth and development as he or she “passes from childhood into maturity” along with “the
recognition of his identity and role in the world".\textsuperscript{19} The subject of such a novel is an account of the protagonist's mental growth, spiritual crisis and the passage of life from childhood to maturity.

Finally, one can simplify that all the scholastic efforts to define autobiography in clear terms may seem deceptive or failing in one or the other point. Despite all the established and varied definitions of the genre, the meaning of autobiography can be understood only by examining the essential, inevitable factors and elements related to or inside the form. One by one these factors are to be taken up for further discussion of the topic. To sum up the discussion about the definition and meaning of the form, one has to notice the following points:

i) Autobiography as a form of prose explores the writer's private life without inhibitions or bias.

ii) In reviewing life, the writer of autobiography reveals the inner world of consciousness and also analyses the external reality in an artistic way, combined with self.

iii) Autobiography in itself is a retold life-history embodying the writer's observations of his contact with the world.

iv) Autobiography is related directly to an individual.

v) By opening a personal and private series of events to society, through autobiography, the writer transcends the limitations created by the social norms.

vi) Autobiography in a way is 'criticism of life' like poetry, and the writer invites social criticism through the act of writing one.

vii) In his attempt of pursuing and presenting the truth, the writer of autobiography faces a gulf between the personal and the social reality.

viii) Autobiography is a literary conspiracy against the socio-cultural standards of sophistication and presentation in the sense that it exposes a secret side of life.

ix) Autobiography as a specific vision of individual's life, demands a consonance between past and present life of the writer.

x) Autobiography implies a record of one's personal values, inner urges and visions combined with the actual life-experience.

xi) Autobiography holds the most fragile memories consisting of the truth that we call truth of the moments.
xii) Predetermined subjective mood in autobiography inspires introvert perceptions to objectify and form the self-expression.
1.2 Autobiography: life or Literature?

In academic world, autobiography has suffered many changes and transitions, although in the mind of common readers and in the world of publication, its place has always been unshaken. No other subject receives more intense, sustained and varied scrutiny today, in academic as well as socio-literary groups. The scholars keep reflecting on style, language, ethnicity, gender, psychology or philosophy of self-presentational mode of autobiographies. Readers have always preferred autobiography to other books because it offers an insight into the private, confidential world of an individual. However biased may be the intellectual approach to the form, despite all prejudices against structure and contents of it, autobiography as a text always reigns supreme in human context.

In the early nineteenth century autobiography was regarded a sub-type of biography and was placed in the secluded shelves of history, even in good libraries. There was no specific distinction between autobiography proper and other personalized forms as diary, memoir, letters or travelogue. As James Olney observes:

Prior to 1950's autobiography was seen as little more than a special variety of biography, a step-child of history and literature, with neither of those disciplines granting it full recognition as a respectable subject for study in itself.

In twentieth century, autobiography is not only a separate literary genre distinguished even from 'autobiographical' fiction or poetry but it has already established its value as a form of writing coming closest to life and actual reality of experience. Nevertheless, autobiography proper still suffers the lack of appropriate place and unbiased outlook in the eyes of critics. Why cannot we call autobiography 'life' or label it as 'literature' so confidently as we do in case of history, biography or even poetry, remains to be examined.

Autobiography is neither life, nor literature. It is neither history nor biography. It occupies the narrow place between the two. It holds its grounding on the thin, rather invisible line between life and literature. Life is the root of its content and literature is the branch that bears its form as a fruit. The two elements in the word 'bios' and 'graphe' include the sense of life and literature in autobiography because it is life brought into literature. Jerome Bruner stresses the importance of the
'generic ness' in the act of 'narrative construction' of reality'. He writes that the literary genres are:

the ways of telling that predispose us to use our minds and sensibilities in a particular way..... while they may be representations of the social ontology, they are also invitations to particular style of epistemology.21

In this light, one may question, what is that which is literature and not autobiography? It is accepted that all literature is the reflection of life in its varied forms. Life is the source, the nourishing force of all that is written. Can we argue, then, that all that is written is autobiography? Life brought into literature can be autobiography but 'all life' brought into 'all literature' need not necessarily be autobiography. For, like the 'bios' and the 'graphe' there is one more element the initial 'autos'-the self. That is why autobiography is also a 'self-written-biography'22 that offers "at least an ostensibly factual account" of the writer's own life. But this type of narrow consideration proves insufficient to make the complete sense clear.

The controversy over autobiography being life or literature, relates itself to the issue of truth in it. We need to discuss the question of truth in the formal analysis of its structure, in further separate sections. Since an autobiographer is at liberty to 'design his truth, we can here sum up for a while that the form called autobiography is rooted in twin forces that are not necessarily conflicting but parallel to each-other. One is the conditions and the circumstances, making life-events of an individual and the other is 'self' –the consciousness of one's existence as living force, that determines the attitudes, ideas, feelings, even thought-pattern of an individual.

Autobiography, then, is not simply transforming of life into literature but a way of expression, a medium of analysis, an instrument to test one's own attitudes by re-viewing the past. In communicating the life-experience, it is the author's memory that brings the association of ideas and impressions to surface. That is why we often say that autobiography is subjective in mood but objective in standpoint. The author has to maintain an aesthetic distance to view his own past as impersonally as a third person.

For Olsen, understanding a written piece of literature implies understanding the 'fictional reports' in it. He affirms that it is "meaningless to have debate on factual issues in connection with the literary works", and the outcome of such debates "would not affect the readers’ evaluation and understanding of them."23 Olsen's
remark conveys that the reports in literary works “cannot be understood as informative”. In this light, when we consider autobiography as a literary work we cannot examine the element of factual life in it.

It can be summed up that autobiography is a fine fusion of life and literature in the sense of its literariness; it varies in degree of truth and imagined possibilities or vision depending on the author’s intensity of involvement in the experience and his expression. To force autobiography in the category of either life or literature, is in fact to destroy the beauty of that fusion. The examination of truth in autobiography is a different issue in the sense that it implies a different problematics of structure that forms the codes of autobiography.
1.3 Identification

Autobiography has a generic kinship with other literary forms that are akin to its private mode of expression. These forms include mainly biography, diary, memories, letters and autobiographical fiction or poetry. Among all these forms the kinship of the first-person-voice ‘I’ as narrating authority is common. This kinship holds itself also on the conceptual plane through the self-conscious mind of writer with its response as subjective in expression. Apart from biography, all the other personalized forms have the voice ‘I’, fused with double functioning of the author as narrator and participant.

For the purpose of this project, the distinction between autobiography and these akin forms can be observed analysing one by one, the specific factors align to autobiography. Yet one cannot forget that autobiography is unique among all these forms, because its theme is self; it’s mode is more private than personal; its form is subjective, it’s base is confessional; it’s vision is independent and it’s outlook is individualistic. With all these qualities, autobiography remains marked out from the other personalized but minor forms. One has to place it side by side with biography, diary, memoir, letters, and the autobiographical works of art to make deeper observations about it. By some specific qualities inherent in its structure, autobiography as a genre falls apart from the bunch of first-person or personalized forms of expression. It has certain characteristic features that distinguish it on generic level, for other forms.
1.3.1 Autobiography And Biography

Biography can be seen as a twin-form of autobiography, by way of its focus on the lived reality of a person’s life. In earlier discussion of biography, it held a slightly better position than its then-considered sub-form, autobiography. Dr. Johnson was the man who, despite his own practice of biographical writing, preferred autobiography and spoke of the inevitable distinction between the two indirectly,

Everyman’s life, is best written by himself... for the writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of a historian, the knowledge of truth...25

The aim of both the forms, happens to be a “successful presentation of personality, and in the best examples, of the period to which the author belonged.”26 Nevertheless, this presentation of a personality is subjective in autobiography and objective in biography in regard to the author. The biographer is thought to be free from the self-consciousness that pre-occupies the autobiographer. In simple words, autobiography is “a product of first-hand experience” while the biography is “of second-hand knowledge”.27 The main line of difference between the two forms is the author’s viewpoint. Biography transforms the life that is implied. Minus the ‘autos’ the self of the writer or the narrator, it is distanced from its author. Such a distance determines a liquidated subjective intensity of biography.

Jean Starobinski refers to autobiography as “a biography of a person written by himself” to stress intrinsic character of the venture. The generic conditions and general standards demand that it must be a narrative while biography can simply be descriptive, most of the times. Starobinski further explains:

Biography is not portrait ; or if it is a kind of portrait, it adds time and movement. The narrative must cover a temporal sequence sufficiently extensive to allow the emergency of the contour of life.28

True that autobiography remains careless about the addition of time and movement. It offers its priorities to the ‘portrait’.

Biography purposefully relates the individual’s life to the social, historical temporality of the times. Autobiography puts forward an intensified, candid and uninhibited account of personal life wherein one has less chances to misunderstand oneself. The biographer has a natural inclination towards the positive or negative
inferences, stamping or labelizing and finally towards making judgments. Biography cannot be trusted in its truthfulness as much as autobiography. The assertion comes from eminent biographer, Dr. Samnel Johnson, who observes:

Yet, I cannot but think that impartiality, may be expected with equal confidence from him that relates the passage of his own life, as from him that delivers the transactions of another...29

The need for writing biography is generally caused by the common events like death of a person, one’s admiration for that person’s high achievements or an occasion of reward and so on. Autobiography, springs from an inner impulse, an urge for self-revelation. The expression of self in autobiography is both, its cause and effect. Andre Maurois believes that truth of life can be manifested in autobiography rather than biography:

We have approached biography by the pathos of ‘work of art’, ‘means of expression’, of ‘science’ and we realize that they all lead us to one central question- is it possible to know the truth about a man? Up to now the answer appears to be negative. But there remains one form, which might give us grounds for hope. I mean, the form of autobiography.30

Biography in its formal purpose of relating one’s life to the socio-historical context, records a person’s life with only those events that are socially or historically significant. The biographer thereby refuses to understand the emotional truth of the moments in his object’s life. He also tends to neglect the facts of his object’s life, for which he does not find convincing evidences.

The autobiographer needs no evidence. He knows what he knows and more than history, chronicle or biography, he too, intends to make his work aesthetically interesting yet authentic work of art. Autobiography may be less objective than biography or history but it imbibes a personal vision. The subjective interest makes it alert by individual conscience yet spontaneous in the author’s desire to tell the truth. Biography ignores personal truth, subjective values or individual emotions because the biographer’s portrait is not ‘from inside’. The very approach of a biographer sounds superficial in this sense. Historically,

biography ranks among the most reliable and rewarding sources for the historian. In Western literary tradition, it stands out as one of the most dynamic art forms, as much a matter of profound
value to a serious scholar as an item of unceasing pleasure to a leisure reader. Few would call at Thomas Carlyle’s assertion that ‘history is the essence of innumerable biographies’.31

Roy Pascal agrees with this when he points out that “biography in being more objective, that is in seeing the person concerned as object, misses the specific dynamic truth of autobiography”.32 Another technical difference between the two forms is sense of form, order, pattern that frames biography in the propriety of sequence, in time and events. Autobiography does not really bother about shape, form, sequence, order of time. The autobiographer is concerned more with the feelingful moments, philosophical ideas, the process of growth of mind. He needs no logic, no link of time as such, for, his link is ‘self’. The theme of autobiography is exploration of self and the autobiographer enjoys freedom of choice, manner, space and expression. A biographer is tied to his object by the sense of observations, inferences and inductions. Edmund Gosse held the view that, to undertake the ‘life and times’ of anybody is always a mistake. He stated:

A biography is a study... limited by two definite events- birth and death. It must be so written as to throw the central figure into strong relief... If I embark on a life of Disraeli, I cannot obviously neglect the state of politics in England during the 19th century.....33

Biography has no temptation of beautifying the image of the central character. A biographer is not really involved with the effect he may produce through his portrayal. It is the retrospective dimension that both the forms share with instructive appeal - by aiming at a moral image or an accepted paradigm. Both the biographer and the autobiographer are motivated to reform public impressions by presenting a positive, progressive, glorified ideal and the edifying scope for these, is more attended than by a novelist, a dramatist, a historian and a poet.

Both the forms generally confirm the relative evaluation of historical events, doctrinal traditions, mob-conscious social order of morality and religion. However, biography cannot equate the depth and intensity of an autobiography. Written with pre-conceived notions and knowledge about its object, biography fails the correct perception because it has no powerful instrument like memory that forms a bond between the autobiographer and his past.
‘Viewers see more than the participants’ can be true in its application to biography but in case of autobiography it is true that “the wearer only knows where the shoe pinches” and how one feels when it does. These proverbial examples appear commonplace but they are apt to understand an exact distinction between the two. Nevertheless, both the forms share problems of skepticism, doubtfulness in the portrayal of truth that comes through the writer’s pen, since both cannot escape the artfulness of creation. “What is to be condemned is a romanticized biography in which the author allows himself to invent incidents and dialogues. A biography is not and should never try to be a historical novel”.34 Right from Dr. Samuel Johnson, the sharp-tongued father of biography, to the modern scholar of the form, Lytton Strachey, innumerable biographies, are written and re-written and form a range of biographical bulk of books. Nevertheless, autobiography, permeated by its intense directness and emotional concentration supersedes biography in modern times.
1.3.2 Autobiography and diary

Diary denotes the note-making habit of a person. It is prompted by a purpose of maintaining a private source of recorded information. It is concerned with the day-to-day matters, and happenings in routine life. A diary is a specific document for the exactness of particularized time, days or dates, from the writer's life. It indicates the writer's disbelief in his own memory. The diarist always writes down what he fears, would forget afterwards.

Autobiography depends on memory, its power to store and recollect the past matter of the writer's life. The urge to write a diary is either rooted in a practical sense of habituality or a desire to record peculiarly mundane to make one's life known to oneself forever. "A diary is only a day-to-day record of an individual's activities by an individual. It may be valuable as a record of certain artistic elements in it. But surely it cannot be called an autobiography". The impulse for writing an autobiography originates from the desire to carry one's practical perceptions to philosophical ones through the memorized 'past' to make it authorized comments, without analytical judgments or sense of choice. The writer goes on recording everything he feels memorable fact to register in the diary. An autobiographer has to choose from the fact stored in memory and analyzing those through his present perspective, he creates his life-story.

According to Pascal, diary moves through the moments of time, "however reflective, ......., the diarist notes down what at that moment seems of importance to him; its ultimate long range, significance cannot be assessed". A diary is private and free from the pressure of reader-consciousness; to large extent, it is meant for private record, a personal reading and secret accounts. An autobiographer has no freedom to record the most secret part of his life and experience because of its 'to-be-published' feeling that makes the writer conscious; it brings caution in carefully selecting what he means to present and what he would prefer to evade to protect his self-image. As F.A. Nussbaum brings out:

The self presented in diary lacks an obvious center, a smooth continuity in its intermittent form and content, and thus may call into question the dominant humanist assumption that man is the center of meaning.
Diary lacks an obvious center and has no opportunity to philosophize on its subject matter. It appears spontaneous but lacks continuity and connection in the broken patches of description. In both the forms, however, the writer tries to mention his actions and reactions against the force of conscience and events. The author may talk about his virtues and vices both in diary as frankly as in autobiography. A good example of this is the historical diary of Samuel Pepys. The diaries of Pepys, Wesley or Boswell describe, “discrete moments of experience, contest a coherent and stable self, and violate the assumption of dominant ideologies.”

A diary is in fact, a source of information for the author’s outward life and perceptions while autobiography is expected to move and carry the readers into the innermost recesses of the author’s self. Diary fails to be introvert because of its focus on the day-to-day matters. Critics like William Mathews point out the lack of representation of united self in diary since it works against a fixed identity. Mathews remarks:

The diarist can see only the pattern of a day, not the pattern of lifetime; if he is a true diarist, one day is likely to be at odds with another for any reader who thinks of people as having fixed characters.....

The author generally records more about ‘others’ in relation to him in diary while an autobiographer cannot easily divert from the self, its attributes and idiosyncrasies. In its critical analysis, autobiography is more sophisticated than diary. Diary is tied closely to biographical dates and details, and has lesser appeal on behalf of the authorial self. It is written daily or at less frequent intervals and lacks the very principle of organizing the events, views, feelings. It has no perspective since a diarist has no time to think upon one. The relevance of Nussbaum’s remarks is worth mentioning once again:

The diary signifies a consciousness that requires psychic privacy in a particular way...it usually affects secrecy, .... It is a private and personal revelation that cannot be spoken to anyone except the self....It is a confession to the self with only the self as auditor and without the public authority.

A diarist does not try to distinguish between what is significant and insignificant; he can hardly enter into the other minds and fails to create empathizing response. Scanty in content and conclusive in its disjointed structure, diary seems to change according to the time, persons, places and experience. There is no lasting
thread of truth in it. Hume established that “the diarist who insists on attention to the present creates memoranda that formulates memory.”41 The diarist perceives that the loss of memory may result in the loss of past. The cherished ideas of identity are to be dumped in a diary-record so that it will be a proof of remembered moments of the author’s ‘discontinuous self’. Diary, simultaneously preserves and evaluates, making the meaning inherent in its record. Sometimes a diary becomes a clue to some secretive, criminal or explosive part of an individual’s life but an autobiography, on account of its apologetic narration and confessional presentation of truth, wins the appeal and acceptance of readers. An autobiography has a sense of moral pressure felt by the author.

Self-explanation, in a diary, is always hasty and immature. The autobiographer, by his adult self, covers the distance of time to explore his psyche and his social image. The diary limits and narrows down the impression of and about the speaking voice. The authorial voice in diary, exercises the habitual act of filtering the mind and move ahead refreshed. The similarity of ‘I’ as a narrator’s voice in both the forms, combines them to find responses of the two writers resembling, many a times. Sometimes a diary proves to be a more authentic record of some moment in the author’s life by virtue of being very close to that moment. The immediacy of writing what occurred makes diary plausible and in autobiography the writer has to tax his memory if the distance of time becomes longer causing confusion about the exactness and accuracy of his account.

A sub-conscious desire for publication marks the diary although the writer takes liberty to write in it what he likes. Many men keep noting their financial affairs in the diary. Autobiography escapes that type of burdensome factuality. It puts forth some ideal, some didactic principle that cannot be viewed by the outside world of factual details in diary.

Confessions of Augustine, Rousseau, Wordsworth’s Prelude, even Yeats’ collected Poems and Eliot’s four Quartets are called the examples of ‘spiritual autobiography’. James Olney comments: “what is autobiography to one observer is history or philosophy, psychology or lyric-poetry, sociology or metaphysics to another”.42

An autobiographer romanticizes and aestheticises his expression to make it as interesting as possible. A diarist does not pay much attention to the ‘make-up’ or protocol of his expression. The accuracy of time and particularity of dates makes a
diary more logical and scientific record, while an autobiographer does not tense himself about such apparent exactness.

The momentary fluctuations of mind, irrelevant ideas and sudden desires find a proper place in diary; as a matter of fact, diary cannot create a consistent picture of one's life despite all its meticulous mentions of time, place, persons etc. At the cost of consistency and self-denial, a diary suffers the paucity of time and re-thinking. Its intimate mode of narration proves useless and offers narrow scope for creation of clarity, vision, etc. The first-person voice is too intimate to judge in diary. Sue Kaufman's *Diary of a Mad Housewife* is noteworthy example of diary used as the self-narrative.

Moira Monteith studies the scope of women's writings while she talks about the diary-like personal writings:

> It has proved difficult for women to publish their own experiences openly, so the diary has been a very important means of expression. Even published writers such as Virginia Woolf found the form of diary 'liberating' and exploratory, a place where things could be written that were not written in letters or published work. Kate Millett who did publish her own experiences apologized for her lack of good taste, for transgressing the social codes. The necessity for secrecy has been an important factor, first of all in what women felt able to express and secondly what was considered publishable.

A diarist informs while an autobiographer investigates. A diary, being indecisive in its image-building, can prove a fine help to the autobiographer for creating his impressive text and decisive self-image. Among recent women's writings, *Anais Nin's Diary* has its beginning with a confessional self-denial by female consciousness:

> An act of independence would by punished by desertion; I have crippled myself...The creation guilt in me has to do with feminity, my subjection to men...

To conclude, the two forms are not to be confused since they are separate and distinctly oriented in their making and pattern. Primarily both stand rooted in the grounds of privacy as literary forms but autobiography draws attention to the individual's perceptive and analytical mind engaged in reflections of private life events while diary only offers a glance at those noted day-to-day events. Diary may or may not, directly or indirectly, reflect the mind-set or perceptive vision of the author.
1.3.3 Autobiography and memoir

The life of a writer is filled with numerous sorts of events, experiences, and visions. In his individual story of 'becoming', there is impact of multiple persons, places and happenings, that influence his mind and even private and public life. Memoir is an appropriate form for writing about such influences, and experiences. Memoir is in fact, an artistic presentation of a memory that keeps lingering in the writer’s mind. It is made interesting in expression and form. Memoir, thereby, tends to be coloured by the author's mood about that singular memory he aims at expressing. In the opinion of Joan Fitzgerald, a memoir is a form of writing

In which the author described his 'external life' that is the circumstances in which he lived, rather than his intellectual or spiritual growth-were generally regarded as not worthy of such consideration......This is understandable since the vast majority of autobiographies written by statesmen, military men and others while conveying a good deal of information about their life and times, neither aspire to nor achieve a literary interest......\textsuperscript{45}

The memoirs do not recreate experience as profoundly as to allow readers to share while autobiography creates such images of self which are literary representations of human self. The readers feel infinitely confided in autobiography.

An autobiography is different from a memoir in purposeful delicacy of self-expression. It has no colouring of a momentary mood or feeling upon a peculiar object. In autobiography, the author is conscious, more than purposeful, deliberate rather than delicate, in expression. It is a transparent expression in autobiography that makes it obvious in creating the writer’s image. Memoir, has a single focus, not on self but on one incident, occasion, person or place or even journey that is memorable, for the writer.

A memoir is sometimes written for paying a tribute. It is essayistic in form, intentional in expression, limited in its meaning and significance. An autobiography is always more impartial, private, honest and faithful to experience than a memoir. Memoir also tends to become a one-sided picture of one part of experience. Generally it is written by a person to register impressions that the writer regrets to miss or forget. Memoir in this sense, has a base of sentimental value. The author’s emotional response to his object results in a memoir. Many a times, memoirs are
written about a dead or a lost person or a place visited in past. Frequently memoirs are also the bi-product of a close friendship, intense relationship or profound impact of the object upon the writer. For many writers, a situation that they feel memorable becomes the matter of their composition.

It is obvious that a memoir is founded on memory. At the same time, surprisingly, memory is not a reliable source for the writer of a memoir, more than for an autobiographer. In both the forms, memory can prove deceptive regarding the truth of the writer's experience. Memoir itself, however, can be a formal part of autobiography. As Shipley observes:

> Autobiography and memoirs, though the terms are often used as if interchanged, are properly distinguished by relative emphasis placed on character and as extended events, memoirs customarily give some prominence to personalities and choices are other than the writer’s own.46

A memoir holds interest of readers by virtue of its first-person voice narrating the first-person experience and is similar to autobiography in this voice of ‘I’. In both ‘I’ refers to the self. The self however, cannot be displayed completely in a memoir since it has no space and the writer makes it partly visible. In autobiography the full-fledged version of self-depiction is actually attempted by the writer. Memoir also lacks vision of the writer and can create misleading impressions. It lacks completeness of the original self and integrity of autobiography. Memoir demands a sort of caution in choosing its object of description.

Sometimes a memoir is written only to communicate an adventurous, admirable or romantic experience. The distinction between fiction and memoir as autobiographical piece is blurred in such memoirs that describe an episode of a heroic journey, or an encounter. The irony of self in twin roles of narrator and actor in a memoir is not so complex as in autobiography. Memoir is significant for a technical reason that the biographers and historians find it useful for their writing. Both these forms are affected by the sequence of time, surroundings, events, historical consciousness of contemporaneity and personal moods. Memoir can divert and distract its attention from self and move on to various outer objects which is not generally possible in autobiography.

A memoir can be a document of eulogy or a revengeful scandal-mongering and can be misused for effect on readers. When memoirs are written as an obituary, about a dead person’s life or actions, they become formal depiction of partial truth.
Autobiography involves a serious purpose, a greater truth and a larger canvass with a deeper analytical insights. Its concentrated thrust on subjectivity makes it more attractive and significant. The very perspective of an autobiographer is broader and devoted to the making of self-image. Memoir simply aims at a refreshment of memory, having no tendency towards self. Autobiography originates from a profound need for self-assertion. It discovers the meaning of an individual's existence. A memoir, born of some occasional or emotional need, gives vent to something that troubles the mind. Apart from arousing memories or achieving fame, memoir has no serious purpose. The Book of Margery Kempe is a recent experiment in the art of memoir wherein the writer describes a dialogic relationship between female visionary and a male priest who records her visions in writing. Another instance is a fictitious record of Mary McCarthy in her Memories of A Catholic Girlhood.
1.3.4 Autobiography and letters

A letter is written with an address to a particular person. It reveals the type of contact, the relationship between the writer and the receiver of it. Autobiography is written not for one reader but for so many with whom the writer has no specific contact or relationship. It is because of this wider social connectivity, that autobiography comes closer to the truth of life-situations personally or privately faced by the author. Letters do not claim manifestation of truth. Nor do they aim at creating or preserving the self-image and are written many a times as a reply to previous event or letter. The writer of letters can offer prejudiced statements or can write letters just to clarify misunderstandings. Sometimes letters are written in a fit of passion, either love or revenge, threat or anger. Sometimes those are also written for advice, guidance or counseling when the need for that is felt. Letters, thus have different targets in different hands.

Autobiography is distinct in all its form, content, purpose, directions, motives and results. It comes nowhere closer to letters except the first-person-narrator. In writing a letter the author holds no conscious motive other than communicative response through a sense of reciprocity. In writing of autobiography however, the author has a standpoint motivating him towards conscious and unconscious purposes. Although it is really hard to know the intentions of an autobiographer, one can easily find those, if there are any, behind letters. "Letters are written generally to demand or offer the feedback" but autobiography is written in "a specific state of mind" and itself proves a feed-back to the life lived so far. Paul Valery’s statement indicates that all pieces of writing hold a hidden fragment of autobiography when he writes: "There is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography". Both autobiography and letters, include each-other in depiction of character and psycho-analytical vision of the writer.

Letters are written to close friends, intimate relatives and attached acquaintances. The writer of those feels free to open his heart and communicate what he feels or thinks. No prejudices or inhibitions are held in writing letters and the writer very honestly, confides about his failures and achievements, doubts and opinions, ideas and illusions.

Presentation is important in autobiography while in letters a psychological need is explored and fulfilled. Autobiography becomes interdisciplinary unlike
letters, since it includes varied reactions and responses of the writer. Letters are single-dimensional address to one or a few persons expected by the writer as his readers. In autobiography the subjectivity of the writer is consciously objectified, while in letters the writer shows no efforts to objectify, rather feels no need of it.

Letters are written with a sense of choice of memories and references which are thought as inevitable in autobiography, “because the path of creativity is particularly tortuous for those who straddle the interval between.....style and mode of discourse he chooses to adopt within the broader generic configurations of autobiography”. Letters are notes, epistles, or ‘a sort of communicative memoranda’ meant for friends or acquaintances. In writing letters the writer can vary his expressions of intimate sense or tone, according to identity, personality and relations with his readers. It is optional for the writer of letters to revitalize the past; in case of autobiography, the author has no choice apart from that of the selection of events. The autobiographer cannot escape past nor can he evade consciousness of its presentation.

In letters, a possibility of publication is scarcely imagined. The writer considers the place of his correspondent and shapes the expression accordingly. The autobiographer cannot really imagine what sort of readers he would find for his autobiography. The sense of publication becomes, many a times, a sort of pressure on the mind of autobiographer. Letters however, are an important source for information about its writer. Both are ways towards the functioning of writer’s psyche and inner visions. Both the forms offer insight into the writer’s personal life. Being the most personal forms of narrative compositions, both involve the writer with a sense of conscious self-revelation. Nevertheless, an impulse or fit of passion can carry the writer’s mind in letters as well as autobiography since both the forms offer their writers an opportunity to open the sentimental and emotional closets of mind.

The inclusion of letters or diary-entries in an autobiography, says Roy Pascal, appears irrelevant, creates incoherence of style and makes an uneasy juxtaposition of different points or view. Goethe refused to incorporate letters in his autobiography on the ground that ‘incoherent realia’ strewn about must necessarily disturb the good effect of self-narrative.
1.3.5 Autobiography and the autobiographical

The form 'autobiography' has its genesis in the 'autobiographical' literature. One cannot ignore its generic kinship with the autobiographical fiction and poetry. The element of subjectivity coming directly from biographical part of the author's life is acknowledged in critical analysis as the 'autobiographical' element in literature.

One can easily observe two variations of the 'autobiographical' in literature: One in happenings, events, situations or occasions in the author's life and the other in ideas, thinking pattern, creed and convictions of the writer. Motlu Konuk Blasing offers a pithy definition when he says that "the autobiographical refers to works in which the hero, narrator and the author can be identified by the same name".53 The writer personalizes his matter in presentation consciously or unconsciously adding his own ideas and experience. It is for this reason that 'autobiographical' is an adjective that is not limited to only fiction or poetry. Whatever be the form of writing, the element 'autobiographical' can spring up from it in any explicit or implicit way. Olney's scrutiny of autobiography begins with a broad perspective stating that all writings are 'autobiographical' somewhere if not autobiography exactly. "What is autobiography to one observer, is history or philosophy, psychology or lyric poetry, sociology or metaphysics to another".54

The literary exponents often refer to a novel that is autobiographical in plot or a poem that is autobiographical by the significance of 'I', the speaker-persona in it. The straight way of finding resemblance in content of the text and the writer's life makes a work 'autobiographical'. Richard Butler coined a term for the books that are 'not self-centred', and have no autobiographical elements. He used the term "allobiography" for such non-subjectively created writing. For, the word 'allos' means 'other' in Greek. Thus all that is written is either 'autobiographical' or 'allobiographical' in critical vision.

Many times the form of interior monologue is treated as autobiographical due to its feel of the writer's presence by consciousness. In literature, nevertheless, one can always locate the fragmented, allusive subjectivity rather than continual or explicit self-reference. 'Autobiographical' can be plot, tone, narrative voice, or a unit of the content in a literary text but 'autobiography' itself is a distinguished text in literature and is full-fledged as the portrayal of the writer's life. Gombrich E. H.
clarifies the relationship of reality of life with the art and illusion of the artist as writer, in his explanation:

What matters to us is that the correct portrait, like the usual map, is an end-product on a long-road through scheme and correction; it is not a faithful record of a visual experience but the faithful construction of a relational model. Neither the subjectivity of vision nor the sway of conventions need lead to deny that such a model can be constructed to any required degree of accuracy. The form of a representation cannot be divorced from its purpose and requirements of society in which the given visual language gains currency.56

One major line of demarcation between the autobiographical and actual autobiography is the focus of narration. Autobiography generally does not deviate from its focus centered upon self of the author. 'Autobiographical' text has its own thematic focus shifting from subjectivity of the writer in disguise to its ideas. Autobiographical text not only narrows down the scope of subjective reflections but also moves with a partial sense of self-depiction, away from the subjective towards the objective. The idea of subjective vision is so prevalent in autobiography that the writer is autobiographical everywhere without any effort to overlook his self or cover his motives of self-presentation. Autobiography, according to Paul de Man, is not a genre or a mode but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts.57 An autobiographical text involves only a subjective interference of the writer, shifting or diverting from main highlight of the work.

Paul de Man queries:

We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of the self-portraiture and thus determined in all its aspects, by the resources of this medium?58

Apart from this, there is a sense of personal identity that motivates autobiography but is disguised and secretive in autobiographical writings. The fusion of idea and experience confused with the writer's imagination and creative vision in the autobiographical forms, creates the distance between his being. It colours his presentation of both the self and the life. In autobiography, however, he continuously
attempts to appropriate the connection between his being and his seeming in the self-presentation. The real self, in fact, is replaced by the ‘self-made’ image of self, in autobiography. Roland Barthes mentions this division when he points out that “the author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after.” In this sense, autobiography is a creation of a new self.

In the process of creation, subjective distortion of topic is inevitable to some extent. All that is created by a person is personalized, and reflects the subjective thereby, to some extent. In this light, language and attitude, literary content and reality, are linked by the thread we name as ‘autobiographical’, since any literary creation is a coherent network of emotions and events, linked by words of the writer with a visible sense of self-perceptions.

Autobiography and the autobiographical text share self-exposure at varied degrees and with a change of standpoint. Confessional, and sometimes confrontational posture of the writer makes autobiography bold and uninhibited in self-exploration. It sometimes, adopts an apologetic tone along with factual, historical and analytical, memorized reflections of the writer. Autobiographical writings, in addition to their distance from the author, can be poetic, prosaic, spiritual, philosophical or ironical in their self-portrayal.

Autobiography, in this way, differs from biography, diary, memoir, letters and the autobiographical writings in literature. The main feature that is absent in all these forms but is prominent as the essence of autobiography is self-analytical vision of self. The ‘self’ becomes the core of autobiography while biography moves around life, diary around moments, memoir around its object of memory, letters around a relation or an experience. For autobiography, self is at the center and at the periphery. All the adjacent forms lack that interior intention which the autobiographer holds in mind, the intention of self-discovery and self-revelation.

Nietzsche’s autobiography Ecce Homo justifies the story of life by its subtitle, “How One becomes what one is.” It is the story of the writer’s ‘philosophical becoming’. In such a journey of self-discovery the writer has to display events, shaping and reshaping his life, that touched him in a very special way. Remembering becomes one part of that process and the writer has to look back with a specified developmental and historical order that he locates in life. To John Sturrock, autobiography is “certificate of a unique human passage through time.” It is a
literary reconstruction of life done with great discrimination through the writer's journey into past.

Autobiography, thus, is a distinguished genre. It poses vexing theoretical questions. One has to consider the various factors intricately interwoven in it. In discussion of its motives and types one can move ahead to crystalise the formal nature of the form. To study it further, the observations on analytical and intellectual, along with the structural elements like self and past, process and position of the writer, are significant. Again to make its constituent factors clear, one needs to discuss its principles like truth, honesty and confession. To find its limitations like authenticity, incompleteness and reader-consciousness is to attempt the full-fledged vision of autobiography and its 'generic' conditions.
1.4 Motives in autobiography

Why people write autobiography, is a question, not less mysterious than why people do not write it....!

The reasoning in motivations for writing an autobiography begins with a primary question why write? And then moves on to why write an autobiography? The urge for writing and the impulse for writing autobiography seem to be twin-factors because the very process of creation of a literary piece is rooted in life-experience, which is the subject matter for an autobiography. Life is the source and connection for both literature in general and autobiography in particular. The reasons of writing, in any form, are grounded in social ethos, private 'autos', the personal 'eros' and also the mental 'bios', along with the psychological climate of ideas, associations, impressions and responses.

Asking oneself, what causes a man or woman to consider the life-story worth-writing-down, answers are found in many simple and complex forms. The simplest is the change, subjectively felt very strongly by the author in himself or his life. The self-appraisal attaching significance to age or time to which the writer belongs is also one of the simple reasons. The informative attitude and desire to add to human knowledge is one more simple reason. John Fitzgerald notices that most autobiographies are written by people in public office, rather than by 'ordinary' men and women. The purpose behind such self-oriented writing can be literary with communicative function, on one hand and on the other it can be an urge to create more than to communicate. According to Fitzgerald:

.....both travel-literature and autobiographical accounts of early settlers shared the same assumptions: that the experience is in itself interesting and worth-communicating, and that a public, however limited, will be found to share this interest.  

Like any other act, writing is prompted by thought. The seed of all expression is found in thinking. A thinking mind strives to express. There is a sort of quest in the act of writing itself. This is the quest for expression. In autobiography, it turns out to be a quest for self-expression. It is a way towards searching and discovering the self. It is a quest for truth, in one's life and perception of the truth by the author.
An autobiography is never a complete memory-picture of incidental or historical passage of life; it is not the history of life in that sense.

There are certain motives implied consciously or unconsciously, in writing of autobiography. In the process of transcribing life into a book, memory is only a mirror-like agent for portrayal of past but the writer aims at much more than a mere portrayal of past. The life that the author presents is to be made attractive in language, acceptable in notions, aesthetic in vision and appreciable in self-image.

To locate the exact motives of autobiography is a very complicated task because every individual considers himself to be a person different from others, and therefore deserving a special interest. Autobiography has its genesis in such feelings. It is taken to write, with conscious or unconscious sense of ‘uniqueness’ or ‘difference’, the writer’s implications of the process of his becoming. The autobiographer imagines that the process of his becoming is a very interesting one for others and it will capture the readers’ minds through something that it reveals, informs or instructs. Peter Abbs establishes that quest for identity is the root source of autobiography and that “the autobiographical work develops as the author develops”.63

After reading an autobiography a reader may question the author, “what is that in your life – adventurous or uncommon, that you found worth-narrating in such a life-story?” But this would not be a fair question. Only an adventurous life with certain uncommon events deserves the narration is a wrong generalization. People who live simple uneventful life, also have some motives, prompting them to write an autobiography. It is a desire for recording, inevitably making it a story-like record rather than life-history. Autobiography, therefore is a life-story and not a life-history. Autobiographer, then, has an impulse for telling his story, however simple or uneventful it may appear to others. It is in this light of instinct for self-expression that Andre Maurois argued that “all biography is to some extent autobiography disguised”.64

The question of authorial intentions in autobiography is seemingly straight but involves a philosophical set of ideas and answers. That is why it engages the attempts of aestheticians and critics of the genre eluding their critical intelligence. It is a sort of fallacy about intentions, wherein a critic cannot jump at any conclusions about the intentions of the author as artist. In their influential essay ‘The Intentional Fallacy’
Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that the author’s intentions are not proper concern of a critic:

The essay argued, the meaning of a work was better discovered by attention to ‘internal evidence’, .....Than to external evidence - the private disclosures of poets, their friends, or biographers. 

And again,

"Wimsatt and Beardsley's argument, however became increasingly over sophisticated and sterile, ... eventually failed to convince even the academic world that their primary motive was not extra-critical: to separate writers finally from their works, and to have no further truck with biography". 

It needs a gradual reasoning into references used by the writer that can lead one towards possible intentions behind a work.

For Hegel, an artist is a conceptual thinker. He has a specific aim, reflectively chosen. He is different from craftsman in that "a craftsman follows an already existing pattern, while an artist invents the pattern itself".

Applying this to autobiography, one can mention that the aim of writer in autobiography can be an experiment in "inventing a pattern" for life that is lived by him. The autobiographer's art is in making this pattern story-like and preserving its 'historicity' of life at once. Pascal examines the formal structure and functions of autobiography very skillfully and points out that the act of writing alters in some degree the shape of writer's life so that "a new formulation of responsibility towards the self... involves mental exploration and change of attitude. Autobiography therefore has function far beyond the pleasure of reminiscence or reflection on an interesting set of experiences".

In Pascal's view autobiography accomplishes a kind of spiritual vision, "an explicit belief in divine direction" or the convictions of inner reality. There is a sort of personal mental pressure that makes autobiography more than a simple exposition of life to public. It conveys the same sense of instinctual inclination of self-discovery, self-knowledge and self-revelation. Autobiography is written not merely to inform others about one's personal life but also to enlighten oneself for its own sake. The purpose of a good autobiography, says Pascal, must be "selbstbesinnung" i.e. a search for 'one's inner standing".
Self-knowledge, thereby, becomes an important motive in autobiography. Consciously or unconsciously, the author of autobiography shows that psychological insight which is consequential only to a contemplative self-analysis. It is an affair of conscience and Pascal believes that its immediate source and purpose indicates "something of metaphysical urge or at any rate something that cannot be reduced to a social or rational function".70

B. Prasad comments in a very simple manner:

From the psychological point-of-view, no one can know so well as the autobiographer himself what motives prompted him at decisive moments, what his secret hopes and ambitions were and how far his career fulfilled his real aspirations.71

The content of autobiography, being self-image of the writer, indicates a use of the genre, to investigate and affirm self-identity. It is in fact, a fusion of introspective self-consciousness and free-play of individual's perceptions. One of traditionally set subjects of autobiography in the view of Philip Dodd, is "The solace the writer gets from his creativity and discovery of his vocation".72

The bourgeois writers are often found to have written autobiographies for self-defence against others, as an evidence of their individuation and autonomy. The self that inevitably confronts others is caught always between hide and seek of mind and body. The body is not self nor does it connect self to the world. In autobiographies, the motive of a bourgeois writer generally becomes the investigation of form, existence and vision of self as an entity that is felt throughout the past experiences of life. Olney conveys this in his general observation that writing of autobiography is a temptation for any thinking individual as "although widely practiced by the self-proclaimed non-scribblers, autobiography exercises something very like a fatal attraction for nearly all men and women who call themselves 'writers'".73

What matters seriously in trials of finding the author's motives in autobiography is the reader's knowledge of the author's explicit subjectivity transcending the author's self-conscious objectivity in his utterances. Philip Hobsbaum argues that the work mediates between "the author's intentions and the reader's interpretations, attitude and form of consciousness...".74 Hobsbaum argues about position of writer in autobiography and sums up that the writer's intention is manifested in artistic form as well as content. The writer's motive in writing an autobiography is located in a sort of creative impulse for artistic form. It is this
creative impulse that makes the writer identify and choose only those events of life, as content, which can be adjusted and arranged on borderline between self-expression and public-impression of the writer. Autobiography becomes the writer’s tool for establishing a coherence between his attitude and his character. The intention then turns to be a task of relating life-experience with personality and self-image. In it, the writer describes not only what happened at different times in his life, but above all, how he became what he is at present, out of what he was. Starobinski comments on St. Augustine’s Confessions:

....one would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life; conversion, entry into new life, the operation of Grace..., it is the internal transformation of the individual....which furnishes a subject for a narrative discourse in which ‘I’ is both a subject and an object”.

In Starobinski’s analysis of autobiography he states that the deviation which establishes autobiographical reflection is double; it is at once a deviation of time and identity. The autobiographer’s style moves in time from past to present and undertakes to merge identity of external social image with internal truth of the author. For that double intention, autobiography is written by the author in such a way that it becomes a dialogue in which ‘I’ does not wait for a response. Starobinski also comments on Rousseau who wrote autobiography because “he felt universally persecuted; it was necessary to re-establish the image of his true innocence. He needed to get others to recognize his innocence, for it was only when they did that he could be reconciled with himself”.

The fulfillment of one’s need for self-assertion is a very obvious directive of autobiography. The author has to encounter his dialogue with self and present it in his narration in monologic but conceptually dialogic structure. Experience is the only thing that most people get from life but transcription of that life-experience in autobiography is what the writers can leave in book-form. Self-assertion in autobiography becomes a basis for the self-identity that results of giving yourself emphatically to others.

The autobiography is basically the narrative of self and a source to seek an answer of the question like ‘who am I’ or ‘How did I become what I am’. It enlightens the writer first and then readers. Autobiography, in its self-imposed
obligation to one's own truth develops the author's vision beyond social, religious, and economical frames.

Cockshut, a critic on the art of autobiography, talks about the necessary qualities of the form and believes that the act of writing autobiography is an exercise of self, striving for inner assimilation. It involves the qualities like, "articulateness, fidelity to experience, sensitiveness to small currents of feeling and above all, curiosity". The idea of Cockshut is similar to Pascal's claim that 'self-knowledge is the primary motive of autobiography'. The gratification of inner thirst for self-knowledge is sought in autobiography through a sense of fulfilment. More than an urge for communication, autobiographer is compelled by a feeling of oppression that arises from his sense of the unacknowledged past. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, there is a list of possible motives of autobiography:

Autobiography.....its motivations are various .....among others, the self-scrutiny for self-edification; self-justification as Cardinal Newman's beautifully written 'Apologia Pro Vita' (1864); a nostalgic desire to linger over enchanting memories, as Selma Lagerlof's *Marbacka* (1922); belief that one's experiences may be helped to others, as Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* (1903); an earnest attempt to orient self amid a world of confusion, as *The Education of Henry Adams* (1906); the urge for artistic expression or the purely commercial desire to capitalize on fame or position.

Some autobiographies are written to satisfy the suffocating memories of confidential experiences haunting the writer's mind. Richard Rodriguez speaks of the secret of autobiography when he says, "There are things so deeply personal that they can be revealed only to strangers". Apart from the curious public mind and entertaining ways of reading about private conflicts, instructive or legitimized ideology, aesthetic voyage of self-discovery and self-defensive apologia, there are other motives like giving a cathartic outlet to obsessions, freeing inner conscience, from saturated past, burdensome memories and doubtful conflicts. To humanize hidden self, is often observed to be a purifying motive that helps the author to overcome his complexes of mind and normalize through confrontational and confessional exposure of self in past. John Sturrock makes a very inclusive remark in his study of language of autobiography:

Autobiography is intrinsic in expression. It designs the past without changing the reality. It perceives
the forms of life and feelings, acts and sufferings, events and happenings; it offers a specific dimension to the writer about his life. It is an imitation of life and a construction of ‘self’ according to the past. The process of assimilation makes the ‘self’, clear in form and sense not only to the writer but also to the readers. The final output of the whole procedure is “not life but an artful representation of life”.81

The use of autobiography as a therapeutic tool for coming to terms with one’s own self is inevitable as one of its motives. The writer’s interaction with his self in the process of search for identity is viewed by Martin Stannerd in his judgment:

Autobiography…a quest for defining the self. In this attempt of self definition…(the author) explores his mind introvertly, forgetting the world, the external ethos. In this sense the autobiography is, perhaps by definition, the most Narcissistic of literary genres.82

To conclude, one can assume that the question of ‘why and how’ will never get beyond speculative remarks because a literary enterprise like writing of autobiography cannot be brought to the state of a chemical experiment in laboratory. The only way towards certain approximate motives is through the respective studies, specified by writers in their finished autobiographies. An autobiography is written with a more or less emphatic intention, of expanding self and all autobiographies are, to some extent the story of a calling; sometimes that inner calling merges into a social function, a profession or a public potentiality, and the writers do have, sometimes, incidental motives as to reinforce the instructive ideas.
1.5 The types of autobiography

The varieties in literary, fictional and non-fictional forms of writing are rapidly increasing in our times. There is an inquisitive urge among readers to know what is life in its inner recesses. This stimulates a taste for the forms like autobiography; in fact, autobiography is a unique form in its personalized presentation. Like a mirror, an autobiography easily reflects the most delicate, more private and hidden visions of an individual mind. To classify such a form into different types, in fact, may appear only superficial clarification of the form since basic structural elements and principles remain the same. For the intention of making the position of autobiography clearer, however, one can think of very broad generalizations, dividing the form according to possible lines of demarcation. In contemporary literature we observe general types of the form as descriptive or narrative, intellectual or satirical, religious or spiritual, poetic or fictional, emotive or sentimental, egoistic or polemical dramatic or comic or humorous.

Some exponents of autobiography, describe its types as historical, political, philosophical, confessional, romantic or aesthetic following the main principles that they observe in the continuous threads of narration. Such broad variations of autobiography can be explained in brief with some points related to the epithet the form acquires.

There are autobiographies of statesmen, political, national, historical leaders. These life-stories of great heroes are found less aesthetic and not so attractive but they are valued for their informative, biographical or historical details and knowledge of the period they encompass. These can be termed historical autobiographies, justifying their historical significance. Some autobiographies are written by soldiers, martyrs, voyagers, adventurous heroes or scientists. Such life-accounts try to convey the thrilling, story-like experiences of such uncommon people who face strange events, fortunate or unfortunate situations in their lives. These autobiographies are noted for their entertainment value and can prove instructive to some extent.

There are a large number of autobiographies written by actresses, dancers, artists etc. even singers or musicians. These life-narratives tend to bank upon the fame of the established artists and also serve as exposures of their private ideas, attitudes and suffering in their lives. Such autobiographies are deeply interesting in
their form and content. In the real sense they reveal private and inner visions of individual's life.

Many autobiographies are found to be written by academicians or creative writers. Men and women who establish themselves as poets, playwrights, novelists or even critics are often tempted to create their autobiographies since they have the expertise and knowledge of writing as an art of creation. Such literary autobiographies are significant in understanding the author's creative writings and unfold their sensitive mind-sets, susceptible selves, and delicate responses to life. These autobiographies prove that problems of self-definition are at the root of all expressions, despite their fictiveness in autobiographical as well as objective or fictional writings.

William C. Spengemann traces back the generic evolution of autobiography, finally to classify its formal strategies as historical, philosophical and poetic. He attempts an advance in theoretical and stylistic structure of the genre with illustration and analytical commentaries. According to Spengemann, 'historical' autobiography was invented “to demonstrate the consonance of an individual life with an absolute, eternal law already in force and known through some immediate source outside the life that illustrate it".83 He conveys that the type he names 'historical' is bound by a connecting line between individual and universal cognitive forces realized by the self-expression.

The philosophical self-exploration and the poetic self-expression are the other two types that Spengemann finds as accounts of self-seeking consciousness of the autobiographers. The relative value of each changes, according to heavy emotional frights or contemplating psychic observations of contradictions in life and existence. There can be a general class of autobiographies by common people who are neither artists nor national leaders nor political or heroic in their actions. The autobiographies that are written by the members of middle-class society, a teacher, a clerk or a labourer have their own place and value in the world of literature.

There are the examples of exhibitionist, egoist autobiographies, and reader-oriented, sensational, unreal autobiographies. There are also the examples of disguised and objectified autobiographies as experimented by the American novelist, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas. Apart from those thematic, stylistic, formal divisions, autobiographies are also classified according to the trends of autobiographies of slaves, of revolutionaries, of Afro-American men or women, racial
or ethnic life-narratives, etc. There can be found the examples of feminist autobiographies, populist autobiographies and also the autobiographies of black women, Indian Dalits, African poets, Caribbean writers etc. One can only sum up that the classification of autobiographies in types depends on the available models of it and their formal or thematic shades of sense.
1.6 The structural elements

The deepest desire of human mind is the desire for self-expression. This urge is very closely woven with feeling and faith, ideas and actions, thoughts and experiences of an individual. It is the human urge for these themes and their exposure that carries the seed of autobiographical writing. No understanding of autobiography is possible without an understanding of its structure right from the causal stimuli to the consequential produce.

The making of autobiography is to be analyzed in its major structural element since any study of the form tends to clarify the basic form of its structure. We can observe four major elements in autobiography as its constituent parts and one by one those can be specified for explaining the generic and other aspects related to the form. These four elements are 'self' of the writer, past of the writer, the process of writing and the position of autobiographer. It is these elements that complicate the structure of autobiography.

'Self' is the core of autobiography and life that the writer narrates, revolves around it. As an entity, self is an invisible power that can be equated to a myth. It is a myth the writer tries to realize in autobiography. The myth of self is visualized, perceived and reflected by the autobiographer.

'Past' is inseparable as the material and the content for autobiography. As autobiography cannot be written without the self, it also cannot be written without the past. It is the sense of past that creates a historical perspective in the writer. It is only the past wherein an autobiographer has to seek the genesis of his evolution.

The process of writing is very important because it brings in the opportunities of selection and omission, contemplation and modified interpretations by the writer. It is in the process of writing that the writer generally finds temptations as beautifying the self-image, while improving his language, style, presentation etc.

The position of an autobiographer can be noticed from the angle of writer, readers and critics. The autobiographer finds himself caught between two opposing forces like past and present, private and public, personal and professional, linguistic and conceptual, internal and worldly pressures. He wishes to be transparent but finds it so difficult.
1.6.1 Myth of self

The very word ‘autobiography’ begins with ‘auto’ that conveys ‘self’. It is not a mere prefix making the act of writing (graphe), of past life (bios) personal, but it implies the focus of this writing as ‘self’. ‘Auto’ also means ‘operating independently’ and not controlled by any outer agency. Self-control is inherent in the word. Thereby the very term, autobiography implies the involvement with self, by its complete subjective allowance in ‘auto’. It makes the writer assertive and bold in presenting the true personality-picture in words.

The consciousness of self in the writer is an obvious factor in innumerable literary writings but in autobiography it achieves a state of stability and a perspective. In other writings, the self-consciousness becomes a feeling ever in flux; it keeps the speculative vision changing, moving towards progressive reflection of the writer’s object. James Olney finds that autobiography is “the most rarified and self-conscious of the literary performances”.84 Pascal too, believes, that the self-consciousness is a quality that belongs to a good autobiography and that the autobiographer, present his inner core, a self beneath the personality that appears to the world...that is his most precious reality since it gives meaning to his life.85

Autobiography, in Pascal’s view, is concerned with self, in its reactions and responses to external forces. The focus of autobiography is individual self through the hidden side of writer’s life and personality. It is not a mere recollection of past events in tranquility but even an analysis of those events and the author’s involvement in them, by his actions and reactions. There is always an invisible borderline, between writer as narrator and narrator as protagonist of the life-story narrated. This borderline is very thinly outlined by the writer’s image of ‘self’ presented in his autobiography. It outlines the individual’s postures, actions, reactions, desires, impulses, and responses. As Patricia Meyer Specks pointed out, “To read an autobiography is to encounter a self as imaginative being”86

Self is a mysterious entity. Its mystery remains unresolved and incomprehensible. Nevertheless, autobiography is the closest channel to find a glimpse of it, since the most hidden part of an individual’s private life is revealed in it. Meena Sodhi explains the position of self in a philosophical and psychological perspective when she writes:
The self is Maya where it strives to be individual, finite and considers itself separate from all other things. It cannot achieve the position of Satyam or Param Atman unless it recognizes its quintessence in the universal and the infinite. This is what Christ means when he says “Before Abraham was I am”. This is the eternal “I am’ that speaks through the ‘I am’ that is in me. The individual ‘I am’ attains its perfect end when it realizes its freedom of harmony in the infinite I am.  

The concept of self, its existence and awareness is also concerned with the religious and spiritual consciousness. Autobiography is rooted in the notion of self that is private, personal, subjective, individualistic and singular in its essential make up. Even for the readers, autobiography as a form of writing, stands for a search for ‘self’ in literature. The first-person narration initiates a deep mood of introspection and introvert contemplation, which is an essential quality of a religious-minded person, a devotee or a saint. The autobiography, in fact, connects two different versions of self—one spiritual, the other psychological. The result is a sort of philosophical variation more than a literary one since autobiography is born of a philosophical mood of the writer and finds the ‘self’ as not simply inescapable theme but a theme with the central focus on it. In this light the philosophical is the autobiographical wherever it is expressed, in autobiography proper or in other creative writings where the author is either in disguise or omnipresent or behind the curtain.

Pascal finds that the central interest of an autobiographer is “the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its peculiar shape”. The writer of an autobiography, Pascal suggests, has to combine the idea of his subjective vision of self as well as the analytical one. This also implies a combination of the self-eluding narrator and the self-conscious protagonist. The autobiographer may be able to visualize the past self ‘face-to-face’ and know what type of conditions contributed to its making.

The selfhood of the writer is always split in the twin factors in autobiography. It is the fusion of the past self with the present one. It is the modified version of the subjective self with an objective attitude of the writer. It is a coherent relation of the faith-line between factual expression of moral, religious and cultural pressure and the writer’s mind. It is also a collaboration of one individual with the notions of a group.
The self in autobiography is, consciousness of past ‘I’, combined with the matured and improved, present ‘I’. In this sense the form is a way to unwind the myth of self; a sort of mirror to visualize the image of self. It is directly concerned with functioning of an individual mind more than with a principle or an ideal. It embodies the self-perceptions but also scrutinizes those in retrospective penetration. The recollection of past is through the agent ‘self’. It is only with a sense of tranquility that the writer’s mind is prepared to analyze actions and reactions in life.

Revolving around the author’s sense of being, autobiography makes the first person ‘I’ clear and visible in its conceptual and practical forms. The moment one attempts writing about self, one faces the problem of creating an image to answer who this ‘I’ is; Balzac treats this problem as having no solution. He states in his confession, “I am inexplicable even to myself”. On the other hand, Montaigne finds this inevitable first person singularly all-pervasive in his outright claim, “it is myself I portray”.

The formal awareness of self is inevitable in autobiography. The writer’s consciousness is fated to expression of self that becomes an indispensable part of the author’s narration. The self that possesses highly active sensitivity and sharp sensibility, the self that holds the dynamic notions of thought and emotion, and the self that brings the sense of being and helps the process of becoming, is a multifaceted part of the writer’s existence as autobiographer. It is a divided self in which two distinct phases of life, the past and the current are unified. The current self visualizes life as a complete sequence of various events, actions and reactions and achieves a sort of moral order or design. The past self looks at the same life-experience as a lost but stored part, through memory as an ever-changing phase of the whole life and forms a participant perspective within it.

It is taken for granted that autobiographies make the private public. The author reveals what the world has not previously known, since the writing of autobiography claims its beginning and end in the display of people as individuals, their inner world of ideas, their minds prepared to confess or confront the outer world. Such a claim presumes that some entity called ‘self’ exists and that it is ‘knowable’.

Autobiography mediates the space between self and life. Self in it, swings between the subjective images and the objective impressions moving from the factual world to the mental landscape of the writer. Finney Brian, in his text *The Inner I* studies the truth as the self-analysis in autobiography in all its versions. He
establishes that autobiography exhibits more positive sense of self than diary, letters, memoirs because those are the sub-genres concentrating on the world outside the self. He substantiates:

There is also the reminiscence, which like the memoir concentrates on the world than is generally the case with a memoir....How is it possible for an autobiographer to explore with honesty the recesses of self while simultaneously he is trying to satisfy aesthetic criteria concerning form, structure, tone and the like?91

The autobiographer, on personal grounds, asserts the authority of content as the unique source of knowledge of that unique subject which is individual's vision of self. In fact, the autobiographer maintains such elements of consistency through the 'self-reference' that it connects his external experience with the internal attitude; it blends past memories with the present explanations. It is in the complex origin of self that autobiography takes birth, form and shape. In this light one can try to trace the shades of self, which can be found in various forms:

i) Presentation of self as a model: aesthetically the autobiographer presents his self as a model and creates an image of that self with some didactic thought in his mind.

ii) Celebration of self or self-glorification: the most commonly criticized part of autobiography is the celebration of self, carried to the point of self-glorification. The writer narrates how he achieved a sublime position, a success through self-trials and struggle.

iii) Documentation of self-development: the autobiographer presents a self-image with its historical shape, form and order for the documentation of self-development.

iv) Self-revelation for self-establishment: the story of his life is written by the author to fulfill his quest for establishing the self through self-revelation.

v) Introspective evaluation and self-discovery: the writer of autobiography concretizes the sense of being through an introspective evaluation of his life and tries to attain a level of self-discovery.

vi) Apologetic or self-defensive confessional declarations: the autobiographer finds a source of apologetic declarations or self-defensive confessions to free the mind from haunting past. He finds solace from his gloom due to absence of emotional props in life.
vii) Search for self-identity or self-replacement: many a times the autobiographer strives to find the identity of his self through the writing of an autobiography. Sometimes the writer also tries to compensate through it for the feeling of dislocation and displacement that is suffered in life by him. In such cases autobiography becomes a tool to refuge the self in its proper place and form.

viii) Self-assertion for the formation of truth: some autobiographers write their life stories asserting their ‘selves’ for the value and formation of truth that they have known, and learned through their experiences.

ix) Temptation to romanticize or verbalize the self: it is agreed by all scholars of autobiography that the writer’s self is either the prime subject or the main object of autobiography. Especially the critical and creative writers do feel the strong temptation to verbalize their life-stories, and romanticize the reality.

x) Self Image in public vision: very commonly exercised desire of autobiographers is to build-up a sound self-image, to confirm the public vision of one’s identity, and reputation. Sometimes it tries to clarify the misunderstandings or rumours about the author.

William Spengemann establishes that ‘self’ is seen to exist independent of whatever the writers say in its behalf and the act of writing about it seeks either to describe that self, historically or to analyze it philosophically. It also can be expressed by a romantic writer, in some poetical forms. It is in this trend of thought that the human mind in self-knowledge necessitates the objective point-of-view for the vision of life. The self thus, becomes a decisive theme of autobiography; the author’s untroubled concern for the inner dimensions of mind visualizes the need not only for external self-defence but also for a compulsion to meditate upon oneself.

The different variations of ‘self’ as they are conceived in literary endeavours of writing, excluding the religious or spiritual ones can be described as the dramatic self, the moral self, the divided self, the feminine self and the alter-ego as self. These can be variedly discovered even in autobiography since it is an attempt to orient the self amid a world of confusion.

Robert Sayre, while discussing the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams and Henry James, points out the division of self that is undividable:

Autobiography is an examination of the self as both a sovereign integrity and a member of society.
fact, the self is at all times both these things, and.... 
Autobiography is an endless stream of 
demonstrations of their inseparability.\textsuperscript{92}

The autobiographer self-consciously screens his experiences in order to project only a selective portrait of his world. He contextualizes the past life with his present vision. Finally, one can sum up that there is no challenge for the emotional value the autobiographer creates for ‘self’. The fetters of memories and haunting past are broken and the trapped self escapes through autobiography. The vision of individuality shared by the writer in autobiography offer a sense of self-discovery at the same time while it takes away the duplicacy by collapsing the wall between private and public. The myth of self is unfolded, the complexities clarified in a conscious and uniformed vision of life, through autobiography. The self itself becomes the story and narrator of the story both, in the ‘I’ working as a director, maker, actor and also speaker in the drama of self-presentation, with its dialogic posture and monologic structure.
1.6.2 The sense of past

Autobiography is a way towards a person’s history; the personal history that is grounded in past life of the autobiographer. The things that happen to person and the things that are performed by him are equally important parts of his past experience. The sense of past, thereby, happens to be an essential structural element of autobiography. By the phrase ‘sense of past’ two elemental qualities of the form are conveyed: one is the mood of nostalgia, that carries the writer’s mind back into the past; the other is the distance of time, that the writer consciously tries to cross and cover, in his expressions. The link, between past and present life of the writer, is his self. It is the most obvious target of an autobiographer, to show how this present self or personality is the natural outcome of that past self or those past events and happenings is his life.

The past occupies a very significant place in autobiography. Rather, it is no exaggeration to state that no autobiography can exist without the past reflected in it. To write an autobiography the writer needs to brood, to ponder over his past for the selection and omission of events. He has to make his choice by appropriate distribution of facts. The author has to discriminate and dissect the facts that emphasize certain aspects of his past life. However, the story that is narrated, the history of ‘past’ as it is, cannot be taken only at its face-value although it has some limitations in revealing the final and complete truth about man. An autobiographer, in short, has to evaluate life, and life cannot be evaluated without the past. There can be no second opinion for the simple fact that an autobiography would seem abnormal without the sense of past. The life-narrative moves from the past to the present, from the childhood to youth, and maturity, through the progressive pattern followed in autobiography. It is a creative reconstruction of the lived life. The writer inevitably recalls and impartially analyses the past life, through a kind of mental voyage backwards in time. In this meaning, autobiography is more a movement than a record of the writer’s mind. The autobiographer moves from convictions to confessions, impelled by the urge of self-exploration and self-scrutiny.

Roy Pascal comments on the element of past in autobiography, not simply as a structural constituent, but even as a part of style and method. In his words,

The autobiography is...historical in its method and at the same time, the representation of self in and through its relations with the outer world. Perhaps
one might say that it involves the philosophical assumption that the self comes into being only through interplay with the outer world...the germ of a description of the manners of their times.93

The philosophical assumption about ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ of self comes into shape only through the description of past as the part of life that is complete. In this sense, autobiography requires a sort of conceptual reconstruction of life. Pascal calls this reconstruction ‘a shaping of the past’ through which the writer attempts to organize his shapeless life-experience. It is through the writing of autobiography, that the writer achieves a certain order, apparent in his vision, by the relevance patterned to create coherence in his life-account.

In a way autobiography is the author’s effort to liberate his mind from the haunting shadows of past. The writer is concerned with inward struggle, problems of mind, conflict of emotive experiences, moral or socio-cultural values and pressures along with the idealized form of his self. But the writer’s determination to portray the past life, springs from the confidence of convictions and there begins the process of writing autobiography. It is a process of transformation of memories, formation of past into a text and display of self into language. The reflective and retrospective way of experimental thinking, about and on past inevitably attaches value to the past experiences, in the attempt of defining the self-existence. Everyone knows himself on the basis of analysis he tries of his past, and, the opinion about ‘self’ is formed with that knowledge.

The sense of past in an autobiographer, arouses the question of truth and its dependence on memory. This makes autobiography a complex produce of self and memory, lost in retrospective quest for truth. It is the effort of A. J. Ayer in his *Philosophical Essays* that brings the question out:

But how are we to interpret that people are directly acquainted with the past? In one sense indeed, it may be said that one is seldom, if ever, acquainted with anything but the past; one perceives physical objects not as they are at the time one perceives them but only, at best, in the state in which they were...therefore...the claim to have direct acquaintance with the past, becomes self-contradictory. What is suggested is that something which is the content of a present experience may be literary identical with the content of a past experience.94
It is important to consider as one of the major problems in autobiography, that the mingling of past with present makes the content appear identical; the perceptions of present self are consciously made to match with those of the past one. An autobiographer is on the voyage in search of a form of self, through the annals of personal history. He is confronted with the fatal breach between the past history and the present position of self. To explain this breach by filling the gap of time, the writer takes shelter in the art of writing through the fusion of past and present. Gerard Stilz refers to this artful use, when he states that the autobiographer,

borrows the models and devices of historiography which help him to show how the present complicated state of affairs can be convincingly derived and explained by relating it to identifiable and well-arranged steps performed successfully in the past.95

Autobiography bridges life in its widening gap of past and present by observing the exact process of growth and progression of the individual's mind. It is a gap between the present feelings and the past experiences, that the autobiographer accentuates in his life-narrative. To bridge such a gap of historicity of self and the actual present reality, the writer has to play, like a politician, engaged in balancing his presentation against his performance. Despite the sincerity and honesty of expression, the past appears, like a lost paradise to the aesthetic vision of the writer's present eyes.

The location of autobiographer's mind is the present but his voyages venturing into the past, the heart of darkness, aim at articulating the discovery of the hidden self, through the stream of memory and consciousness. The attempt of autobiographer is to portray the story of self, while the self is still in its making as he looks back into its genesis and growth. John Plamentalz clarifies an individual's attempts of self-assertion as different from self-expression:

....self-assertion is sometimes called self-expression, these two terms are not synonymous. Often, when we say of someone that he has expressed himself, we mean only that he has communicated to others, some beliefs or feeling of his. Sometimes, such beliefs or feeling 'express' his character, in the sense that reveal what sort of person he is, even though he may not intend or know that they do so; or they reveal some attitude of his of which he may not be conscious at the time, or indeed at any time. He intends to express his
feeling and beliefs and in doing so, perhaps without intending or being aware of it, expresses himself also in others ways. Artists, since the beliefs and feelings they intentionally express are subtle and idiosyncratic, are often said to express themselves in these other ways.96

It is this difference between self-expression, and self-assertion that evades the autobiographer’s self-realization. The writer’s determination to reflect the past self, springs from the confidence of his convictions and the experience that provided or blocked those.

The autobiographer goes through a deeper and repeated process of contemplation to choose and discriminate the memories, past events, feelings, associative ideas and impressions in his mind. These form a storage of stimuli he wishes to legitimize, by placing them in a modified form and order. The mood of contemplation, combined with a sense of appropriateness as well as the impulsive urge for confessional narration, constitutes the balance in autobiography. It is the balance of past and present self, combined in the way making autobiography a re-\textit{vision} of life.

The question of authenticity, of truth and dependence on memory requires a separate attention. The sense of past, so far as it constitutes the structural order of autobiography, relates the self of the writer from its origin and beginning to the matured or adult stage, of the present. It is the feeling of nostalgia that permeates the form and content of autobiography, since the writer cannot evade his sense of past. The form engages reflective act of introspection and retrospection as a kind of settlement with the past. Lionel Abel defines autobiography as

\begin{quote}
A recounting of events of the author’s life as they happened, together with what the author may have felt or thought at the time of these happenings, insofar as he can remember them exactly.97
\end{quote}

Abel’s statement brings exactly the combination of past events with the feeling and responses of writer, to those events as far as his memory stores and restores. It is noteworthy in autobiography to observe that the past impressions do not completely belong to the past and do not contribute to the historical truth, but to the ‘historical’ sense of the writer. They are past but they are recalled in and from the present standpoints; such intrusion of the present mind into the past is very decisive factor in the procedure of writing autobiography.
1.6.3 The process of writing autobiography

Autobiography is not an upshot of chance or spontaneity. It is not a 'spontaneous overflow', but a 'recollection in tranquility'. The writer faces the first hand narration as carefully as in the creation of a stream of consciousness novel. It is a very difficult task to select some events from the past life and to reject others. The process of writing autobiography needs brooding, contemplation, choice and arrangement of the matter. This necessity is recognized by Annie Dillard as the primary choice of the author. She observes that “the writer of any first person work, must decide two obvious questions. What to put in and what to leave out?”

Life itself is an ever-changing process. No final truth can be assured in human life. Autobiography in the process of its making, offers a new form to the author’s life. It is in this sense that Montaigne stated, “I have not made my book more than my book has made me”. The autobiographer has to put together and organize the formless, irregular and chaotic picture of life, as to suggest a clear and consistent pattern and order in it. It is through the involvement of mind in the retrospective flashes of past life that the author carves himself into an image. It is the process of merging the external happenings with the interiority of his self to identify that image of his personality and life. The writer has to move forward and backward, from the mind to the sense, from the present to the past and to the present again. Misch rightly points out that:

The form of autobiography arises in a very special way, out of the actual manner in which the author experiences reality; but his over-riding historical purpose leads him to overlook the difference between the shape of life and the shape of an autobiography.

The process of writing one's life-story is in fact the process of fitting a consistent frame into the simultaneous interplay of past and present. It is true that the story already exists, but the form is created for that story and the writer finds himself trapped between the twin-factors that surround the making of the form; those twin-factors are past and present, subjectivity and presentation, self and society.

No autobiography is written impulsively like a short-story, a poem or an angry-man's letter. Apart from the timed sifting and frequent drafting it also requires concentration and involvement in relating the emotions to the reality of life. Writing an autobiography proves a long process and a healthy one. Basically it is an exercise
to systematize, clarify, even justify, the ideas and values, creed and convictions that
the author followed and suffered for. The act of writing an autobiography is a
dynamic process of recorded choice. It unveils the inevitable and hidden recesses of
the author’s mind, confiding in the readers. It leads them into the private world of his
experience.

Despite the complications in the genre, the bias of critics against it and the
doubts of readers in response to it, the fact remains that autobiography is a matter of
great interest and temptation for all. The fascination to write about one’s own life
influences not only the academicians, qualified literary artists, successful creative
writers but even the non-academic and non-literary persons and personalities. It is
strange and surprising to find that more number of autobiographies are written (or
dictated to ghost-writers) by actors, and actresses, social reformers, politicians,
travellers, models, doctors, scientists and even great national leaders, who strive to
legitimize their concepts and ideas. However complex, the process of writing
autobiography has always been an invitation desired by all human beings. James
Olney observes:

....it is widely practiced by self-proclaimed non-scribblers; autobiography exercises...a fatal
attraction for all men and women....the daring
venture of writing their own lives directly as well as
indirectly seems to have an overwhelming appeal
for all such.101

In the process of writing what is important is the sense of ‘literariness’ that
affects a lot the creation of linguistic texture for the life-history. This sense of literary
formatting directly clashes with the autobiographer’s sense of past that embodies the
element of truth. Ironically the author has to keep the text swinging between two
extremes life as lived in past and life-story as an interesting literary text. This makes
autobiography move from life to vision, from history to creativity, from experience to
presentation.

Ulric Neisser terms the revision of past in autobiography as self-narrative
when he maintains that life-narrative is a way to define the self. A self-understanding,
for it provides answers to the question ‘who am I?’102 The self-knowledge can be
achieved by an autobiographer after a process, that “depends on perception,
conceptualization and private experience as well as narrative”103 It is the process of
clarifying the connection between the ‘historical’ sense, the conscious re-vision of
past and the ‘individual talent’ in the personal perspective of the writer. It is in this
process that the questions of authenticity, aestheticity and honesty take their shapes. On one hand, the writer has to account factual details of happened and lived events and experiences and on the other hand he has to relate this account with the consciousness that the resultant narrative should be an aesthetic vision of life. The writer, in such a process goes through the conflict between facts narrated and the feeling of 'self' narrating. It is a kind of amusing feature of autobiography that the errors of fact appear friendly in their narration by the feelingful self that recalls them with liberty to interpret, justify, analyze from the author's perspective. Autobiography revitalizes the past and thereby the author creates live experience of life.

There are some psychological features in the process of writing autobiography. These features can be seen as the principles of autobiography, making the author conscious and careful. The autobiographer is expected to offer truth, confession and faithful rendering of the past. These principles of truth, confession and honesty are discussed in further part, but at the same time, one cannot overlook the contribution of these principles in complicating the process of writing autobiography. Since the autobiographer is bound to narrate the truth, he has to employ his choice and skill in selecting, organizing and forming the expression of that truth. This is what Pascal means by the title of his book 'Design and Truth In Autobiography'. The autobiographer has to 'design' his truth and organize his life-experience into a pattern. The other principles as confession and honesty of expression, too, make the process of writing obscure and artful. In his foreword to the book of Lejeune, Paul John Eakin comments on the apparently straightforward definition, stating that Lejeune in his orientation towards prose, temporal features of narrative and his attraction to psycho-analysis, makes his definition biased. He defines autobiography as

The retrospective prose narrative that someone writes concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life,.....in particular the story of his personality.\textsuperscript{104}

What Eakin wanted to suggest in his comment is that the autobiography as a genre is a complex and unstable category in the history of literary creation. It is created with an idealist objective through its process of rendering the contours of one's life. According to Lejeune, the authorial consciousness in the process is finally unknowable and creates the central issue of uncertain internationality present in
signals in the text. The secret of autobiography ultimately is the discovery of some order for life. This discovery is one of the interior aims of the writing.

The authenticity, memory and personal truth in autobiography involve a special consideration. One cannot evade the factor of aesthetic vision or creativity of the author, as a natural sense of presentation. Despite all the truthful and honest recording of the autobiographer, one cannot challenge the 'literariness' in presentation. The author's choice and selection of his matter from the past life cannot be objected. For, the very process of writing is grounded in the freedom and choice of the writers. It is a sort of license for the writer. The reader has no appropriate source to verify or question the author's freedom of creativity and presentation. Rather, it is inherently found and accepted in the concept of writing a life-narrative. It is true that the writer's position in such forms, is very odd. The author of a life-narrative is trapped between the writing process on one hand and the life truth on the other. The writer cannot elude the consciousness of reader's responses. Equally inevitable is the consciousness of the writer that his work should be worth-publication.

There is no specific rule or theory about the process of writing an autobiography. Paul de Man, complaining of 'distressing sterility' of generic discussion of autobiography, argued in 1979 that "empirically as well as theoretically, autobiography lends itself poorly to generic definition".105

Thereby, one finds no fixed set of norms or rules for autobiography, the autobiographer and the process of writing. Shari Benstock begins her explanation by stating that the form autobiography is, 'initiated into the act of writing' and is directed towards the self that is presumed to be 'knowable'; hence, the starting point for the investigation of the form can be at the crossroads of 'writing' and selfhood'.106

The autobiographer's objectives in the process keep changing from the questions of subjectivity, nostalgic sense of past, to the location of growth, flexibility and betterment of self. The process involves the writer's consciousness about his position, purpose and presentation. It is a way to quench his thirst for understanding and justifying himself wherever he is not understood or misunderstood by others. It is a type of multifaceted process of the writer's consciousness ranging from the philosophical, psychological, historical, thematic, linguistic and generic visions of his context. In this sense, autobiography becomes an interdisciplinary text. In the language of James Olney, the freedom of an autobiographer is "the root of all
complications about the genre because there are no rules nor any formal requirements binding the prospective autobiographer”.107

The study of autobiography, is inevitably the study of a process of writing it. What the autobiographer records in life can be questioned with ‘how’ and ‘why’. The purpose of a translation of life into the act of writing relates itself with both the matter and the manner. It is a creative process that involves the ways of an individual, the world around and human consciousness between the two.
1.6.4 The position of autobiographer

Being a distinctive mode of presentation, autobiography proposes a portrayal of life from the author's 'eye-view' that is individual, as the author may say 'I -view'. It offers the inside picture, the hidden life of the author. The autobiographer's position becomes odd by his 'three-in-one' role of the writer-narrator-protagonist of the life-history. It is true that autobiography is a purified and filtered version of the lived experience. In the writer's vision, this experience holds the breach of past and present. It is the connecting agent self of the author that forces the centre upon the triple-sided position of the autobiographer. If we look at the autobiographer from a slightly closer angle, we find that he is caged in three different circles through those roles; it is the cage of truth, confession or self-conscience and the social image. Roy Pascal in Design and Truth In Autobiography, points out the presence of a 'double-character' of the autobiographer, being both, an object and a subject.\(^{108}\)

Shari Benstock brings into discussion Lacan's View of self as essentially split between the self one holds to be the ideal and the self as reflected from others. Benstock goes on to show how such 'splits are overlooked in a conventional autobiography.\(^{109}\) She explains how in an autobiography, there is a split between the present moment of narration and the past, on which the narration is focused. However, the conventions regarding the narrative fabric generally hide the gaps in the temporal and spatial dimensions of text, so that "the self appears organic, the present the sum-total of the past".\(^{110}\)

In autobiography the writer is expected to present the facts of life objectively. Autobiography is the only form in which the author is prepared to confront the truth of his self, face to face. The problem of the autobiographer begins in knowing the truth, continues in presenting that and matures in projecting both, the self-conscience within the mind and the social image outside. If the truth is presented by him as it is, his public impression may damage, and if he colours the truth, his own mind may not accept it, and even the readers may discern that the truth is something different than what appears to be.

The position of autobiographer is very odd. He has to balance his weight against the air of public-opinion upon the rope of socio-moral order with a stick of self-presentation, he holds in his hands. The self-revelatory form of autobiography contributes in creating a sort of ideas biased against the autobiographer. The bias is a
critically posed question as how far the autobiographer exploits the form for one’s conscious projection of idealized self-image. It is due to this bias that Shaw asserted, “all autobiographies are lies”. It is in the same bias that George Orwell stated that “autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful”.111

It is a very artful task to present a coherent yet selective and introspective analysis of one’s life in a way of self-estimation. The autobiographer engages the curiosity of readers and holds their interests deeply unto the last page. He has to function two-way at once because he reflects the closest vision of his private life and records the process of his becoming through the history of ideas, the structure and growth of his thought-pattern, personality, mind and philosophy.

The autobiographer does not really confine to the framework of chronological or other identifying details of time, place or persons, nor has he any compulsion to carry on the bondage of identified references or events from his life. It is the aesthetic freedom of an autobiographer offered by his position as autobiographer, that is not restricted to style or content. Like his matter, he can also select the manner, for his story of self. The only condition the generic convention imposes on autobiography is through its structural principles - truth, honesty and confession. Like history or chronicle, autobiography is bound to life by the connection of truth although it does not follow necessarily the sequence or order of events. It does not exactly mention the dates or times. Rather, the autobiographer chooses to portray his matter ‘beautifully’ and tries to evade the mention of date, sequence or time to make it skillful or artful in capturing the interest of readers.

The common reader looks at the form as an interesting tool for pastime, since it gives a varied and vivid picture of the ways of an individual. It quenches the thirst for knowing what is the secret part of the writer’s life, or at least what is unknown about the author’s personality. The autobiographer knows this and becomes reader-conscious. He begins his story with a particular desire for self-expression not as the right of a person but as a mental and emotional necessity. He claims to have lived an narration-worthy life. This desire prepares the mood of self-evaluation in him.

The voyage of an autobiographer, thereby, begins with self-expression but ends with self-discovery through self-scrutiny. What is challenging for him, is an impartial vision or objective estimate of his life. For the autobiographer the writing of autobiography is also a sort of opportunity to plead. Why should one be pleading? The apologetic tone appears to be inessential yet inevitable in autobiography. It is an
apology that the autobiographer offers for the responsibility he shares with life; a responsibility for all that happened to him and performed by him. It is a way to display a stable image of his changing self. Visibly, it is a story of the events and incidents that helped to change and to stabilize his self. Historically it is a look back into the past with a detached outlook. The autobiographer has to labour hard to make his expression as true as his experience. He has to rise above the notions of self-love and the narrow circle of egoistic outlook. He has to overcome the powerful sense of ‘I’ in the self-conscious existence.

Jean Starobinski points out the significance of style for an autobiographer and establishes that it is the facility of explicit self-reference in narration that enables the autobiographer satisfy the generic conditions. It adds the implicit self-referential value to his mode of narration. Style, says Starobinski, is an act of an individual and the conditions of autobiography are, in, “ethical and relational order” that demand, “only the truthful narration of a life, leaving to the writer, the right to determine his own particular modality, span etc.” Since it is the story of life, an autobiographer needs an artistic exercise to shape it. Michael Sheringham states that it is obvious and natural for any individual to take the “advantage of arts shaping powers in the effort to transmute the incoherence of life into the regularities of a story”.

Autobiographer’s position is that of a person withdrawn from society, to perform the act of reconstructing his self-image as more of a social than an individual entity. The autobiographer makes his book the testimony of his personality and uses the narrative devices of accuracy of feeling, impartial expression and appropriateness of response. He recapitulates, reconstructs and also revitalizes the self-image of the writer. George Gusdort observes:

The man who takes delight in thus drawing his own image, believes himself, worthy of a special interest. Each of us tends to think of himself as the centre of a living space: I count, my existence, is significant to the world and my death will leave the world incomplete....

An autobiographer simply cannot escape the temptation of making his story awful, striking and different. He forgets that it is an exercise in inner assimilation. A.O.J. Cockshut puts it straight by prescribing the qualities for an autobiographer, like the involvement with self, a distant standpoint, “articulateness, fidelity to experiences, sensitiveness to small currents of feeling and above all curiosity”.
Very few autobiographers can reveal the above qualities and most of those fall victim to the weakness of asserting and claiming a self-righteous sense of existence. Very few, finally, are able to depict their 'self' in balanced, coherent and faithful form. An autobiographer must be truthful and his portraiture of the life narrated should be impartial in viewing the self. He must have the fidelity of expression and experience. The best autobiographers always prove the smallest important inner consciousness along with those in their private life. The autobiographer is the person who holds the pen with an aim of presentation. It is the presentation of his authentic self-image, through the conceptions of his past and present, ideological and cultural, personal and social presuppositions and inferences after experiences.
1.7 Principles of autobiography

The format of autobiography is self-generated. It has no tradition, no bindings of any particularized framework, design or pattern. The method of writing of one’s life-narrative depends on the individual talent for perception. It is the individual’s mind that emphasizes or escapes the units of matter from one’s life-experience. To formulate the principles for a form like autobiography is nearly impossible and to observe some conventional rules in it is equally challenging as to perceive the making of its form; one has to study various autobiographies in their structure and style, content and form and then try to norm out some principles or formative rules as well as limitations of the form.

What confuses one more is the very tradition of establishing the rules, examining the works by measure of those and deciding the standard and value of the writing on the basis of them. It is very difficult to find a prescriptive frame of rules or principles for autobiography. James Olney infers that autobiography is “the most elusive of literary documents” and “one never knows where and how to take hold of autobiography; there are simply no general rules available to the critic”.

Olney’s inference is true so far as technical rules about autobiography are found doubtful and non-applicable at all. Anyhow, some possibility of principles can be discovered by thinking of the form as ‘self-justice’ of a writer.

‘Self’-being the subject of autobiographer’s vision, and historical sense of choice from past matter of experience being the source, the possible location of principles can be impartial stance of the writer, his emotional intensity, quest for identity and truth and thirst for sense of fulfillment in self-vision. From these factors one can generalize three simple yet essential principle of the genre in its form as well as content. These principle are the question of truth, the degree of honesty and the spirit of confession. One by one the researcher has attempted a brief discussion of these essential principles to arrive at the limitations of autobiography inherent in the form.
1.7.1 Question of truth

Autobiography in a way is history of life but one cannot judge it on the basis of its veracity or factuality. The question of truth has specific concerns in its answers in autobiography. It can be medium to know and understand the hidden personal aspects and varied private forms of life. It can be seen as an instrument that introduces the quality of writer's perceptions of his life on the basis of his retrospective analytical vision of past. The real concern in autobiography relates truth to individual consciousness, the person to person relationships along with the self and subjectivity. Jerome Bruner stresses this in his claim, "the truth of individual's life and its introspective scrutiny can be found only in one genre—that is autobiography". S.T. Coleridge, too, claimed the certainty of truth in self-narrated accounts of self, when he observed, "when a man is attempting to describe another's character, he may be right or wrong but in one thing he will always succeed, in describing himself".

As a quest for the truth of self, autobiography is an expression of the author's impression. Since each mind has its own story to tell, autobiography cannot be tested as true or false. It can be seen as a means of discovering truth on behalf of the writer. It defines the writer's truth in relation to the world around him. It can be a truth of the moments in his life, it can be the truth of his private ideas, actions and reactions. It can be the truth of his experience as somewhat similar or different to that of others. It is the writer's effort to find the reflection of bare truth about himself. As Barrett J. Mandel puts it:

> Autobiography is a way to enter in the truth like every pure experience; it takes birth from that state of existence, which is superior to memories, general falsehood, great deceptions and desire to be or look honest and sincere.

Such a statement simply signifies the narrative mode of truth in autobiography that emerges from nostalgic state of mind, out of the desire to prove oneself truthful. The truth in autobiography can be unique or singular while it can be, at the same time, dramatic and aesthetic. The narrative in it follows the presentation of many-sided reality of life.

To examine the realistic shades of truth and to distinguish the part of autobiography as fictional and artistic on one hand and historical, or biographical on
the other, one requires an eye that can discern the creative from the historic, the truth of situations in life from the truth of consciousness, the reality of external world from the reality of personal passions and emotions. What matters in the pre-set expectation of factual details from autobiography is that such an expectation makes the reader’s mind prejudiced and demanding. Autobiography, Pascal claims, “links the multiple experiences of life reflectively in the consciousness”.

It has an inherent appeal for the readers to accept the confiding position with a sort of empathetic considerations. This appeal originates from the writer’s mental preparation to open up exposing the private truth of his life, and his permission to the readers to enter into the private world of author’s experience and share it. There are other variations of that we observe in our creative and critical writings - such as practical reality as truth, mental vision, dreams and intoxicated fits of mind, meditation, truth of belief or conviction, the truth of imagination, truth of the moment, truth of death and truth of sense, or perception, or even truth of emotions.

Autobiography offers the plain truth, the writer’s mental response and the knowledge of truth about self. Roy Pascal raises the question about the truth in autobiography only to emphasize the uncertainty in finding the answers:

How to examine whether autobiographies are works of art or not? It is not a matter of examining the ‘form’ as opposed to the ‘content’. What needs to be discussed is, on what principles is the content of a life organized in this literary form, the autobiography?

Pascal’s gesture is at finding out some concord that motivated the author to integrate his memories and patternize them in format of autobiography. The world of art is open to experience of the artist who creates and beautifies the form and practice of the art through his visions and re-visions of matter from life. This matter may come from good or bad experiences but one cannot question its reality, validity or utility just because the form happens to be self-narrated. Its appeal lies in its idealism of presentation through the writer’s self-evaluating judgment of his life.

The autobiographer attempts to quench his thirst for ideal self-image through the real portrait of an individual like him-trapped in the life situations as he has been. Some forms of creation depend upon the material from the author’s life-experience; no social sense of loss or gain, nor any criterion of truth can be directly applicable to those, on the biased grounds of utility, didacticism or even morality. Truth is an abstract notion, varying and relative; it is used as a term for the universal values,
factual experiences, human feelings, conditions of conscious and unconscious mind, conflicts of psyche. It includes the collective mind along with the social order or public-opinion. Truth is perceived, in multiple patterns and ways; in fact, the notion of truth itself is variegated and shadowed by the backdrop of its use or reference. The manifestations or revelations of truth can be different on individual level from its functioning at social, community level of culture, morality or religion. In religion we talk about the ‘eternal truth’; in scriptures we find the references of the ‘supreme truth’; in the earliest critical theories of Plato we have the notion of ‘ideal truth’; in the philosophy of ancient devotees, we find the description of God as the ‘absolute truth’.

The question whether autobiography offers the truth in its vision or not, cannot be answered straightforwardly since autobiography exists beyond all practical and factual truth. It perceives that particular kind of truth which is semi-physical, existing in the author’s mind or inner consciousness. The critics of consciousness see literature as an act or genesis and analyse it as a drama taking place in the psychic structure of the writer. Sarah N. Lawall offers her critical explanation:

The consciousness perceived in an emphatic reading need not fit into a familiar pseudo-biographical formula..., because they define a work as the expression of an individual personality..., aimed at an available personal experience while symbolizes and communicates part of the human condition. The idea of literary consciousness leads to an analysis of the work as a mental universe, a self-contained world where human experience takes shape as literature. In addition, the texts’ Literature...... is a difficult but possible representation of reality. ¹²²

The truth in autobiography, then, derives its order and form in the mental universe of the writer to offer the possible representation of reality. Autobiography places its accent upon subjective self. Therefore, the truth in it happens to be the subjective representation of reality, shaded by the personal feelings, coloured by the mysterious perceptions of an individual mind. In this aspect of its subjectivity of consciousness autobiography comes very closer to romantic writing. On one side there is the truth of reality on the other the truth of writer's feelings and where the two coincide, nothing cannot be decided by an outside authority, in advance, as Goethe ruefully puts it when he reviews a collection of autobiographies:
Truth belongs to all written accounts of one's life, either in relation to matter of fact, or in relation to the feeling of the autobiographer, and Gods willing in relation to both....

The truth in autobiography, in short, has no rival. It exists with its own aesthetic vision and power. It may be double-sided truth as the writer views from within as well as from outside. The autobiographer's internal reactions and consciousness merges with his external surroundings and outward situations. The borderline between the two disappears, hence the truth becomes obscure in autobiography Pascal's chapter *The Elusiveness of Truth* in autobiography, explains in detail how the question of truth is a question of design and outlook. He believes that the writer of autobiography possesses a sort of two fold attitude, a double character because he occupies the position of both the subject and the object of his story Pascal maintains that the autobiographer is.

a man recognizable from outside and he needs to give, to some extent, the genetical story of this person. But he is also the subject, a temperament whose inner and outer world owes its appearance to the manner in which he sees it....the events have a double relevance; a relevance to the author's historical life and a relevance to his present self. They are symbolic of both.

Autobiographies do reveal the writer's mind, wrestling with truth, because of this double side of relevance and of presentation. Pascal further explains that the truth in autobiography is not objective truth but "the truth in the confines of a limited purpose, a purpose that grows out of the author's life and imposes itself on him as his specific quality...."

The autobiographer is concerned with the discovery and perception of truth from his past life and it is not the expression or evidence of that truth that can be a binding upon him. To John Sturrock,

Autobiography as truth-telling has both a moral and an aesthetic claim to make: by its veracity it displaces the false reports previously attaching to its author and in its fixity as literature it rises above the mutability of daily life.

Sturrock quotes Rousseau who wrote in his autobiography, "My role is to tell the truth, but not to get it believed". It is true that the autobiographer compels
attention through the attraction of truth, created by the generic expectations, but the scope of shaping and curtailing it, is always there with him.

Despite the artistic presentation of truth, the value of autobiography remains intact. Leslie Stephen remarked that “distortions of truth belong to the values of autobiography and are as revealing as the truth itself”. It is significant to find here that truth in autobiography may be vague and elusive, it may be double-sided, it may be obscure or mysterious, it may be narrowed vision of individual and it may damage the critical significance of the genre but on historical and psychological plane, that remains, no doubt, the truth of writer’s feelings. It may not be the truth of belief that is located in religious stories, but it certainly remains the truth of convictions, of outlook, defined and designed, discovered and demonstrated by the autobiographer.

In the act of retrospective thinking or contemplation of past, it is only surprising if the truth does not get distorted, or at least shadowed by the author’s present mood and method. It is impossible in this process of thinking and narrating while remembering simultaneously, to escape the ‘elusiveness of truth’. The historical truth, then, may be raw-material for an autobiography and not essentially the final output.

The autobiographers have an obvious desire, rather a temptation of giving a design, a shape what Pascal calls ‘definitive assessment’ of their lives. At the same time they are carried away by the stress of time-gap, the remoteness of their past from present and that uncertainty many a times results in distortion or conversion of truth, from vague reminiscence to a reality, clarifying the vision of mind.

The distinction of great autobiography is not so much the truth of knowing as the truth of being, an integration and reunion of different aspects of the person, a coherence of the acting and the spiritual personality in the particularity of circumstances.

William Spengemann devises the gap of time in autobiographer’s concern for truth. He explains:

because the narrator does not stand within the temporal span of the action he is reporting, because he does not stand in time at all, his perspective is not altered by new experience. He contemplates each past event from the same unmoving point, the point of immutable truth.

Spengemann’s perception is different in the sense that he philosophically invents an evolutionary pattern in the genre by concern of self. Self, he believes,
permeates autobiography too consistently to break it in the division of past or present time. The truth, finds its way from the 'historical', through the 'philosophical' to the 'poetic form' of expression... “about the truth which will have to be revised in the light of subsequent, unforeseeable experiences.”
1.7.2 Honesty as a policy

Autobiography thematically moves from the outer to the inner vision of the writer's mind. Among the structural elements of this form, truth and confession both involve a degree of honesty that can be seen as a policy. It can be a policy in the sense that the autobiographer achieves an impression of a credible narrator of truthful story only by exposing himself as an honest writer who has expressed his narrative with complete sense of credibility and modesty. The autobiographer is expected and tries to be honest at his best but the quality of honesty has to go through the subjective consciousness of the author and gets filtered and flimsier after its editing through the ego-the of narrator 'I'. It is in this sense that honesty is a policy in autobiography. Olney believes that autobiography not only analyses the personal life but artfully accounts the writer's mental responses to the external world. It is true that the genre settles itself between fiction and non-fiction, history and story, biography and novel.

There is always a desire to be and look honest and sincere, at the root of autobiography. It may offer the writer a choice between performance and presentation but the arguments about truth and honesty in autobiography concern the writer and the reader both, depending on their positive or negative conclusions of it. What really matters in case of autobiography is the relativity rather then the attempt to verity its truth or honesty. The freedom of selection and presentation that the author exploits makes honesty not simply a policy but a significant aesthetic criterion too. Spengemann comments on this dimension by which honesty intermingles with emotional inventions and factual recollections:

....with every moment of self-seeking consciousness....the relative value of each event changes......and one feeling constitutes the primary standard of value ; the truest autobiographical statements are those which bear the heaviest emotional freight....the distinction between fact and fiction....begins to blur....Not even lies or self-contractions are untrue as long as they generate those ecstatic feelings which are the ground of true being and of sympathetic consanguinity.\(^\text{132}\)

Spengemann's comment hints at the fusion of fact and fiction created by memory and the ever-shifting relative value of emotional expression. It is the same self-seeking consciousness of an autobiographer that fuses the sense of honesty with
the assumptions and interpretations of memory. Along with honesty, other elements like spontaneity and sincerity mingle with the independence of aesthetic brooding. It creates a discrepancy between experience and its utterance. It echoes the formal structure of the text while subjective consciousness of the author synthesizes his outer experiences with the ‘mental universe’. Beyond the simple parallelism of subjective consciousness and objective standpoint of the writer, autobiography attempts to reconcile the two as a mode of existence. The simultaneous composition of unified expression by the writer, of private sense and public self, prepares a series of transitional revelations of honesty, truth, fragmented reality, even the objectification of quite intimate moments and metaphysical insights.

Brian Finney considers the truth revealed in autobiography as broader and more complex than sheer factual veracity. Autobiography not simply captures human interest in individual nature by creating-generic expectations but even tries to be factually true without any generalization or documentary evidence of truths presented in it. In Finney’s words, “autobiographical truth is concerned with both, facts and the meaning the autobiographer attaches to the facts”.¹³³ The honesty of autobiographer thereby, has no source for its confirmation or verification. There is a sort of inherent paradox about the structure of autobiography. It is an inevitable and perhaps invisible discriminating outline between truth and honesty. One side of this is to present the truth as perceived and conceived by the autobiographer. The other side is an inevitable selection wherein the author is left with his own choice and freedom for the degree of honesty he desires to put in. There is a double sense, an ambiguity in the author’s notions about the truth of life he has been living and the readers’ notions about the honesty expected from the autobiographer. One cannot accurately discover the details of one’s own life once it is past and moreover, perceptions do alter from time to time, in passing from experience to memory and from memory to the act of recollection and finally from recollection to expression.

It is the self-reflective mode of the genre that makes the autobiographer combine the version of truth with factual accounts of self in internal verification. Memory becomes a kind of instrument for filtering and adding the matter from the author’s life and perceptions.

Autobiography achieves its value not through the sequence of narrative but through the consistency of the writer’s self-expression. It is this quality that intimates
the readers with the honesty of an autobiographer. Henry James comes closer to the same stand when he remarks that

there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature...134

To bring such a consistency of expression in autobiography, the writer recollects moments of truth and delusions from his life. Those revelation of truth are to be transformed without any exhibitionist literalism on the author's part; such a transformation cannot be arrived at without honesty. Roy Pascal infers that there is no rule-of-thumb-procedure to judge those omissions, distortions and versions of truth since the honesty of an autobiographer is closely linked with the psychological and historical backdrop the author inherits. The intrinsic question for the genre is, "how is it possible for an autobiographer to explore with honesty the recesses of the self while simultaneously he is trying to satisfy aesthetic criteria concerning the form, structure, tone and the like?"135 Finney Brian comments on subjective structure of the form. Like other narratives, he states, autobiographer also makes heavy use of aesthetic criteria even when he is most concerned to 'give an honest and unravished picture of the facts'.

This ultimately directs one towards the inference that element of honesty employed as a policy by an autobiographer, comes into conflict with the other features of the form, like structure, tone, style and so on. The autobiographer has to move ahead through such a conflict and find the possible balance. The subjectivity of the genre imposes the value of honesty upon the writer not as binding but as a way to security of self. The formal and artistic presentation indeed springs from the most original and the most factual details of the author's life and formation.
1.7.3 Confessional mode

Confession is both a principle and a thematic mode in autobiography. It is the germ of creativity and confession both, that produces the urge for self-expression through what Keats implied by his term, 'the egoistical sublime'. The romantic cult of Narcissism and fascination with self-image is at the root of confession. Literally 'confession' means an acknowledgement, an avowal, acceptance or disclosure of some sort. In a literary application, the term 'confession' does not necessarily imply any religious connotations such as the admission of wrong-doing or acceptance of sinful actions.

The term 'confession' is primarily related with the religious concept of sin, and Christianity signifies it by the creed of offering its utterance in church when the priest gives ablution. It is also related to basic religious feelings of the acceptance of human limitations. God as the Father offers his unconditional love despite human actions but the bad actions are differentiated from the good that we don't do; the priest offers a feeling of penance through the sacrament of God's love and forgiveness.

On psychological plane, confession implies a solution of guilt complex, fear or inferiority and it is in this sense of the act that is more significant to an autobiographer. For an author, it is just a sort of mental surgery that will offer a new life to the patient and sickly mind. The writing of autobiography may not necessarily be a moral analysis of life but it is not simply a literary enterprise. It happens to be the process of locating 'I' with the placement of self in past but identification in the present. It is the process of knowing self and making it known by establishing an ordered form of growth wherein all bad, secret things of life, wrong or right, are to be accentuated. Confession is cathartic in this sense. It offers the vision of truth without crossing the limits of decency on socio-moral plane as well as personal order of expression.

Realization of self is the core of autobiography. In fact, realization of one's own actions, words, deeds, mistakes is the central notion in the process of confession. Confession can be a motive for writing autobiography and involves the same spirit of self-realization. The element of confession in poetry, states Abrams, "designates...sometimes, shocking detail with which the poet reveals private or clinical matters about illness, experiments with drugs, and suicidal impulses...."
The notion of good or bad can be conveyed only after its realization in the mind of the writer. In religion it gains the value as a purifying influence and in autobiography it becomes a valuable feature as a relieving source for suppressed perceptions of the author. The writer as an autobiographer uses confession as a device also for connecting past and present, with the associations and connections of perceptions and interpretations.

A sensitive mind is always the victim of moral consciousness created by social order or sense of public opinion. One talks about oneself with an awareness that the audience are members of society and may form impressions according to their collective concepts. The social consciousness thus becomes an integral part of one's self-presentation. It helps an individual to form his ideology and to sustain the moral sense of what is good or bad in one's past actions, events and life-situations. In autobiography, the writer is haunted by such a socio-moral consciousness that inspires him to offer confession for the sake of cleansing his image of self. Stephen Spender refers to this consciousness in his autobiography:

...The social reality intrudes upon the individual's private life in two ways: one through the presence of his family friends, acquaintances and relatives. The other through his own imprisonment by the values stamped on his mind from childhood. The artist also, as an individual, faces this intrusion and feels that he is 'hounded by the external events'.

According to John Sturrock, an autobiographer gains a sort of erotic pleasure by writing his life-story with confessional mode of narration. While commenting on Rousseau's autobiography he brings out that the autobiographer tries to compensate for a sense of shame or guilt in secret part of life by re-experiencing the same through autobiographical narration. Sturrock explains with reference to Rousseau's autobiography,

The purpose of Confession must therefore be to evacuate the shame which he has felt at these culpable moments and which the autobiographical act will revive, since his emotions fluctuate as he writes in consonance with the emotions he is recalling. His desire in writing is to purge himself by this tardy but sincere abasement.

Sturrock argues that the autobiographer is trapped in his own sense of moral responsibility and social obligation. The relationship between past impressions and present feelings is made explicit in autobiography through the 'modified' moral
behavior that expresses itself in the writer's confessions. The author also clarifies a conditioning environment of his life and experiences the sensual excitement which he felt at the time of those secretive moments in his past life.

Confessional mode, therefore, is an important part in the structure of autobiography. It works as a principle, it proves a cathartic exercise to the writer's saturated emotions and it brings charm in autobiography by introducing the truth of secret moments of his past life. Confession has direct association with the mental upheavals of the autobiographer.
1.8 Limitations of autobiography

Like all other literary genres, autobiography has its own limitations. Some inherent restrictions in the form affect its 'literariness' and some structural elements or features complicate its transparency in life-portrayal. As a coherent dialogue between the author's past and present self, autobiography deals with purely personal concerns. The true conception of life in the form of a faithful portrait of a soul adventuring introvertly, makes the formal and internal mode of autobiography a complex record of mind, life and times. Elizabeth Bruss comments on complex structure of the form, stressing the necessity of clarifying its proper perspective and knowing its adequate interpretations:

Faulty or naïve assumptions that the nature of a genre impair the criticism of autobiographical writing, since the critical statements which result are either too broad to be explanatory or too rigid to cope with change and development. Such statements, as for example, “autobiography is confessional” or “the autobiographer must trace the teleology of his life” or even “autobiography is an act of artistic memory” all of which have some currency and plausibility, are still only too easy to refute. 

Bruss maintains that the literary community recognizes autobiography as a distinct and deliberate undertaking. What is autobiography for us may have originally been the same for its writer. Many a times it is only the by-product of another act, a kind of apology in self-defence or a sort of self-exhibition for the sake of self-image or self-revelation. It is the life events and their compulsions that create a necessity, an urge for self-expression. Autobiography as literary text has its genesis in such compelling urge for utterance. In its primary form, it is simply an account of one's own life but this account, in one way or other, is consequent to self-love. Self, then, can be seen as both the privilege and the limitation of autobiography.

What happens in autobiography is the clash of reader's expectations with the writer's performance. The readers seek to know the whole of the writer's life but the writer desires to reveal his life and self in parts. Gerald Stilz pointed out that Gandhi denied that he was writing a real autobiography. It was more of an attempt at the 'self-realization' and "to see God face to face, to attain Moksha". He quoted Gandhi's clarification:
I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography.¹⁴⁰

No autobiographer would ever deny the fact that autobiography as a literary presentation of life has its own generic limitations inherent in it and no life or personality can be totally portrayed in it. Even the exponents agree that limitations are inevitable, inescapable and insoluble since the form involves different factors, phases and elements that complicate its making and structure.

To simplify the study of those complicating factors, in the genre and its making, the researcher has attempted a glance at its limitations in brief and essence. These limitations can be viewed as the issues or doubtful factors in autobiography. They can be classified as 1) Aestheticity – that motivates the creative germ in an autobiographer and affects the historical and factual side of its presentation; 2) Authenticity – that shakes and shades the grounds of selfhood, subjectivity and involves the role of memory, in the process of recollecting the past; 3) Incompleteness that causes the author end his story while the life continues and creates the sense of death in his mind. 4) The reader-consciousness on the part of the writer whose mind pre-supposes the public-opinion and forms his self-expression accordingly.

Apart from these basic limitations inherently shading and shaping the structure of autobiography, there can be another set of limitations varying from person to person. In that generalized sense one can mention class, race, caste, gender, religion or nation in the vision of the author. Yet the above four limitations are to be discussed in brief, separately, one by one, before one moves ahead to look at the origin, progress and popularity of autobiography from a historical perspective.
1.8.1 Aestheticity: the creative impulse

The act of writing is performed with a pre-caucious sense of presentation by the writer. In the autobiographer's position, the writer's temptation to polish the finery and style intensifies since the reflection of 'selfhood' involuntarily follows the subjective vision. The autobiographer is in love with his self-image and views the past romantically. It is something very closer to the notion of Keats' 'egoistical sublime' in the form of romantic subjectivism. The feeling of selfhood and self-revelation prompted by self-love necessitates an aesthetic sense in the author. Moreover, if an autobiographer is a creative writer, a literary artist blessed with the skill of language and style, his autobiography inevitably becomes the outcome of his aestheticity.

There are some universal ideas and themes that capture the readers' attention and interest easily. These themes are love and failure, hatred and revenge, sin and suffering, anger and commitment, adventure and death, the suspended and unexpected actions, mysterious happenings, coincidences and accidents. The autobiographer discerns these themes and tries to place them in the central focus of his story. The aesthetic desire of an autobiographer to impress his self-image, interferes consciously or unconsciously with his life-story.

Autobiography, becomes a type of psycho-drama rather than a mere recollection of biographical details. Spengemann relates the concept of autobiography to the 'self-biography' stressing that all literary writings, including various poems, novels, plays, “despite their fictiveness, seem to address the same problems of self definition”. Goethe wisely entitled his autobiography as *Poetry And Truth* since he knew that “it is almost impossible that a record of life should not be a mixture of poetry and truth”. It is the sense of aesthetic presentation that creates a problem of sincerity in autobiography. Andre' Maurois argued that the aesthetic sense of a creative mind is essentially prone to lose the matter-of-fact-attitude in autobiographer. He states, “if an autobiographer is also a gifted writer, he is tempted...to make the story of his life a work of art, an unfaithful record”.

It is Philippe Lejeune who maintained that autobiography, in its deepest sense, is necessarily a special kind of fiction. He states that it can be as much created or discovered in its truth and realities. Citing some examples of fictive autobiographies, Lejeune theorizes that there is a pact, in the autobiographical text,
between the writer and the reader. Both, explains Lejeune, know, understand and accept the 'illusory vision' of the author's life. It is the self-referential value of the form as an aesthetic text. Lejeune's discomfort with concept of sincerity as a 'sterile problematic' is due to biographical reality the author posits to support the identity of his revealed self. Lejeune's struggle with the problem of sincerity at the heart of autobiography illustrates in exemplary fashion the difficulties of referential art. He insists that autobiography is "necessarily a fiction produced under special circumstances yet...without some sincere basis....risks losing its status as a distinct genre and collapsing completely into fiction."144

Lejeune thus labels the autobiographer as a "dogmatic formalist with interior intention"145 In fact, the significance of chronological references in structure of autobiography as narrative is underestimated by Lejeune. He finds it to be simply a narrative that follows in time the story of an individual. Lejeune's perception seems partial since he is blind to the self-integrity, the authentic self that pressurizes the autobiographer to write. The very origin of autobiography is rooted in self - the agent of writer's perceptions of life.

The creative impulse in the writer becomes a type of framing agency in the act of re-creating his life-experience so much so that autobiography adopts the fictive shades even in memory and risks its authenticity at the cost of historical and biographical realities of life. James Olney observes:

...in the act of remembering the past in the present, the autobiographer imagines another person into his own existence, another world and surely it is not the same, in any real sense, as the past world that does not, under any circumstances, nor however much we may wish it, now exist"146
1.8.2 Authenticity: the role of memory

The limitations of autobiography as a genre are all situated in two basic components of its structure. One is the triple-role of the writer's 'I', the writer, narrator, protagonist and the other is the act of writing dependent on life. The question of truth in autobiography and its lack of evidence or verifiability makes the form susceptible to critical doubts about its authenticity. The frequently-claimed reason as the base of such a doubt is in the role of memory upon which the autobiographer depends. The role of memory is always perceptive in it. Discovering the meanings of past experience without any partial view or prejudice is the demand of an autobiography. It is a project of memory and meditation both.

George Gusdorf notes that the autobiographer "gives himself the job of narrating his own history; what he sets out to do is to reassemble the scattered elements of his individual life and to regroup them in a comprehensive sketch". In such a task of re-assembling the scattered elements memory becomes an agent for recollections of the events from the author's life. Roy Pascal states that value of truth in autobiography is always dependent on memory and its function. He maintains that in the process of writing autobiography,

Memory becomes symbolic both of a past situation and of the quality of mind that recalls it....the very remoteness from times to stress and uncertainty may lead to distortion; at the same time, the fact that they have reached a stable goal may bring them to depict the past as leading too inevitably to its outcome, they may see their lives too much as a sort of theodicy... Pascal's remark suggests the gap of time between the writer's experience and the expression of it. Memory appears to carry the burden of linking this breach of time; actually the distance cannot be evaded since the attitude, stance and degree of involvement, on the part of writer changes. In fact the stance of the writer is ever in flux. This dynamic nature of his vision makes memory strategic in its function. Apart from its lapses and missing links, it also falls prey to the associations that form impressions through emotive or aesthetic or intellectual concepts of the writer. Pascal also brings out the complexity of childhood-memories in autobiography. It is natural for the autobiographers to locate the source of their ideas and growth in childhood.
experiences but it is very difficult for a grown-up, adult mind to recall the childhood-
events accurately unless those are associated with some further experiences or events
in his life. Pascal explains:

In treatment of childhood, the autobiographer
cannot escape a painful dilemma. It he treats the
childhood without reference to what he has become,
it tends to be, in many parts, irrelevant to his story
and to reflect perhaps a sentimental indulgence in
his private memories; if he speaks only of what in
his childhood presages his later development, the
truth may easily be distorted by his polemical
bias.149

The question of truth and functioning of memory contribute to the limitation of
authenticity in self-narrative. Pascal believes that “there is no final and complete
truth about man...For, man changes as he writes his autobiography”.150 It is in the
same sense of disbelief in the authenticity of the genre that Paul John Eakin states that
“autobiography...is increasingly understood as both, an art of memory and of
imagination”.151

Eakin also signifies the way memory can become a foundational rock for
building self-image of the writer. The echoes and re-echoes of past experiences,
emotions, feelings, ideas and conflicts appear through memory. The invisible time-
gap between the past and present is bridged often by memory. The role of memory,
thereby is very crucial in the making of the form. It is easy to forget the things rather
than to store them and recall at appropriate moment. In the autobiographer’s case,
memory seems to conspire with his ‘self’ only to favour the self-presentation;
memory, thus can play a very decisive, even deceptive role in shaping the life-story.
It is at once both the receptive faculty and the source of autobiographer’s
psychoanalytical vision. It recollects the matter for re-interpretation in the conscious
effort of the autobiographer and tends to influence his present stance.
1.8.3 Incompleteness : life v/s death

Incompleteness is the fatal flaw of autobiography for two reasons: one is the fact that the autobiographer is a living narrator of the story that he cannot finish or end, in his text. The second is the writer’s consciousness of death or mortal nature of life that makes his mode of expression pre-posing the posthumous impressions about him. It is this consciousness of death that makes the writer conscious and skilful in building his self-image.

Generally a person thinks of writing his life-story after living the major portion of life, nearly in the old age or after the middle age. This maturity through experience is what Pascal refers as “the account of the acquisition of an outlook, the final philosophy that emphatically colours all the past”.

Pascal states that many autobiographies are written in middle life, when the person is still vigorously engaged in life and work.

Autobiography is essentially haunted by the sense of death; conscious of mutable life, the writer acknowledges his mortality, his awareness of mutable existence and uncertainty of life. The very attempt of looking back into the past, suggests turning one’s face away from the present and the future. The autobiographer looks back into the past also because he is already aware of the loss of that. The mind of the autobiographer projects a desire of putting his life into language and thus recreating it only when he has felt the value of his life and existence strongly and has realized its phases in passing as the process that he cannot help or avoid. The helplessness of the writer, thus helps him in re-creating his life-story.

In such a light of death-conscious and living author, one can clearly perceive the sense of incompleteness of autobiography, as an inherent limitation in its formal structure. Paradoxically, life itself is incomplete despite all its fulfillments and the autobiographer is motivated to find some degree of completeness, through the writing of autobiography; he seeks an order in his ‘lived life, tries to locate its meaning and leaves it as a record.

The thought of death is an obvious motivation for the writing of autobiography, despite the knowledge of one’s incompleteness in life. In a way the autobiographer tries to compensate for the incompleteness through the writing of apparently complete story of his life.
On the level of critical and literary analysis, some autobiographies prove 'complete' in the sense that they reveal a complete image of the author's self and personality and nothing considerable happens in the life of that author even after the completed story of his life and its publication. On the other hand there can be some examples of autobiographies that end their life-record when the author is either a middle-aged person or changes his life and personality due to the changing times and events after the publication of his life-story. In such cases the autobiography becomes only the record of that truth which can be called truth of the moment.

Pascal's observation is relevant when he talks about the quest for 'perfection' or completeness in autobiography:

It is the tempering with the past, the truth and the self that interferes with the 'perfection' in autobiography......we can consider what is actually narrated rather than what actually happened.....Saint Teresa wrote two accounts, the earlier dominated by her need for confidence from her confessor and the latter showing her own confidence in her visions and chosen way of life, written for guiding others....hence, autobiography could not achieve the honour of being 'perfect'....153

Hence, autobiographies remain to be studied independently without their link to the further life of the writer. In the cases like Saint Teresa, the autobiographer feels a need to write a second version or a sequel to the life-record already published by one ; it can be seen as the inherent incompleteness of the form that makes the writer desire for a volume of that. Sometimes the same story is repeated in a new form, through the author's more matured perceptions and the next volume also may have some additions.

Roy Pascal emphasizes that in autobiography, the beginning is an end and the end is in the beginning, when he remarks:

For, one expects from autobiography a totality rather than a quintessence and even if such an experience gives the personality a view dimension, a turn, the autobiography must embed it in a long process...must offer the whole-image, a complete picture, the total sight of author's personality, ...154

Complete or incomplete, life is delineated in autobiography although in its partial factual aspects. Yet it can be revealed in completed form if the writer wishes or chooses to. The final inference is, one cannot challenge the truth of autobiography,
especially the personal, subjective truth that is the core of the genre because there is no other form in literature that can touch the extremes of truth in the writer’s personal life.
1.8.4 Reader - consciousness

The most important and the last limitation of autobiography is reader-consciousness. The author of any literary form may suffer from this consciousness but can take the aid of disguise, imaginative and creative links and literary devices to escape any type of oddness, shame or embarrassment in public-life. In autobiography, the consciousness of readers is so pressing and the writer so helpless that it becomes a sort of tension. The autobiographer is helpless because he has no support of creative or imaginative faculties and he cannot use any device as disguise. Autobiography happens to be such a direct encounter of the author with the records that the first-person ‘I’, although it is the inner ‘I’, fears the public-opinion about the writer’s expression. The autobiographer knows about the generic expectations of the form and feeds his readers accordingly. He is desperate in satisfying their demands many a times. Reader-consciousness is thus, a responsible factor for making the autobiographer not only alert and watchful about the self-presentation but also strategic and skilful.

It is the fear of social and public opinion that demands not simply truth in autobiography but the polished truth so that the writer cares more about the polish than about the truth. The autobiographer knows what the readers will think about his story and how they will react or respond to that. He very consciously omits those events and incidents from his life-story that may prove harmful or dangerous to his self-image, which he creates for the ‘to-be-published’ autobiography.

Not that we don’t have any instances of candid and bold autobiographies in which the writers risk their prestige, security, life and self-image for the sake of truth; but it is very difficult for an autobiographer to escape from the sense of public-opinion and the knowledge that even the most personalized form like autobiography is essentially a public performance that needs prepared stance, objective evaluation and self-estimating presentation.

It is important to find that some autobiographies are written only to change, reform or justify the public opinion about the writer. There are self-narratives written from this angle, as defense-narratives or celebrating and justifying stories of self. Criticism can make as well as break a writer. It has the two-way effect, destructive or constructive, when it comes to hold the relationship between life and literature. Self-
evaluation, in this light, is a painful act wherein the autobiographer tries to be simplistic, spontaneous with past that he locates as distinctive mode of self-analysis.

Sometimes autobiographies are written to answer the critical public opinion or to reply the harsh statements spread about the author. In such cases the reader-consciousness becomes an original motif but remains a limitation yet. It is the fear of social criticism on writer’s self, that checks, colours and refines the moves and moods of presentation in autobiography.

Publicity or desire for public-attention, the attraction of limelight, the fascination for focus in people and social vision can be the other side of the reader-consciousness. Then the consciousness of readers as judges of one’s life-story, makes the autobiographers ponder over what they should write or not and how much of truth they should narrate in what language and so on. Many a times the autobiographers tend to fall prey to the attractive incentive of fame and try to write what would please their readers.

Every individual has an innate desire for earning fame or at least good name in public. The creative writers, moreover, are found striving always for their popularity and goodwill in society. Autobiography suffers this publicity-stunt as limitation because of the creative urge and the reader-consciousness on the part of its writer.

Apart from these limitations, there are certain fallacies around the form of autobiography. These fallacies can be observed in brief:

i) There is a sort of emotional fallacy in the narrative tone of autobiography. It is a fallacy because the writer keeps shifting his position of the narrator to the ‘narrated’ or from the subject to the object and vice-versa. It is emotional because the writer is essentially gripped by the ‘self-image’ he wishes to idealize and present; this image is shadowed, most of the times, by the emotion of self-love, vanity or self-esteem which is neither evitable nor false.

ii) There is a sort of intentional fallacy in creation of the form. Although there are so many intentions apparent like self-love, instruction, cathartic narration, desire for popularity, classification or confession, defense or apology, desire to leave the record of private experience, a desire to tell the truth, etc. But ultimately the confusion created by the
vagueness and uncertainty of these intentions, is found so much at the root of autobiography.

iii) There is a type of relational fallacy too in an autobiography. In fact, the form autobiography deals with the twin-self of its writer. One is related to the writer’s own self what he perceives as himself. The other is related to knowledge of the author about the self he perceives as what others know about him. The tenable strategy of the narrator-author-hero in an autobiography is to maintain the account of his life-experience truthfully.

Autobiography, like a mirror becomes a metaphor for self, as it works towards self-observation, self-recognition, self-identity and self-analysis. The poetics of autobiography is interwoven by the self, the past-experience of the self and the present act of writing through the contemplated and analyzed vision.