

Chapter – I

Introduction: Theory of Autobiography

The word autobiography was coined towards the end of the eighteenth century at which time three Greek components *auto-bio-graphia*, meaning “self-life-writing” were combined to describe a literature already existing under other names (memoirs and confessions, for example). Plato, in the fourth century B.C., wrote his autobiography in the form of letters. *The Seventh Epistle*; St. Augustine, at the turn of the 5th century A.D wrote it as *Confessions*; Montaigne, in the later half of the Sixteenth Century called it *Essays* and the first ‘autobiography’ was written by W. P. Scargill. It was published in 1834 and was called *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister*. Thus, we see that the genre of autobiography has been in practice for a long time. The same is not true, however of the theoretical and critical literature on autobiography. One of the main reasons for this, according to James Olney is:

There is the dual, paradoxical fact that autobiography is often something considerably less than literature and that it is always something rather more than literature. (1980:24).

Georges Gusdorf, often identified as the ‘dean of autobiographical studies’, asserts in his essay “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” that “autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist” (1956:30). The cultural precondition for autobiography, Gusdorf argues, is a pervasive concept of individualism. However, the individual concept of the autobiographical self that is established by the male tradition raises serious theoretical problems for critics who recognize that the self, self-creation, and self-

consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities and many non-western people. This establishes a critical bias that leads to the misreading and marginalization of autobiographies by women and minorities. Women's autobiographies display quite a different orientation towards the self and the others from the typical orientation to be found in the autobiographies by men. Women narrate their inner life in autobiography and, as Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, they, "define for themselves and their readers, Woman as she is and as she dreams" (1980:17).

Since his days as a post graduate student at the School of Languages in the Gujarat University, the researcher has been fascinated by the exploratory studies on the effect of gender in creative and critical writing. The present project is intended to be a further exploration of the topic that has fascinated him since his M.A./M.Phil days. In this thesis an attempt is made to explore the writing differences in the autobiography-writings of men and women through a comparative study of the autobiographies of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Acharya J.B.Kripalani and Sucheta Kripalani, C.D.Deshmukh and Durgabai Deshmukh, Mahatma Gandhi and Madeline Slade (also known as Miraben). These Indian political leaders played a vital role in the Indian freedom struggle. The full title of the present research project is: *Poetics of Difference: A Study of Autobiographies by Men and Women in Indian Politics*.

The four pairs of autobiographers selected to explore the writing differences were all contemporaries. They were actively involved in India's struggle for independence in one or another way. Out of the four pairs of the autobiographers, three pairs were closely related to each other. Jawaharlal and Vijayalakshmi were

brother and sister. J.B.Kripalani and Sucheta, and C.D.Deshmukh and Durgabai Deshmukh were respectively husband and wife. Madeline Slade was a spiritual disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. In spite of being brought up in a similar socio-political background, however, these autobiographers write differently as males and females. Before we look at the scheme of presentation of the rest of the chapters of the thesis, we shall have a brief discussion of the male/ female theory of autobiography writing.

Male Autobiography

The critical literature on autobiography began in 1956. In the beginning, we have Georges Gusdorf, whose “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography” with its philosophical, psychological, literary and more generally humanistic concerns have preoccupied students of autobiography from 1956 onwards. Gusdorf, recognizing autobiography as “a solidly established genre” notes:

Autobiography exists, unquestionably and in fine state; it is covered by that reverential rule that protests hallowed things, So that calling it into question might well seem rather foolish. Diogenes demonstrated the reality of movement simply by walking, and thus brought the Scoffers with the Eleatic philosopher who claimed, with reason as his authority, that it was impossible for Achilles ever to overtake the tortoise. Likewise, autobiography fortunately has not waited for philosophers to grant it the right to exist (Gusdorf, 1980:28).

However, in order to sort out the implicit presuppositions of autobiography, Gusdorf points out that the genre of autobiography is limited in time and space, it has not always existed nor does it exist everywhere. Furthermore, in his view

autobiography writing is not to be found outside the Western culture since it expresses a concern that is associated with the Western man only:

The concern which seems so natural to us, to turn back on one's own past, recollect one's own life in order to narrate it, is not at all universal. It asserts itself only in recent centuries and only on a small part of the map of the world. The *man* who takes delight in thus drawing *his* own image believes himself worthy of a special interest (Gusdorf, 1980:29 Emphasis added).

Gusdorf's concept of autobiography, thus, is premised on a model of the 'self' that he identified as endemically Western and individualistic. One starts dissociating one's self from the others and tends to think of himself as the center of a living space. He thinks that his existence is significant to the world and that his death will leave the world incomplete. Gusdorf further asserts that autobiography is not possible in a culture where this consciousness of self does not exist - a culture which exists in India for example, where individual ego is looked upon as an illusion and salvation is sought in depersonalization.

Autobiography, thus, becomes possible only, under certain metaphysical precondition. It is after the Copernican revolution that the humanity, which previously aligned its development to the great cosmic cycles, finds itself engaged in an autonomous adventure, and now man knows himself as a responsible agent; gatherer of men, of lands, of power, maker of kingdoms or of empire, investor of laws or of wisdom, and so on. With this cultural resolution our interest is turned from public to private history.

Gurdorf also talks about the invention of mirror and the major role it plays in a child's gradual consciousness of his own personality. He sees himself as another among others. Autobiography, according to Gurdorf, is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image. However, it is only after Renaissance and Reformation that Man began to take an interest in seeing himself as he is without any taint of the transcendentalism. This virtue of individuality was particularly dear to men of Renaissance.

The author of an autobiography is narrating his own history, reassembling the scattered elements of his individual life and regrouping them in a comprehensive sketch. Autobiography requires a man to take distance with regard to his self in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his unity and identity across time.

Various motives of autobiography, the reasons for which an autobiography is written, according to Misch, are confession, glorification, self-justification and posterity. An autobiographer aims at providing a kind of posthumous propaganda for posterity that otherwise is in danger of being forgotten by the society which may fail to esteem him properly, for as Gurdorf notes: "One is never better served than by oneself" (1980:36). The autobiography that is exclusively devoted to the self-justification or glorification of a man, a career or a political cause is limited almost entirely to the public sector of life. The situation is altogether different when the private life assumes more importance. In Augustine's *Confessions*, for example, it is the history of a soul that is told to us.

Furthermore, autobiography also assumes the task of reconstructing the unity of a life across time. It is not simple repetition of the past for “recollection brings us not the past itself but only the presence in spirit of a world forever gone” (Gusdorf, 1980:38). This second reading of experience is truer than the first for there is always a consciousness and the narrator always knows the outcome of the story he tells.

Finally, according to Gusdorf, an autobiography can not be a pure and simple record of existence, as in an account book or a log-book. In the writing of an autobiography, the literary, artistic function is of greater importance than the history or objective function claimed by the positivist criticism.

Fe/male Autobiography

Women’s autobiographies, on the other hand, display quite a different orientation towards the self and the others as compared to the typical orientation found in the autobiographies by men. Women write out their inner life in autobiographies. As Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, they “define for themselves and their readers, women as she is and as she dreams” (17). Shari Benstock, in her essay “Authorising the Autobiographical” examines the reigning attitudes toward autobiography in theory and practice that often do not take women into account as the writers of autobiography. Very often the accounts of the most crucial features of womanhood are left out: how woman is situated under patriarchy; how metaphors of self and writing write her out of the account; where she is placed with regard to the subjectivity - the “I” that structures autobiographical accounts.

It has only been since World War II, when the formal analysis of all branches of literature flourished, that autobiography began receiving consideration as a literary genre worthy of serious critical study. During this period two bibliographies of autobiography were published; William Matthew's *British Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies published or Written Before 1951* (1955) and Louis Kaplan's *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies* (1962). Very surprisingly, these works do not include many important autobiographies by women. Noted critics like Wayne Shumaker, Roy Pascal, Robert Sayre have also paid little attention to women's autobiographical writings. James Olney, in his *Metaphors of Self* (1972) devotes separate chapters to Eliot, Montaigne, Fox, Darwin and Newman with not a single reference to a woman's autobiography. A strong social bias against the delineation of women's lives often predominates critical objectivity for most critics consider women's lives to be insignificant.

In a very interesting study Estelle C. Jelinek notes that the attitude of these critics would be altogether different if we merely change the autobiographer's gender; i.e. from Mountain Wolfwoman to Mountain Wolfman, or from Gertrude Stein to Arthur Stein:

As men these women's experiences would be described in heroic or exceptional terms; alienation, initiation, manhood, neurosis, transformation, guilt, identity crisis and spiritual journeys. As women their experiences are viewed in more conventional terms; heartbreak, loneliness, anger, motherhood, humility, confusions and self-abnegation (Jelinek: 5).

The tradition of autobiography beginning with Augustine had taken as its first premise the mirroring capacity of the autobiographer: his universality, his role as a spokesman for the community. But there is 'NO' mirror of 'Her' era. Her invisibility results from her lack of a tradition, her marginality in male dominated culture, her fragmentation - social, political as well as psychic. At both extremes of subjectivity and publicity, the female autobiographer lacks the sense of radical individuality.

According to Gusdorfian ideology, autobiography is the literary consequence of the rise of individualism. It must have a 'mark' or 'imprint' of man's power. For Gusdorf, the consciousness of self upon which autobiography is premised is the sense of 'isolated being', a belief in the self as a finite, discrete 'unit' of society.

Some background of feminist thinking is necessary for an understanding of women's writing. Showalter set out to trace 'The Female Literary Tradition' in English fiction from about 1840s in her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Any minority group, she argues in her said book, finds its "self-expression relative to a dominant society" (1977, 11-12). She defines three major phases that she claimed are common to all literary subcultures - first, a phase of 'imitation', second of 'protest' and third, a phase of 'self discovery'.

Feminist criticism could be regarded as functioning in two distinct modes: 'Feminist critique' and 'gynocritics'. The former is concerned with woman "as a consumer of male produced literature, and the way in which the hypothesis of the female reader changes our apprehension of a given text". The term 'gynocritics' for "scholarship concerned with women as the producer of textual meaning, with the

history, themes, genres and structures of literatures by women” (Showalter: 1986, 128). Feminist critique is essentially political and polemical, with affiliations to Marxist sociology and aesthetics, whereas “gynocritics is more self-contained and experimental” (Showalter: 1986, 129). It provides a setting and the rationale adequate to recovery of a tradition of women’s writing.

Traditional criticism of autobiography has constructed a genre that authorizes some ‘identities’; and not others and links ‘autobiography’ to the post-enlightenment politics of individualism or the post-romantic aesthetics of self-expression, or both. In contrast, much feminist criticism of autobiography has sought thematic, formal and even broadly epistemological coherence among all women’s autobiographies, claiming that women represent the self by representing “others”, not an “isolate being” because that is how women know and experience their identity.

Recent theorists of women’s autobiographies including Patricia Meyer Spacks (1975), Estelle C. Jelinek(1980), Shari Benstock (1988), Susan Stanford Friedman (1988), Felicity Nussbaum (1989) and Carolyn Heilburn (1998) have acknowledged that women’s autobiographies, like their real lives, are dictated by gender-consciousness. Recognising the gender limits placed on women writers, these theorists challenge the genre boundaries. As Friedman explains:

The emphasis on individualism as the necessary precondition for autobiography is thus a reflection of privilege, one that excludes from the canons of autobiography those writers who have been denied by history the illusion of individualism (Friedman: 1988, 39).

Like Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1982) these theorists recognize a need for a separate poetics to evaluate women's life writing - a poetics which is not androcentric or phallogentric but gynocentric.

Defining the unique difference of women's writing, as Irigaray and Cixous have warned, must present a slippery and demanding task. Is this difference a matter of style? Genre? Experience? Or is it produced by the reading process as some textual critics would maintain? Spacks calls the difference of women's writing a "delicate divergency", testifying to the subtle and elusive nature of the feminine practice of writing. According to Showalter, the theories of women's writing presently make use of four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. Each is a gynocentric effort to define and differentiate the qualities of the women writer and the woman's text from that of a man. Let's now try to sort out the various terminologies and assumptions of these four models of difference and evaluate their usefulness.

Wo/man's Body

Organic or biological criticism is the most extreme statement of gender difference, of a text indelibly marked by the body: anatomy is textuality. Biological criticism is also one of the most sibylline and perplexing theoretical formulations of feminist criticism. Simply to invoke anatomy risks a return to the crude essentialism, the phallic and ovarian theories of art that oppressed women in the past. Victorian physicians believed that women's physiological functions diverted out twenty percent of their creative energy from brain activity, Victorian anthropologists believed that the

frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus women were inferior in intelligence.

While feminist criticism rejects the attribution of literal biological inferiority, some theorists seem to have accepted the metaphorical implications of female biological difference in writing. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), for example, Gilbert and Gubar structure their analysis of women's writing around literary paternity. "In patriarchal Western culture", they maintain:

...the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. (1979:6)

Lacking phallic authority, they go on to suggest, women's writing is profoundly marked by the anxieties of this difference: "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts?" (1979: 6)

Gilbert and Gubar offer no answer to this rhetorical question. It is a serious question of much feminist theoretical discourse. Elaine Showalter, protesting the fundamental analogy replies that women generate texts from the brain or that the word processor of the near future, with its compactly coded microchips, its inputs and outputs, is a metaphorical womb. She further adds that the process of literary creation is analogically much more similar to gestation, labour and delivery than it is to insemination: "if to write is metaphorically to give birth, from what organ can males generate texts?" (1981: 188).

Some radical feminist critics insist that we must read these metaphors as more than playful. They argue that women's writing proceeds from the body, that their sexual differentiation is also the root. In *Of Woman Born* (1977), Rich explains her belief saying:

Female biology ... has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specifications. The feminist vision has recoiled from female biology for these reasons; it will, I believe, come to view our physicality as a resource rather than a destiny. (15)

Feminist criticism written in the biological perspective stresses the importance of the body as a source of imagery. Alicia Ostriker, in her essay, "Body Language: Imagery of the Body in Women's Poetry" (1980) notes that contemporary American women poets use a frank, more pervasive anatomical imagery than their male counterparts. According to Miller, however, it is dangerous to place the body at the centre of a search for a female identity. The study of biological imagery in women's writing is useful and important as long as we understand that factors other than anatomy are involved in it. Ideas about the body are the fundamental in understanding how women conceptualize their situation in society; but there can be no expression of the body which is unmediated by linguistic, social, and literary structures. The difference of woman's writing, therefore, in the words of Miller, must be sought in "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body" (1980:271).

Wo/man's Language

Linguistic and textual theories of woman's writing ask whether man and woman use language differently; whether sex differences in language use can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization, or culture; whether women can create a new language of their own; and whether speaking, reading and writing are all gender marked. American, British, and French feminist critics have all drawn attention to the philosophical, linguistic and practical problems of women's use of language. The debate over language is one of the most exciting areas in gynocriticism. Poets and writers have led the attack on what Rich calls "the oppressor's language", a language sometimes criticized as sexist, sometimes as abstract.

Annie Leclere, in *Parole de femme* (1985), calls upon women, "to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue" (179). Another feminist critic Mary Jacobus, in her *Women's Writing and Writing about Women* (1979) proposes that we need a women's writing that works within the male discourse but works "ceaselessly to deconstruct it : to write what can not be written" (1979:12). The advocacy of women's language is thus a political gesture that also carries tremendous emotional force. But despite its unifying appeal, the concept of a woman language is riddled with difficulties. Unlike Swahili, Weloh or Breton, that is language of minority or colonized groups, there is no mother tongue, no genderlect spoken by the female population in a society, which differs significantly from the dominant language. In the 1970s a growing number of empirical studies related sexual difference to language use.

Andrea Nye, in her *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* (1981) and Robin Lackoff in *Woman's Language* (1989) both argue and establish that women speak less and less often than man. Women are more careful than man to use correct grammar, are more conservative when it comes to stylistic innovation. They use adjectives of emotion rather than pace and form conflicting, ambivalent, rather than stereotypic metaphors. Women also show a preference for modal structure such as 'might have been', indicating uncertainty and indecision. Other, empirically less well established but observed, differences are women's use of 'empty' adjectives such as 'charming' or 'lovely', or of tag questions to dull assertive force, in addition to women's tendency to be more polite and more responsive. In some cultures the 'abnormality' of female speech is institutionalized, or built into phonological structure. Women may use different dialects than men, or write in a vernacular while men write a more formal language. These specific differences in male and female speech, intonation and writing, however can not be explained in terms of "two separate sex-specific languages" but need to be considered "instead in terms of styles, strategies and contexts of linguistic performance"(1981:193). According to Showalter, the problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism or circumlocution.

Fe/male Psyche

Psychoanalytically oriented feminist criticism locates the difference of women's writing in the author's psyche and in the relation of gender to the creative process. It incorporates the biological and linguistic models of gender difference in

the theory of the female psyche or self, shaped by the body, by the development of language, and by sex-role socialization. Penis envy, the castration complex, and the oedipal phase have become the Freudian coordinates defining women's relationship to language, fantasy and culture.

Currently, the French psychoanalytic school dominated by Lacanian theory has extended castration to a total metaphor for female literary and linguistic disadvantages. Lacan theorises that the acquisition of language and the entry into its symbolic order occurs at the Oedipal phase in which the child accepts his or her gender identity. This stage requires an acceptance of the phallus as a privileged signification and a consequent female displacement, as Cora Kaplan has explained,

The phallus as a signifier has a central, crucial position in language, for if language embodies the patriarchal law of culture, its basic meanings refer to the recurring process by which sexual difference and subjectivity are required... thus the little girl's access to the symbolic, i.e. of language and its laws, is always negative and/or mediated by intro-subjective relation to a third term, for it is characterized by an identification with lack. (1991:22)

In psychoanalytic terms, "lack" has traditionally been associated with the feminine. Feminist criticism based on Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis continually struggles with the problem of feminine disadvantage and lack. There has also been some interesting feminist literary criticism based on alternatives to Freudian psychoanalytic theory like Annis Pratt's *Jungian History of Female Archetypes* (1976), Barbara Rigney's *Laingian Study of the Divided Self in Women's Fiction* (1970), and Ann Douglas' *Eriksonian Analysis of Inner Space in Nineteenth Century*

Women's Writing (1979). For the past few years, critics have been thinking about the possibilities of a new feminist psychoanalysis that does not revise Freud but instead emphasizes the development and construction of gender identities.

The most dramatic and promising new work in feminist psychoanalysis looks at the pre-oedipal phase and at the process of psycho-sexual differentiation. Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978) has had an enormous influence on women's studies. Chodorow revises traditional psychoanalytic concept of differentiation, the process by which the child comes to perceive the self as separate and to develop ego and body boundaries. Since differentiation takes place in relation to the mother (the primary caretaker), attitudes towards the mother emerge in the earliest differentiation of the self, the mother who is a woman, becomes and remains for children of both genders the other, or object. The child develops core gender identity concomitantly with differentiation, but the process is not the same for boys and girls. A boy must learn his gender identity negatively as being non-female and this difference requires continual reinforcement. In contrast, a girl's core gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity and identification with the mother.

Chodorow's work suggests that shared parenting, the involvement of men as primary caretakers of children will have a profound effect on our sense of sex difference, gender identity, and sexual preference.

Although psychoanalytically based models of feminist criticism can now offer us remarkable and persuasive readings of individual text and can highlight

extraordinary similarities between women writing in a variety of cultural circumstances, they can not explain historical change, ethnic difference or the shaping force of generic or economic factors. To consider these issues, we must go beyond psychoanalysis to a more flexible and comprehensive model of women's writing which places it in the maximum context of culture.

Wo/men's Culture

A theory of culture incorporates ideas about women's body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The ways in which women conceptualize their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environments. The female psyche can be studied as the product of construction of cultural forces. Language too, comes back into the picture as we consider the social dimensions and determinants of language use, the shaping of linguistic behavior by cultural ideals.

A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole. As women's psyche is relational psyche.

Hypothesis of women's culture have been developed over the last decade primarily by anthropologists, sociologists, and social historians in order to get away from masculine systems, hierarchies, and values and to get at the primary and self defined nature of female cultural experience. In the field of women's history the

concept of women's culture is still controversial, although there is agreement on its signification as a theoretical formulation.

Further more, according to feminist critics, the relationship between male speech and female silence is not a simple binary but rather a cultural context in which the enforced silence of women can be read as the norm even when women manage to speak, write, publish and achieve influence. Thus, the linguistic relationship is dominated by socio-cultural limitations.

The socio-cultural taboos, thus, make it difficult for women to transform their private ambition into a public record. There is a special relation between women and convention. The socio-cultural set-up demands from women to be apologetic, dependent, timid and confused; in short, to be 'feminine'.

Scheme of Presentation/ Methodology

The researcher has followed a specific scheme of presentation to highlight how the gender specific theories of autobiography writing are actually found applicable in the autobiographies of male and female Indian political leaders selected for the present project. The thesis comprises total seven chapters, the first one being an introduction and the last forming a conclusion to the thesis. The following section gives an overview of the chapters of the thesis.

In the present chapter of the thesis, we have briefly discussed the development of autobiography as a literary genre; the conditions set up by Gusdorf, Olney and

other theorists for the writing of autobiography and that these canonical theories are not applicable to women's autobiography-writing. We have also explored the writing differences between men's and women's autobiographies. Gusdorf's concept of autobiography is premised on a 'self' that is endemically Western and individualistic. Male theorists often do not take women into account as the writers of autobiography. The female theorists like Shari Benstock, Estelle Jelinek, Sheila Rowbotham, Elaine Showalter, etc advocate a separate poetics to evaluate women's life-writing – poetics which is not androcentric or phallogentric but gynocentric.

The second chapter, titled *Writing Differences in Male/ Female Autobiographies: A Theoretical Perspective* is an attempt to prove that most of the critical theories produced by the male tradition are not applicable to women's autobiography due to biological, socio-political as well as psycho-analytical reasons; that women's autobiography-writing is different. For male individuation dissociation is a must while for women, association is becoming an individual. Man's autobiography in form, is dominated by "I" and this "I" is always at the centre of every incident. While woman's autobiography differs in projecting a dotted 'i' that goes in circles. She does not stand in the centre; there is always a man or loved/valued ones at the centre and she is in the periphery. The chapter is an in-depth study of the theory of 'poetics of difference' in autobiographies of men and women under four distinct headings: Association/ Dissociation, Personal/ Public, Self-conscious/ Self-confident and Fragmented/ Structured. The first of the pair stands for the male trait while the latter for the female one.

The third chapter titled *Writing Differences: Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit* elaborately discusses the writing differences in the autobiographies of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit who, being brother and sister, were brought up in the same family. After a detailed discussion on the theory of writing differences in the earlier chapter this chapter proposes to apply the theory to the practice of autobiography-writing through two texts: Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936) and Vijayalakshmi Pandit's *The Scope of Happiness* (1979). The pattern of the present chapter is based on the earlier chapter. The four subtitles under which the differences were discussed in the earlier chapter are further split into eight subtitles in the present chapter with a meaningful change in their order. These subtitles highlight the writing differences in almost binary oppositional terms like association, dissociation; personal, public; self-conscious, self-confident, and fragmented, structured. Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* and Vijayalakshmi Pandit's *The Scope of Happiness*, uphold the gynocentric theory of "gender-difference" in autobiography-writing. Though having the same socio-political and economic backgrounds, the brother and the sister project an essentially different orientation towards self in their autobiographies. *An Autobiography* consistently focuses on the important role that Nehru played in the contemporary public affairs. In contrast, Vijayalakshmi undermines her political achievements to underscore the significance of personal affairs in her life. The chapter also brings in discussion of other women autobiographers from the Nehru family like Krishna Hutheesingh's *With No Regrets* (1968) and Nayantara Sahgal's *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954) and *From Fear Set Free* (1962) and shows how their autobiographies, when read in comparison with Jawaharlal, support the central hypothesis of this thesis i.e. the 'poetics of difference'.

The fourth chapter titled *Writing Differences: J.B.Kripalani and Sucheta Kripalani* discusses the writing differences in J.B.Kripalani's *My Times: An Autobiography* (1982) and Sucheta Kripalani's *Sucheta: An Unfinished Autobiography* (1978). The pattern of this chapter is the same as the earlier chapter. The writing differences in male/female autobiography are highlighted through the eight subtitles: association, dissociation; personal, public; self-conscious, self-confident and fragmented, structured. The first of the pairs again stand for male traits while the latter for the female. Both Acharya Kripalani and Sucheta Kripalani participated in the freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Whereas Kripalani's *My Times* focuses on his crucial role in the independence movement and political developments thereafter, Sucheta's *An Unfinished Autobiography* dwells more on personal affairs in the midst of dramatic historical events leading to India's freedom. Kripalani projects an image of self-confidence in his ideas and actions. Sucheta, on the other hand, reveals self-consciousness throughout. The autobiographies by these two Indian politicians, who happen to be husband and wife, attest the belief that gender influences autobiography-writing.

The fifth chapter titled *Writing Differences: C.D.Deshmukh and Durgabai Deshmukh* elaborately discusses the writing differences in C.D.Deshmukh's *The Course of My Life* (1974) and Durgabai Deshmukh's *Chintaman and I* (1980). Both the Deshmukhs were great achievers in their own right and were awarded with the *Padma Bhushan* for their services to the nation. The pattern of this chapter is again the same as the third and fourth chapter. The writing differences in male/female autobiography are highlighted through the same eight subtitles that stand for male and female traits. *The Course of My Life* and *Chintaman and I*, crystallize the differences

evident in other pairs of autobiographies by male and female Indian political personalities that the researcher has selected for the present study. Deshmukh was encouraged to join politics in independent India at the end of his successful career as a civil servant. Durgabai rose to be a Member of Parliament through her social and political work. As the very title of her autobiography *Chintaman and I* suggests, Durgabai's autobiography focuses more on Chintaman rather than on her own self. She reveals self-consciousness throughout *Chintaman and I* and feels gratified in her role as an Indian wife to serve her husband. On the contrary, Deshmukh's *The Course of My Life* exudes a calm self-confidence typical of a member of 'the steel frame' Indian Civil Services of the pre-independence era. The difference in their projection of 'autobiographical self' provides an empirical proof supporting the hypothesis that women's self-writing differs from that of men.

The sixth chapter titled *Writing Differences: Mahatma Gandhi and Madeline Slade* discusses in detail the writing differences in Mahatma Gandhi's world famous autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927) and Madeline Slade's *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* (1960). The chapter undertakes to study the above two autobiographies as a pair as their authors share guiding principles of life. Both spring from similar ideological framework. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* stand apart among all the pairs of autobiographies by Indian political personalities, selected by the researcher to examine the writing differences in male and female authored autobiographies. An undisputed leader of India's freedom movement, Mahatma Gandhi devoted himself completely to Truth and Non-violence in his fight against the British. Thus, he raised politics to a spiritual level. Gandhi's uncompromising pursuit of his ideals of truth and non-violence naturally led to his

dissociation from family and colleagues – a trait evident in male autobiographers. Madeline Slade, drawn to Gandhi's ideals, surrendered herself completely to his will. Miss Slade considered her life a 'spirit's pilgrimage' and her autobiography documents Gandhi's actions and his influence on her life more than her own life *per se*. The influence of gender is clearly evident in their differential projection of "autobiographical-self."

The seventh and the final chapter titled *Conclusion: Endorsing the Differences* substantiates the hypothesis that sex (a biological 'given') and gender (a socio-cultural construct) play an important role in the creative process, producing distinct writing differences and that the canonical theories established by the male tradition can be of very little help in critiquing women's autobiography writing due to biological, socio-political and psycho-analytical reasons. Women write their autobiographies differently. To interpret and appreciate such differently written autobiographies a new 'poetics' is called for – a poetics which will endorse and appreciate the 'difference'. The 'conclusion' is divided into two parts; part I cites four distinct points regarding the autobiographer's sex/gender influencing his/her writing and part II cites the researcher's findings regarding the four pairs of autobiographies of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Acharya Kripalani and Sucheta Kripalani, C.D.Deshmukh and Durgabai Deshmukh, and Mahatma Gandhi and Madeline Slade. Keeping the guiding principles of International Research Methodology, having established the hypothesis the chapter also discusses the contribution of the present thesis to the existing knowledge and literature on autobiography, gender-studies and writing differences. It also suggests possibilities for future researchers in these areas.