PREFACE

With its grounding in the "guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability," the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner's personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) National Credit Framework (NCrF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with 'A' grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM's) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm's. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy.We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM's.

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) &
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NEC-EG-02
(New Syllabus)

Course Title : Autobiography (DSE-2)
Course Code : NEC-EG-02

Module-1 : Autobiography as a Genre

Module-2 : Jacques Rousseau. The Confessions, Book 1

Module-3 : M. K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth

Module-4 : Charles Chaplin, My Autobiography

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Module-5 : Sunil Manohar Gavaskar, Sunny Days

MODULE-1
Autobiography as a Genre

Unit 1 ❒ History and Evolution of Autobiography

1.1.1: Objectives:

The objectives of this unit are:

- to explore the history of the autobiographical mode – when, why, and how the earliest autobiographies were published and how this form of writing gathered momentum in due course
- to acquaint you with how historians should approach autobiographies and other forms of life writings such as diaries, political memoirs, and oral history
- to make you familiar with different theoretical positions on the autobiography
- to classify autobiographies into broad categories and acquaint you with some important autobiographical texts

1.1.2 Introduction

"In our lives we are always weaving novels." (Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*,1883).

The term "Autobiography" is constructed of three primary derivations - *autos* self + *bios* life + *graphein* to write. William Taylor used this term in *The Monthly Review*, an eminent English periodical in 1797. Anderson and Berryman discuss the fact that officially, Robert Southey coined the phrase in 1809 to characterise a Portuguese poet's oeuvre (1, 7; 71). In his book, *In Side Out: An Introduction to Autobiography*, E. Stuart Bates attempts to show that autobiography is "a narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned" (2).

In general, autobiographies are the depiction of one's own self in the first-person singular perspective. Jean Quigley in her book *The Grammar of Autobiography*notes: "As soon as we are asked about ourselves, to tell our autobiography, we start to tell stories. We tell what happened, what we said, what we did" (144).

1.1.3: History of the Genre

Autobiography and autobiographical literature have a long history since the Middle Ages. *Sima Qian*, the Chinese historian recorded the events of his life in the *Shiji* ("Historical Records"). The 1st century BC witnessed the letters of Cicero and *Julius Caesar*'s*Commentaries.*Although the latter providelittle account of Caesar, they drafted a scenario of the conquest of Gaul and efficiently presented the operations of the Roman military machine.

Confessions by St. Augustine (400 CE) was a characteristically unique book; it placed Christianity as the nucleus and main center of the text and the narrative. The book contains a fairly descriptive account of his life in the form of a series of incidents and proves to be a very powerful narrative to read and reflect upon. The book narrates the journey of St. Augustine from childhood to adulthood, and a sizeable portion is dedicated to the incident of his religious conversion.

*Confessions*is a book that consolidates much of the modern, Western dimensions of the nature of autobiography. The emergence of autobiography, in its truest sense, however, occurred in Europe during the 15th century with the advent of the Renaissance. Margery Kempe, a religious mystic from the Norfolk region, is believed to have written the first of these autobiographies. As old age approached, Kempe recorded the many eventful incidents of her youth. *The Book of Margery Kempe* also concerns her religious life, the religious situation of the times, and brings in many personal dimensions. The book also depicts other events e.g. the pilgrimage undertaken by Kempe to the *Holy Land* and her visit to Rome. The book, however, is only partially

an autobiography. Itappropriates the characteristic traits of a memoir and records Kempe's religious experiences in a detailed manner. Until its publication in 1936, the book was in the form of a manuscript.

Enea Silvio Piccolomini, a humanist and publicist and quite a famous personality, wrote an extensive and lengthy autobiography after he was raised to the stature of a pope. That happened in 1458 and his new name was Pius II. *Commentarii* pens the eventful journey of how Pius II inherited the papacy. Subsequent chapters narrate his shaping and the course of his papacy. Comprising 13 volumes, the last interrupted by his death in 1464, the work provides a broad view of the contemporary age. *Memorias* by Leonor López de Córdoba, a Spanish noblewoman, isanother early autobiographical record in Castillian.

Moving east, Emperor Zâhirud-Dîn Mohammad Bâbur, founder of the great Mughal dynasty of South Asia, was said to be the author Bâburnâma, which was written in the form of a journal in Chagatai/Persian, in the period 1493-1529. Bâburnâma literally means "Book of Babur" or "Letters ofBabur".

Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), celebratory sculptor and goldsmith, wrote his autobiography between 1556 and 1558. It was named *Vita* which was in Italian and meant 'life.' The book was considered one of the best autobiographies of the Renaissance period and it contains these famous lines: "No matter what sort he is, everyone who has to his credit what are or seem great achievements, if he cares for truth and goodness, ought to write the story of his own life in his own hand; but no one should venture on such a splendid undertaking before he is over forty." These words defined the spirit of the autobiography for much of its early years, and in many ways, continues to be one of its dominant impulses. Autobiographers of the next nearly three hundred years tried to stick to that criterion. Italian mathematician Gerolamo Cardano who was also a physician and an astrologer, wrote an autobiography called *De Vita Propria*(1574).

Captain John Smith's autobiography (1630) is generally held to be the first autobiography which was available for the general public. It was written in English. However, there is a doubt regarding its authenticity as some believe the book is more a collection of tales. Philip Barbour's biography in 1964 challenges many such tales within Smith's book by providing a convincing and factual rebuttal of Smith's accounts, showing that they lackedsufficient validity and contained accounts that are mostly imagined. However, Smith provides the information in the book in such a way as if he lived in that moment and witnessed the incidents. Other famous autobiographies of those times include those by Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1643, published 1764) and John Bunyan (Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, 1666). The first person to venture into the realm of autobiography in the United States was Jarena Lee (1783-1864), an African-American woman.

Autobiography as a modern subject emerges around 1800. It involves non-fictional, yet 'constructed' ways of narrating life which is most of the time autodiegetic, in which the narrator enquires into his/her identity. The narrator takes a look at his/her life journey from the beginning to the present—as Nietzsche argues, "How One Bec[ame] What One Is" ([1908] 1992), showcasing the "temporalization (*Historisierung)* of experience" as Burke puts it (13).

The modern autobiography and the autobiographical narrating genre remain stuck to the concept of the individuality and individual subject, propelled by and propelling self-realization and self-propagation towards achieving emancipation of life. By the 1800s, an autobiography aimed to present the essence of individuality and its unique representation. As Rousseau puts it: "I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not like any of those who are in existence" (1). Autobiography aims to direct attention towards what Weintraub describes as "genetic personality de-ve-lop-ment founded in the awareness of a complex in-terplay bet-ween I-and-my-world" (13). It thus makesa case for the "full convergence of all the factors constituting this modern view of the self" (XV). The central image of an autobiography is that of the constitution of the self that grounds itself in memory and the process of memorization.

Oral traditions of autobiographies have their influences on dominant written narratives such as those written by American Indians in the 19th century. In *American Indian Autobiography* (1988), H. David Brumble notes "preliterate traditions" that comprise coup tales, tales of misfortune and self-investigation, narratives on education, and tales recording healing powers. Among tribal cultures such as those of Australian aboriginal people, oral traditions survive as dominant genres. Such traditions preserve cultural knowledges of indigenous peoples and also the refugees and dispossessed people like the Hmong of Laos and other diasporic communities that could otherwise be lost.

Available Native American autobiographical narratives, numbering more than seven hundred, are known as "as-told-to" stories edited by white missionaries, anthropologists and scholars. Such collaborative works lead to controversies about whether, and how much, the white editor intervenes in the record. Among American Indian autobiographies,*Black Elk Speaks* (1932) is quite well-known. It documents the life of Black Elk (1863–1950), an Oglala Sioux holy man, depicting his journey from the age of nine to adulthood when he experiences the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. It also talks ofBlack Elk's spirituality and visionary truths, dominant Lakota rituals and healing exercises, and the Ghost Dance movement. In the introduction (1979), Vine Deloria Jr. mentions that *Black Elk Speaks* "has become a North American bible of all tribes." It portrays Black Elk as a man full of despair and defeat, lamenting his failure in bringing relevance to the Lakota spiritual vision for his people who face the

crisis. The text does not talk of Black Elk's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1904 and how he played the role of being a catechist and missionary on Indian reservations for decades together or Black Elk's continued faith in the value and relevance of the Lakota worldview. A unique form of "as-told-to" autobiography is constructed by anthropologist white editors. For instance, Paul Radin's*The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* (1920) narrates the life journey of S. B. who experiences a conversion to Peyote religion of the Native American Church, and Nancy Oestreich Lurie's *Mountain Wolf Woman* (1961) recounts the life of S. B.'s sister, who also has encounters with Peyote.

Apart from Indian autobiographies" edited by white people, there are also "autobiographies by Indians" recorded by literate Native Americans. Christians write the first one –*Son of the Forest* (1829) by William Apess (Pequot). Other notable works include those by George Copway (Ojibway) in 1847, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Paiute) in 1883, Charles Eastman (Lakota) in 1902, and Luther Standing Bear (Lakota) in 1928. Thereafter, there are other Native American accounts such as*The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa and Cherokee),*Storyteller* (1981) by Leslie Marmon Silko (Kiowa and Cherokee) and the poetry and memoirs of Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) and Joy Harjo (Creek). There are notable subject matters which have a religious bent, such as sacred geography andindividual personal identity,the circle of human life and being, respect for oral traditions and customs,synchronicity with nature and the natural world, and piousness. Likeother similar cultures on the verge of extinction – for example, the Australian aboriginal people – American Indian writers use autobiography to bring out the latent cultural values and to fight against issues of racism, injustice and lack of spirituality.

1.1.4 Construction of Memory and Autobiographical Memory

Memory aids in building self-concept, shaping identity and representing attitudes towards a person's self. The creation and construction of memory impacts the corresponding essence thought process, different feelings and sentiments, and life-serving goals. Memory in autobiography can be formed and remembered from both the first-person and third-person points of view (which can be termed as "field" or "observer" points of view). In memories which originate from the first-person point of view, a person or an individual relives an occurrence or experience recorded their own sight and cognition. On the other hand, when memories are called up from a third-person point of view, the persons tend to see themselves in the memory, watching the remembered event like a detached observer. Researchers suggest that autobiographical memories are mostly remembered from the third person point of view.

Psychologists have pointed out several ways of constructing memories and the roles memories play in an individual's life. Social-personality psychologists have experimented with third person memories which, they say, can act as a distancing method for an individual who recalls the memory as a detached person as if the events never happened to him and him in unknown to the events. Clinical psychologists have pointed out another fact: that memories may emerge from some crisis traumatic incidents and tragic events. They have pointed outs that such traumatic memories are remembered from a third-person point of view to analyze and forget the physical and psychological pain so as to come to terms with them.

The visual dimension plays an important role in the psychological process. It is mostly associated with the memories which we experience in our childhood. Later when one revisits them from a third-person point of view, these childhood memories are re-built and re-constructed. When we visualize something, it causes a greater impact on our brains and influences our memories. The memories, then, control our emotions and balance the personality, thus helping maintaining coherence in identity.The memory that is articulated and integrated into our lives through visualizing things remain longer and can direct us into inscribing those in our writings. How the recalling of such autobiographical memories can be self-evaluative and how they elaborate on things that happen in our lives are, however, areas that have not been identified clearly.

It is in this way that autobiographical memories are created and last in writing forever. The memories are of both individual selves and social selves of a person's life. Autobiographical memories can be traumatic, therapeutic, self-assessing, or evaluative. Whatever the case, theye shape an individual's life and identity and help him grow as a developed and matured autobiographer or autobiographical narrator.

Stop-think-go

- You can see there is a comprehensive history of autobiography.
- One's personal memory has a deep connection with autobiography and autobiographical literature.

1.1.5 Autobiographical theory, 'truth', reliability and self-censorship

In their book *The Voice Within*, Roger Porter and H. R. Wolf state that "[t]ruth is a highly subjective matter, and no autobiographer can represent *exactly* 'what happened back then,' any more than a historian can definitively describe the real truth

of the past" (7-10). The fact is that words are not enough to express fulfilling emotions because the author often fails to authenticate events or make objective representations. Bates says "There is, in fact, no dividing line between autobiography and fiction" (9).

The works of Serge Doubrovsky, the French author whose books revolve around the Holocaust, are recorded in a nearly fictionalized manner of representation. Doubrovsky coined the term "autofiction" and used it to describe the particular characteristics of the style that feature both the genre of fiction and reality of autobiography. The term was first used on the cover page of Doubrovsky's novel, *Fils*.

The language and style of autofiction, as Doubrovskyillustrate, often differs from that of traditional autobiographies. There is more than one narrative pattern inDoubrovsky's novels. What is particularly characteristicof his novels is the method of representation:the style is more poetic than logical, sequential or argumentative in representation. The*Dictionary of Literary Biography*states that Doubrovsky makes use of many rhetorical tropes like "alliteration, assonance, homonyms, paronyms, antonyms, and anagrams."

While autobiographers generally focus upon real issues of life, autofiction writers are mainly engaged with the experiences that they gain from their lives. Unlike autobiographers, autofiction writers do not always maintain accuracy in history. According to Hughes, autofiction authors hold that "'c'estmoi et cen'est pas moi.'" This is the crux of autofiction. It depicts the life of the writer adding fictional elements. Thus autofiction is more than a mere record of the real aspects of one's life.

Autobiography was considered to be the highest art form in the eighteenth century. At that time fiction was considered unworthy and facts were what wasacceptable and resonated with readers' expectations. Such expectations drove prompted novelists to show their works as non-fiction. There were prefaces which were drafted by purportedly real characters to make stories appear authentic. But it is not certain if readers believed such stories to be true.

Douglass's autobiography, which belongs to the next century, has a political approach. The initial chapterscontains proof of objectivity and scientific approach. There is a taste of authenticity that lends a taste of likelihood. Douglass opined that there is a good amount of investment of emotion and personal opinion in the narratives used by autobiographers, especially the Romantic writers of 18th and 19th century. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* is known to be emotionally drawn. There is no melodrama in Rousseau's work, but instances of sentiments being expressed are in evidence in the parts depicting atrocities associated with slavery. There are, besides, Gothic horrors that denote the Romantic era of nineteenth-century.

The title of Douglass's work, *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*,confirms his authorship and aimed to separate his work from other existing slave narratives of his times penned by white writers. Thephrase "Written by Himself" creates authenticity within the text. Some racistsquestioned the authenticity of Douglass' work. As he was a slave, they thought there was no way he could author such a document. Douglass proves his authorship and this was a strategy to counter the racist critics.

Authenticity emphasizes emotional and metaphorical truth instead. Bart Beaty, in *Autobiography as Authenticity*, refers to "truth" and "authenticity" as "an attempt to reconcile one's life with one's self and that therefore the core of autobiography is not historical accuracy but metaphorical truth" (Beaty 228). Heargues that it works differently. The characteristics of autobiographical writing, according to him, is to reflect the "real world" and to fashion arguments about "truth" or "authenticity" which destroy the autobiographical study (Beaty 228). Some arguments explore the fact: one focuses on metaphorical truth which motivates autobiographical writing, whereas the other is true and factitive. However, Beaty's second argument is not fully convincing. Autobiographical writing, despite focusing on prime aspects of reality, is not at all accurate historically.

1.1.6: Autobiography and Ethnicity

It makes sense that ethnic autobiographical studies would typically concentrate on the autobiographical "I" or subject; nonetheless, examining ethnic autobiographies collectively offers a different perspective that allows us to observe group resistance to oppression. There is a substantial corpus of ethnic autobiographies as collective reactions to historical circumstances over protracted spans of time. We can understand these as communal narratives of cultural resistance if we look at them outside of the confines of literary traditions, ethnographic research, or historical records. The most well-known collection of ethnic memoirs that tell a story of cultural resistance is probably the slave tales. Slave narratives were written throughout the American enslavement era and emerged as composite autobiographies of African Americans in the twentieth century. These narratives are an important source of information that changed our perceptions of American black history, literature, and culture. Literary researchers used black autobiographies and slave narratives, first in 1948 and then more widely in the 1960s, to study African American lives and culture. They discovered that slave narratives contained the earliest records of African American literary traditions. Revisionist historians rewrote the history of slavery in the I960s by analysing African cultural remnants that allowed slave families and communities to thrive, as well as by rewriting plantation mythology and chronicling uprisings and resistances. Two thousand

interviews with former slaves that were conducted for the Works Progress Administration between 1936 and 1936 were collected and reprinted in nineteen volumes as *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States* (also known as the WPA Slave Narrative Collection) by George Rawick in the 1970s, making them available to the general public. By fusing African cultural traditions with American socioeconomic realities, new social forms, customs, and cultures were created that allowed for collective and cultural resistance against the institutions of racism and slavery. Many modern researchers look at the historical similarities between modern revolutionary leaders like Malcolm X and virtuous slave rebels like Frederick Douglass. In all these enterprises, as African American William L. Andrews points out, the first serious and major critical analysis treating American autobiography was Rebecca Chalmer Barton's study of black autobiography, *Witness for Freedom: Negro Americans in Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1948). However, this fact has been overlooked in white American autobiographical studies.

Chicano autobiography in the United States emerges in the context of the conquest of northern Mexico by the United States government (1846-48) and the desire to remember a more just and accurate image of the past. Genaro Padillo writes: "It was this event that set off social, political, economic, linguistic, and cultural shockwaves which may be said to have generated an autobiographical impulse in Hispano-Mexicano society that constitutes a genuine autobiographical consciousness. I mean to say that the violent transformation of a well-established society as much as forced many individuals into an autobiographic mode." Thus, the violent appropriation of Mexican lands and people in the mid-nineteenth century created the beginnings of Chicano autobiography. Padilloargues that the social rupture occasioned by this event, and the consequent breakdown of individual and communal life, required individuals to relocate themselves in the new regime: "The life of the past had somehow to be accorded purpose, dignity, integrity. Autobiographic social history served this re-integrative, psycho-social process" (289). Part of the project of studying ethnic autobiography, argues Padilla, is archaeologically recovering the texts buried under the weight of Anglo-Saxon institutions and literature departments that defined the literary standards and historical narratives, until those oppressed challenged their authority. In this recovery project, he has found a wealth of autobiographical writing.

1.1.7: Autobiography and the Marginalized People

People belonging to marginalized communitiesinhabit the peripheries of society. Such people are often denied social, economic, and cultural advocacy and rights. Forms of marginalization deprive the people a rightful share in the society and utilization of properties. The dominant power structure within society subject the marginalized

people to the threshold of social exclusion where inequality, lack of opportunities, and access to the rightful demands are often noted in terms of gender, class, caste, religion, and race.

Social exclusion leads to the subordination of one section of society by another section. There are various groups of marginalized people. The groups consist of the poor people, the children who act as workers, victims of gender inequality, or linguistic minorities. Thus, there is a difference in problems across the person, group and country.

Literature acts as a form of political ideology, and it is often "produced by members of the dominant classes in society who tend to represent and naturalize differences as it is seen from their social and cultural position" as Gugelberger& Kearney (1991) point out. History of Latin American society exemplifies such exploitations, instability, and various situations of turmoil. Various indigenous and peasant groups are often victims of maltreatment, harmful activities, colonizing power, and elimination by political and social mobilization.The subaltern and marginalized people express their grievances through literature and literary outputs, especially autobiographies. There is a clear difference between the subaltern and dominant groups of people within such writings, which are also characterized by depictions of social and political. This new emergence of autobiography in Latin America is termed as testimonial literature or the *testimonio*. Testimonial literature often tells the story of an individual of a marginalized group who critiques the wrongdoings of the dominant social class or a dominant group of people in society. A popular example is *I, RigobertaMenchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1985) edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. This is a story of a young Guatemalan Quiche Indian woman that narrates the tragic experiences of Indian communities in Latin America who constantly negotiated the torturous activities of the military people,and their limitless endurance and struggle for justice.RigobertaMenchú was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for this book because of her efforts to end oppression and torture of the marginalized people of Guatemala.There are some sentences within the autobiography which prove that it is a narrative testimony of a group of indigenous people and not the story of an individual. Menchú says: "This is my testimony. I didn't learn it from a book and I didn't learn it alone. I'd like to stress that it's not only *my* life; it's also the testimony of my people…. The important thing is that what has happened to me has happened to many other people too: my story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people" (1984, 1). Menchu expresses that in her *testimonio* she tells the story of a marginalized group and through this narrative expression she attracts global consciousness against violence perpetrated on the groups. Thus, the testimonio also acts as a change and social and literary movement to put an end to the hegemonic social and political situation.

InsideOut: An Autobiography of a Native Canadian(1995) by James Tyman is a form of"talking back" to hegemonicdiscourses which seek to culturallymarginalize him both as anAboriginal man and as a convicted prisoner(Smith 20). In *Inside Out*, Tyman shows how he is subject to constant threat and cultural marginalization and how his identity falls into crisis. He was an aboriginal youth and then a white, middle-class family adopted him. Tyman gets an isolated life and individual identity as time passes by. However, after that Tyman gets into the path of crime and criminal activity and through this, he earns a position within society. *Inside Out* gives Tymanthe space to share his experiences and through this experience, he challenges the dominant perceptions of the society. Through his autobiography, he also liberates the voice of culturally and socially marginalized people.

Dalit autobiographyis another form of marginalized autobiography in India. It has a historical specificity and is a significant literary performance within the autobiography.Originating in Maharashtra in the 1960s, it represents a particular social category: it talks of members of Indian society who are often designated as 'untouchables' or 'outcastes.' There is a crucial juncture of time and place within Dalit autobiographies. One essential feature of Dalit autobiographical narratives is that it represents not only the individual as a subject and narrative persona but family, community, and society at large. Dalit autobiography narrates suffering, cruel casteist practices, negation, trauma and moves towards the assertion of identity within the narrative.

Dalit literature in general and autobiography in particularshowcases both the oppression of individuals and the community and shows how access to education and modern instrumentation of society is an essential tool for theirliberation and upward mobility. The particular characteristic of a Dalit autobiography is that it negates subjective autonomy in favour of being 'community biographies.'Dalit autobiography engages in analysis and interpretation of the socio-cultural surrounding of a person and the community with subjective emotions, lively actions, and objective empirical outlook. The monologic and personal 'I' of the narrative transforms into a polyphonic and communal 'I' and in this process, the autobiography takes the form of an autoethnography.

A host of Dalit autobiographies in Indiafetch the essence of internationalism and global solidarity: like *Baluta* (2015) by DayaPawar, translated into English by Jerry Pinto; *Joothan* (2003) by Omprakash Balmiki, translated by Alok Mukherjee;*Akarmashi* or "The Outcaste"(2003) by SarankumarLimbale; translated by Santosh Bhoomkar;*Aayadan* or "The Weaving of My Life" (2009) by Urmila Pawar;*Changiya Rukh* or "Changiya Rukh: Against the Night" (2010) by Balbir Madhopuri, translated by Tripti Jain;*Karukku* (2002) by Bama translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom;*Jina Amucha* or "The Prison We Broke" (2008) by Baby Kamble translated by Maya Pandit; and*Ooru*

Keri or "Ooru Keri: An Autobiography" (2003) by Siddalingaiah, translated by S.R. Ramakrishna.

1.1.8 Types of Autobiography

1.1.8.1 Spiritual Autobiography

Spiritual autobiography is a type of non-fiction that evolved among the Protestants in the 17th century and the dissenters were its chief practitioners. The genre flourished in England. The narrative follows the journey of a believer from the condition of being damned to the path of grace.John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) is a prominent example.

- Spiritual autobiography follows a predictable pattern. The "formula" starts with a young person who commits a sin, and is followed by the awakening of feelings that are spiritual, leading to a sense of anxiety about the hopes for one's soul. The circle of sinning, repentance, and sinning again continue for several years. *The Bible* was a dominant source of sustenance at that time. Ultimately, the person would have an epiphany, often of an emotionally shattering character, which individuals to realize that they had been singled out by God for salvation. The characteristic nature of spiritual autobiography led to it being identified as the precursor of the novel. Later writers like Daniel Defoewrote fictionalized accounts of a character's spiritual journey, such as *Robinson Crusoe*. G. A. Starr solicits that English Protestantism had rejected the "otherworldliness" of Catholicism "and insisted on the compatibility of earthly and spiritual callings," pointing out that "utterly mundane activities could be drawn upon to illustrate and enforce religious duties."

  Towards the end of the 20th Century, the spiritual autobiography contains reflections on various dimensions of sex, sexuality, and sexual behaviour entwined with traditionally established Christian belief, and the conflictbetween the two often led to a polemical tone. Famous examples of such writings are Jesuit John J. McNeill's*Bothe Feet Firmly Planted in Midair: My Spiritual Journey* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), Evangelical Minister Mel White's *Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 1995),and *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Man's Struggle to Serve the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) by Chris Glaser, self-described as a "fundamental Baptist and biblical literalist".

- The Abrahamic traditions can be noted in the recent discussions of spiritual autobiography. Notable examples include expatriate British writer Christopher Isherwood's *My Guru and His Disciple* (1980), Jane Hamilton Merritt's *A Meditator's Diary: A Western Woman's Unique Experiences in Thailand*

Monasteries (1986), Irina Tweedie's *Daughter of Fire: A Diary of a Spiritual Training with a Sufi Master* (1986), Andrew Harvey's *A Journey in Ladakh: Encounters with Buddhism* (1983) and *Hidden Journey: A Spiritual Awakening* (1991), Mark Matousek's*Sex Death Enlightenment: A True Story* (1996) and Victor Mars's *The Boy in the Yellow Dress* (2014). Worth considering too is Carol P. Christ's *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess* (1988).

The Western engagements with Buddhism is seen in Stephen Batchelor's *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* (2011). From the Japanese Zen tradition there isSoko Morinaga Roshi's*Novice to Master: An Ongoing Lesson in the Extent of My Own Stupidity* (2002), translated by Belenda Attaway Yamakawa. Some prominent examples of spiritual autobiography are mentioned below:

- *The Confessions of St. Augustine* by St. Augustine
- John Bunyan's*Grace Abounding*
- Richard Norwood's *Confessions*
- John Crook's *A Short History of the Life of John Crook*
- Lawrence Clarkson's *The Lost Sheep Found*
- *The Narrative of the Persecution of Agnes Beaumont* by Agnes Beaumont
- William Apess' *A Son of the Forest*
- Robert Bell's *Metamorphoses of Spiritual Autobiography*

Pre-modern spiritual autobiography followed the tradition of Augustine's *Confessions* and continued well into the 19th century. It is constructed as an exemplum, i.e. as a typical story to be learned from. Little emphasis was put on life-world particularities. Dividing life into clear-cut phases centred round the moment of conversion, the spiritual autobiographer tells the story of self-renunciation and surrenders to providence and grace (e.g. Bunyan [1666] 1962). Its narrative becomes possible only after the key experience of conversion, yielding up a 'new self.' While from the perspective of the story, the division in spiritual autobiographies is one of 'before' and 'after', the level of the narrative isgoverned exclusivelyby the perspective of 'after': only after the experience of conversion to Christian belief can the story be told at all. The moment of *anagnôrisis* and narrative present do not live together in such narratives.

1.1.8.2 Working-class Autobiography

By the 1820s, book prices were coming down and literacy rates were rising in England and it produced the first literate working-class majority. These

workers got access to other persons' activities in lives like "the histories of heroes" and "histories of philosophers" as put by one such worker-author. Those growing up in the 1790s were influenced by the revolutionary attitudes of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Industrialization also provided them with first-hand experience. Their lives thus have diagonally different characteristics than their parents' lives, and they knew that they had to tell their own stories. Between 1820 and the defeat of Chartism in 1848, forty-eight worker men and women produced their own autobiographies, scripting in their own words the cultural changes accruing from England's transformation into an industrial and capitalist economy.

In *Literature by the Working Class*, Cassandra Falke analyses five such autobiographies which are situated in their historical and literary environments. Each of them proves to be serious literature that the readers should pay careful attention to. There are aspects of the diversity of working-class life that she has focused upon. One author, John Clare, the celebratory poet of a great anthologized poetry collection was born as an agricultural labourer. He met a tragic death in a lunatic house. Robert Blincoe, another author, was an orphan and was eventually sold into the factory apprentice system, which was no less a nightmare. His contemporary, Timothy Claxton, was a gardener's son who was in charge of a big house. The lady of the house educated him for two years, and though opportunities were rare, he excelled as a successful whitesmith and established the first Mechanic's Institute of London. Christopher Thomson, who was trained as a shipwright, thrived as an actor and scene painter. His life was never stable, as he was continually moving with his wife and children in search of jobs and a steady home until finally landed a settled job as a house painter. Notably, he writes about pleasure, personal feats and trials, and also about his own community instead of drawing on the drab realities of life. The last autobiographer in the list was Thomas Carter, who proved to be a working-class autodidact to serve his own period. Though he stayed in an overcrowded apartment in a London garret, he was said to encourage his fellow workers to pursue their education and to keep hope and aspiration in the freedom of an active free life. His family, like those of many others, struggled for basic amenities, and often suffered due to cold, hunger, and child mortality rates.

Working-class autobiographies offer socio-historical influences with their compositions and the value of the philosophies they espouse. Although historians agreeupon the pervading influence of working-class autobiography to the early nineteenth century, this type of literature has seldom met academic researches and discussions. The negligence occurs due to the style of the autobiographies. The autobiographies reject notions of autonomous self-introspection that

characterize general autobiographical works, particularly of the Romantic period. Working-class autobiographies have also been neglected because their authors understood that being in their own class, they were barred from the Romantic nostalgia and literary imaginings. They generally wrote with the thought of the readers' expectations, without which they founnd it difficult to record their emotions.

Falke argues that working-class autobiographies happen to incorporate literary techniques and acquired features such as the non-narrative mode, non-chronological structure, and symbolic plots. The autobiographies lack textual properties of other canonical works of this particular genre. Falkeargues that these autobiographical texts re-imagine the method of other autobiographies. They contain enough insight to merit a detailed inquiry, making them a revisionist platform for a literary genre that is unique and one of its kind.

1.1.8.3 Women's Autobiographies and Autofictions

There is the identifiable narrator of the 'I' which can be traced in the women's autobiographies. Works by writers like Catherine Cusset, Catherine Millet, and Alina Reyes, whose autofictions are self-analytical and dissociative,manage toforge an associative bond with the broader aspects of spaces of feminine desire which they share. Though these autobiographies and autofictions deal with the authors' experiences, often violent and gained in dismay from lives that tended to make unusual experiments, they do effecta distance in expressing such emotions.

There are many autobiographers and fiction practitioners like Angot, Robin, Geneviève Brisac, Chantal Chawaf, Danielle Sallenave, and Hélène Duffauamong others, who make responding remarks on issues such as rape, sexual and mental violence, incestuous relationship, illness and trauma, and death. Diverse narrators and practitioners like Delaume and Nina Bouraoui work upon and interrogate aspects of wounding traumas and their violent repercussions on life that are expressed with an intention to self-invention within the experimental genre. Trauma and traumatic after-effects forge particular shapes and rhythms in constructing auto-fiction and autobiographies. Elizabeth Molkou in "L'Autofiction, un genre nouveau?" observes how Robin's writing, which is wounded and traumatic, lacks the streamline continuation, whileAngot's autofiction, which is marked by her nervous traumatic disorder, has been linked to the experience of incest that lies within the narrative. Barbara Havercroft in her autofiction has dealt with anorexia that affects Brisac's body in the narrative. Cusset's autofiction features the 'mise à jour d'uneculpabilité.' There are formal features of contemporary *écriture de soi* which is covered by Dominique Viart and Bruno Vercier — women's autofictions and autobiographies revolve around

the leitmotifs of exhaustivity, a sense of immediacy, and an inherent closeness.

Several issues like authenticity, integrity, and legal intervention on the rights of privacy work within the postulates of women's autonarratives. There was a controversy regarding first-person narration and the borderline between truth and fiction at the advent of the publication of Darrieussecq's*Tom est mort*. Camille Lauren came across the mourning of a mother upon losing her baby which she thought to be inspired and re-worked from her own (factual) book of mourning, *Philippe*. Darrieussecq was arraigned with the charge of 'plagiatpsychique'. In defence, Darrieussecq explains to write and explore one's own and imagined experience which marked all the publications. However, on an interesting and intriguing note, it was after writing *Philippe* that Laurens postulated the demarcation of both fiction and autobiography and attempted to explain her own method of writing an autobiography, a move that explains and elaboratively discusses the use of the autofictional 'I'.

Gill Rye the critic challenges the specifically gendered way of trusting that acts behind the voluminous construction of the women's writing and reading. Angot, the writer Rye talks about, puts much aggression in her attempts of bringing readers and writers and that has been observed in repeated encounters and practicing ways. This repeated negotiation does not, however, affect the connectivity that the narratives share with the readers. Darrieussecq's defence of autofiction has been echoed in 'la part de brouillage et de fiction due […] à l'inconscient'; while Hélène Jaccomard argues that autofiction does connect the readers, though her tone was much oxymoronic. Autofiction makes detailed characteristics of rehearsal, experiment, and adventure.

There is also a scope of hybridization in autobiographical writings. Women writers Nothomb and Suzanne Lilar from Belgium, Ken Bugul from Senegal, Maryse Condé from the Caribbean island, and Bouraoui and Assia Djebar from Algeria, Natalie Edwards, and Christopher Hogarth's edited volume *This 'Self' Which Is Not One* makes effective use of the much hybridized and pluralized 'I'.

Les enJEux de l'autobiographique dans les littératures de langue française, edited by Susanne Gehrmann and Claudia Gronemann, shows how writing from Québec, Africa, the Antilles, and the Maghreb are different from Western writings. McNee's study probes the very compulsive *mise en doute* of authority that remains involved in the autobiographical writing, as well as how self-camouflage and *brouillage de piste* allow a simultaneously exploratory and self-protecting persona that shapes the nomadic identity of the author.

Calle, another feminist autofiction writer,a makes use of tragic and hapless love and paradigmatic ways of vulnerability. She designates her writing s therapeutic— a way of 'taking care of herself.' Mounir Laouyen observes that

autofiction is 'le lieu où le sujet se perd et se dissout dans la multiplicité'. Calle's strategy of using installations and phototexts is a unique approach. The potential co-existence of photography and autofiction is also characterized in autonarrations of Ernaux, Laurens, Marie NDiaye, and Anne Brochet, each of whom makes simultaneous construction of autobiography and photography, fashioning an analogous relationship between the two.NDiaye's*Autoportraiten vert* is analyzed by Daisy Connon as a phototextual exercise in 'uncanny autofiction' that deals with 'the problematics of selfhood and self-representation.'

Another autofiction movement is *bandedessinée*, wherein autofiction's engagemnt with self-estrangement as well as the quality of having self-generation is seen in broader perspectives. Cartoon art practitioners Nine Antico, Florence Cestac, Élodie Durand, Lisa Mandel, Pauline Martin, Aude Picault, and Ann Miller analyse the articulations of the structural co-ordination of femalehood, the female body, pain, lamentation, and loss. Miller draws out the potential graphic autofictions and the powerful illustrations of the female practitioners in the works of Lebanese, Belgian, and Quebec creators as well as that of Iranian Marjan Satrapi.

Critics contend that traditional autobiography is much in discord with the issues of women. But autofiction has served the purpose of concord. There are several analytical works of individual practitioners that signify a range of critical works but there is paucity of links and connections to the broader emancipating history of women through the existing self-narratives. Hence, one should look and explore more to make concerted and assertive efforts to know women's history, both collective and individual, with a study of formal and informal features and larger aspects that characterize women's autobiographies, and most potentially the autofictions.

1.1.8.4: Political Autobiography

Political autobiographies are written and recorded by political figures and largely deal with political issues in reltion to the writer's personal life. This kind of autobiography primarily takes place in a political context and it involves political actions and activities.

1.1.8.5:Sports Autobiography

Sports autobiography is written by sports personalities of different times and eras. There is a mingling of happiness, joy and such feelings inside the book and those are drawn out while reading the autobiography. There is also a thrill and excitement in reading the books as if we are watching games. These books re occasions to have interactions with our favourite athletes and sportsmen. There are some well-known sports autobiographies.

Stop-think-go

- Ethnicity and autobiography share a large history.
- Women have a distinct relationship to autobiography as it gives them the desired space of expressions.
- Autobiography contains lived experiences of the marginalized people such as the Dalits of India.
- There are different types of autobiographies.

1.8.1.6 Other Autobiographies

There are various kinds of life writings – those produced by a particular social class or occupational group, for example, artisans, criminals, clergymen, 'the middling sort', farmworkers, urban workers, historians, politicians. The list is long and needs to be explored and researched further. A detailed study will help to broaden the perspectives and literary scholarship of the very literary genre of autobiography.

1.1.9 Summing Up

1. The unit is divided into segments. The first segment provides a general introduction to the genre of autobiography. Apart from citing the origin and the etymological root of the term, this part contains some important definitive remarks of various thinkers, philosophers, and critics who have commented upon this particular literary genre.
2. The second segment deals with the evolution and history of autobiography. Detailed discussions range from ancient times when autobiographies started being written to modern-day autobiographies. This segment throws light on various representative phases of the evolution of the genre and the literary crisscrossing of autobiography.
3. The third segment discusses various unknown/lesser-known autobiographies, the writers and their history and background.
4. Next, there is a discussion of the construction and role of memory in autobiography and autobiographical memory.
5. This is followed by a critical analysis of the connection between autobiography and ethnicity. This part analyses what role ethnicity plays in case of writing a successful autobiography, and how ethnic communities and their ideologies are used in the autobiographies.
6. The next issue is about autobiography and authenticity. While autobiography is a self-searching genre, it sometimes compromises with "truth". Authenticity

debates deal with this very fact – whether autobiography vouches for the truth and reality or there are combinations of fiction and reality.

7. The next section discusses the relationship between the marginalized people, the role of the autobiographies of the marginalized people, and how are they different from the traditional notions of autobiography.
8. The last segment introduces a representative sampling of various types of autobiography (spiritual, working-class autobiography, and women's auto-narratives) with examples, identifying their particular characteristics.

1.1.10: Comprehensive Exercises

1. "Autobiography is a self-investigating genre." Comment on the statement.
2. Discuss the history and evolution of the literary genre of autobiography.
3. "The form and theme of autobiography keep changing over time." Discuss.
4. "Autobiography compromises with authenticity." Give your views on this statement.
5. Critically comment on the connection between autobiography and ethnicity.
6. What are the characteristics of spiritual autobiography?
7. Does autobiography by women have any unique trait/s? Give examples for your answer.
8. Write about the history and development of working-class autobiography.
9. Briefly and discuss some well-known political autobiographies.
10. Are sports autobiographies merely inspirational stories?
11. Briefly narrate and discuss the relationship between autobiography and marginalized people.

1.1.11: Suggested Reading List

Primary Sources

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Unit 2 ❒ Memoir, Autobiography, and Biography

Structure

1.2.1 Objectives

- This unit deals with the three majortypes of life writing and explores their derivative origins.
- There are characteristic traits of each type – autobiography, biography, and memoir.
- This unit also aims to study the similarities and differential notes that mark the various forms of life narratives.

1.2.2 Introduction

2.2.2.1 Characteristic Nature of Biography, Prominent Examples, and Function

Each biography depicts the story of someone real. A biography may tell of someone dead now, recently, or who might be still alive, although in the last case the biography

is necessarily incomplete. Biographies are generally of such persons' lives whose lives we want to follow, who keep marks of greatness in their deeds.

Often curtailed as *bio*, the term can be both synonymous to *biography* and a word which directs its attention to the biographical sketch of a person and narrates and describes his or her life briefly. These kinds of biographies are short in length and range over a few numbers of line or sentence. Bios can be regarded as a medium where you put something in your terms.

Biography originates from Late Greek *biographia*, from the Greek *bi-* + *-graphia*. The word is said to have been first used in 1665.

Some notable biographies have left marks over the whole world. *The Life of Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* (1791) by James Boswell, *Henry James (Five volumes: 1953-1972)* by Leon Edel, *James Joyce* (1959) by Richard Ellmann, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (1974) by Richard Holmes, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (1975) by R. W. B. Louis, *Shakespeare: A Life* (1999) by Park Honan, *Arthur Miller: Attention must be Paid* (2003) by James Campbell, *The Bronte Myth* (2013) by Lucasta Miller depict the lives and surrounding events of different literary personalities of various ages. Apart from these, there are other acclaimed biographies such as*Kobe Bryant: The Inspiring Story of One of Basketball's Greatest Shooting Guards* (2014), *We Will Rise: A True Story of Tragedy and Resurrection in the American Heartland* (2020) by Steve Beaven, *The Path to Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (1990) by Robert A. Caro, and *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (2006) by Doris Kearns Goodwin, all ofwhich give accounts of sportsmen and political leaders ofdifferent times and places.

- **Function of Biography**

Biographies give details about a life. The manner of writing is quite interesting and full of valuable information. At the time of the closing of the biography, readers feel that they are much better informed about the subject and the inherent essence of the biography. Biographies are non-fiction,but some of them use the format of a novel. Biographies are usually based on such life-stories which are quite inspirational and motivating and reading them makes us confident to emulate and imbibe the best of these qualities into our lives.

2.2.2.2 Characteristic Nature of Memoir, Prominent Examples, and Function

Memoir derives from French*mémoire*: *memoria* (meaning *memory* or *reminiscence*). It is the collective oeuvre of memories which someone records. It can be of various incidents across time that happen both publicly and confidentially. Memoirs are factual accounts. Since the late 20th century, memoirs share the characteristics of biography and autobiography, but its focus remains narrow and form remains different. A biography or autobiography depicts the narrative "of a life" but memoir depicts the narrative

"from a life" such as various standpoints of a person's life. One who writes a memoir is designated as a *memoirist* or a *memorialist*.

The Sarashina Nikki is a memoir which originates in Japan in an earlier time. It was drafted in the Heian period. Nikki Bungaku, the type of book writing also originated at that period.

Memoirs were written during the Middle Ages by Philippe de Commines, Jean de Joinville, and Geoffrey of Villehardouin. Through the works of Blaise de Montluc and Margaret of Valois, the genre thereafter blossomed just as the Renaissance was coming to an end. The latter was frequently cited as the first female memoirist who wrote in a highly contemporary style. Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, did not begin writing memoirs until the Age of Enlightenment, which spanned the 17th and 18th centuries. Others were the French Prince de Marcillac, François de La Rochefoucauld, and the Duke of Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, who penned his memoirs while his family was residing at the Château of La Ferté-Vidame. Despite the fact that Saint-Simon was recognised as a writer with exceptional skill, dexterity, and agility in crafting memoirs and character development studies, it was only after his passing away that the public began to take notice of his memoirs.There are some notable memoirs which contain the idea of different themes ingrained within them. Memoirs of literary stalwarts *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) by George Orwell, *Speak Memory* (1951) by Vladimir Nabokov, *A Moveable Feast* (1964) by Ernest Hemingway, and the graphic memoir *Maus* (1991) by Art Spiegelman contain accounts of memorizing experiences of life. There are notable memoirs from areas other than literature like *Silver Lining* (2020) by Elizabeth Beisel, *Let Your Mind Run: A Memoir of Thinking My Way to Victory* (2018) by Deena Kastor, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006) by Barrack Obama,and *The Girl with Seven Names: A North Korean Defector's Story* (2015)by Hyeonseo Lee which tell the stories of sports personalities and political personalities.

- Function of Memoir

The memoir has existed since ancient times. Julius Caesar is supposedly considered the first memoirist who narrated his personal experiences in a memoir. This literary genre became increasingly popular over time. Memoirs have the strength to contain history and preserve it. The memoirs sometimes reveal the troubled and darker sides of the personalities too, like famous rock stars who talk about their early struggles, drug addicts who reveal their struggle to get back to normal lives, soldiers who share the experiences of fighting in the war, and neurodiverse people who write about their experiences. Some authors record their experiences of witnessing events. Memoirs thus provide outlets to express the incidents, emotions and feelings of memoirists and the provide insights into their lives.

1.2.3 Differences between the Genres

A nonfictional work like life writing always brings in the question of "authenticity." The production of the work often revolves around a real-life "I" who is writing, an experienced "I" who has gone through the situation, and a narrating "I" who tells the story. The author is responsible for telling a true story grounded with proper evidence. Primarily, this non-fictional genre can be categorized into three creative nonfiction sub-genres: a memoir, autobiography, and biography. Each literary genre possesses individual traits, so we need to know how they are different from each other.

2.2.3.1 Memoir

"You don't want a voice that simply relates facts to the reader. You want a voice that shows the reader what's going on and puts him or her in the room with the people you're writing about" says Kevan Lyon in *Writing a Memoir.*

Within a memoir, a reader finds a collection of personal memories of an author revolving around specific moment(s) and particular incidents of his or her life. One of the important characteristics of memoirs is its scope which makes it different from biography and autobiography. While the scope of other sub-genres is to record entire life stories, memoirs focus on one dimension of a particular incident or various moments. Memoirs are different in that they often make attachments to the authors' relationship with the incidents s/he shares and showcases their emotional attachment towards these incidents.

Authors who intend to pen down a memoir can tend towards both the fictional and the nonfictional. Memoirs present stories that contain enough truth yet focus on a tale-telling quality that tends to engage the readers, in that they express the sense of a novel. Memoirs produce a flexible narrative effect to improve and develop upon the story.

Some important memoirs are*Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert and *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls.

- **Characteristics of a Memoir**

1. The author writes in the first-person point of view.
2. Memoirs are more informal in comparison to autobiographies and biographies.
3. The timeframe of memoir is narrow in scope and presentation.
4. Memoirs work upon on feelings and memories rather than mere facts.
5. There is a chance to make a flexible change to the story and the after-effects.

2.2.3.2 Autobiography

While memoir is part of an entire autobiography, autobiography deals with the author's comprehensive drafting of his/her own life in firstperson. The author remains the main protagonist of the narrative with a bunch of characters. Categorized as the non-fictional narratives, autobiography engages in the storytelling of a central conflict. Unlike memoirs, it focuses more on facts than emotions.

While the space and possibility of the memoir are restricted and narrow, an autobiography unveils broader avenues for introspection. An autobiography depicts the larger journey of the author and involves a detailed timeline, incidents, places, actions, reactions, and motions and such associative aspects that revolve around the author's life. The timeframe of the happenings of an autobiography occurs in an organized way but it does not necessarily follow a strict chronology. Autobiographers access relevant informative materials to develop the story in the form of letters, photographs, and other personal collectables. A sound autobiography focuses on subject matters, incidents that occur around them, and traits known only to the author, constructing moments by incorporating all those to a much broader perspective. The reader is allowed to relate to his personal experience.

There are popular autobiographies like *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou.

- **Characteristics of an autobiography:**

1. Autobiography records the first-person point of view, sometimes with a dual association of author-collaborator.
2. It depicts formal and objective information unlike memoirs, but at the same time, it provides more subjective depiction than biographies.
3. It represents a broad timeline, often covering the author's entire life journey.
4. It focuses its views more on factual information than emotional inputs.

2.2.3.3 Biography

A biography is the representation of formal and informal incidents of a person's liferecorded by some other person. Usually, biographies are about a figure of historical and public importance. Authorization is not often required. Since the biography is written by someone else, it incorporates the third person point of view. Biographies present detailed descriptions of his or her moment of birth, education, job profile, relations, death, and more such things. Good biographers factually observe a person's life and present an accurate and multi-prismatic picture of an individual's experiences. A biography usually entails an in-depth research.

"If you're dealing principally with historical figures that are long dead, there are very few legal problems…if you're dealing with a more sensitive issue…then the lawyers will be crawling all over the story", observesDavid Margolick in *Legal Issues with Biographies*. In biographies, the author shows the resolve to observe and analyze moments and incidents in the person's life, their actions, failings and wrongdoings, problem-solving capacities, details that connect their lives, thus highlighting the importance of the person's achievements in life.

Authors often organize events in a manner that follows a particular timeframe, but they sometimes arrange key ideas according to the basic characteristics of themes or any particular relevant topic.

There are many notable biographies like *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson and *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot.

➢ **Characteristics of a biography**

1. Biographies usually record lives of legendary figures, well-known or important persona in the third-person.
2. They are generally formal and objective as compared to memoirs and autobiographies
3. There is a broad timescape that tends to encompass the subject's whole life journey.
4. The focus is on factual presentation.
5. Biographies entail detailed research and fact-checking to gain accuracy.

Stop-think-go

- Autobiography, biography, and memoir deal with persons' lives and experiences but are different in characteristics and nature.

1.2.4 The Relation between Autobiography and Memoir

In the book entitled *The Vintage Book of Canadian Memoirs* (2001), George Fetherling says that "people may not agree what a memoir is but they know one when they see it and they create a demand, which writers and publishers rush to satisfy" (vii). According to Fetherling memoirs discard the known concept of recording life publicly or depicting the events of life. According to some critics, autobiographiessubsume a small amount of memoir. The memoir is thus a subsidiary form of auto-narratives like personal diaries, confessional expressions, writing in letters or journals. Critic James Olney states that "in the works of three authors one can trace the central line of life writing in the Western world. St. Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Samuel Beckett: each of them is crucial; no others are necessary" (n. p.).

Autobiography deals with literal aspects of creative texts. Autobiography as fictional writing gives birth to individualism and creative aesthetic uniqueness. George Gusdorf pointed out "autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past; it is also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his likeness at a certain moment of his history" (43). Autobiographies are never the forms of letters, confessions, or memoirs although the early writers often confess that they are writing the literary forms only.

Misch draws out the fact that memoir has an informal comparative relation with autobiography: "the term "autobiography" … conveys nothing regarding the literary form or the standing of this sort of work about great literature; its main implication is that the person whose life is described is himself the author of the work" (6). Memory acts as a central force of memoirs. Memory writing practice signifies the role of relation a man holds with the world actively and passively. There is a clear distinction between autobiographies and "memoirs"... in memoirs the writers act as the detached observers and passive consumers of writing and play a minor active part. On the other hand, the autobiographer remains concerned with such things that necessitate himself and the journey of his life. (15)

There are clear distinctions between memoir and autobiography. Autobiography is a form of narrative which tends to shape a person's life events, while a memoir is regarded as a form of writing which deals passively with life. The memoir is not only a passive form; it is often thought to be less sophisticated than an autobiography.There is an interiority that keeps a mark of art and artistry within the autobiography, and that is the hallmark of autobiography.

Gusdorf supports the idea that autobiography is not only a genre but a working upon self. According to Gusdorf's view, most public men who write autobiographies do so to make public records. A great many autobiographies can be seen to follow thismotive which acts as the major pull: there is the motive to create posthumous recordsthat serves the purpose of remembering them and their works and regarding them in esteem. "For public men, it is the exterior aspect that dominates" (36). Gusdorf lists Cardinal Newman, Augustine, Rousseau, Goethe, and John Stuart Mill as public personalities. And so, "autobiography properly speaking assumes the task of reconstructing the unity of a life across time" (37). However, memoirs too record the thoughts and skills of personalities.Public figures write memoirs as a method of propagandist philosophy to satisfy their ego.

Feminist critics discernautobiographies in formats which are not so traditional and tethered to old ideologies.Texts like *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* byMaxine Hong Kingston or *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, for example, could be discussed as autobiographical even though neither of them was intended to be

autobiographies. However, there are limitations to call these texts as autobiographical discourses.

Memoirs, especially those loaded with confessions, are implicit life narratives by celebrity personas though they are not mention-worthy. Memoirs and confessions that contain popular appealsatisfy the base appetites or salacious tastes. This popular form of memoir is similar to scandal memoirs that construct the picture two hundred years ago in Europe and Britain when they were considered as sub-standard and not up to the mark by literary reviewers, and eagerly read by lower-class readers (i, 10).

1.2.5 Some Other Forms of Life-Narratives

- **Journals**

Journals are mainly records of everyday accounts and professional transactions where lies the originality of its source. The records in the journal are mostly done with maintaining a chronology or historical timeline. The word journal is derived fromOld French*journal* (meaning "daily") which refers to several things. Activities within a journal are based on the daily record of events. There is a length of time within the narrated records of a journal.

Journals provide us withan informal way of learning facts and concepts. Many persons write journals. Personal journals help writers to share their feelings and thoughts and act as a therapeutic way of description. Journals often become learning experiences and give opportunities to know new concepts and reflect on how a personhas progressed in his life. The journals become sources of learning, as for example for students who keep journals to record observations and experiences collected from a field survey and to share their attachments with a literary piece. Journal writing also helps in building and developing writing skills.

Journals can also be referred to as periodicals or serials because it often comes in a method keeping with the specific period and time length. There are specific types of journals:

1. Academic journal: An academic journal refers to scholarly writing and academic pursuit.
2. Scientific journal: This is a type of an academic journal which mainly focuses on science and scientific events.
3. Medical journal: A type of academic journal which focuses on medicine and the effects of the medicine.

Some journals are treated as magazines which are non-academic or scholarly periodicals. There are types of such magazines:

1. Trade magazine:This is a type of magazine which interests people who belong to some professional sectors like trade or business.
2. Literary magazine: A type of magazine which speaks about literature and literary events and analyzes the literary pieces from a broader perspective.

Another broad sector of journals is the newspaper, which, based on periodical events or daily events and covers news and information on a range of issues such as politics, business, sports or art and artefacts.

1. Gazette: This is a type of newspaper which tells about records.
2. Government Gazette: This is published by a government and it generally contains notices based on political affairs and legal matters.

- **Diaries**

The word diaryoriginates from Latin*diarium* ("daily allowance," from *dies* "day"). A diaryis usually a handwritten record. The entries in a diary are done according to reports of particular dates and times that cover a day or a specific period. People also record their personal feelings, thoughts, experiences and remembrances in diaries. A personal diary reflects a writer's direct experience from his life. A diarist is one who tends to keep a diary and record events in it. Diaries have served severalpurposes throughout human history and civilization. These include records of government activities, records of the military and business ledgers. A diary is also a form of notes which are collected and inscribed.

The personal diary is usually private and circulated in a limited format among friends and relatives. While the diary often contains information which later becomes the source for a memoir, autobiography or biography, the intention of writing a diary is solely personal and remains the author's own and it is not meant for publication. The diary often becomes a printed document if it is eventually published. In literature, the use of diary was notable in Ben Jonson's comedy *Volpone* in 1605 where daily records were written.

In the east, the diary as the oldest form of narrative came fromMiddle Eastern and East Asian cultures. The Arabians started writing diaries from the 10th century.A form of diary that survived since those times and contained characteristics of the modern form of the diary was that of Ibn Banna in the 11thcentury. The diary is written in the form of arrangement of dates (*ta'rikh* in Arabic). This is a feature which is notable in modern-day diaries.

Preceding the modern age, diaries were nothing but a collection of notes that contained mystical elements of the medieval age, physical and psychological emotions and events that were spiritually sound. Notable diarists of that age were Elizabeth of Schönau, Agnes Blannbekin, andBeatrice of Nazareth. The Renaissance period

witnessed several emergences of diaries. One notable thing about these diaries was that individuals did not just record events asin previous ages but often expressed emotions, framed opinions, and narrated their fears, mistakes, hopes, despairs and also intended to publish the diaries. One of the important examples of such diaries wasthe anonymously written *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* which narrated events of the period of 1405–49 besides recording personal comments and reflections. Apart from that, other notable diaries were those by the FlorentinesBuonaccorso Pitti, Gregorio Dati, and the VenetianMarino Sanuto the Younger.

There are many diaries written by important figures which later take the form of autobiographical literature. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) is one of the famous diarists in the history of English literature. His diaries, preserved in Magdalene College, Cambridge, were published in 1825. Pepys was the man who took the diary beyond transactional records made it his own unique venture. Another notable diarist wasJohn Evelyn, a contemporary of Pepys. Pepys' and Evelyn's diaries track important records of English Restoration period. There are also appearances of notable incidents such as the Great Plague of London and the Great Fire of London.

The 19thcentury witnessed the publication of diaries which took place posthumously. The *Grasmere Journal* of Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1855) was published in 1897; the Journals of Fanny Burney (1752–1840) came out in 1889; in 1869 the diaries of Henry Crabb Robinson (1776–1867) were published. Since the 19thcentury politicians,artists, and litterateurs of all ages and spheres started publishing diaries of various statures and descriptions. Bylate 20thcentury the political diaries of the British, such as those byRichard Crossman, Tony Benn and Alan Clark made their appearances.The lattermost among them wrote in the tradition of the diaries of Chips Channon. In Britain in the field of the arts notable diaries were published by James Lees-Milne, Roy Strong and Peter Hall, artists who maintained diaries of their own while politics and arts became the subject matters for Harold Nicolson in the mid-20thcentury.

In the modern age, a famous diary which was posthumously published was *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, who wrote in the 1940s at the time of Nazi occupation of Amsterdam. Anne Frank's father Otto Frank published an edited version of her diary. The diary was banned in many places and from many libraries as it contained sexually implicit comments and remarks.

From the 20th century onwards diary-writing was a conscious act and a matter of self-exploration. The diaries of Carl Jung, Aleister Crowley and Anaïs Ninare notable examples of such forms. The 20thcentury literary figures likeFranz Kafka, Edmund Wilson, and the French writer Paul Léautaud were also notable diarists. *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul* written by Saint Faustina records her connection with God and Jesus.

The diary has often remained part of a person's life and much more than simply a book. Anne Frank used to call her diary "Kitty."Friedrich Kellner, a court official in Nazi Germany, regarded his diary as a weapon to fight against terrorism and terrorist fears. He named it as *Mein Widerstand*, which meant*My Opposition*. Victor Klemperer was the person who recorded torturous experiences and expressions of Nazi Germany in his diaries. However, none of the above authors planned to publish their diaries.

- **Blogs**

Blog (the short form of "weblog") is a form of informal discussion or write-up which is generally published informally on the World Wide Web. A blog often follows the diary pattern and the style of informal diary writing. But unlike diary entries, blog posts patterned in reverse chronology where the latest post appears first. Though upto 2009 blogs were singly authored, from 2010, the concept of "multi-author blogs" (MABs) emerged, where a large group of different authors and professionally edited writings appeared. Blogs generally comprise news, university portal information, advocacy groups and other such cognitive thoughts. The emergence of Twitter and other "microblogging" systems make an integrated appearance on the news media.

In the late 1990s, blogs started using web publishing tools and could be used by such persons who did not have any sound knowledge of computers, HTML, or any such software system. Gradually, blogging became a part of the social networking service so that bloggers could build social relations with the readers. Blogs oftentimes invite commentary or discussions from the readers. There is a combination of texts, images, graphics, web pages and such media properties which make blogs compact entities. While predominantly textual, blogs can also focus on art, photography (known as "photoblogs"), videos (known as "videoblogs" or "vlogs"), music and songs (MP3 blogs), and instructional blogs ("edublogs"). Blogger is the blogging service which is the biggest and the most popular today.

Jom Barger used the term "weblog" on December 17, 1997. The short form, "blog", came fromPeter Merholz'sattempt to break the word*weblog* into the phrase *we blog* in his blog on Peterme.com which appeared April or May 1999.From then the word blog has been in use till now.

Commercial blogsfirst started appearing on business and commercial web sites which were created in 1995 by Ty, Inc. There was a separate section in the commercial blogs like "Online Diary". The modern form of blog appeared from the concept of an online diary where people generally keep running notes and events from their daily lives or personal lives. The writers of blogs are generally known as diarists, journalists, or journalers.

There are some general types of blogs which are discussed briefly below :

(i) Personal blogs: Generally, such types of blogs attract few readers (naturally consisting of the blogger's friends and family) but they gradually broaden their perspective while inviting sponsors. However, the popularity of personal blogs remains very less and their reach is limited, both on the online platforms and in the real world.

(ii) Collaborative blogs or group blogs: Collaborative blogs are such places where more than one author writes and expresses their views. There is a range of themes such as politics, technology, or advocacy. The blogosphere is the collaborative efforts. The growing popularity of such blogs is seen in the attention they increasingly attract of a wide range of audience.

(iii) Microblogging: Microblogging is a manner and practice of composing texts, images, web links, short videos that generally appear on the internet. Microblog describesdates of upcoming concerts, some educational programmes such as lectures, book releases or schedules on tours. There are add-on tools with software updates and interactions with other application. There are many popular microblogs such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr.

(iv) Corporate and organizational blogs: Corporate blogs are mainly used for business and commercial activities. There are internal corporate blogs which use company policies to establish communication and engagement among the employees and enhance their working spirit. They also delve into marketing, commercializing products, and branding. Similar types of blogs include club blogs, group blogs, or blogs by members of an active organization.

(v) Aggregated blogs: These are blogs where individual persons or organization aggregate to impart combined efforts and views for its readers.The readers can concentrate their minds on reading only.Many hosting websites use aggregate blogs. One such aggregation software is called Planet.

- **Testimonials**

Testimonials, or testimonial literatureas Yúdice (1985) terms it, is "an authentic narrative, told by a *witness* who is *moved* to *narrate* by the *urgency* of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.)." In testimonial literature, the author expresses and shares his or her emotions while representing a particular community. Testimonial literature deals with exploitations, oppressions, and trauma of subjugated communities. Testimonial literature originates in Latin America and emerges as a form of protest against mainstream literature. The particular characteristic of testimonials is that it usually starts as an oral form. Also, whereas biography and autobiography are written in first-person, testimonial literature represents a subaltern group and does not tell about an individual only.

Testimonial narrative is said to have originated in1966 as used by the Cuban Miguel Barnet. Titled as *Biografía de un Cimarron* (Biography of a Runaway Slave), it was the story of Esteban Montejo, a Cuban man who descended from Africa. He was a fugitive slave and he also fought in the Cuban War for Independence. After that at the reign of dictators testimonial started to become fictional and thereafter it was called testimonial narrative. The form became fictional also because it wanted to hide the author's identity for his or her safety. The primary purpose of this literature was to denounce repression and dominance. Employing the form of a fictional narrative, it drawsthe attention of a large audience. Many Latin American authors at this time wrote testimonials while they were imprisoned or in exile. Notable among them were Mario Vargas Llosa, whose *Feast of the Goat* (2000) described the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Isabel Allende, whose *The House of Spirits* (1982) described Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, and Gabriel García Márquez, whose *CienAños de Soledad* (1982) told the story of Macondo, a fictional town in Latin America that witnesses and tolerates significant events over a hundred years. The story discusses an endless number of these incidents. These are instances of exploitation and abuse occurring in Latin American nations. With the introduction of testimonials or testimonial literature, Latin American literature takes a noticeable turn,and the literature has gone through an evolutionary process with this. It was no wonder that Latin America, with its long history of repression, colonization, dictatorships, and major neoliberal movements, gave birth to testimonial literature. Hence, it was the context of social movement that led to the origin of this form. Testimonial literature and narrative evolve from being a fictional narrative of an individual into being the social narrative of a dominated, marginalized, or subaltern group. In broader aspects, the narrative tells about other indigenous groups, the peasants and exploited classes or race of other places. There is a revolutionary tone in the narratives that is clearly discernible.

Stop-think-go

- Journals and diaries have particular platforms of expressions related to live narratives.
- Blogs are modern forms of expressing experiences of one's personal life.

1.2.6 Summing Up

1. Three demarcating sub-genres are similar but not the same in both nature and characteristics i.e. the autobiography, the biography, and the memoir.

2. Inthe first part, there are definitions of the three respective genres with some prominent examples that foreground the thematic tonality of the sub-genres.
3. The second part of this unit draws out the differential outlook among the three genres that are our points of discussion. This part focusses on the salient features of each of these genres and the differences among them.
4. The unit next traces the relationship between autobiography and memoir, how the two are related, and how, though there are some points of similarity between them, they also vary on other, significant dimensions.
5. In the subsequent part, various other similar narrative forms like journals, diaries, blogs, and testimonials have been discussed to introduce the students to taste the flavour of other life narratives.

1.2.7 Comprehensive Exercise

1. Outline the differences among autobiography, biography, and memoir.
2. Write down the salient features associated with the literary genre of autobiography.
3. What are the defining features and characteristic approach of memoir?
4. What are the principal characteristics of the biography?
5. Explain the relationship between autobiography and biography.
6. In what waysare autobiography and memoir different from each other?
7. What is the intertwining relation between autobiography and memoir?
8. Discuss briefly the salient characteristics of diaries and journals. How can they beconsidered forms of life narratives?
9. What specific features do testimonials contain?
10. How are blogs the modern form of expressing one's individual experiences? Discuss different types of blogs.

1.2.8 Suggested Reading List

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Unit 3 ❐ Signal Autobiographies across the World

Structure

1.3.1 Objectives:

- The objective of this unit is to identify various autobiographies and signal autobiographies of different ages.
- This unit also cites various categorical examples and provides detailed discussions of each work.

1.3.2 Primary Readings

3.3.2.1 Selections from India :

Autobiographies of Literary Personalities :

Rassundari Debi, *Amar Jiban* (1876)

Amar Jiban is written in Bengali by Rassundari Dasi. Dasi, Rassundari (c 1809?) learned by herself and leaves important traces within her autobiography. *Amar Jiban ("My Life"), which came out in 1876, is the first autobiography by a woman. The* autobiography details the various happenings of her life and is a record of her journey from her birth, childhood, marriage, and death, day to day household work, the very secret way in which she self-taught herself at the tender age of 25 in her husband's family. The religious manuscripts of her husband provoked her to write and record. Rassundari shows both the internal and external changes in her own life and surroundings as well as the general condition of the women of Bengal. She depicts how she negotiated between following the norms imposed upon her as a traditional Hindu wife and her powerful thoughts and dexterous writing style through which expresses her views on emancipation of women.

The initial part of *Amar Jiban* came in 1688. The second part was written by her at the age of 88.

It was a difficult time for the upper caste Hindu and Muslim women in the 19th and 20th centuries as they had to spend their lives under the *purdah* (veil) and *ghoonghat* (veil) – their condition was very much like that of prisoners. Rassundari was no exception and she had to cover her face with a veil in the kitchenas well. This clearly shows how women were subjugated in those times.

*Amar Jiban*was a symbol of patriarchal domination. But Rassundari also depicts her advanced lifestyle – like how she learned horse-riding with her sonat the age of 25.

Rassundari's autobiography, which dates back to one and half-century, paved the way for true liberation of women. Though the situation and condition of women have now changed and women now are more free-spirited in terms of education, professional choices, decision making, etc. yet Rassundari's contribution can never be forgotten.

Krupabai Satthianadhan, *Saguna: The Story of Native Christian Life* (1895)

Saguna: *A Story of a Native Christian Life* is a semi-autobiographical novel by Krupabai Satthianadhan (1862-1894). In the book, she depicted how the Indians were afraid of a learned woman because they thought that education would enable women to establish a connection with spirits. More surprisingly, they believed that it would take a toll of their lives. When the husbands of the learned women died, the cause of death was believed to be such women's liaisons with evil spirits, even though they were of advanced age. As penitence, the women had to commit suttee.

Saguna depicts the life and events of Saguna's life who, like the author herself, had taken recourse to study. Saguna came into contact with the Western missionaries and their culture and the evangelist thoughts enriched her life and vision.

"So, like a slave whose freedom had just been purchased, I was happy, deliriously happy."That education is the prime and vital mode of emancipation was preached by the Western missionaries who acted as pioneers in establishing girls' schools in India, China and also in Africa. Through *Saguna*, Krupabai shows very well how a family can be an aid in helping women to learn and educate themselves and this makes their lives beautiful.She also made a discrete depiction of Indian and Western culture.

With *Saguna* Krupabai became the first Indian woman to write a novel in English.

Rabindranath Tagore, *Boyhood Days* (1940)

Tagore has described the development of his life journey, the growing years and his feelings about embarking on path his life has led him to in his autobiography *Boyhood Days* (*Chhelebela*, 1940). There is a very beautiful description of his times in this work:

Young women in Palanquins carried by 4-8 servants, hackney carriages all over the city, the wrestlers who entertained people, Badam tree in the courtyard, the ghost on the tree, women covered in veils, rumours about the presence of ghosts in the dark corridors, the palatial bungalows, times when dacoity was respected, games of olden days like top-spinning, hunting for a tiger in a jungle, street plays, water of the Ganges, the luxury of servants and caretakers.

Over time Tagore has expressed how the good old days have been overridden, and modern lifestyle and innovation have resulted in drastic changes in life. The changes were very disheartening to Tagore and he expresses displeasure when he has to see the factories on the banks of the Hooghly that make the fertile fields on the banks disappear, the vanishing of horse-drawn carriages and palanquins in favour of motor cars and modern vehicles, the replacing of street plays and wrestling with cinema, and many more such developments. Throughout the autobiography, Tagore's tone is not that of displeasure, sadness, or irritation but poignant nostalgia.

In another passage, Tagore writes how he was very disinterested in his studies. He expresses how he was initiated to education at a very late stage and how he spent his life in idle pastimes squandering time. Tagore shows how the *exercise books of all kinds which he kept from beginning to end seemed to him nothing but white widow's cloth. He faces confrontation from his teacher for this unprecedented determination to not study in a traditional way. As a result, his class teacher complains against him.*

There is a dexterous depiction of places, locations, and surroundings. Tagore mentions places with exact reference to the directions: balcony to the south, window to the east, room towards the north, and terrace towards west.

The book is a nostalgic lamentation of the past and Tagore very well crafted a story while depicting the past.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *TheAutobiography of An Unknown Indian* (1951)

*The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*is the widely read 20th century autobiography by Nirad C. Chaudhuri. Chaudhuri had penned down the autobiography at the age of 50. Born in 1869 in a small town of Bangladesh called Kishoreganj, he records the journey of physical and mental development and how his life revolves around the typical Indian atmosphere. He observes the changing history of the Indian ubcontinent and the exit of the British from the Indian scenario. Although it is a personal account, Chaudhuri has also depicted the struggles of the British regime which is a decisivefactor in the narrative. The particular environment builds the maturity of the scholar and shows how the British rule shaped the Indian mind.

Four chapters depicts the brief period of Nirad's staying in Calcutta from 1910-1942. Though Nirad's school education was a complete failure yet he learned a lot from museums and libraries.Book 4 is entitled *Into the World* and its four chapters are:

1. Man and Life in Calcutta
2. New Politics
3. Vanishing Landmarks
4. An Essay On the Course of Indian History.

In this particular book, Nirad depicts the whereabouts of his life in Calcutta. Besides, he also embarks on account of the different sections of the society, the mansions of the rich and middle-class houses. The book also takes a sneak peek into the contemporary political situation, the Gandhian era, and describes the advent of Gandhi and Chaudhuri's political resentment of Gandhi's ideology. According to him, the contemporary politics destroyed the synthesis of the orient and the occident.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri ends his"Autobiography" with his views on"Indian History."He believes that the tropical land of India has corrupted its people. He feels that in the future the USA along with the British Commonwealth can bring back the lost glory of India.

The Autobiography ends here. "In the words of Nirad C. Chaudhuri himself." The book is a testimony to national history rather than recording personal history. Chaudhuri is an Anglophile at heart. His *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*presents a remarkable standpoint in the field of autobiography with a pronounced Indo-Anglian flavour. Chaudhurishares balance and emotions fashioning an inimitable manner of telling a story.

Omprakash Valmiki, *Joothan: An Untouchable's Life* (2003)

Joothan: An Untouchable's Life is Om Prakash Valmiki's autobiography. Through *Joothan*, he showcases some examples of violence occasioned by his caste position that left marks which remained forever in his life.

Valmiki's autobiographical narrative brings educated people into light and expresses their conditions. *Joothan* was the first Dalit autobiography in Hindi and it was translated into English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee in 2003.He records the traumatic experiences of segregation of the *Chuhra* and *Tyaga* in terms of touch.The government granted education to the *Chuhra* communities in government schools, yet they were victims of the wrath of the *Tyagas*. Segregation too contributed to ruining their lives. The humiliating experience of sweeping the school premises and the bitter taunts of the headmaster Kaliram hover through the narrative of *Joothan*.

"The taunts of my teachers and fellow students pierced me deeply. 'Look at this Chuhre ka, pretending to be a brahmin" (71).

Women's education in the *chuhra* community was beyond consideration. The restrictions that were imposed upon the girls were many. There is an instance where

Valmiki's mother denied to take the leftovers of a wedding.There are instances when Omprakash was beaten black and blue due to his caste denomination. He was consumed by perpetual fear and identity crisis. His account shows that though untouchability has constitutionally been abolished, the fear of subjugation and repression is always there.

> "We need an ongoing struggle and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change" (152).

Ambedkar's ideas shape Valmiki's bent of thinking and reflect upon his own ideology. After coming into contact with Ambedkar he not only changes his political ideology but becomes a staunch supporter and activist of the anti-caste movement.

> "Why does caste superiority and caste pride attack only the weak? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against the Dalits" (48)?

Valmiki narrates the moments and the contexts where people change their attitudes towards him after knowing his surname. He has a belief in the assertion of his caste identity that constructs a considerable part of his life. Valmiki observed that Dalits who face the victimization of caste oppression fear the caste system and caste identity very much. Changing surnames or altering identities seems to be the nearest possible solutions for the hapless and tormented Dalits.

Stop-think-go

- India records an earlier history of autobiography writing.
- The first female autobiography is penned by a Bengali woman.

Malini Chib, *One Little Finger* (2011)

One Little Finger is the autobiography of Malini Chib, who despite her disability and the odds and difficulties on account of them, recorded the events of her life. The autobiography describes Chib's search for independence and identity and her zest for living her life in a full and meaningful way. She suffers from Cerebral Palsy, a neurological disease that makes the movement of her body extremely difficult. But the cognitive factors of her brain remain intact. Chib records the day to day experiences that make up her life, she remembers the journey from childhood to adulthood, her struggles with motor skills and speech, how she manages to perform the regular activities, and the way people express apathy and indifference towards disabled people. She learns to write with her little finger and educate by herself and speak through the Lightwriter. Finally, she manages to become an event manager while working through a condition that was of totally unfavourable and unsupportive.

Passing through the thick and thin of life Malini depicts how she has to face numerous challenges – all sorts of adversities, prejudices, stigma, difficulties, and

trauma that mark her life and the way she succeeds and manages to overcome the difficulties and how she realizes her own self.

Autobiographies of Political Personalities:

M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1925-29)

The Story of My Experiments with Truth is written by Mohandas K. Gandhi. It depicts the journey of his life from childhood to the year 1921. It came out in weekly instalments in the journal *Navjivan* from the year 1925 to 1929. The journal *Young India* published the English translation of this book.

The structure of *The Story of My Experiments* is divided into introduction, five chapters, and closing or conclusion. Most of these chapters are brief and are written in a chronological pattern. The introduction depicts the process of his quest for the truth while the closing part provides a significant message. Part One chronicles Gandhi's birth (October 2, 1869), childhood, education, and the growing years. His father possessed a religious and political bent of mind and his mother was a pious lady. Both of them influenced him a lot. He got married to Kasturbai at a very tender age of 13 with his parents' consent.

After some years Gandhi and his wife became parents of children. After Gandhi's father died he went to England to study law although his caste told him that going abroad would be a violation and it was against their religion.As his mother forbade him, Gandhi took an oath not to touch alcohol, meat, or any other forbidden things in England. He went to England and then returned to India after becoming a lawyer.Part Two shows his working in a law firm in South Africa. He shares an experience where he got thrown out of a train due to "color prejudice" (or what is known as racism). He then resolved to protest in a non-violent way. He started to study religion and established the Natal Indian Congress. In India Gandhi met Gokhale, his mentor, but soon returned to South Africa for "public work" during what is termed as the activist period in his life.

Part Three shows Gandhi's adoption of spiritual practices where he took the vow of *brahmacharya*. A father of four sons Gandhi formed a political association by establishing the corps of Indian ambulance in the Boer War. After coming back to India, he joined the Indian National Congress and worked with his mentor Gokhale. He started practicing law.

Part Four depicts how Gandhi fought in the Asiatic Department in the Transvaal, gave legal advice to Indians in Johannesburg, and organized the Indian Volunteer Corps for the Great War. Gandhi narrated his practice of religion and studying religious books and detailed his *brahmacharya* life. To him, the self-restraint of celibacy was the ideal way of leading a life.Part Five details Gandhi's political career. He established

the Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad and extended his help to the farmers of Champaran, fought the Rowlatt legislation. After a violent turnover he withdrew *Satyagraha*, he started to edit newspapers and got engaged in non-cooperation by the Nagpur Congress.In the concluding part, Gandhi talks about the value of goat milk. He also talks about how drinking goat's milk makes a violation of the spirit. There is conflict in his mind and Gandhi says his choice pains him much.

A P J Abdul Kalam, *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography of A P J Abdul Kalam* (1999)

This book is written by Amar Pakir Jainul Abeddin Abdul Kalam who was the former President of India. It was a collaboration between Dr. Kalam and Arun Tiwari.Kalam narrates his tender age, hardships, struggles, bravery, strength, luck, and opportunity that carry him to the lead role in Indian space research, nuclear and missile programs. Right after becoming a graduate in Aerospace engineering at MIT (Chennai), India he initiated his career at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. He was given the responsibility to build a hovercraft prototype. Then he shifted to ISRO and aided in establishing the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. He was a pioneer figure in the first space vehicle launch program. During the 1990s and early 2000, Kalam shifted to DRDO to initiate the Indian nuclear weapons program. He got huge success in the field of thermonuclear weapons development which rises in Operation Smiling Buddha and an ICBMAgni (missile). Kalam expired on 27 July 2015 while giving a speech at Indian Institute of Management in Shillong, Meghalaya.

K. Natwar Singh, *One Life Is Not Enough*(2014)

It is the autobiographical narrative written by K. Natwar Singh who was former Minister of External Affairs and senior Indian National Congress politician. He was a politician and a bureaucrat. The book records his witnessing of Delhi's political atmosphere. He experiences several important events which include the Volcker controversy and the withdrawal of Sonia Gandhi as a possible candidate for the position of Prime Minister of India. Its release dreates controversy in the political arena of Delhi to the extent that Sonia Gandhi took a step to say that she would confess what was the actual truth of the whole situation.

Autobiographies of Sports Personalities:

P. T. Usha,*Golden Girl: The Autobiography* (1987)

This is an autobiography of the athlete P.T. Usha who was a fine sprinter. P.T. Usha missed a bronze medal in the 1984 Olympics by 100thof a second; however, her efforts did not go in vain. She continued inspiring every athlete later with her motivational work. P.T. Usha is fondly called Golden Girl and her autobiography is an inspirational story.

Sunil Gavaskar, *Sunny Days: Sunil Gavaskar's Own Story* (2011)

The autobiography of Sunil Gavaskar reveals many unknown and interesting facts about his life. There are details when the Little Master was lost after birth and was returned to his uncle. There is also an incident when he breaks his mother's nose in childhood. The autobiography also contains Gavaskar's journey – how he became one of the greatest cricketers of India.

Saina Nehwal, *Playing To Win* (2012)

This book is about Saina Nehwal's "life, on and off the court." Saina is a badminton player and she won an Olympics medal for her country. Besides, she has the charisma to draw people to the sport, within as well as outside India. Saina confesses all these things in her autobiography. The book is enjoyable reading for all the people who takes an interest in her life and wish to know more about her.

Yuvraj Singh, *The Test of My Life* (2013)

This book expresses the way Yuvraj Singh foughtthe battle with cancer and overcame the fatal disease in a way that becomes a legendary story. Singh's mind-blowing performance when India won the World Cup in 2011 is an emotional event for all Indians, more so as Yuvraj was playing despite his cancer. The autobiography documents his "journey from cricket to cancer and back." Yuvraj also talks about and details the days when he spendt time in Indianapolis for his treatment.

Mary Kom, *Unbreakable: An Autobiography* (2013)

This book describes Mary Kom's life journey and career in boxing. Being a woman athlete is tough; besides, Mary Kom had to accept and face challenges of coming from a family of landless agricultural labourers. Her field of sport is no less challenging. However, she narrates how she gets over all the difficulties of her life and gains success in the sport and eventually wins an Olympic medal. There are interesting stories of her fight against all odds, rebellious mindset, and subsequent victory.

Milkha Singh, *The Race of My Life: An Autobiography* (2013)

The autobiography of Milkha Singh, who is fondly called the 'Flying Sikh', narrates his performance on the track and how he spent his whole life running from various places and odd situations. Milkha escaped a death like the situation at the time of partition and later he ran away from police after stealing in childhood. Milkha's life takes a turn when he joins the army. Milkha starts running for the army battalion and then he joins the Olympic in 1960 but misses the medal as he stands fourth. There is also a Bollywood movie named *Bhag Milkha Bhag* based on Milkha Singh's autobiography.

Sachin Tendulkar, *Playing It My Way* (2014)

Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography depicts the life history of the cricketer who is considered to be one of the greatest of all eras. This book expresses his ideology and philosophy of life also. In his own words, "No autobiography can claim to document every detail of the author's life." This book contains episodes and expressions that help the readers in knowing the greater cricketer and his splendid journey and motivation throughout his life and career.

Sania Mirza, *Ace Against Odds* (2016)

Sania Mirza's autobiography depicts the woman athlete who was formerly world doubles number one in tennis. She is a champion figure among women athletes who aimed big in the field of tennis. In India, the sport was dominated by male players in huge numbers, but Sania made her mark and was ranked as number one player for nine years at a stretch. The autobiography is about the odds and evens that Sania faces in her life. The book touches on the difficult phases in the life of the sports star even when everything was apparently going on fine on every side.

3.3.2.2 Autobiographies across the World

Autobiographies of Literary Personalities:

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1916)

This is an unfinished recorddepicting the years from 1771 to 1790; however, Franklin fondly calls the autobiography as *Memoirs*. This book is one of the well-known autobiographies of its era. Franklin's account of his life is divided into four parts and reflects different standpoints which he records. The narrative has breaks between its three parts, however, part three and part four do not contain any authorial break. In its introduction the part editor F.W. Pine writes that it presents the "most remarkable of all the remarkable histories of our self-made men with Franklin as the greatest exemplar."

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947)

The Diary of a Young Girl, also known as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, is a record of events written in the Dutch language by Anne Frank during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands when she was staying with her parents. The diary has been translated into more than 60 languages.

The book was first published as *Het Achterhuis. Dagboekbrieven 14 Juni 1942 – 1 Augustus 1944* (*The Annex: Diary Notes 14 June 1942–1 August 1944*) by Contact Publishing in Amsterdam in 1947. It gathered critical attention when it was translated into English and published by Doubleday & Company (United States) and Vallentine Mitchell (United Kingdom) in 1952. The renamed version was titled *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Anne Frank's parents gave her the diary on June 12, 1942, which was her 13th birthday.However, the diary looked like a red, checkered autograph book which Anne decided to choose for herself from a nearby bookstore a day before her birthday. After two days she started to record events in it. It was from June 14, 1942, two days later.

Hermann van Pelswas the business partner of Anne's father Otto; his wife Auguste accompanied him along with their son Peter. Anne Frank's family were hiding in the rooms that were situated at the upper story of the annexe building which was behind Otto's company in Amsterdam.The business that was started by Otto Frank was named Opekta, in 1933.

In August 1944 Nazi concentration camps got hold of them. Although the police targeted the "ration fraud" they were accidentally betrayed and discovered. Otto Frank (who was the oldest person) was the sole survivor of all the eight people. The date of Anne's death, some thought,was a few weeks before in April 1945. Some researches indicate that the date falls in February.

The manuscript which was nothing but some loose sheets was found in the hiding place and it was discovered by Miep Gies and Bep Voskuijl when they got arrested. Prior to that, the room was searched by the Dutch police and the Gestapo. The manuscript, which contained original notes, was preserved in a safe position and it was delivered to Otto Frank.

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969)

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969) is the autobiography of the American writer and poet Maya Angelou.Narrated in a coming-of-age story format in sevenvolumes, the book describes the way a person can triumph over racism and the horrors of trauma with the strength and love.Through the narrative of *Caged Bird*, Angelouovercomes all prejudices and sheds the victimizationaccruing from trauma of racism to be a more resilient and confident human being.

Some critical reviewers regard *Caged Bird* as autobiographical fictionon account of Angelou's technique of fictionality that she applies to the narrative, but then most of the reviewers opted to call it an autobiography. The book, like many other well-known autobiographies, possess traits which have been depicted by Black American women in the years after the Civil Rights movement took place: where there are thematic representations of Black motherhood, racism, and criticism of race, some aspects of family and individual self and dignity with self-prowess.

In her autobiography, Angelou focuses on the issues of illiteracy, rape victimization, trauma, and racism. She also depicts in novel ways women and their lives in a society which is dominated by men. MayaAngelou's presentation of how she was raped at the tender age of eight pervades the book. Another haunting image in the central part of

the book is that of a bird which struggles to escape from cruel clutches acts. The power of literacy acts as an aid for Angelou to be free from a bewildering context; she handles trauma and gets over her traumatic memoriesin the refuge of books.

The title of the book owes its origin to a poem by African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. The metaphor of a caged bird which symbolizes a slave, who is in chains, is a recurrent metaphor throughout Angelou's writings.

With the advent of *Caged Bird*, Angelou puts the use of the similar "writing ritual" for several years.She used to get up at five every morning and took entry into a hotel. The hotel staffs were ordered to take off all the pictures that were walled up. She lay on the bed and started writing on a unique write-pad, the sizes of the pads were legal and the colour was yellow. She sipped from the bottle of sherry. She had by her side a deck of cards to play solitaire, *Roget's Thesaurus*, and the Bible. After spending all day thus she usually left in the afternoon. She recorded 10-12 materials as first drafts throughout the day on an average basis, the pages were cut short and edited to 3 to 4 in the evening.Lupton commented that this particular process initiated "a firmness of purpose and inflexible use of time." She has stated, "It may take an hour to get into it, but once I'm in it—ha! It's so delicious!" This was not a much cathartic process for her; however, it provided her the solace of "telling the truth."

Taslima Nasrin, *My Girlhood* (1997)

Taslima Nasrin, a Bangladeshi born doctor, is the author of the autobiographical book *Meyebela, My Bengali Girlhood* (1997). This is a depiction of the author's life from birth to adolescence period. The book faces a ban in Bangladesh with the message "its contents might hurt the existing social system and religious sentiments of the people." In the book, she describes her father as a tyrannical and staunch-headed person.While she was treating them, she remembered of her harrowing experience of being raped.

In other books too, Nasrin has written about the condition of women and girls who suffer in the Muslim countries. They are born and brought up with the perception of acting as slaves to the male members of society.She narrates how pathetic their condition is.

Autobiographies of Sports Personalities:

Pele, *Why Soccer Matters* (2014)

This is an account of the legendary footballer Pele's life and football career. Pele is regarded as one of the greatest in the field of soccer. His autobiography is an interesting and thought-provoking narration about the accomplishments of all soccer players. The book also unfolds many events in his life and the game of football and how as a footballer Pele used to inspire other players and mould them.

Diego Maradona, *Touched by God: How We Won the Mexico '86 World Cup* (2017)

This autobiography documents Diego Maradona's life and remarkable performances in the sport of Football. FIFA 1986 is probably considered to be the most memorable event of all the football events that have taken place so far. There is the mention of the famous and controversial Quarter Final match with England where Maradona scored two goals, one of which is also very controversial. These were the'Hand of God'goal and Goal of The Century.

Autobiographies of Political Personalities:

Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994)

Long Walk to Freedom is an autobiography written by South African PresidentNelson Mandela. It came out in 1994. The book presents the details of his life, education, growing up years and the 27 years of incarceration in prison.

Mandela made a dedication of his book "my six children, Madiba and Makaziwe (my first daughter) who are now deceased, and to Makgatho, Makaziwe, Zenani, and Zindzi, whose support and love, I treasure; to my twenty-one grandchildren and three great-grandchildren who give me great pleasure; and to all my comrades, friends and fellow South Africans whom I serve and whose courage, determination and patriotism remain my source of inspiration."

In the initial part of the book, Mandela depicts his childhood and adolescent period in Africa; he expresses a connection with the regal Thembu dynasty. He was called Rolihlahla in childhood, meaning "pulling the branch of a tree". It it also means "troublemaker" euphemistically.

Mandela received his education from Thembu College, Clarkebury, and then Healdtown School which was a very strict place. Later he took admission in the University of Fort Hare and eventually started practicing law. He famously stated: "Democracy meant all men to be heard, and the decision was taken together as a people. The majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be clashed by a majority." (29)

There was an influence of the politician Daniel François Malan who told about the degenerating condition of African freedom. In 1950 Mandela got initiated into the African National Congress and ran a secret organization of guerrilla tactics that worked against apartheid.In 1961, Mandela was accused of fomenting agitation among his countrymen and hence, he had to leave the country without a passport and after that, he was put behind bars for five years. But soon after, Mandela was imprisoned for a lifetime due to sabotage of "Rivonia Trial" by Justice Dr. Quartus de Wet, although he managed to avoid a death sentence. (159).

Mandela gives a detailed picture of Robben Island and Pollsmoor Prison. In the years in jail, he had to face several cruelties of the African guards,a inhuman torture, nd unending laborious tasks. He had to spend sleepless nights in small cells that were nearly uninhabitable. Mandela's book differs from his biographer Anthony Simpson's description. Mandela's book does not provide detailed descriptions of the complicity of de Klerk in the violent period of the 80s and 90s, neither does it mention Winnie Mandela, Mandela's ex-wife's death in the violence. In 1994 Mandela becamea President of South Africa.

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle* or *My Fight*) (1925)

Hitler's autobiography portrays the process by which he became anti-Semitic. He narrates his political ideology and future vision for Germany. Volume 1 of *Mein Kampf* came out in 1925 and Volume 2 in 1926. The book got its first edition from Emil Maurice, later by Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess. Hitler started *Mein Kampf* at the time of being imprisoned owing to "political crimes" in November 1923. Although at first he entertained several visitors, he later engaged totally with the book. While writing he realized that it would have to be in two volumes. The first volume was published in 1925. The governor of Landsberg pointed out at that time that "he [Hitler] hopes the book will run into many editions, thus enabling him to fulfil his financial obligations and to defray the expenses incurred at the time of his trial."The book sold at a very slow rate initially but it was a bestseller in Germany after Hitler rose to power in 1933. When Hitler died the copyright of *Mein Kampf* was handed over to the state government of Bavaria, which did not attempt to preserve copies or printings of the book in Germany. In 2016, the Bavarian state government made an expiry of the production of the book.

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965)

It is a collaborative work of human rights activist Malcolm X and journalist Alex Haley. Haley co-authors the autobiography which is based on interviews conducted by him between 1963 and Malcolm X's assassinationin 1965. The *Autobiography* is a spiritual journey of Malcolm's life and it depicts black pride, Black Nationalism, and pan-Africanism. Right after the assassination of the leader Haley wrote the epilogue to the book.He describes and narrates the events at the end of Malcolm X's life. Scholars variously consider Haley as the ghostwriter orcollaborator. According to them, Haley remains silent to convey Malcolm's voice to the readers. Haley has influenced some of Malcolm X's literary pursuits.

Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography* (1988)

Written by Benazir Bhutto, the 11th Prime Minister of Pakistan, the book was also known as *Daughter of the East: An Autobiography.* It was published byHamish

Hamilton in 1988. In the book, Bhutto recounts life journey,Oxford University days, her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the days when she was in prison, her wedding to Asif Ali Zardari, the birth of her first child Bilawal and her struggles in restoring policy inPakistan.

Stop-think-go

- In foreign countries there is a large history of autobiography writing.
- Well-known persons hailing from different fields have tried their hands in autobiographies.

1.3.3 A Brief Discussion over the Selections

These are a host of representative autobiographies from both the Eastern and Western worlds and different sectors ranging from literary personalities, sportsmen, political figures and activists. The choice of such selections demands a logical discussion that arrests the attention of the readers. These autobiographies are cross-sectional in tone and characteristics. Both private and public lives have been discussed in these autobiographies.

The autobiographies from India that have been chosen for discussion represent the breadth and diversity of the 'Indian' experience. Readers can smell the vernacular soil in reading the literary texts, as well as sample the diverse influences to which Indian people have been exposed over time. The autobiographies represent such personalities who have made marks in their lives. Though the idea of autobiography owes its origin in the Western world yet works from India have left their indelible imprint in representing the essence of self-investigating minds and thinking ability of the personalities. *Amar Jiban* (or *My Life*) (1906) by Rassundari Devi is important for discussion as it is literally the first and foremost autobiography by a woman and that too by a Bengali woman. The spread of education was high among the Bengalis and it was also noticeable in the women. This autobiography of Rassundari Devi thus depicts the subtleties and nuances of a previously unrecorded way to look at the life of a woman in a male-dominated world and society at a time when upper caste Hindu and Muslim women of 19th and 20th century had to spend their lives under the *purdah* or *burkhas*. Again *Saguna: The Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) by Krupabai Satthianadhan is a picture of how society of those times feared a learned woman and her dreams. This autobiography also speaks about the emancipation of women in Indian society and details the path of a woman's journey throughout life. *One Little Finger* (2011) by Malini Chib is also a depiction of the hardships and struggles of a woman with Cerebral Palsy, the neurological disease that tends to affect her life and

dreams, which she overcomes with her passion and enthusiasm. The above three autobiographies deal with exceptional women of our society. Along with this, there are autobiographies of Rabindranath Tagore which draws out the poet's childhood experiences and gazing soul with an eye to the contemporary social scenario of Kolkata and the growing changes that the city witnesses. The book *Boyhood Days* (1940) is important for it brings out both the private self and public self of a person. Similarly, *The Story ofMy Experiments with Truth* (1921-25) by Mahatma Gandhi, fondly called the 'Father of the Nation' is a description of the journey from childhood to adulthood and the series of experiences that Gandhi had to pass through in his life and how those helped him to realize his self and learn from mistakes. *An Autobiography of An Unknown Indian* (1954) by Nirad C. Chaudhury is again a self-realizing autobiography that records the author's perspectives on the socio-political scenario of contemporary Calcutta and carries an Indo-Anglican flavour within the book. Most importantly *Joothan: An Untouchable's Life* (2003) by Omprakash Valmiki has been placed in the segment for it is a testimonio of a Dalit who has been segregated from mainstream society. The book poses a stark and contrastive picture of Indian society that carries many unseen and alternative truths as well as the journey of a person who has been subject to the lowermost rung of the hierarchical society and who constructs identity through many struggles.Many other signal autobiographies have been discussed from different fields such as *One Life Is Not Enough* (2014), *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography of A P J Abdul Kalam* (1999), *Playing It My Way* (2014), *Ace Against Odds* (2016), *Unbreakable: An Autobiography* (2013), *Straight from the Heart: An Autobiography* (2004) to introduce the readers to the journeys of such great personalities whose lives remain experimental.

Three autobiographiesthat deal with the Western world and culture demands a separate discussion. Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) details the days of his political career, imprisonment, and growing experiences attached with these and the age of Apartheid that covers the political history of Africa. *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) by Anne Frank and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) by Maya Angelou draw pictures of trauma, suffering, and struggles of two women who have to face the changing realities of the society. Anne has to deal with the realities of Nazi Germany where she has to meet an untimely and tragic death. Angelou depicts the struggles and victimization of a Black woman in a racist society.*My Girlhood* (1997) by Taslima Nasrin is the story of a Bangladeshi woman who has to pass through several hardships in life to establish herself within a staunch and orthodox religious world that tends to dominate women in every step. Notably, all four autobiographies point out some unknown facts of history and are thus unique. There are other such autobiographies like *Why Soccer Matters* (2014), *Touched by God: How We Won the Mexico '86 World Cup* (2017), *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle* or *My Fight*) (1925), and

The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965) which help the readers to enrich their thoughts and broaden their views about the lives and works of many international figures.

1.3.4 Summing Up

1. There are two broad segments here that mainly talk about the various autobiographies in India and the world. These auto-narratives are of a range of different personalities and narrate the life-stories produced in their life-times.
2. This section provides knowledge regarding cross-sectional categories of the autobiography. There is a taste of different stories that characterize the autobiographies.
3. Apart from narrating the autobiographies, there are ideologies of different autobiographers (who are well-known persons) that are ingrained within the autobiographies.

1.3.5 Comprehensive Exercise

1. Can *Joothan: An Untouchable's Life* by Omprakash Valmiki be termed as a Dalit testimonio or community autobiography?
2. Is there any particular difference between Indian and Western autobiographies in terms of representation?
3. How does Tagore depict the journey of his life in his autobiography?
4. Comment on form and format of diary writing in Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*?
5. How is Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography a quest towards the self-investigating process?
6. Discuss how trauma plays a vital role in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.
7. Discuss briefly some of the prominent sports autobiographies.
8. What are the particular characteristics of political autobiographies?

1.3.6 Suggested Reading List

Primary Readings

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Random House Publishing Group, 2009.

Chaudhuri, Nirad C. *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, University of California Press, 1968.

Chib, Malini. *One Little Finger*, Sage, 2011.

Devi, Rassundari. *Amar Jiban*

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Samaira Book Publishers, 2018.

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. *A Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Routledge, 2010.

Krupabai Satthianadhan, *Saguna: The Story of Native Christian Life*, OUP, 1999.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*, Abacus, 1994.

Nasrin, Tasleema. *My Girlhood*, Kali for Women, 1998.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Boyhood Days*, Penguin, 2007.

Valmiki, Omprakash. *Joothan*, Stree, 2003.

Secondary Readings

Beverley, John. *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Franco, Fernando, et al. *Journeys to Freedom: Dalit Narratives*. Bhatkal and Sen, 2004.

Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Memory*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

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Heddon, Deirdre. *Autobiography and Performance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Hesford, Wendy S. *Framing Identities: Autobiographies and the Politics of Pedagogy*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Huddart, David. *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*. Routledge, 2008.

MODULE-2
Jacques Rousseau. The Confessions, Book 1

Unit 4 ❐ General Discussion of the Text

(*The Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Book 1)

Structure

2.4.1 Objectives

- To situate Jean-Jacques Rousseau historically and geographically in the context of his autobiography *The Confessions.*
- To outline the autobiographical events in *The Confessions*, Book 1.
- To enable the learner to perform a stylistic analysis of Rousseau's writing.
- Identifying the evolution of Rousseau's mind during his childhood.
- To enable the learner to recognise the roots of Rousseau's philosophy in the experiences of his early life.

2.4.2 Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a Genevan philosopher of the **eighteenth century**. He is known for his philosophical writings, novels, plays, operas and writings on children's education. He was a polymath whose influence can be felt in the subsequent

centuries in the fields of politics, social sciences, poetry, art, Western classical music, pedagogy, and mysticism. Some of his major works are as follows:***OnThe Social Contract or Principles of Political Right***(1762), ***Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men***(1754),***Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*** (1750), ***Emile, or On Education***(1762), ***Narcissus or The Self-Admirer: A Comedy***(1752),***Essay on the Origin of Languages***(1781),***The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau***(1782),and***Reveries of the Solitary Walker***(1782).

The Confessions is Rousseau's autobiography. The first book of *The Confessions* is concerned withhis childhood and teenage years. The text begins with Rousseau's declaration of his distinct individuality and the uniqueness of the work. He swears in the name of God that all the things written in *The Confessions* are true. This volume of autobiography stands apart due to its emotive prose, ironic humour, honest discussion of the highs and lows of the author's life and notable psychological insight. The style is ornamental with a strong touch of nostalgia. The first book of *The Confessions* was written in 1765 when Rousseau was fifty-three years old. It is the tale of his life told by himself as an older man looking back upon his past experiences with both humour and sympathy.

2.4.3 Birth and Early Childhood

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in **1712** in **Geneva** which was at the time a Protestant republic. His mother **Suzanne Bernard** came from a well-established family. Her father Mons. Bernard was a minister by profession and possessed a good amount of wealth and literary taste. After his death,Suzanne inherited his library which contained some great books of history, romance and classical literature. As a child, Rousseau would read these books which began his life's journey as the very unconventional scholar he was. His mother had received an enviable education due to her father's refinement and resources. She had also learnt singing, painting and playing the theorbo. In his autobiography, Rousseau mentions that she also wrote good poetry.

The Influence of the Father

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's father, **Isaac Rousseau**, was a dexterous watchmaker and a well-read man. He was known in the area for his skill and ingenuity,as a result of which, he had to often travel to other towns for professional calls. Despite his skill as a watchmaker, it was difficult for him to financially support his family. Rousseau's mother came from a far more well-off family but the gap in family wealth could not adversely affect their marriage and their love kept them together through tough times. Unfortunately,Rousseau's mother died of puerperal fevernine days after he was born. The death of his mothercreated a deep chasm in Rousseau's soul, a vacuum that he longed to fill throughout his life. Her death had also put his father Isaac into a deep

state of melancholy. Isaac's mourning for his deceased wife had not subsided even a few years after her death when Rousseau was old enough to have a stark memory of his father's grief. Sometimes Isaac would tell Jean-Jacques that it was the time to talk about his mother. The young Rousseau would know that it was the time to weep. Such sessions of remembering Suzanne occurred often, when Isaac would get emotional and lash out at Jean-Jacques, holding him responsible for his mother's death. He would ask Jean-Jacques to return his wife to him. These sessions of emotional outbursts from his father filled the young Rousseau with a great sense of dread.

- Isaac Rousseau's emotional nature was a testimony to his romantic temperament. Jean-Jacques inherited this tendency from his father. He too would be erratic, spontaneous, and emotional.Isaac understood the importance of education and encouraged Jean-Jacques to read the books his mother had left behind. After the age of five Jean-Jacques would read with Isaac after dinner. The father and the son would get so deeply drawn into these books that they would take turns reading out to each other all through the night until the birds began to sing at the break of dawn. Thus, on one hand, his father traumatised him in his weaker moments, on the other he introduced the young Rousseau to a world of imagination, ideas and intellectual life. Before reaching his teenage years, Jean-Jacques had read the works of classical philosophers like **Plutarch, Brutus, Aristides, Artemenes** and some great tales of adventure. As a young boy he often fancied himself as a hero of ancient Rome.
- The early influence of Rousseau's father did not end only in the realm of books but went further in determining Rousseau's political beliefs. Geneva was a republic and the spirit of being a free citizen instilled in Isaac a great sense of individuality and liberty. The same was inherited by Jean-Jacques who despite all the financial and political constraints of adult life, strived for self-determination and freedom. His early years in Geneva under his father's tutelage instilled in him a **deep sense of patriotism** and a glorified image of the **liberated citizen**. He pursued the idea of liberty throughout his adult life as a political thinker. The foundationof his well-known works such as *The Social Contract, Discourse on Inequality,* and *The Confessions* was laid down early in his childhood.

Being the youngest in the family, Jean-Jacques received a certain tenderness at home that was denied to his elder brother **Francois.**Jean-Jacques was brought up in his early childhood by his aunt **Suzanne** and his governess **Jaqueline**. The elders in the family ensured that he did not mix with the unsupervised children who played in the streets. He mentions in *The Confessions* that the kind of upbringing and care he received in the beginning could be received only by princes. He was availed all kinds of books, even those far beyond his age. He also claims in his autobiography that a loving upbringing did not spoil him. Distinct from the other children around him, he

neither mutilated small animals to satiate any sadistic curiosity nor did he falsely incriminate the innocent in his childhood. The little mischiefs he engaged in were entirely puerile in nature. He was an extroverted child who could talk endlessly. On some occasions, he would tell lies or steal sweets. Contrary to this, his brother

The Natural Goodness of a Child

It is certainly unfortunate that due to reasons of poverty and despair, the children of the Rousseau household had to face difficult times of neglect and violence. While Jean-Jacques's torments were largely psychological, his brother François, being older, had to bear the brunt of their father's beatings. During these proceedings what shines through is Jean-Jacques's bravery and spirit of sacrifice. This reckless altruism remainsunalteredthroughout Rousseau's life and works. It acts as the foundation of his overall view of human beings in his philosophy wherein he considers people as fundamentally virtuous but driven to vices due to the provocations of society. This notion of the purity of human beings informsthe entire discourse of romanticism which was largely influenced by Rousseau's thoughts. A child is seen as pure and innocent whogradually gets corrupted by the ways of the world. Built upon the works of Rousseau, romantic poetry emphasises the innocent virtue of children in no ambiguous terms.

Francois, who was seven years older than him, had a childhood that was far more difficult than Jean-Jacques. Francois was trained by his father in his own profession but he was not suited for the work of a watchmaker by temperament. He would often get into trouble in the town. Isaac Rousseau would beat the boy to correct his wayward behaviour. Often these beatings would be severely violent. Jean-Jacques recollects in his autobiography that on one such occasion the beating became so cruel that he could not hold himself back. He threw himself between his angry father and his stubborn brother and received the blows for him. This act of self-sacrifice helped in ceasing the punishment. It turned out that this was only a temporary cessation of problems with his brother. Eventually his brother left home and never made any

Influence of Women Caregivers

Rousseau's father's sister Suzanne and his governess Jaqueline tried their best to fill in the emptiness left by his parents. Like his mother, Suzanne was a beautiful and talented woman. She had a wonderful singing voice. Even till his old age Rousseau would remember her grace, tenderness, and songs. In Suzanne the young Jean Jacques had found the care of a

mother. Same is the case with Jaqueline as Rousseau would fondly recall even in his mature years the walks he would have with her in the garden where she would try and answer the thousands of questions that occurred in his young inquisitive mind. The presence of Suzanne and Jaqueline in early childhood would go a long way in instilling the idea of love and tenderness in Rousseau's psyche.

further contact with anyone in the family again. Jean-Jacques later found outthat Francois was living in Germany but no communication could be established due to Francois's

Rousseau's time with his father came to an end during his pre-teen years. One day, due to some unfortunate sequence of eventsrelated to trespassing, Isaac got into a scuffle with a captain of the French army. The captain had his nose broken in the fight and having his pride injured, he accused Isaac of attacking him without provocation. According to the law it was required that both the accuser and the accused be detained for enquiry but due to his rank in the army, the officer was released. Isaac, on the other hand, faced imprisonment. He fled from Geneva to Switzerland, never to return. Although Rousseau reunited with his father later in life, this separation marked another blowto hischildhood. Following his father's abrupt departure, Rousseau's uncle, **Gabriel Bernard**, an engineer working for the military, took him into his care.

Things To Remember:

- Rousseau's mother died ofpuerperal fever after giving birth to him.
- Rousseau's father encouraged him to read from an early age but also tormented him time and again for his mother's death.
- Rousseau inherited his father's romantic spirit and patriotism.
- His brother Francois ran away from home as a teenager.
- His father had to flee from Geneva after getting into a fight with a French Captain.
- Rousseau found motherly love from his aunt and his governess.
- Rousseau's uncle Gabriel Bernard took care of him in the absence of his father.

2.4.4: Education at Bossey

After Isaac left for Switzerland, Uncle Bernard sent his son Abraham and Jean-Jacques to Bossey, in eastern France, to study Latin and Mathematics under the guidance of the Protestant minister **Jean-Jacques Lambercier**.Rousseau in *The*

Confessions observes the coincidence of his name matching with his master's. The pastor was a strict man and he made sure that his students learnt their lessons properly. The boys spent two years under the minister's guardianship and this period introduced the young Jean-Jacques to new aspects of life. First and foremost, he formed a genial relationship with his teacher who never overburdened him with work. Secondly, the rural landscape of Bossey began to calm him down, making him much more appreciative of the **serene rural environment** around him. It was the beginning of Rousseau's lifelong love of nature. He also developed an interesting bond with his caretaker**, Miss Gabrielle Lambercier**, the minister's thirty-year-old unmarried **sister**. Rousseau wouldbe greatly attracted to her as a woman of beauty and grace. An imprint of her personality would stay with him for a long time all the way into his adulthood. Being young boys, the small pranks that he and his cousin busied themselves with would warrant punishments and the only thing that somewhat restrained Jean-Jacques from doing anything terribly naughty was his desire of not displeasing Miss Lambercier. Yet, being young and restless, he would get into small troubles at the Lambercier household.

The Anecdote of the Walnut Tree

One day, Mr. Lambercier had a walnut tree planted in the courtyard to have some shade on the terrace which was directly exposed to sunlight. Great care was taken to plant the sapling and Mr. Lambercier himself supervised its watering. Rousseau and Abraham were fascinated by this whole exercise and decided to plant a tree themselves. They planted a slip of a willow tree about ten feet away from the walnut tree. Their initial enthusiasm was short lived because after planting the slip they had to find a way to water it lest it should die. After much deliberation they cut out a secret underground channel that ran from the root of the walnut tree to their young willow tree. Theconstruction of this secret canal took an immense amount of labour as the surrounding earth kept falling in, blocking the flow. The cousins went to great lengths by strengthening it with sticks and hardened soil to keep the canal hidden yet functional. Finally, after hours of excited anticipation, it was time to water the plant. While the watering was in progress, Mr. Lambercier was surprized by how quickly the water disappeared into the roots of the walnut tree. Rousseau and Abraham, elated by the success of their scheme, let out ecstatic cries as all the water flowed to their willow tree through the secret canal. Mr. Lambercier on hearing the short squeals of joy turned around and discovered the arrangement. In no time he began to dig up the canal with his pickaxe shouting "'An aqueduct! An aqueduct!'" (Rousseau, 1931, 18). Soon the whole enterprise of the boys was destroyed by an axe-wielding Mr. Lambercier. However, on realizing the cleverness of the boys and the humour of it all, he never scolded or punished them. Rousseau later overheard him narrating the incident to his sister while having a hearty laugh over it.

2.4.5 Trouble at Bossey

Towards the end of his stay at Bossey, Rousseau was approaching his teenage years. The changes in his body were in tandem with those in his mind. He developed an affinity for Miss Lambercierand expressed it in a peculiar fashion. He derived pleasure from the punishments (which sometimes included spanking) that the lady would administer him. He writes in *The Confessions*," To lie at the feet of an imperious mistress, to obey her commands, to ask her forgiveness-thiswas for me a sweet enjoyment; and, the more my lively imagination heated my blood, the more I presented the appearance of a bashful lover (Rousseau, 1931, 13)." This was also the time when he was becoming aware of a stubbornness that was developing in his personality. This stubbornness was due to the occasional punishments he had to receive despite being innocent. As a younger child, Rousseau was docile and intelligent, but later while living at Bossey, he had to face punishments irrespective of his guilt or innocence at the hands of those who supposedly oversaw his well-being. This filled him with an enraged stubbornness. He was more conscious of being falsely accused of a crime than of actually committing one. The final incident that soured his stay at the minister's house was when **Miss. Lambercier's comb was found broken**. Rousseau was the only one in the room at the time;thus, he was accused of the crime and was severely reprimanded even though he claimed his innocence till the end. Even while narrating this incident in *The Confessions* Rousseau maintains his innocence. Eventually, with things becoming uncomfortable at Bossey, Uncle Bernard came and took the boys back to Geneva. Even though the first year at Bossey was mild, towards the end,Rousseau's childhood innocence kept slipping out of his heart. The initial seed of impatience with injustice planted at Bossey along with other insults later in life, flowered into a system of philosophy where addressing human injustice became a recurring motif.

Things To Remember:

- Rousseau was sent to Bossey with his cousin Abraham to Mr. Lambercier, a protestant minister, to study Latin and Mathematics.
- At Bossey, Rousseau developed his life-long love of nature.
- He felt a great attraction to Miss. Lambercier, his teacher's sister.
- He was falsely accused of breaking Miss. Lambercier's comb.
- Towards the end of his stay at Bossey, he felt his childhood innocence slipping out of him due to unfair accusations.

2.4.6 Back in Geneva

Rousseau's childhood adventures continued during the three years after his return to Geneva from Bossey. During this period,he lived in his uncle's house at the Grand Ruein Geneva. Uncle Bernard was like his brotherIsaac, a man of pleasure, but he was not as well read as the latter. He did not give much time or attention to Rousseau and Abraham thus leaving the boys with ample liberty to explore life on their own. In his autobiography, Rousseau claims he never took unfair advantage of the freedomthat he enjoyed at his uncle's place. Rousseau and his cousin were the best of friends but their physical features were in stark contrast to each other. Rousseau was short and his cousin was tall and lanky. Together, Rousseau writes in *The Confessions*, they were "an oddly-assorted couple" (Rousseau, 1931, 21). Soon, the village children began taunting Abraham with the gibberish phrase 'Barna Bredanna' for his height and slovenly walk. After having enough of teasing Rousseau got into fights with the boys with minor support from his cousin but they got easily overpowered and beaten up.

During the time Jean-Jacques was living in Uncle Bernard's house, Isaac Rousseau had settled down in a beautiful little town called Nyon in Switzerland. When Rousseau would go to visit his father in that pretty little town, he would meet Miss Vulson. The young Rousseau was fascinated by her. His attention to Miss Vulson was reciprocated in jest,but he, being impulsive and imaginative, embarked upon a flight of fantasy that kept his young heart busy. Though at the time Miss Vulson was twenty- two and he was only eleven, she fuelled his fantasies which in his mind resembled the stories of the knights and the pretty ladies that he had read with his father as a child. Simultaneously he was also enamoured with a Miss Goton who would play the role of a school-mistress with him and would punish him as a game, when he asked for it. The two women opened two vistas of fantasy to Rousseau wherein with Miss Vulson he pretended to be a grown up, and with Miss Goton he played the role of a wayward boy. When it came to Miss Vulson, he thought of knights' adventures, while with Miss Goton, he developed adolescent fantasies.

2.4.7 Apprenticeship and Alienation

Rousseau's journey continued when he was sent as an apprentice to **Jean-Louis Masseron,** a **city registrar** and then to an **engraver** called **Abel Ducommun**to learn the skills of a watchmaker. Initially, he rather appreciated the work as the engraver's apprentice as he liked the instruments and the process of working with hands. Unfortunately, it was extremely difficult to work under Abel Ducommun. He was quite erratic and inflicted **sadistic violence** upon Rousseau. Although he worked

under Ducommun for more than two years, he never really got used to the workplacedue to his master's sheer brutishness. This experience left a profound influence upon his personality which manifested itself when he went to meet his father and other acquaintances. Rousseau realized that he had lost his boyish charms and nobody was really attracted to him likeearlier. In the meantime, when Rousseau was fourteen, his father remarried in Switzerland creating another emotional upheaval in his life. He never got along with his step-mother. Suddenly Rousseau was left painfully alienated in the world. The elders in his family had moved away, his father had remarried, old friends at Bossey had disappeared and even cousin Abraham was busy in his career as an engineer. There he was stuck at mercy of the irascible engraver, so his work began to falter. He started to get into more trouble like petty thievery and general disobedience. Rousseau was introduced to stealing by a journeyman,**Verrat**, who also worked for Ducommun. Verrat would steal asparagus from his mother's garden and sell them in the market. He convinced Rousseau to do the job for him and soon it was Rousseau who was stealingasparagus and selling them for Verrat.

Stealing asparagus for Verrat gave him confidence in his ability to steal.For his next project he targetedan apple that was kept in a kitchen cupboard. As he was trying to steal the apple with great efforts, trying to sliceit through a lattice, the pieces fell and he could not pick them up.The sliced apple remained as a witness to the attempted crime and the next daywhen he returned to get them, his master Ducommun, who was aware of his actions of the previous day, caught him red handed. He was, of course, severely beaten.

The Effect of Corporal Punishment on Rousseau:

The corporal punishments hardened Rousseau and gave him a sense of entitlement to break the rules further. After a point he did not even care if he was beaten. He felt that he was made to be beaten, such was the extent of his despair. At this point in life Rousseau was going through violent passions. He had become an obsessive child, fixating on whatever caught his mind.He was impulsive, rude, fearless, and violent. He began to realize the influence of money in the world while recognizing his own poverty. Rousseau in his own words, during his apprenticeship, turned from the "sublimity of heroism to the depths of worthlessness (Rousseau,1931, 33)." Rousseau was never good with labour that was imposed upon him by force. During this time the only positive activity he maintained was reading the books which he used to borrow from a small library run by a woman. He read all kinds of books voraciously and sometimes sold his clothes to pay the modest library fee. When his master caught him reading instead of working, he was invariably beaten.

Things to Remember:

- After Bossey, Rousseau stayed with his uncle Bernard in Geneva.
- His friendship with his uncle's son Abraham was strengthened during this period.
- He was sent to Abel Ducommun to learn the skills of an engraver.
- The severe beatings by his master turned him into a stubborn troublemaker.
- Despite all the problems, he maintained his reading habit at a local library run by a woman.

2.4.8 Escape From Geneve

At the age of fifteen Rousseau was in dire-straits. His life was going nowhere and he felt that his entire existence would be wasted if things continued as they were. However, an opportunity for change did arrive. At that time Geneva was a fortified city with gates which would be closed every evening. On a Sunday, Rousseau was out in the countryside as usual, away from the city, with his companions. That evening the gates were drawn half an hour earlier, just as Rousseau and his companions came running at the last moment. Unable to reach in time he and his friends had to turn away and spend the night in the village outside the city walls. Rousseau had two options: wait for morning and be beaten for staying out, or run away from it all. He was already estranged from his father and the rest of the family. He had nothing to lose. So, like his brother Francois, he decided to run away. Rousseau was always aware that he had something in him that was different from others. It was something that needed to be preserved. He knew that he had to acknowledge the calling he felt for bigger things in life. At the engraver's, he was going nowhere, so he decided to take a chance. He granted himself the liberty that was so dear to him and when the sun finally arose the next morning, he turned his back on Geneva and walked away to discover himself all on his own. Rousseau was leaving his childhood behind and as a young man of fifteenhe was entering into a world upon which he was to leave a profound impact. It is due to this pull towards**autonomy and self-determination** that he would go on to establish himself as a philosopher and challenge the leading thinkers of his era.

2.4.9 Style of Writing

The Confessions is written in the **first-person narrative**. Rousseau meanders from one incident to another with detailed analysis of their significance.The style of narration forms the spine of the text. The style is largely **anecdotal** and **humourous**. After a stretch of narration Rousseau stops to reflect upon his past actions which

gives the autobiography a **meditative** quality. The narration of anecdotes jumps from one to another and there is no build-up for the next event.This lack of steady transition from one incident to the next shows the **spontaneity** of Rousseau's writing style.The manner of narration ismore **emotional**than objective. The prose is **balanced** with long and short sentences. The tone of the narrative is formed by the direct description of actions followed by a **rationalization** of those actions. In addition to the component of **self-reflection**, there is a great presence of **nostalgia** in the text. Since Rousseau writes from memory, he adds some superficial **ornamentation of rhetoric** in his attempt to make up for the lapses in his recollection. However, despite the expanse of time between the older Rousseau; the author of *The Confessions* and the younger Rousseau; the central persona of *The Confessions*, the author tries to be **honest and truthful** as much as his conscious mind allows him. He does not shy away from discussing his most embarrassing moments and there is deep **psychological reflection** on the traumas of childhood. This speaks of the seriousness with which he approaches the project of self-revelation through the medium of the autobiography. Due to its relatively secular outlook, analytical approach and psychological insight, *The Confessions* is regarded as the **first modern autobiography**.

Things to Remember:

- On a Sunday, evening Rousseau is stranded outside the gate of Geneva with his friends.
- Rousseau decides to run away from Geneva to find a better life.
- *The Confessions* is written in the first-person narrative in a meditative, humourous, and anecdotal style.
- *The Confessions* is nostalgic, introspective, and emotional in tone.
- Due to its psychological, secular, and analytical approach *The Confessions* is considered to be the first modern autobiography.

2.4.10 Summing Up

The first book of *TheConfessions* introduces the reader to Rousseau's **enterprise of writing an autobiography**. Here the author establishes his **truthfulness** as a narrator which is an important element of autobiographical writing. He **chronologically** narrates the incidents of his life while maintaining the same openness for both, **the sublime and the base**. In the first book he reveals his family background, early influences, and experiences of childhood.The reader is treated like a **witness** to the author's life and he guides the reader as he meanders through the past events of his life. Rousseau mentions his father's presence and absence, the memory of his aunt and governess, to lay the foundation of his **childhood psyche**. He mentions the impact of

Miss Lambercier and the ladies at Nyon who play significant roles in the formation of his relations with women in general. Rousseau's political writings regarding **liberty, patriotism, and sovereignty** can be traced back to the early influences of his father's political beliefs and his pride in being a citizen of Geneva. The first volume describes the reading habit of Rousseau,initially with his father and then on his own while working as an engraver's apprentice. It points at Rousseau's dedication to keep learning even when the situations in life were at their worst. This volume also reveals the **emotional, whimsical, and stubborn** side of Rousseau's personality. These elements in the first book of *The Confessions* make sense when one sees his oeuvre of diverse works which, on numerous occasions, go against the dominant ideology of Rationalism of the eighteenth century. Rousseau's **emotional temperament** and his **appreciation of natural beauty** explains the **romanticism** in his later works.Most importantly, the first volume of *The Confessions*, besides being an excellent insight into childhood experiences and the resultant **psychological evolution** of the author, is resonant with the **central philosophy** of Rousseau's corpus which states that human beings are virtuous in nature by birth and it is the society that corrupts them with neglect, trauma, abuse and illusions.

2.4.11 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions (20 marks):

1. What was the influence of Rousseau's family upon his personality?
2. Describe Rousseau's experiences in Bossey.
3. Why did Rousseau at the end of Book 1 decide to leave Geneva?
4. In the light of the first book of Rousseau's*Confessions*, explain why Rousseau claims that society corrupts human beings.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions (12 marks):

1. Describe Rousseau's relationship with his father.
2. What was the incident of the walnut tree at Bossey?
3. Why was Rousseau's education under the tutelage of Mr. Lambercier discontinued?
4. What were the problems faced by Rousseau as the apprentice of Abel Ducommun, the engraver?
5. Write a note on the writing style of *The Confession*s.
6. What is the significance of the first book of *The Confessions*?

Short questions (6 marks)

1. Write a short note on Rousseau's reading processduring his childhood.
2. What was the significance of the broken comb incident at Bossey?
3. What made Rousseau lose his childhood innocence?
4. Why did Rousseau's father flee from Geneva?
5. Why did the children at the village tease Rousseau and his cousin Abraham?

2.4.12 Suggested Reading List

Cohen, J. (2010). *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals (The Founders)*. Oxford University Press.

Dent, N. (2008). *Rousseau*. Routledge.

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Unit 5 ❒ Contemporary France and Rousseau

Structure

2.5.1 Objectives

- In-depth understanding of Rousseau's philosophical views.
- To correlate Rousseau's ideas on Nature and Civilisation with thehuman-ecology relationship in present-day France.
- The learner will be able to discuss Rousseau's political theory in relation to the political structure of contemporary France.
- To analyse Rousseau's views on the economic system of the state in contemporary France.
- To enable learners to understand Rousseau's thoughts as they historically developed in the eighteenth century and to recognise their overall contemporary relevance.

2.5.2 Introduction

The influence of Rousseau's philosophy upon France and the rest of the world has stood the test of time. Since their publication, Rousseau's works have been praised, criticised, celebrated, and challenged by different philosophical schools according to their respective philosophical stance. His philosophy may have followers just like it may have detractors, but one thing is certain: it has been nearly impossible to ignore Rousseau. His influence is most visible in the years following his death (1778), particularly during the **French Revolution (1789)**.He was not directly responsible for

the uprising, but his ideas did stoke the revolutionary fire. It was through the French Revolution that his core idea regarding the basic equality of all people in nature, irrespective of race, religion or creed, spread across the world. The famous slogan of the revolution "**Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**," emerged from the philosophy propounded by Rousseau. In 2019, France celebrated the two hundred and thirtieth anniversary of the revolution. Even over twocenturies after his death,Rousseau'sideas remain alive and relevant in contemporary times.

- Rousseau's influence as a philosopheris multi-dimensional. He has been read and interpreted by social and political groups of all kinds. Each group has historically used Rousseau according to itsown ideological assumptions. Ideologues of authoritarianism, communism, liberalism and the far-right, all have gleaned ideas from Rousseau's philosophy. While he had many followers, he also had to face bitter criticism from his contemporaries like Voltaire and Burke. Due to the foundational nature of Rousseau's social philosophy, his influence has spread far and wide in the establishment of the idea of the **modern sovereign nation-state**.
- In the twenty-first century, France is a wealthy, sovereign, and democratic nation. In the traditional media, France is shown as a land of liberty, arts, philosophy, fashion, and high culture. In order to understand the relationship between contemporary France and Rousseau's system of thought, one must have a basic understanding of his socio-political philosophy. In the following sections, we shall go through the major strands of Rousseau's thoughts and simultaneously analyse their points of connectionto the present social framework of France.

2.5.3 Rousseau on Nature and Civilisation

"**Back to Nature**"is a slogan often associated with Romantic poets, which in turn, emerged from the ideas of Rousseau**.** Rousseau was one of the first Romantics who professed a philosophy that privileged nature and emotion over rationalism. He was a strong critic of modern human civilisation which, according to him, pushes people into an artificial mode of existence. For Rousseau, goodness is the essence of human beings. He cites the example of the early humans who lived a simple life in small groups, in harmony with nature. The primitive humans according to Rousseau were not driven by greed or envy. Quite opposite to the traits of the modern human, the primitive human was honest and lived his life without any complication that emerged from complex social institutions. This was when there was no settled form of society and the population was less. People lived as nomads with no permanent property or business attachments.However, things began to change with the development of systematic agriculture and permanent settlements. This was the

beginning of private property which led to competition and hostility among people. According to Rousseau, the day a person claimed a part of the earth as his private property, the seeds of civilisation were sown. Civilisation grew and became the reason for numerous wars, crimes, and discontents throughout history. Systemic oppression and violence increased as civilisations became more complex. For Rousseau, things are worse in modern civilisation where people cannot be honest but must wear masks of pretensionto be accepted insociety. He ascribes the vices of human beings to society and suggests that people should return to more natural, honest, and kind ways of living. A common misunderstanding is to conclude that Rousseau recommends everyone to go and live in the forest like primitive humans. He is in fact drawing our attention to the assumptions of eighteenth-century philosophers who worshipped rationalism and believed that it was the only path to continuous and endless progress of human civilisation. Rousseau claims that this civilising project itself is the problem.He warns us about the institutions of modern civilisation built on rationalism because on many occasions they induce corruption in human beings.In other words, Rousseau's work is a realistic and ethical intervention in the reckless fantasies of eighteenth-century rationalism.

When one puts Rousseau's thought in the spirit of his times one finds that he was

The Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a **movement in philosophy** in Europein the eighteenth century. The Age of Enlightenment, also known as the **Age of Reason,** saw the rise of rationalism as the only legitimatemethod of obtaining knowledge. The main figures of Enlightenment are as follows:

Isaac Newton, G. W. Leibniz,Joseph Priestleyand **Antoine Lavoisier** in science**, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Denis Diderot,** and **Voltaire** in Philosophy.

These thinkers banished the age-old systems of non-rationalism to usher in an era of **scientific knowledge**. The Enlightenment movement put the conscious human mind at the centre of analysis instead of God or Nature.It promoted the use of **objective methods** of observation and the development oflogical inferences to attain knowledge. The Enlightenment began with science and philosophy but eventually expanded into **politics, sociology and literature**. While the Enlightenment promoted materialism and rationalism, it marginalised the matters of spirituality, emotions and nature.

going against the dominant socio-political ideology. During the eighteenth century when Rousseau was writing some of his most ground-breaking books, the Age of Enlightenment was raging throughout Europe. The philosophers of the time such as Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieuetc. were the leading figures of the Enlightenment in France. The European Enlightenment, as a system of thought, promoted rationalism and materialism over all other systems of knowledge. The Enlightenment philosophers attempted to understand the world scientifically by the norms of reason and logic. This was also the time when **capitalism** was beginning to flourish throughout Europe. The materialist philosophy of the Enlightenment later found supporters on both sides of the political spectrum- the left and the right. The Enlightenment philosophers thought of themselves as progressive thinkers who were pulling human civilisation out ofthe darkness of irrationality. Their belief that **the whole universe worked like a machine** led them to propose that if rational principles were applied to the mysteries of the universe, the natural worldand human society, everything could be understood, explained and controlled. Predictability and control are important elements in this system. It is a philosophy of **scepticism**that does not believe that knowledge can be received through spirituality or intuition. In this philosophy there is no requirement for faith in soul orGod. Human intelligence conquers all. Thus, when Rousseau challenged this philosophy of **absolute rationalism**, which was distinct from theeveryday use of human rationality (without the -ism), his detractors accused him of being a primitivist and against the progress of humankind. For a few years, Rousseau was on good terms with the rationalist philosophers Voltaire and Diderot, but soon their relationships soured due to themassive philosophical rift between them. The principles of the Enlightenment have been challenged in the subsequent years, most notably by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Beckett, Derrida and so on, yet the initial critique developed by Rousseau during its heyday calls for a deeper appreciation.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau prioritised Nature over Civilisation.
- He considered human beings essentially good by nature.
- In his works, Rousseau claims that Civilisation corruptshuman beings with greed, envy, and competition.
- The eighteenth-century Enlightenment was a movement in science, philosophy, and the arts that promoted rationalism as the sole legitimate method for acquiring knowledge.
- Rousseau was critical of the absolute Rationalism endorsed by Enlightenment philosophers.

2.5.4 Civilisation and Nature in Comtemporary France

In terms of their basic philosophy, Enlightenment philosophers seem to be more influential than Rousseau in the nature versus civilisation debate in France today. The charge of primitivism against Rousseau by his philosophical rivals is largely misplaced, as he does not recommend abandoning social life altogether.Rather, he welcomes a strong sovereign nation that remains connected to honest and natural ways of living while working for the welfare of every member of the community. While France today is surely a sovereign republic, it has at the same time drifted away from organic unity with nature in its journey towards being a modern industrialised society. The ills of modern civilisation plague France today just as they trouble the rest of the world. Rousseau rightly anticipated the extremes of industrial growth, pollution, and the alienation of citizens. Ecological nature and the nature of human beings are inextricably connected. Turmoil in one certainly disturbs the other. When Rousseau advocates for people to stay close to nature, he warns of the dangers of a runaway model of technological progress that marginalises the metaphysical aspects of existence embedded in the natural world. His vision of progress does not align with the one adopted by France in the past century.Absolute rationalism coupled with wealth-based self-interestin the long run will be responsible for the undoing of human beings is the essence of Rousseau's philosophy. The neglect of nature for the sake of industrial growth is evident in the ecological problems faced by France today. Industries and the transport system of France constitute a large section of the total carbon emission by the country. This not only worsens the climate change situation but also leads to numerous deaths caused by air pollution. The water that runs through the country is polluted with industrial effluents. It is estimated that since the year 1985, a quarter of France's plant and animal species have become extinct or endangered. With this state of ecological crisis, Rousseau's warnings have become an everyday reality.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau advocates for living simply and honestly in nature.
- Modern industrial economies driven by greed marginalise the ecology.
- France like other industrialised nations has ignored nature in favour of economic growth.
- At present, France suffers from pollution, climate change and extinction of species.
- Rousseau's predictions have come true as the growing distance between human beings and nature is aggravating human suffering.

2.5.5 The Political Legacy of Rousseau in France

- **Humanism in Rousseau**

Rousseau is principally a liberal philosopher. His political theory opens up **a third way** that is **neither totalitarian nor individualistic**. If read in parts, Rousseau may appear to favour authoritarianism on some points and reclusive solipsism on others.

The French Revolution

The French Revolution was a radical movement in France that started in **1789**. It reshaped the French socio-political structure by abolishing the system of absolute monarchy. It was the result of grave discontentment among the French people caused by the poor administrative and economic policies of the nobility. The financial situation of France was in peril by the end of the eighteenth century,yet the **nobility** and the **clergy** enjoyed a lavish life while the people were burdened with taxes. Adding to that, the masses had no real say in the legislature. The body that represented the interests of the common citizens known as the **Third Estate** organised the revolutionary zeal under the leadership of figures **like Marquis de Lafayette, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes, Maximilien Robespierre** etc. They wanted France to be a democratic nation ruled by the will of the people of France and not by the king and the nobility. Fearing counter-revolutionary measures by the army, the people of France stormed the fortress of **Bastille** on **June 14, 1789,** and seized all the weapons. On June 20, 1789 the Third Estate assembled in a tennis court in Versailles and took an oath to establish a new constitution of democratic France. On August 4 the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was passed. This document was based on the political philosophy of Rousseau regarding the basic rights of human beings and citizens. The king of France **Louis XVI** was significantly weakened. Soon the French Revolution took a violent turn under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre. In the year **1793** the king along with most of the nobility and thousands of alleged counter-revolutionary individuals were openly executed by the guillotine. This started the phase of horrible violence known as the **Reign of Terror** which lasted for ten months. As France went through numerous violent political upheavals **Napoleon Bonaparte** arose as a strong general. On November 9, 1799 Napoleon abolished the Executive Directory of France, declared himself as the First Consul and seized the entire state power thus becoming a dictator. This ended the French Revolution and started the Age of Napoleon.

However, when read as a whole, his work balances these extremes in the true spirit of liberalism. Although there has been a tradition of liberalism in France, the country has seen its share of political radicalism. This radicalism can be seen largely in the **French Revolution of 1789** and the **Reign of Terror** that followed. When it began, the revolution was based on Rousseau's liberal principles of liberty, equality, universal adult franchise, human rights, self-determination etc. Unfortunately, what started as a movement for liberty and equality was appropriated by figures of political ambition and the revolution soon turned into a violent nightmare leading to thousands of deaths.

The political ideology of authoritarianism, both from the left and the right, has attempted to gain ground in France. It is interesting to note that though France is known now for its liberal traditions, liberalism as a doctrine has faced tough times in the country throughout history. After the revolution,there was a dramatic rise of ruthless dictatorship in the country which attacked the liberal ideology. Further, in the twentieth century, during the First and the Second **World Wars** France had to negotiate with political extremism of both kinds, **Fascism** and **Communism**. In the sixties the intellectuals and the youth of France were drawn to the radical left.Totalitarian models of political thought often distort humanism to the point where it loses meaning. Thecritical theoriesthat developed in Franceare suspicious, in a progressive way,ofthe grand narratives and binaries that have historically constructed human societies.Rousseau's philosophy, however, is humanist, putting faith in essential human goodness that transcends boundaries of place and time. To him, people are always good in the beginning, as children, irrespective of where or when they are born. Thus, he considers human virtue as an element beyond historical context. French critical theorists of the 1960s opposed such a vision, rejecting the notion of a timeless concept of virtue, metaphysics, or even human. Towards the end of the twentieth century,when the dominance of critical theory seemed to be waning,there was a renewed enthusiasm for Rousseau's humanism. New works on humanism by philosophers like **Alain Renaut, Tzvetan Todorov, Luc Ferry** etc. pivot around the humanist philosophy of Rousseau. In the contemporary era of artificial intelligence, cyborg, transhumanism, and posthumanism, Rousseau may be termed as a bio-conservative humanist. A new era of critical theory is emerging in the twenty-first century with the development of the theories of posthumanism.In this discussion, Rousseau's works represent a humanist argument that human beings are essentially connected to nature, both biologically and metaphysically. Debates about what is human will not disappear anytime soon and Rousseau's philosophical humanism will remain central to these arguments.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau balances between the extreme ideologies of authoritarianism and individualism.
- The tradition of Liberalism has come under attack many times in France especially towards the end of the French Revolution and the World Wars in the twentieth century.
- The idea of humanism has been philosophically challenged in French academia, especially since the sixties.
- There has been a revival of humanism in the twenty-first century centred around the works of Rousseau.The discussions on humanism will always find the presence of Rousseau's philosophy.

The Political Theory of Rousseau

Rousseau discusses his political theory in his most well-known work ***The Social Contract*(1762)**. Rousseau's politics emerges from the early influence of Geneva, the city of his birth. Geneva was a sovereign republic whose culture had a strong emphasis on **patriotism** and**communitarian** life. A sense of nationalistic pride was instilled in Rousseau early on by his father and later Rousseau himself wrote highly of the political traditions of Geneva where individuality and community life co-existed in harmony.Rousseau was in favour of **direct democracy**.He wanted citizens to have direct participation in the legislative process and the government's job would be only to apply the laws. He had no problem with aristocrats running the government as long as the real power of legislation remained in the hands of the people. At the same time, he was a supporter of the sovereignty of the citizens of a nation. To his mind, a strong nation is one where the citizens have a unity of purposefor the welfare of the people without outside interference. This leads to the central idea of his political system- The General Will.

The General Will is the most controversialelement of Rousseau's philosophy. It is also the most misunderstood. Scholars in the past have blamed the concept of the General Will for the excesses of the French Revolution and even for the rise of European Fascism in the twentieth century. It is to be noted that what Rousseau means by the General Will is a much more subtle idea than what has been used by politicians to justify their political actions. The General Will isat the foundation of every modern democraticnation.The General Will is not a collection of individual wills or the will of the majority. It is rather the will of a nation whose political system, constituted by its own citizens, functions likean organism that is motivated towards the well-being of its people irrespective of their religion, race, class, or gender.**Ethical uprightness** is an important feature of the General Will.It emerges **organically** from

the **liberated citizens** of a **democratic nation**. **It cannot be imported from outside or be placed from above by authoritarian leaders**.In case tyrants use the excuse of the General Will to propound their own agenda, then, according to Rousseau, the social contract between the citizen and the state dissolves. He writes in *The Social Contract*, "as soon as the government usurps sovereignty,the social pact is broken; and every ordinary citizen, restored by right to his natural liberty, is forced, but not obliged, to obey (Rousseau, 1994, 119-120)." Thus, the **natural liberty** of every **individual citizen** is of utmost importance to Rousseau. The General Will by its nature is benign, just and for the benefit of the people. Unfortunately, during the French Revolution, the authoritarian leader **Maximilien Robespierre** and later **Napoleon Bonaparte**t wisted this idea to unleash political and military violence. They pretended to represent the General Will but that is not how the concept works in Rousseau. Even in the twentieth century, one finds discussions on General Will with reference to contemporary politics.

The Social Contract

Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762) begins with the dramatic statement: "**Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains**(Rousseau, 1994, 45)." In this work Rousseau recognises the case where, in practical terms, human beings have to live in a society. Since living in a society is inevitable, people must relinquish their unrestrained natural freedom to a certain degree and accept the rules of society. Thus, people make a contract with the state that promises them security at the cost of some of their freedom. Here Rousseau discusses how such a society can be formed where its members can live as a community while maintaining at the same time their individual liberty. Rousseau claims that a society that forces people to obey the laws cannot be desirable. Laws cannot be dumped on the citizens from above by a king or a dictator. His agenda is not to scare people into submission but to form a community where the people themselves are the lawmakers. Here his politics is concerned with not only having a strong state but also a state that is ethical. Liberty to him in such a society lies in obedience to self-made laws. In Rousseau's model the state is a voluntary association of willing individuals who constitute its laws and preserve their own freedom by obeying them. *The Social Contract* is a seminal text in the development of the modern democratic nation.

Rousseau's Connection to French Politics

It remains a fact that Rousseau's political thoughts, irrespective of certain misunderstandings, have shaped the national discourse of France. His idea of the innate goodness of human beings is at the foundation of the progressive values we find in contemporary politics.The central document of the French Revolution entitled "**Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen"**introduced by the French National Constituent Assembly in 1789 derives its influence from Rousseau's political principles of liberty, justice and sovereignty of the individual citizen. It lays the foundation of the natural rights of human beings to be free of oppression and to be free to pursue their interests as long as they do not harm others. Further, it ensures the right of political representation of citizens thus clearing the way for democracy which has empowered the common person in all modern democratic states today. The "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" is an integral part of the **French constitution**and this speaks ofthe influence of Rousseau in the present-day French political values.

Rousseau's contribution to contemporary French politics goes even further in determining the socio-political spirit of France in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite the numerous political ideologies that had their influences in France, the spirit of liberty, equality and self-determinism continues to survive among the French people. This spirit manifests itself time and again in various political movements. In 1968 for examplethe university students of France in collaboration with the factory workers staged protests against consumerism and regressive social institutions.This movement is recorded in history as the **Protests of May1968**. Though eventually it remained only as a social and cultural movement rather than a political one, yet it remains an example of the strength of the common people in solidarity with one another. Amore recent noticeable movement known as the **Yellow Vests Movement**began in October 2018 in France. The Yellow Vests represent the concerns of the working people of France across the political spectrum.Thousands of French citizens protested across the country against low wages, high fuel prices, high taxes and apathy of the state. Every time such movements arise in France one cannot help but remember Rousseau who championed the spirits of democracy, equality, freedom and self-determinism of the common people.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau advocated for direct democracy and patriotism.
- The natural liberty of the citizens of a nation is of utmost importance.
- The General Will – the will of a nation whose laws are constituted directly by its people- is at the core of Rousseau's political philosophy.

- Rousseau's political principles form the basis of the French constitution.
- The democratic spirit of self-determinism has become an essential part of the French social tradition manifested invarious social movements.

Points of Departure from Rousseau's Political Doctrines

In his writings, Rousseau advocates for democracy but his democracy is different from what exists in France today. His notion ofdemocracy is where the **free citizens**, guided by the **General Will**, **legislate the law of the land**.In arepresentative democracy, where the laws are made by the chosen representatives of the people, the citizens may be alienated from the actual legislative process. Often in such a system, corruption arises whenthe chosen representatives ignore the welfare of the masses. According to Rousseau, it must be the commonmasses who should directly constitute the legislative body to form the laws of the land. In his writings, Rousseau favoursdirect democracy, not the representative democracy present in France today. Rousseau's system states that the government should be there only to execute the will of the people legislated as laws directly by the people. With a strong system of representative democracy, the political framework of France is different from Rousseau's vision.Thus, Rousseau's idea of democracy is still an ongoing project. Direct democracies have existed and still exist in places like**Switzerland**, areas of**New England** in the United States, parts of **Mexico** and **Rojava in Syria**.However, it is to be noted that one major limitation of Rousseau's system of direct democracy is that it is more suitable for smaller nations with a limited population. The contemporary world is so complex that in order to apply direct democracy to large countries, the population will have to be grouped into small sustainable communities which in itself is a revolutionary idea and requires a separate discussion.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau considered direct democracy to be the best form of political system.
- Although there is an influence of Rousseau in the political tradition of France, it is not a direct democracy but a representative democracy.
- Rousseau's direct democracy is more suitable for smaller nations with limited populations.

5.5.6 Rousseau and the French Economic System

Rousseau begins the second part of his *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755) with the following declaration:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying 'This is mine' "and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder ofcivil society.How many crimes, wars, murders; how much misery and horror thehuman race would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Beware of listening to thisimpostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyoneand that the earth itself belongs to no one!'(Rousseau, 1984, 90)"

As explained earlier in this unit, Rousseau considers human beings as good by nature who become corrupted by society. According to him, civilisation began with the beginning of private property and it is at the core of the destructive cycles of greed, envy, violence, oppression and artificial inequalities. In his writings,Rousseauis critical of the economic system of his time that judged the value of human beings in terms of wealth. Based on the laws of property, civilisations have emerged that reserve the fruits of the earth only for a few individuals,forcing the majority of the people into a state of penury. Rousseau's system is opposed to this economic arrangement where artificial inequalities among people are justified on the basis of their material possession. According to him, the wealth of the earth belongs to everyone as everyone is born equal in nature. Economic and social justice are important aspects of Rousseau's overall system. One can see a direct impact of these ideas on progressive political systems and theircritique of private property and capitalism.

When one observes the contemporary French economic system, one does noticethat the state's expense on social welfare policies is comparatively higher than other countries, as the official website of The World Economic Forum states:

"While social spending as a share of GDP has generally declined in OECD countries over the past ten years, France remains the country which is most generous in terms of its social benefits. In 2019, the equivalent of almost a third of French GDP was spent on social services by the government. (Buchholz, 2021)"

Yet, this welfare model is still within a larger system that is dominated by private ownership.This runs contrary to Rousseau's principles.After the Second World War the Western nations saw a rise in industrial productivity. This accelerated their journey towards a consumerism-oriented form of global capitalism. France too underwent a dramatic industrial development for thirty years after the war. This period is known as **Les Trente Glorieuses** or **The Glorious Thirty**. During this time the population saw better wages, greater living standards and improved social benefits. After this phase of rapid growth was over there came a lull in the economy during the 1980s. France began to feel the downside of this economic growth in the form of ecological damage due to the resultant pollution. It is true that this period confirmed France's

position as a **global superpower** with a strong economy but it also pushed the nation towards the culture of **consumerism** like the rest of Europe. With the rise of global corporate giants, the economic disparity between the rich and the poor haswidened. Alienation of individuals has been on the rise. As Rousseau had stated over two centuries ago, such a system promotesthe desire for personal financial profitwhile marginalising the value of empathy, sharing and social solidarity among the citizens. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a series of economic debacles in the West which hasfurther deepened the socio-economic inequality among people. In the twenty-first century France struggles with ecological crisis, climate change,social alienationand protests on the streets. Rousseau's political writings warn us of such crisesthat emerge out of an economic system based on **individual profit**. Since Rousseau was **not someone who favoured dramatic revolutions**, it can be said that if he were alive today, he would have liked to see France gradually moving towards a more egalitarian economic system by democratic means where **equality, empathy and justice** would be upheld over unfair personal profit.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau was against an economic system that forced people into poverty by artificial discrimination.
- After the Second World War France saw a dramatic increase in industrialisation.
- Contemporary France is struggling with ecological pollution, climate change, social alienation and unrest due to unrestrained economic growth.

2.5.7 Summing Up

In analysing contemporary France under the three headings of ecology, politics and economy we find that there is a partial influence of Rousseau on the countrytoday. His impact is clearly seen in the ideas of liberty, the spirit of individual autonomy and the French Constitution, but his doctrines have not made their way into the treatment of the ecology in the present times. On egalitarianism and economic justice, Rousseau's ideas have been pushed into the background.In other areas such as contemporary academic philosophy,Rousseau is making a comeback with the revival of discussions on humanism. His impact is also visible in the culture of France today which values individual liberty of the citizens and the spirit of democracy. Rousseau's principles continue to provide sustenance to egalitarian politics everywhere.Rousseau's greatest contributionto France and to the rest of the world comes from his indomitable faith in the natural virtue and freedom of human beings. Rousseau's spirit exists in all political efforts that attempt to create a more liberal,just, egalitarian and ethical society.

2.5.8 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. How has contemporary France moved away from Rousseau's idea regarding the human- ecology relationship?
2. How can Rousseau's influence be explained in the current political system of France?
3. Compare and contrast the present economic system of France in light of Rousseau's philosophy.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions (12 marks):

1. What is the General Will?
2. What is the role of Nature in Rousseau's philosophy?
3. How was Rousseau's philosophy different from his contemporaries?
4. Write a note on Rousseau's humanism. Which contemporary philosophers are working in the field of humanism?

Short questions (6 marks)

1. How is Rousseau connected to the present Constitution of France?
2. Name some intellectuals who were contemporaries of Rousseau.
3. What is a Direct Democracy?
4. How is Rousseau a liberal philosopher?

2.5.9 Suggested Reading List

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Unit 6 ❒ The Confessions as an Autobiography

Structure

2.6.1 Objectives

- To recognise the technical aspects of autobiographical writing in terms of history, self, honesty, narration, intention, etc.
- Drawing the learners' attention to the claim of uniqueness of *The Confessions* and its analysis.
- To point out the scope of truthfulness in *The Confessions* as an autobiography.
- Understanding subjectivity in *The Confessions.*
- To enable the learners to read *The Confessions* with special attention to its style and interpret the autobiographical elements expressed through it.

2.6.2 Introduction

There have been autobiographical writings before Rousseau's *The Confessions*.A prominent example of an early autobiography is **Saint Augustine's *Confessions*** written in the **fourth century**. It is an account of Augustine's life of sin before his conversion to Christianity. It is a study of morality, repentance, and redemption. More autobiographies were written after Augustine's *Confessions* in the subsequent centuries like ***Memorias* (15th C)** by **Leonor López de Córdoba**, ***Baburnama* (16th C)** by

Zahir ud-Din MuhammadBabur, and ***Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1666)*** by **John Bunyan**.

The genre of autobiography took a turn towards modernity with the publication of Rousseau's *Confessions*.The prose style of *TheConfessions* has influenced the writings of authors like**LeoTolstoy, Marcel Proust** and **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**. Further, **William Wordsworth, Thomas De Quincey, George Eliot, Ralph Emerson**, **Virginia Woolf** etc. have acknowledged Rousseau's*The Confessions* for its literariness, honesty, uniqueness,narrative appeal and so on. Though the book shares its title with Augustine's autobiography,it has not been written from the point of view of religion. It is rather the chronicle of a man who is trying to find himself in an era of rationalism and social upheaval.Like a **modern text,** it contains a longing to present a **unified self** while at the same time, it features contradictions, narrative variety, anxiety, self-consciousness, and psychological observations.

2.6.3 Construction of the Self in Autobiographies

One can wonder why somebody would go through the effort of writing an autobiography. It is not only a physically demanding enterprise where one must write hundreds of pages but this task can also be emotionally draining. It is expected that the author of an autobiography is honest in the work. It cannot be easy to reveal one's darkest secrets, most embarrassing moments, or shameful habits. It may anger friends, alienate relatives and even damage the author's public reputation. Yet autobiographies are written and in the twentieth century, we see a tremendous rise in all kinds of autobiographies written by artists, authors, musicians, politicians, sports personalities, and so on. There seems to be a race to make one's private life public. One explanation for this rise of the autobiography is the human desire to present oneself in a specific mannerto the public. In an era when community life and religious faith begin to disintegrate,one seeks to **establish one's identity** through the means of a self-narrative. An autobiography is an attempt by self-consciousness to dive back into the memories of the past and glean a **persona** that it wants to present to the world. Although to the reader,'**Truth**' is an important element of an autobiography, it is not the sole reason for reading one. More than the mere presentation ofbiographical truth,an autobiography reveals the intention of the author regarding how he or she would like to beremembered. As readers, we expectthe authorto be fully objective and impersonal. No doubt an autobiography is a heroic attempt to tell everything about one's life but given the slipperiness of language and the mysteries of the human mind, the reader must be watchful of the various discourses evoked by the author to present his or her persona.The protagonist of an autobiography is after all a **persona**, a **construct** based on **memory, language and the author's intention**.The events in an autobiography

revolve around the author who is thecentral figure. The towering figure of the author is a natural outcome of a genre where both the **object and the subject are the same person: the author.** An autobiography by its nature does not aim to be fictitious. Yet, the protagonist of an autobiography is finally the product of how the author imagines herself/himself to be and how s/he would like to express it to the readers. In such a situation one must take the subjective nature of any given autobiography as a part of the text and understand it as a truth and not necessarily the Truth. A certain distance of observation is thus necessary on the part of the reader so a critical reading of an autobiography as a subjective text can be accomplished.

Things to Remember:

- The author's intention to present himself/herself to the reader in a particular way shapes the content and style of the autobiography.
- The autobiography is a subjective work.
- In an autobiography, the object (the protagonist) and the author are the same person.
- A critical distance is required on the part of the reader to read anautobiography as a subjective account and not as the final truth.
- Memory, language and intention of the author influence the autobiographical work.

2.6.4 The Confessions and Individuality

Autobiographical writing by its essence is a form that privileges the **construction of individuality**. In Rousseau's case, it becomes more significantas he, being a Romantic, designs his individuality as a picaresque hero on an adventure, who fights against the odds to establish himself as a philosopher, musician, and novelist. Thus, an effort to construct a unique individual self is easily perceptible in*TheConfessions*. At the onset of *The Confessions*, Rousseau declares the following:

I feel my heart and I know men. I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist. If I am not more deserving, at least I am different. As to whether nature did well or ill to break the mould in which I was cast, that is something no one can judge until they have read me. (Rousseau, 1931, 5)

Without affecting any humility, Rousseau states that he is one of a kind. He claims that he is not the best of men but he certainly is **original** in his ways. He writes that his claim to **uniqueness**can be determined after reading *The Confessions* with the assumption that everything he has written in the book is true. In the introductory paragraph, he says that *The Confessions* is a **performance** that has no **precedent**. He

writes, "I am resolved on an undertaking that has no model and will have no imitator. I want to show my fellow-men in all the truth of nature; and this man is to be myself. Myself alone" (Rousseau, 1931, 5). He is also certain that this book cannot have any imitator in future. It is true that until his time in the eighteenth century, autobiographical writing was not as popular as it is now in the twenty-first century. It must be noted that in the second half of the eighteenth century, the time when Rousseau was undertaking this enterprise, **individualism** as a philosophy was beginning to take its roots in the Western political discourse. Contrary to the claim of some thinkers that Rousseau was a collectivist (due to his theory of the General Will), it was Rousseau who was somewhat responsible for the rise of **romantic individualism** in the second half of the eighteenth century. His ideas of the community were grounded in the bedrock of nature and individualism. His ideal community was an organic association of liberated individuals. It must also be remembered in this context that in the second half of his life, due to his relentless criticism of rationalism and modern civilisation, he was at loggerheads with the prominent Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire, Diderot, Burke etc. who had banished him as a primitivist and a solipsistic hedonist. The *Confessions* is an attempt to make a case for his political beliefs wherein the autonomy, uniqueness and virtue of the individual were of utmost concern. By claiming his own individuality and the uniqueness of his autobiography, Rousseau uses *The Confessions*asan example to present his philosophy of individualism.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau claims his uique individuality in *The Confessions*.
- The philosophy of Individualism developed in the eighteenth century.
- *The Confessions* is Rousseau's attempt to present himself to the public.

2.6.5 Truth and Ethics in The Confessions

Rousseau takes care to establish at the beginning of *The Confessions* that he is writing the truth. He states:

Let the trumpet of judgement sound when it will, I will present myself with this book in my hand before the Supreme Judge. I will say boldly: 'Here is what I have done, what I have thought, what I was. I have told the good and the bad with equal frankness. I have concealed nothing that was ill, added nothing that was good, and if I have sometimes used some indifferent ornamentation, this has only ever been to fill a void occasioned by my lack of memory; … Let each of them, here on the steps of your throne, in turn reveal his heart with the same sincerity; and then let one of them say to you, if he dares: *I was better than that man*.' (Rousseau, 1931, 5)

He announces in the name of God's judgement that he can stand by his claims

made in *The Confessions* on the day of the apocalypse. To emphasise his honesty, he writes that on the day of judgement when the world will end and all the souls will be judged by their actions, he would approach God with a copy of *The Confessions* and use it as a document to authenticate his virtue. He states that he has revealed everything that he has known about himself irrespective of whether it is noble or vile. He accepts that at some points he has added superficial ornaments only to fill in the gaps created by the lack of exact memory. He does not stop at God but goes further to invoke all the people of the world to listen to his confessions. He would like them to listen to his most embarrassing flaws and then admit to their own shortcomings. After this session of mass confessions, he invites all the souls, with God as their judge, to say if they really think that they are ethicallysuperior tohim. Rousseau writes these dramatic linesonly to assertthat he is being truthful in *The Confessions*.He makes a case for his virtue by designing this parliamentary systemwhere from the point of view of ethics, he is not exceptional among human beings, but as virtuous or as vile as each one of them. In this collectivist approach to ethics, either all will be damned or all will be redeemed.

2.6.6 The Study of the Subjective Consciousness in the Confessions

The modern autobiography as a form of writing has evolved in a historical context. Europe in the eighteenth century was no longer a community that was centred around God like it was in the Middle Ages. The myth of the solitary individual at odds with the surroundings began toflourish during this period. Due to the influence of older scientists and philosophers like Galileo (1564-1642) and Descartes (1596-1650), the faculty of reason began to challenge the centuries-old traditions of religious faithin the stratified European feudal communities.Having the example of a man like Galileo, standing in the face of state power and challenging the traditional theological discourse, one has to reckon with the new precariousness in which the conservative institutions of Europe found themselves, much before the eighteenth century. The challenges made to the establishment by individuals like Galileo were founded on the twin pillars of doubt and reason.In the eighteenth century, Kant, Voltaire and Diderot in philosophy and Newtonin science continued the advancement of human reason into becoming a full-fledged system of rationalism. During this period, in the socio-economic field, the traditional aristocracy was no longer sufficient in handling the rising wealth of the society, which led to a steady shift of powerfrom land-based feudalism to themarket-based mercantile economy. Along with it rose individualism wherein a person'stalent, skills and originality were supposed to determine his/her position in life instead of birth in a particular class or family. It was the individual whose liberty was to be

privileged over the bindings of the community. It is no surprise then, that in the light of the newfound glory of individualism, the genre of autobiography began to prosper in the eighteenth century. This was further bolstered by the development of relatively cheap printing technology whichmade reading possible for a greater number of people. Thus began the tradition of the solitary reader engaged in reading the unique self-written lifestory of a unique author.

The spirit of the eighteenth centurypromoted the study of the consciousness of the individual protagonist. It was not the era of Everyman.Life narratives flourished in literature during this time giving rise to novels such as *Robinson Crusoe, The History of Tom Jones, Tristam Shandy* and *Moll Flanders*.Mere events in a person's life were not enough.They needed to be put into a narrative. With the changing times, there was an anxiety to record the **experiences of the individual** as a **witness of history**. Thus, history was no longer a mere succession of events but lived experiences of individuals, filtered through theirminds.

In *TheConfessions*, Rousseau compares himself with Robinson Crusoe, the protagonist of Daniel Dafoe's popular novel. The narrative of Robinson's life had left a deep imprint upon Rousseau's mind. He compares himself with Crusoe in *The Confessions* in Book 07 and Book12. In his other writings such as ***Emile, The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*** and ***The Dialogues***, Crusoe is evoked multiple times. It can be said that in the given zeitgeist, the celebration of the solitary consciousness of the individual motivated Rousseau to create a narrative of his own life.

The Confessions is a narration by Rousseau of his own life from memory. The identity of the young Rousseau-the persona in *The Confessions*- is a product of the narrative. Rousseau peers into his past to reveal everything to the best of his ability. The privilege of old age enables him to observe his past with a certain ironic humour which clearly shines forth in the work. The narrative thus creates a persona of the author narrated by the author himself. The persona shares the consciousness of the author in the process of creationof this work, wherein the same consciousness (of older Rousseau) is studying itself through memory and at the same time creating itself. Rousseau himself is the object of his own description. Thus, through this work, like all other autobiographical works, Rousseau creates himself for future generations. This **self-reflexivity** is the essence of **romantic subjectivity** where the individual experience is the starting point of truth. Although,in the narrative of *The Confessions* Rousseau in a great flight of rhetoric evokes God and fellow humans to test hisvirtue, yet in the narrative scheme, he is the sole source of revelation, free from any objective scrutiny. In *The Confessions,* Rousseau tries to make sense of the events of his past by putting them together in a historical narrative of personal nature to account for the way things turned out to be in his old age.

Things to Remember:

- There is a direct historical link between the growth of Individualism and the rise of autobiographies.
- Doubt and reason dominated the spirit of the eighteenth century.
- Lifenarratives of individual protagonists flourished in eighteenth-century fiction.
- The self-study of the consciousness in autobiographies is an indicator of romantic subjectivity.
- *The Confessions* is an attempt by Rousseau to record his life's events in a narrative form.

2.6.7 The Prose Style of The Confessions

Rousseau is considered as a leading precursor to **romanticism** and it is evident in the **emotionally exuberant** style of *The Confessions*. Romanticism privileges organic emotions over mechanical intelligence. In this work, Rousseau does not merely report the events of his life in a detached manner. His narration is a record of his emotional journey. At every stage of the autobiography,he mentions how his emotions evolve with every passing incident. For example, he does not stop only at mentioning that his father would incriminate him for his mother's death but he also succinctly describes the trauma of the experience:

"I never knew how my father bore his loss; but I do know that he never got over it. He thought he could see my mother in me, without being able to forget that I had deprived him of her; he never caressed me without my sensing, from his sighs, from his urgent embraces, that a bitter regret was mingled with them, for which, however, they were the more tender... 'Ah!' he would sigh, 'bring her back to me, comfort me for losing her, fill the emptiness she has left in my soul' (Rousseau, 1931,7)"

He recalls the songs sung to him by his aunt and how she left a deep impression of beauty in his mind. He describes the feeling of joy during the initial days at Bossey and the peculiar pleasure hederived from Miss Lambercier's punishments. He also reveals the horrors of being wrongfully accused of breaking a comb and how it tainted his young soul with spite:

"Taking to the same bed, we embraced one another in transports of convulsive sobbing; and when we were sufficiently recovered for our young hearts to express their outrage, we sat up where we were and began to shout repeatedly and at the tops of our voices: Carnifex, Carnifex, Carnifex."

"As I write this, I feel my pulse beginning to race again; these moments would always be fresh in my mind, even if I lived for a hundred thousand years. This first

experience of violence and injustice has remained so deeply engraved in my heart that any idea that is at all associated with it brings back the emotions I felt at the time (Rousseau, 1931, 19)"

He registers how the relentless violenceduring his apprenticeship at M. Ducommon hardened his soul and pushed him towards rebellion. He writes:

"My passions, when roused, are intense, and, so long as I am activated by them, nothing equals my impetuosity. I no longer know moderation, respect, fear, propriety; I am cynical, brazen, violent, fearless; no sense of shame deters me, no danger alarms me. (Rousseau, 1931,35)"

He adds, "I would never be done with these details if I tried to retrace all the different ways in which, during my apprenticeship, I descended from the sublime heights of heroism to the depths of worthlessness." (Rousseau, 1931,38). Having the **benefit of retrospection**, Rousseau disentangles the emotions that he had experienced in childhood but could not fully understand them at the time due to their immediacy. This study of the emotional journey of his childhood enables him to arrive at a unique **psychological analysis** of his own mind. This **emphasis on emotions** sets Rousseau apart from the other authors of his time who were moving towards a more cerebral analysis of existence. The eighteenth-centuryEnlightenment was hinged upon a rationalism that was untouched by emotions. If the rationalists of the eighteenth century were to be believed, everything could be explained using reasonand logic. Rousseau, though a philosopher of the same century, disagrees with his contemporaries on this issue. To him, emotions cannot be ignored as they form the core of the humanity. Rousseau was one of the major turning points in eighteenth-century Europe that swayed the spirit of the age from **neo-classicism to romanticism**. Here it becomes necessary to mention that Rousseau had a tremendous influence upon the development of the Romantic movementof the English Romantic poets in the nineteenth century. His ideas about emotions,beauty and nature moulded the poetic philosophy of **Wordsworth, Shelley,**and **Keats**. By the end of the eighteenth century, especially after the French Revolution, romanticism had spread across Europe along with the philosophy of Rousseau.

Things to Remember:

- Emotional expression is the central element of *The Confessions.*
- Rousseau connects the biographical events with their emotional impact.
- Rousseau is a precursor to nineteenth century romanticism due to his emphasis on emotions, nature and beauty.

- **The Differences between the Eighteenth-Century Neo-Classicism and the Nineteenth-Century Romanticism:**

Neo-Classicism	Romanticism
• Emphasis on rationality	Emphasis on emotions
• Civilisation- oriented	Nature-oriented
• Strict rules of thought and expression come in the way of honest expression	Rules can be compromised if they
• Urban	Rural
• Knowledge by reason	Knowledge by revelation
• Objective	Subjective
• Ignores mysticism and spirituality	Values mysticism and spirituality
• Stress on empirical methods	Stress on imagination
• No special attention to natural beauty	Natural beauty is given importance
• Children are considered inferior to adults	Children are greatly valued

2.6.8 The Literary Style of The Confessions

The Confessions is a remarkable volume of romantic prose. The emphasis **on emotions, nature, humanism, and individualism** marks its deviation from the eighteenth-century neo-classical mode of writing. Rousseau was a prolific author. After a career of writing **music, novels, plays, essays, and books on philosophy, sociology, education**etc. Rousseau had dedicated his final years to autobiographical works. In addition to *The Confessions*, there are two more autobiographical volumes entitled ***Dialogues: Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*** **(1782) and** ***Reveries of the Solitary Walker*** **(1782)**. *The Confessions* is divided into **two parts,** each part contains**six books**.The publication of these books began in **1782** and in **1789** the final book was published. *The Confessions* is a motley of passages of **introspection, humour and anguish**. The events of the autobiography are interspersed with Rousseau's commentary. The style is conversational where Rousseau is directly addressing the reader. In these passages of commentary, Rousseau explains the emotional and psychological significance of the events narrated by him. Sometimes he tries to make a case for his innocence or guilt to the reader by putting the events in their historical and ethical contexts. For example, regarding the comb incident at Bossey, he maintains even fifty years after the incident, that he was innocent. He claims that he has no idea how the comb was broken and all he knows is that he had nothing to do with it. By such claims, Rousseau tries to make a case for his innocence where he thinks it is required. In

other places, by his commentary, he tries to explain the effects of his surroundings upon him. In the following passage he writes about the psychological impact of the mistreatment he received from M. Ducommon during his apprenticeship:

"I had soon endured so many beatings that I became less fearful: I saw them in the end as a sort of compensation for what I stole, which gave me the right to go on doing it. Instead of looking backwards and thinking of the punishment, I looked ahead and thought only of revenge… After all, I said to myself, nothing so very bad can happen. I'll be beaten, that's all. So be it; I was made to be beaten. (Rousseau, 1931, 33-34)"

This style of switching between narration and analysis manifests the connection between Rousseau the author and Rousseau the persona in the autobiography.

The humour in *The Confessions* is tinged with **nostalgia**. The older Rousseau, the author, looks back upon the desperate, anxious, and confused younger Rousseau of the past. For example, he recalls the funny incident of the willow tree and the secret aqueduct at Mr.Lambercier's with nostalgic fondness. Such light-hearted episodes of humour make *The Confessions* an entertaining read.

The diction Rousseau uses in *The Confessions* is **emotional and ornamental**. This acts in unison with the element of **self-pity** in the narrative. As Rousseau describes his confused and often helpless young self, he is full of compassion. This manner of writing enables him to invoke the **empathy of the reader** for himself. In the following passage, he directly invokes the tenderness of the reader while describing his plight of stealing apples from the garden ofhis master Ducommon, the engraver:

"I found supports to hold the spit in place, a knife that was long enough to split the apple, a board to rest it against. After much ingenuity and time, I managed to halve it, meaning to ease the pieces through one after the other. But no sooner were they separated than they fell back down into the cupboard. Pity me in my affliction, gentle reader… (Rousseau, 1931, 33)"

A certain humour cannot be denied in this invocation to the reader but that is a characteristic style of Rousseau in *The Confessions* where he combines pathos and humour with ease.

The narrative style of *The Confessions* is similar to that of a **picaresque novel** where the protagonist, beingalone in the world, moves from one experience to another in a lifetime of adventure. Rousseau's **loneliness** as shown in *The Confessions* is not without historical and psychological context. In his childhood, his loneliness was due to the absence of his parents, with his mother dead and his father and brother away. While accounting for his alienation in adult life, it is to be noted that Rousseau in his

philosophy was going against the popular philosophical trend of the eighteenth century. While all the other major philosophers were glorifying rationalism, Rousseau was not only singing hymns to nature but was also severely criticising civilisation for corrupting human beings. This philosophical stance alienated him from his fellow thinkers and turned the state of France against him. After feuding with **Voltaire** and **Diderot** he finally found friendship with the English philosopher **David Hume.** Unfortunately, this friendship could not last long as Rousseau accused Hume of conspiring against him. This brings us to the psychological reason for Rousseau's alienation. Rousseau probably suffered from paranoia, a psychological condition that convinced him that everyone, including a sympathiser like Hume, was conspiring against him. This condition prevented him from having lasting friendships with his contemporaries. Through the prolific prose of *The Confessions* Rousseau presents the **psychological evolution** of his personality. The passages of self-analysis scattered amongst the biographical events establish connections between his experiences and their impact on his mind. The critical evaluation of one's psychology in the context of the phenomena of the external world makes this autobiography **a precursor to modern psychoanalytical writings.**

Things to Remember:

- *The Confessions* is an amalgamation of introspection, humour and pathos.
- Rousseau makes a careful psychological study of his childhood.
- The tone of the writing is nostalgic.
- Rousseau tries to evoke the sympathy of the reader for himself.
- *The Confessions* records Rousseau's struggle with alienation.

2.6.9 Summing Up

As an autobiography, *The Confessions* echoes the central vein of Rousseau's philosophical oeuvre which concerns the essential goodness of human beings. In this volume we see Rousseau depicting through various examples how his natural virtues were violated by society. Whether it is his father's emotional outbursts or the abuse he faced when he worked as an apprentice, the traumas of childhood are well portrayed and analysed in the text.*The Confessions* also illuminates the beautiful side of Rousseau's life, especially those in his childhood. His recollection of the songs sung by his aunt, the all-night reading sessions with his father, the gracefulness of Mr. Lambercier as a teacher, his tender friendship with his cousin Abraham etc. balance the darker sides of this book. This autobiography is an amalgamation of two consciousnesses- the older Rousseau writing the text and the younger Rousseau as the object of the text. *The Confessions* is not arranged according to a defined structure but meanders from

one incident to another interspersed with the author's commentaries, analyses and messages to the reader. In the text, Rousseau addresses the reader directly and contextualises the incidents, often evoking the emotions of humour, pity, defensiveness, and sarcasm. It is a documentation of Rousseau's psychology told from his own point of view with the advantage of retrospection. *TheConfessions* is a significant autobiographical work of the eighteenth century that not only elaborates on Rousseau's early experiences in life but also hisassociations and conflicts with his contemporaries in philosophy thus illustrating the firmly held beliefs of the author thateventuallymanifest inhis philosophical writings.

2.6.10 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions (20 marks):

1. Write a note on the style of Rousseau's *The Confessions*.
2. Describe how the language of *The Confessions* is emotional.
3. Show your familiarity with the ideas of truth, memory and autobiographical persona with special reference to Rousseau's*Confessions*.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions (12 marks):

1. How can we say that *The Confessions* is a text about Individualism?
2. How is *The Confessions* a romantic text?
3. Why was Rousseau alienated?
4. Why did the genre of autobiographical writing flourish in the eighteenth century?

Short questions (6 marks)

1. How is *The Confessions* a modern autobiography?
2. Why does Rousseau invoke God in the beginning of *The Confessions*?
3. How can *The Confessions* be compared with a picaresque novel?
4. Besides *The* Confessions, what are the two other autobiographical texts by Rousseau?

2.6.11 Suggested Reading List

Brockmeier, J., & Carbaugh, D. (2001). *Narrative and Identity*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

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Olney, J. (2014). *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton University Press.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1931). *Confessions (Vol. 1)* (E. Rhys, Ed.). J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Everyman's Edition.

Smith, S., & Watson, J. (2001). *Reading Autobiography*. University of Minnesota Press.

Unit 7 ❐ Early Life of Rousseau and Its Impact on Later Ideas

Structure

2.7.1 Objectives

- A close reading of the early life of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
- Recognising the significant events in Rousseau's childhood.
- To identify the influences of family and society on Rousseau during his childhood.
- To understand the evolution of Rousseau's mind during his childhood.
- Grasping the basic points of Rousseau's worldview in his later writings.
- To understand the later ideas of Rousseau in the light of his early experiences.

2.7.2 Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau holds a special position as a unique thinker of the **eighteenth century** in Europe. The diversity of his ideas has impacted the subsequent

currents of **philosophy, literature, sociology, politics, ecological studies, children's education, psychological studies and autobiographical writing**. The fact thatRousseau, who never had any institutionally structured education could affect so many institutions of both knowledge and power is quite striking. Due to this diversity, it is difficult to restrain Rousseau in one particular stream of thought or ideology. His oeuvre is like a fountain from which the subsequent thinkers of many disciplines have drawn sustenance.

Rousseau's life was a chequered one, full of unpredictability and adventure. If there were moments of great glory then there were also periods of deep despair. He presents them all with honesty in his autobiography ***The Confessions***. When read closely, the first book of *The Confessions* reveals interesting incidents and observations about Rousseau as a child. These early experiences of Rousseau can be read on a larger scale against the background of his later philosophical works. Connecting lines can be drawn between his early life and his later works with the assumption that childhood experiences determine, to a great extent, the kind of adult the child grows up to be. In this unit, we shall learn about the significant events of Rousseau's childhood and how they influenced his worldview and later ideas.

2.7.3 Family Background and Childhood

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in the Protestant Republic of **Geneva** in **1712** to Suzanne and Isaac Rousseau. His parents came from **different social backgrounds**; Suzanne was from a wealthyupper-class family while Isaac was a skilled yet impoverished watchmaker. Rousseau had to grow up in the absence of his biological mother as **Suzanne died soon after he was born**. Although she was no longer alive, she influenced Rousseau's upbringing through her collection of books which she had inherited from her father. Isaac valued education and was a well-read man himself. Isaac would read out Suzanne's books to Jean Jacques while he was still very young. After turning five years old when he could read by himself Jean-Jacques would read with his father all night. Together they read books of **history, classics and medieval romance**. The habit of **reading from a young age** opened Rousseau's faculties of **imagination** and **intellect** quite early in life.

Due to the early death of his mother, Rousseau was raised and nurtured by hisaunt, also named Suzanne, and his governess Jaqueline. Despite having the care of two women, Rousseau's unconscious longing for his mother resulted in a life-long attempt to fill the void. This void was further exacerbated by his father's abrupt departure before Rousseau wasa teenager. Isaac Rousseau got into a scuffle with a French army captain due to an issue of trespassing. Due to his connection with the higher authorities, the French captain was released from the case and all the blame

fell entirely on **Isaac** who **promptly left Geneva** to avoid incarceration. This was yet another blow to the young Rousseau's sense of security whereby he was left practically parentless at a young age. Though he was taken care of by his uncle Gabriel Bernard yet Rousseau's parentless growing years had implications, as we shall see in the subsequent sections,for his political thought and conception of the **ideal state**.

2.7.4 Life at the Lambercier Householdin Bossey

Rousseau was sent to Bosseyin eastern France along with his cousin Abraham to study Latin under the tutelage of Monsieur **Jean-Jacques Lambercier**, a Protestant priest. There he boarded with his cousin and the change of place greatly influenced Rousseau's mind. The natural beauty of **Bossey calmed Rousseau's spirit** and the discipline at the Lambercier household brought regularity to his life. Mademoiselle Gabrielle Lambercier, the unmarried sister of the priest, was the caretaker of the household and Rousseau developed an attachment to her. In Bossey, he engaged in many childish pranks.Initially, he was not reprimanded harshly, even though the priest was quite particular that the boys must learn their lessons properly. Over time, punishments increased, and Mademoiselle Lambercier would spank Rousseau for his occasional unruliness. In the second year of his stay with the Lamberciers, tensions rose when **Mademoiselle Lambercier's comb was found broken**. Rousseau was unjustly blamed for the damage, even though he maintained his innocence until the end. Apart from the punishment, Rousseau felt quite insulted for being blamed for a crime which he did not commit and this broke in his young heart. After this incident,Uncle Bernard was summoned, and Rousseau left Bossey with wounds of injustice in his soul.This was when the initial seed of thought regarding the **innocence of childhood, childhood pedagogy, and child psychology** was planted in his mind—ideas he would later develop in his philosophical writings.

Things to Remember:

- Rousseau was aprominent thinker of the Eighteenth century whose works have influenced the fields of philosophy, literature, sociology, politics, ecological studies, childhood education, psychological studies and autobiographical writing.
- Rousseau received an unstructured but diverse education from his father.
- Rousseau's father had to flee from Geneva leaving Rousseau in his uncle's care.
- Rousseau was sent to Bossey with his cousin to study under the tutelage of Mr. Lambercier.
- The stay at Bossey came to an end when Rousseau was wrongfully accused of breaking a comb.

2.7.5 Back to Geneva and Apprenticeship

Rousseau's adventures continued for the next three years while staying at his uncle's house at the Grand Rue in Geneva. Uncle Bernard was a man of pleasure, like his brother Isaac, but he was not as well-read as the latter. He did not devote any time to Rousseau or his cousin, allowing the lads to explore life on their own. Rousseau's journey continued when he was apprenticed to **Jean-Louis Masseron**, a city registrar, and subsequently to **Abel Ducommun**, an engraver. He enjoyed working as an engraver's apprentice at first because he liked the instruments and the process of working with his hands. Unfortunately, it was a nightmare to work under his master. Ducommun was unpredictable and he **beat Rousseau** with merciless ferocity. Despite working for him for more than two years, Rousseau was never able to adjust to the profession due to the master's brutality. The violence and insecuritygreatly affected his personality, a change which he was able to sense when he visited Nyon to see his father and other acquaintances. Rousseau felt that he had lost his juvenile charms andno one was as enamoured of him as they had previously been.Amid all this trouble, Rousseau kept borrowing books from a private library and kept up his education as an autodidact.

As he was sufferingat the hands of his irascible master, his work began to suffer too. He began to engage in greater wrongdoing, including small thefts and general disobedience. Rousseau was first exposed to theft by a journeyman named Verrat who also worked for Ducommun. The asparagus that Verrat stole from his mother's garden, he sold them at the market. Rousseau was soon stealing asparagus for Verrat after he persuaded him to do the work for him. The recently acquired skill of thievery encouraged Rousseau to steal an apple from his master's cupboard and after he was caught, he was beaten mercilessly by the master. These troubles in early life and his gradual corruption due to the circumstances left a profound impact on Rousseau as a thinker later in life in understanding the role of society in corrupting a person.

2.7.6 Leaving Geneva

Geneva was a fortified city during Rousseau's time with gates that were closed every evening. Rousseau and his friends were outside the city on a Sunday as usual. That nightfall, the gates had been closed half an hour before Rousseau and his companions arrived. He and his friends were compelled to flee and spend the night in a village beyond the city walls. There were two options available to Rousseau: either wait until the next day and face the danger of being punished or run away. He decided to leave Geneva since he did not have much left to lose. When the sun ultimately rose, he granted himself the freedom he had been craving for. Rousseau

was leaving his boyhood behind and, as a fifteen-year-old, he was entering a world where he would have a remarkable impact. The decision to fend for himself from a young age helped Rousseau down the line to reflect upon **individual autonomy** and society at large.

Things to Remember:

- Back in Geneva, Rousseau began to work as an apprentice to Jean-Louis Masseron, a city registrar and then to Abel Ducommun, an engraver.
- Abel Ducommun was a brutal master who punished Rousseau mercilessly.
- Rousseau kept borrowing books from a small private library and continued his education as an autodidact.
- Inretaliationfor the violence and isolation, Rousseau began engaging in petty thievery.
- After being stranded outside the Geneva city gate one evening, Rousseau ran away to find a better life on his own.

2.7.7 The Imprint of Mother's Death and Estrangement from Father

Childhood is a period when a person is in their most vulnerable state. As a child, not only one is unable to defend oneself in a world dominated by adults but also due to the greater learning capacity in childhood,one is extremely impressionable. Many childhood experiences remain as memories throughout a person's life, especially those that are associated with strong emotions of happiness, fear, embarrassment, and longing. The childhood of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is full of such experiences because of the upheavals in his family and surroundings. The early memories of Rousseau go back to the awareness of his mother's absence and his father's grief over his wife's untimely death. His search for a mother figure was entwined with his attachment to his aunt Susanne and his governess Jaqueline. The same association happens with Miss Lambercier during his stay at Bossey as he writes in *The Confessions*, "Just as Mlle Lambercier felt for us the affection of a mother, so too she had a mother's authority, which she sometimes exerted to the point of inflicting common childhood punishments on us, when we had deserved this" (Rousseau, 1931, 14)Thoughts about the mother-figure become further entrenched in Rousseau as a result of his father's suffering.He records in *The Confessions*:

"I never knew how my father bore his loss; but I do know that he never got over it. He thought he could see my mother in me, without being able to forget that I had deprived him of her; he never caressed me without my sensing, from his sighs, from

his urgent embraces, that a bitter regret was mingled with them, for which, however, they were the more tender… (Rousseau, 1931, 7)"

Though his father loved him dearly yet even as a child Rousseau could sense shades of lament in his love for him. These experiences stay in Rousseau's mind till his later years which he meticulously narrates in *The Confessions*.

The **early sense of loss** is further stressed in Rousseau with the abrupt departure of his father after his clash with the French captain. Although Uncle Gabriel Bernard took care of him well and raised him with his own son Abraham for some time, the **psychological impact of losing and being estranged from his parents** reveals itself in works like*The Social Contract* and *Emile, or On Education*.In ***On the Social Contract; or, Principles of Political Right*** **(1762**), commonly known as ***The Social Contract***, Rousseau writes on the issues of **citizenship, the republic state and individual autonomy**.

He begins the book with the concept of the family and lays down the distinction between the natural need for a family and a voluntary attachment to the family. He writes in *The Social Contract*:

The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural, is the family: and even so the children remain attached to the father only so long as they need him for their preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children, released from the obedience they owed to the father, and the father, released from the care he owed his children, return equally to independence. If theyremain

The Central Argument of *The Social Contract*

In ***The Social Contract***, Rousseau argues for the most effective method for establishing and maintaining political authority without jeopardising human liberty. He develops upon the seventeenth-century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes's concept of the 'social contract' between the subjects and the authority of the state, albeit he differs from Hobbes in his idea of monarchy and humanity's essential nature. In this treatise, Rousseau raises the key issue that he aims to answer: how to construct a long-lasting and productive political state without restricting humankind's natural liberties unfairly. According to Rousseau's social contract, people give up some of their rights to the "General Will," which is the only truly legitimate form of authority. People remain as free as they can be while living in an orderly society because **each individual gives up the same rights and assumes the same duties**.

united, they continue so no longer naturally, but voluntarily;and the family itself is then maintained only by convention. (Rousseau, 1994, 46)

This sense of individuality emerges from his own experiences of childhood without a mother and a mostly absent father. After his father left Geneva and settled down in Switzerland with his new wife, Rousseau realised that relationships, even within a family, changeover time.Eventually, the burden of existence comes down to the individual and thus the individual must be empowered and supported by the state to sustain a free and fair life. When viewed in the larger perspective one finds that the system of the state that Rousseau recommends in *The Social Contract* pertains to the **voluntary association of individual citizens**to constitute the legislative body of the state. A modern republic that is established on the grounds of **justice, liberty and equality** serves as a **nurturing institution to which autonomous citizens can turn for support**. Rousseau is indeed kind towards the aristocrats, but only to the extent of allowing them administrative powers instead of legislative powers. He is critical of monarchical and aristocratic forms of government because they promote artificial inequalities among people. He places the monarchical form below the republican form of government by stating the flaws of the former in the following words in *The Social Contract*:

"An intrinsic and unavoidable defect in monarchical government, which will always make it inferior to a republic, is that in a democratic government those who are put into high office by public vote are almost always enlightened, capable men, who perform their duties with honour; whereas in a monarchy the ones who succeed are petty incompetents, petty scoundrels, petty intriguers, whose trivial talents, those that bring great success at a court, serve only to show the public their owners' ineptitude as soon as they gain office. (Rousseau, 1994, 106-107)"

Rousseau promotes a republican form of government where liberated individuals would decide their fate together as an organic social body. He calls this metaphysically organic collective of individual citizens the **General Will**. This vision of the republic emerges from the depths of his **childhood experience in Geneva and his father's teachings**. Isaac Rousseau was a patriotic man who took immense pride in the system of the Republic of Geneva. Rousseau's father not only read books with him but also discussed with him various aspects of history and society from a young age. No doubt these discussions instilled in him a sense of reverence for the **republican form of government and individual liberty**. Though both Isaac Rousseau and Jean-Jacques Rousseau had to leave Geneva for different reasons and spend the rest of their lives as expatriates, and though Rousseau criticised Geneva on many occasions, his love for Geneva and republicanism stayed in him throughout his life.

2.7.8 The Corrupting Influence of Society : The First and Second Discourses

Regarding the impact of the abuse during his apprenticeship under Ducommun, Rousseau writes in the first book of *The Confessions*, "I would never be done with these details if I tried to retrace all the different ways in which, during my apprenticeship, I descended from the sublime heights of heroism to the depths of worthlessness. (Rousseau, 1931, 38)"In*The Confessions*, we find that Rousseau is a kind-hearted **child who is a victim of circumstance**. Without parents, he is at the mercy of his relatives, teachers, and employers. He runs into injustice while still at Bossey in the Lambercier household where he is unfairly accused of breaking a few bristles of a comb. Further, when he works as Ducommun's apprentice, he is severely abused by his master which pushes him towards rebellion. Though never interested in money, his thievery of little things is a way of venting against the cruelty of his situation. The corrupting influence of Ducommun, Verrat etc. **debases him in his own eyes**. He realises that he has lost his childhood innocence. Rousseau delves deeper into this observation and in his essay entitled ***Discourse on the Arts and Sciences,*** commonly known as ***The First Discourse,*** published in **1750** he maintains the thesis of the **corrupting influence of society**. He states that civilisation which manifests itself in the advancement of arts and sciences turns people into dishonest pretenders, who under the garb of civility, wish ill of others. With the progress of arts and sciences, which is the sign of a complex civilisation with networks of socio-economic and political relations, there is a **moral degeneration of people**. He writes in *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* that in the so-called Enlightened Europe it is difficult to even know with certainty who is a true friend. He states:

"What a parade of ills accompany this uncertainty! No more sincere friendships, no more real regard for another, no more deep trust. Suspicions, resentments, fears,coldness, reserve, hatred, and betrayal habitually hide under that uniform and perfidious veil of politeness, under that lauded sophistication which we owe to the enlightenment of our century.(Rousseau, 2022 ,50)"

Like an infection, this corruption infiltrates into the minds of the people, who though are born in purity, become unethical as they grow up in a civilized society. He **spares Bacon, Descartes and Newton** from his scathing criticism due to their uniqueminds but otherwise, he is very critical of the progress of science and arts as a whole, as according to him, they lead to the decay of morality. Such a criticism of civilisation was quite counterintuitive during the eighteenth century, especially when science was seen as a singular pathway to human advancement. He writes *The First Discourse*:

"While government and law provide for the security and well-being of people in their collective life, the sciences, letters, and arts—less despotic though perhaps more powerful—wrap garlands of flowers around the chains that weigh people down. They stifle the sense of freedom that people once had and for which they sensed that they were born, making them love their own servitude, and turning them into what is called a civilized people. (Rousseau, 2022, 48)"

***The First Discourse* of Rousseau**

The publication of ***'A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences' (The First Discourse)*** in 1750 marks the beginning of Rousseau's career in philosophical writing. Rousseau came across an announcement for a Dijon Academy essay competition by coincidence. The Academy had asked the question, "Has the Revival of the Sciences and the Arts helped to purify or to Corrupt Morals?" A flash of epiphany ran through Rousseau's mind as a response to this question. The contrast between man's inherent nature on the one hand and the degeneration of modern civilisation on the other drives the argument of *The First Discourse*. In this work, Rousseau is concerned with separating the essential human nature from the artificial aspects added by civilisation. Rousseau saw humans as a species that evolved over time, gaining new capabilities. He believed in the human ability for self-improvement and progress. Rousseau believed that human beings are good by nature and only become corrupted by social institutions. By affirming human capacities for improvement Rousseau is able to critically analyse the modern political and social institutions by showing how they block human development by corrupting human nature and preventing human beings from reaching their full potential.

In the same vein, he continues in ***Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men***also known as ***The Second Discourse*** published in **1755**. In this text, he states thatnumerous **inequalities** exist among people that do not have a natural origin but are **artificially createdby social systems**. According to Rousseau, a monarchic society which is based on the supremacy of **private property** is the source of all artificial inequalities among people,leading to **crime, corruption and injustice**. Rousseau prefers a republican system of government, where the citizens have greater equality and legislative rights, to a monarchy or an aristocratic oligarchy. For reference, he uses the example of the republic system of Geneva and even dedicates this work to the city of his birth. He extols Geneva for its promise of **individuality, equality, proportion, justice and liberty**. This work reflects the influence of his father on his thought, as we have seen before.Being a scholar and a patriot, Isaac Rousseau instilled the virtues of the Genevan republic in the mind of Jean Jacques quite early in life. *The Second Discourse* is thus another example of how the early influences on Rousseau shaped his works later as a thinker.

Things to Remember:

- The early death of his mother left a void in Rousseau which he tried to fill with various motherfigures throughout his life.
- Estrangement from his father left him even more isolated but also taught him self-dependence. His alienation necessitated the conception ofa state that wouldtake care of autonomous individuals.
- The ideas of republicanism, liberty and individual autonomy in *The Social Contract* emerge from his childhood readings, conversations with his father and his father's eventual departure.
- His childhood experience in Bossey and Geneva during his apprenticeship taught him about the innocence of childhood and the corrupting effect of society which he explores in *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*.
- The discrimination he had to face as a child drew his attention to the artificial inequalities among people created due to social ranks and private property inspiring him to write *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*.

2.7.9 Children's Education and *Emile, or on Education*

Emile, or On Educationpublished in **1762** is a fascinating treatise written by Rousseau on the philosophy of children's education. It not only established a fresh perspective on children in eighteenth-century Europe but also impacted literature and philosophy regarding children in the subsequent years. *Emile, or On Education*is not meant to be a practical handbook on children's education but it is rather a philosophical take on the issue. In the eighteenth century, children were seen as incomplete mini-adults and little regard was givento child psychology. Under the influence of the writings of the **British philosopher Thomas Hobbes,** it was believed that human beings were **inherently full of vices**. Rousseau goes contrary to this belief and his entire body of work including ***Emile, or On Education*** attempts to make a case for the **inherent goodness** of people, especially children. He famously states in *Emile, or On Education* that "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man (Rousseau, 1979, 37)." This agrees with what he writes in *The Social Contract* that "Man was born free,and everywhere he is in chains (Rousseau, 1994, 45)." Clearly Rousseau sees children as innocent creatures who are led astray by the temptations of the world. Such a view of children goes on to influence the **romantic view of childhood,** especially in the works of **Blake and Wordsworth** and impacts the works of **Swiss and German** thinkers such as **Pestalozzi, Basedow and Froebel.**

- Rousseau claims that the advancement of civilization has corrupted human society rather than improving it. *Emile, or On Education*is presented as a treatise outlining a plan for a new type of **natural education** that will protect children from corruption and also prepare them for their inevitable admission into the social arena where vices reign. In *Emile, or On Education* he recommends **isolating the child from society** under the tutelage of a **dedicated teacher** who would help the child learn instinctively according to age. A child must not be made to imitate but encouraged to **explore**. A child should be taught to be **self-dependent, artistic and reasonable**. Children are **naturally inquisitive** thus it is not wise to force them to learn by habit, rather children should be encouraged to **learn according to their inclinations**. Rousseau also states that children's reasoning faculties are not as strong as their **instinct**. Children feel no need for abstract philosophical reasoning andtheir Reason is derived from **concrete experiences that affect them directly**. He writes in *Emile*,

  Since everything which enters into the human understanding comes there through the senses, man's first reason is a reason of the senses; this sensual reason serves as the basis of intellectual reason. Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes.(Rousseau, 1979, 125)

  Thus,children must be taught by **actions, activities and games** to help them grow into **well-balanced adults.**

- *Emile, or On Education* is rooted in the larger context of Rousseau's idea of **a virtuous citizen of a republic**. It is quite apparent in the book that Rousseau is building a philosophical system that interlinks **politics, psychology and pedagogy**. Children's education is a major aspect of this project as only through a proper education citizens of a well-functioning republic can be developed. His recommendation of raising **natural, virtuous and autonomous** human beings to face a corrupt society reflects his own experiences in his childhood. Though Rousseau did not receive any structured education his inclination towards reading from a young age opened his horizon of imagination. Simultaneously, conversations with his father regarding what a good republican state should be, established in his mind an objective for which children should be educated. Citing his own learning as an example, he writes that while he read books in his childhood, he understood little but sensed everything andthus he makes a case for a **stronger instinctive sense in children**. After the departure of his father Rousseau was practically a parentless child who had to learn all about life on his own. Through his experiences of the **natural world** at Bossey and through the abuses he faced during his apprenticeship, he deduced numerous conclusions about childhood and education later in life.At Bossey,the simplicity

of the rural location provided him priceless benefits, such as introducing him to new friendships and allowing him to learn about the natural world. He was an open-hearted child who was wronged by society on many occasions but he was also the one who played and pranced in the countryside learning about life from his own experiences. These observations about childhood inform his later works like *Emile, or On Education*and *The Confessions* where for the first time in history he presents a **psychological and sympathetic view of childhood.**

2.7.10 *Reveries of the Solitary Walkar* : The End Note

The unfinished book by Rousseau **published posthumously in 1782**, ***Reveries of the Solitary Walker*** is structured as a collection of **ten essays**. Written at the dusk of life and not intended for publication, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*can be seen as a meditative and introspective book. Due to his ground-breaking philosophical and political writings which perturbed the statusquo, Rousseau had been persecuted by the authorities both in Geneva and France. This greatly tormented Rousseau throughout his life essentially turning him into a social pariah. The last years of Rousseau were spent in isolation, alienated from society and peers. Nature was the only refuge he had towards the end of his life. The content of *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* was conceptualised when Rousseau would take long walks in the boulevards and meadows reflecting onthe **world**, **society, persecution, freedom, individuality, happiness and isolation**. The book is laced with **recollections of past experiences** and a blend of regret and gratitude for his lonely state. Rousseau's **tone** is consistently **sorrowful** throughout the book.In *Reveries of the Solitary Walker,*one finds that Rousseau has fallen into a state of despair due to the continuous harassment he has been facing for his distinct ideas. He finds solace in his hobby as an **amateur botanist** and states that nature should not be seen from the point of view of **anthropocentric interests**.

- When Rousseau was writing *Reveries of the Solitary Walker,*he was in the closing years of his life, greatly distanced from his childhood. Yet, when we read the book,we see that through the trials and tribulations of his life the Rousseau we know from the first book of *The Confessions* survives in spirit till the end. He does not give up on his convictions till the end, despite the opposition and abandonment.As a child, Rousseau was unmistakably unique in his sense of **freedom, honesty and individuality**. Between his childhood and authoring *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau produced writings which would readjust human society, perception of nature, ideas of childhood and the attributes of the **modern state**. Though he was born in the eighteenth century, he cannot be clubbed together with other thinkers of his age under the umbrella of the European Enlightenment precisely because Rousseau was critical of the emphasis given on rationalism, science, and technology for the cessation of

human suffering. Rousseau angered most of his peers, resulting in his isolation which led to the writing of*Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. This indomitable confidence in one's point of view, regardless of his lack of a formal education speaks volumes on Rousseau's integrity as a thinker. This is reflected in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*as although he feels despondent, he steadfastly sticks to his own integral thoughts; he begins the book with the following declaration:

"I am now alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbour, friend, or society other than myself. The most sociable and the most loving of humans have been proscribed from society by a unanimous agreement. In the refinements of their hatred, they have sought the torment which would be cruellest to my sensitive should and have violently broken all the ties which attached me to them. (Rousseau, 1979, 1)"

The despair in these lines is tinged with a desire to return to a life of thought. He adds further, "But I, detached from them and from everything, what am I? That is what remains for me to seek. Unfortunately, that inquiry must be preceded by a glance at my position. This is an idea I must necessarily follow out in order to get from them to me." (Rousseau, 1979,1) One sees a **desire to know oneself** as an individual, the same sense of individuality that we see in him as a child. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, the last of Rousseau's books, carries the signs of his innate being, the same which we find in his childhood when he would play in the rural surroundings of Bossey and Geneva. Despite all the trouble that afflicts him from childhood to old age, Rousseau finds a safe haven in **nature, imagination, thoughts and self-belief**.

Things to Remember:

- *Emile or On Education* is an influential philosophical take on child pedagogy and psychology which favours a natural, liberal and ethical education system for children aimed to raise them as competent adults in a republican state.
- Rousseau's own education received from his father early in life and his appreciation of the republican values of Geneva inspires the pedagogic plan elaborated in *Emile, or On Education.*
- *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*,an unfinished collection of ten essays, published posthumously, is a meditative volume where Rousseau writes on profound topics such as society, social persecution, freedom, individuality, happiness and isolation.
- The essence of Rousseau's philosophy which combines individual autonomy, liberty, republicanism, justice, love for nature and instinctive wisdom, qualities that set him apart in his early years as a precocious child, find their final expression in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, and draw a line of unification through his diverse philosophical output.

2.7.1 Summing Up

The foundation of a person's character is established in childhood. People go through a journey of various experiences in life which affects their worldview. If one agrees with the **Lockean notion of the Tabula Rasa** where the mind is like an empty slate, then the deepest markings are made in childhood. The moments of **joy, inspiration and trauma** of childhood stay with a person throughout their life and so it is with Rousseau. On the positive side, Rousseau had the rare opportunity to **read numerous books** as a child, have meaningful **conversations with his scholarly father**, receive the **love and care of his uncle, aunt and governess**, have the **friendship of his cousin** and **playfully learn in the countryside** of Geneva and Switzerland which established the finer parts of his adult personality and writings. The elements of imagination, liberty and justice which inform most of his philosophical and political writings were infused in his psyche during his childhood. When the darker sides of his childhood are considered viz. **estrangement from his father, wrongful accusations at Bossey, andbeing abused by his master during his apprenticeship**, one finds that he derives lessons on human nature and society from those painful experiences. When his later works are read alongside the first book of *The Confessions*, one discovers that the soul of Rousseau stays intact throughout his life regardless of temptations and persecutions, expressing its different facets in his various works. Though it is difficult to hold Rousseau down in a single compartment of philosophy due to the diversity of his literary output, his **individual personality**,like a unifying thread, shines through all his works as a **champion of justice and freedom**. Rousseau teachesthe world to be honest, liberal, fair and respectful of nature, virtues which he learnt, cherished and defendedever since he was a young boy.

2.7.12 Comprehenson Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions (20 marks):

1. What were the challenges that Rousseau had to face in his childhood?
2. Briefly describe the main ideas of Rousseau's books as explained in this unit.
3. Write a note on the early life, family and education of Rousseau.
4. How do the childhood experiences of Rousseau influence the ideas in his works?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions (12 marks):

1. Describe the impact of Rousseau's father's teachings on shaping Rousseau's later ideas.

2. How does *Emile, or On Education* propose to change the system of children's education?
3. How are the ideas explored in *The Social Contract* connected with Rousseau's childhood experience?
4. How does the abuse of Rousseau during his apprenticeship at the engraver shape his thoughts on innocence and injustice?
5. How is the personality of Rousseau reflected in his last work *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*?

Short questions (6 marks)

1. What were the two biggest losses in Rousseau's early childhood?
2. Why did Rousseau leave Bossey?
3. Why did Rousseau run away from Geneva?
4. Name any three works by Rousseau.
5. Which form of government does Rousseau favour the most?

2.7.13 Suggested readings

Wraight, C. D. (2008). *Rousseau's "The Social Contract": A reader's guide*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Rousseau, J.-J. (2000). *Confessions* (A. Scholar, Trans.). Oxford University Press.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1979). *Emile or On Education* (A. Bloom, Trans.). Basic Books.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1979). *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (C. E. Butterworth, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

Rousseau, J.-J. (2022). *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*. Yale University Press.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1994). *The Social Contract* (C. Betts, Trans.). Oxford University Press.

MODULE-3

M. K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth

Unit 8 ❐ General Discussion of the Text

(II - IX)

Structure

3.8.1 Objectives

- Introduce Gandhi, the apostle of peace and life-long worshipper of truth
- To give the student a broad idea of the text.
- Presenting a basic idea of the structure of Gandhi's autobiographical work.
- Discussing the main points of the chapters in the syllabus
- Offering critical perspectives to the chapters with a view to help the students to think independently and form their own opinion on the text.

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3.8.2 Introduction

Mohondas Karamchand Gandhi (October 2, 1869 to January 30, 1948), the father of the nation and arguably the man of the millennium, carries a huge influence on the political and social order of India in particular and world at large. This apostle of truth, peace and non-violence made his presence felt in more ways than one on the world stage and contributed immensely to shape India's struggle for independence in the first half of the previous century. His non-violent civil disobedience movement – a novel form of protest — shook the mighty British Empire ruling over India to the core. To him *Satyagraha* or r holding onto truth force is a potent weapon that galvanised millions of his supporters to a particular form of nonviolent resistance or civil resistance that can annihilate even the most powerful power. Needlessly to say that this man wielded immense authority over world of politics and served as an inspiration for people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela—and when one is inspiring two of the most inspiring world leaders that ever lived, the importance and influence Gandhi becomes legion to say the least. This is the man of whom Albert Einstein famously said: "Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this walked the earth in flesh and blood."

3.8.3 Structure of *My Experiments with Truth*

Gandhi's autobiography is divided into an introduction, five parts with chapters, and a closing. Mostly brief in nature the chapters generally deal with one or two episodes from his life. The account he presents follows, more or less, a chronological order. The introduction outlines his quest for truth, and the closing sums it up, so they show the big-picture message. Gandhi clearly states in the introduction that his life is based on the goal of self-realization, seeing God face to face, in order to reach Moksha, or freedom from birth and death and his experiments are geared toward that goal. He admits the conclusions drawn from his experiments might not be infallible, but they work for him. He categorically defines God as Truth with a capital T. His path is to seek after it, and he hopes readers will learn from his humble journey.

However, we shall be restricting our discussion to the first nine chapters of the first part of the book. Here we find Gandhi chronicling his birth, early childhood, education, marriage at an extremely early age, his passion for truth and the death of his father.

3.8.4 Chapter-wise Summary & Analysis

The autobiography begins with Gandhi introducing us to his family. He very

briefly sketches the family tree to give us an idea of the parentage he is born into. His father, Karamchand *alias* Kaba Gandhi was a political official and served as prime minister for Rajkot and for Vankaner, two cities in the western coast of India. He had no education but lots of life experience and was truthful and incorruptible. From his introduction we find Gandhi's mother, Putlibai – the fourth of as many wives of Kaba Gandhi, was saintly and deeply religious. She would fast often, was informed about matters of government, and had good common sense. Gandhi is born on October 2, 1869, and spends his childhood in Porbandar, a city in Gujarat.

Book I Chapter II: CHILDHOOD

The Chapter begins when Gandhi is a seven-year old kid going to school.

He is mediocre in studies but what stands out of his character is his penchant for truth.

His teacher once tried to get him to cheat on a spelling exercise conducted for the school-inspector, but Gandhi did not even realize what the teacher was trying to get him to do, such simple and honest his mindset was.

Around this time Gandhi almost accidentally comes across two plays: *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* and *Harishchandra.*

The devotion of the main character Shravana in *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* for his parents inspires Gandhi to remain devoted to his parents throughout his life.

Gandhi is also greatly inspired by the honesty of Harischandra in the play sincedevotion and honesty remain the cornerstones of Gandhian philosophy.

8.8.4.1 Analysis

This chapter talks about the school-going stage of Gandhi. From the beginning we find his panache for truth. He appears to be a simple and an introvert kid. He was shy and bookish as he states 'my books and my lessons were my sole companions'.

The incident in the school where Gandhi refuses to cheat by copying a spelling from another student in spite of being nudged to do so by the teacher bears testimony to his deep devotion to truth from a very early age. Truth to Gandhi is clearly non-negotiable. What is incredible that Gandhi refuses to believe that the teacher hinted him to do something not moral and his devotion to the teacher 'remained the same' for he had 'learnt to carry out the orders of elders, not to scan their actions' (Gandhi). This clearly shows the traditional ethos with which Gandhi is brought up where 'by nature, blind to the faults of elders'.

Almost at the same time, Gandhi happens to read a play called 'Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka' which deals with the protagonist Shravana's devotion to his parents. He also comes across a painting depicting how Shravana carries 'by means of slings fitted for

his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage'. This leaves an indelible impression on young Gandhi's mind about the devotion of a child to his parents as 'an example for you to copy'.

Gandhi also recollects how the drama *Harischandra,* which he watches around this time bears a deep mark in him as he says 'to follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me' and he asks 'why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?' Gandhi's affinity towards duty and truth gets re-emphasised through these two incidents as he appears to arrive at his life's philosophy. He states unequivocally: 'Still both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today.'

What is most striking from the beginning of the autobiography is the simplicity and directness of the language used which gels well with its broader theme. Gandhi chooses a linier approach and recalls events from the past almost in a matter of fact way. But, what is most commendable is the fact that he is still able to hold the philosophical dignity of the same and presents the reader with a deep insight into his process of thought.

Chapter III: CHILD MARRIAGE

In this chapter, Gandhi narrates his child marriage. He got married at early age of 13 as was the tradition with his caste.His parents choose his wife, and hers him. He says there are no moral arguments in favour of such young marriages, but that was the tradition.To save money in the wedding celebrations it was decided by the family that Gandhi along with a cousin and a brother will marry one and at the same time. Gandhi's father was injured on his way to attend the wedding.But, Gandhi, the teenager, forgets grief in the excitement of the marriage.Gandhi abundantly enjoyed the celebration surrounding his marriage. Scarcely did he have any idea that as an adult, he would vehemently oppose and criticize the institution of child marriage.The newlyweds spent a nervous first night post-marriage together, which Gandhi did not describe. However, he tells us he right away that he did not hesitate to assume total authority over newly married bride as her husband.

3.8.4.2 Analysis

Gandhi feels rather awkward to narrate his marriage to Kasturbai, a girl of his own age, when he was only thirteen. This is nothing but a shameful tradition where children are married at a tender age against which he would voice his opinion at a later stage. But he must narrate this event, however much he would not have liked to, as a worshipper of truth.

Gandhi's parents choose his wife, and hers him. He says there are no moral arguments in favour of such young marriages, but that's the tradition. The adults decide to marry Gandhi, one of his brothers, and a cousin of his all at the same time in order to save money on the celebration. This, they feel, their duty since they are themselves growing old. Needless to say, the children are never consulted and Gandhi for himself felt that marriage would bring to him a new playmate. He states: "it was only through these preparations that we got warning of the coming event. I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners, and a strange girl to play with." (Gandhi)

We also learn that Gandhi's father is injured on the way to the wedding, but the teenager forgets the grief in the excitement of the marriage. He rather childishly enjoys the celebration, pomp and the glory having no idea that as an adult, he will criticize the institution of child marriage. He writes quite candidly: "My father put on a brave face in spite of his injuries, and took full part in the wedding. As I think of it, I can even today call before my mind's eye the places where he sat as he went through the different details of the ceremony. Little did I dream then that one day I should severely criticize my father for having married me as a child. Everything on that day seemed to me own right and proper and pleasing. There was also my own eagerness to get married. And as everything that my father did then struck me as beyond reproach, the recollection of those things is fresh in my memory." (Gandhi)

Gandhi's candid confession about his marriage continues when he recalls the first night with his 'child-wife' post-marriage: "Two innocent children all unwittingly hurled themselves into the ocean of life. My brother's wife had thoroughly coached me about my behaviour on the first night. I do not know who had coached my wife. I have never asked her about it, nor am I inclined to do so now. The reader may be sure that we were too nervous to face each other. We were certainly too shy. How was I to talk to her, and what was I to say? The coaching could not carry me far. But no coaching is reallynecessary in such matters." (Gandhi) He would conclude that in this way they gradually began to know each other, and to speak freely together. Gandhi is also candid enough to admit that he had been rather unhesitating to establish his full authority over his wife as all men would like to. This fundamentally paves the way for the constitution of the next chapter 'Playing the husband'.

Chapter IV: PLAYING THE HUSBAND

Talking of his marriage, Gandhi says the passion for truth lies innate within him and being faithless to his wife out of the question.But faithfulness has a flip side, too, because, as a young husband, he wants to force Kasturbai, his wife, to also be faithful.Kasturbai, needless to say, is faithful.But, that hardly preventsGandhi from

being jealous all the time with an overzealousness to control her.During the first five years of their marriage—from age 13 to 18—the two aren't allowed to stay together much.Finally, when the two are allowed to be together, often it so happens that it is Gandhi's lust distracts him from more productive things, such as teaching her to read and write.As an adult, Gandhi would blame her lack of education on his lust.

3.8.4.3 Analysis

What straightway attracts the attention of the reader is the title of the chapter: 'Playing Husband'. Yes, the teen-aged Gandhi learns and enjoys also to play the husband's role – overzealous and overtly idealised that is. He happens to read pamphlets where duties of married couples are discussed and the 'lifelong faithfulness to the wife, inculcated in these booklets as the duty of the husband, remained permanently imprinted on my heart'.

Discussing his marriage, Gandhi says that the passion for truth is innate in him and put being faithless to his wife out of the question. At the same time, as a young husband, he always wants to force Kasturbai, his wife, to also be as faithful. Gandhi asserts: "I wanted to make my wife an ideal wife. My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learnt,and identify her life and thought with mine." (Gandhi)

Kasturbai is faithful, but that hardly stopsGandhi from being jealous all the time and trying to establish his control over her. But, the highly spirited young girl in spite of being illiterate, is scarcely to be controlled. And, Gandhi recalls: "I must needs be forever on the look-out regarding her movements, and therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. This sowed the seeds of a bitter quarrel between us. The restraint was virtually a sort of imprisonment. And Kasturbai was not the girl to brook any such thing. She made it a point to go out whenever and wherever she liked. More restraint on my part resulted in more liberty being taken by her, and in my getting more and more cross. Refusal to speak to one another thus became the order of the day with us, married children." (Gandhi)

Gandhi was 'passionately fond of' his wife. He recalls that even at school "I used to think of her, and the thought of nightfall and our subsequent meeting was ever haunting me. Separation was unbearable. I used to keep her awake till late in the night with my idle talk. If with this devouring passion there had not been in me a burning attachment to duty, I should either have fallen a prey to disease and premature death, or have sunk into a burdensome existence." (Gandhi)

We also learn that during the first five years of their marriage—from age 13 to 18—the two aren't allowed to stay together much. When they are together, Gandhi's lust distracts him from more productive things, such as teaching her to read and write.As an adult, he blames her lack of education on his lust. He once again

unequivocally confesses:" most of my efforts to instruct Kasturbai in our youth were unsuccessful. And when I awoke from the sleep of lust, I had already launched forth into public life, which did not leave me much spare time. I failed likewise to instruct her through private tutors. As a result, Kasturbai can now with difficulty write simple letters and understand simple Gujarati. I am sure that, had my love for her been absolutely untainted with lust, she would be a learned lady today; for I could than have conquered her dislike for studies. I know that nothing is impossible for pure love." (Gandhi)

Gandhi has no qualm in admitting that the frequent separation between him and Kasturbato be a blessing in disguise: "At the age of eighteen I went to England, and this meant a long and healthy spell of separation.' Even after returning from England, Gandhi busied himself in his professional life in Bombay and Rajkot leaving little space for a conjugal life and then he sets sails for South Africa which 'found me already fairly free from the carnal appetite." (Gandhi)

Chapter V: AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

In high school, Gandhi guards and nurtures his character carefully according to the principles of truth, simplicity and devotion that he firmly believes in. He becomes tearful at the least bit of bad behaviour on his part.Despite his dislike of sports, per say, Gandhi develops the habit of taking long walks, which, in hindsight he asserts, keeps him in good health.Once an innocent mistake of Gandhi's leads the headmaster to wrongly punish the teenager for lying. This incident teaches him a crucial lesson in life:he can now categorically understand that a man needs not only to be ever truthful but caring also in one and at the same time. With these he sets high standards of truth and morality in a definitive way. Narrating his experience of learning Sanskrit in high school Gandhi goes on to urge that Indian higher education must include learning of several languages.

3.8.4.4 Analysis

At the very outset of the chapter Gandhi voices his concern against the practice of child marriage in the Hindu society – something he had touched upon in the previous chapter – and informs that not only did he and his cousin had to lose a year in school in the process but his elder brother had to give up study altogether. He surely shows his displeasure in the whole process and makes a critique of the society when he laments: 'Heaven knows how many youths are in the same plight as he [his elder brother]. Only in our present Hindu society do studies and marriage go thus in hand.' (Gandhi)

In high school, Gandhi guards his character carefully, becoming tearful at the least bit of bad behaviour on his part. He is a meritorious student and his results bare testimony to that. But his humbleness prevents him from showcasing his merit. He

dislikes sports, but he develops the habit of taking long walks, which he now goes on to say, keeps him in good health.

Gandhi, at this juncture narrates another story from his life where he wrongly punished for lying, something he could hardly bare. We are introduced to one Mr Gimi, the head master of the high school.He was popular with the students for being a strict disciplinarian, 'a man of method, and a good teacher'. He had made gymnastics compulsory with an eye to the physical well-being of the students. This is something that Gandhi did not like at that time simply because he would have liked to spend the time serving his father. He writes truthfully: "The reason of my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire to serve as nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him." (Gandhi)But being obedient he would hardly miss the gymnastic class till one day when he was deceived by the weather and failed to attend such a class. The next day he, in his usual way, narrated what truly had happened but that was taken to be a lame excuse and he was fined for lying. Thus, an innocent mistake of Gandhi's leads the headmaster to wrongly punish the teenager for lying. He was deeply anguished and pained. He thought 'how was I to prove my innocence?' Through this incident Gandhi could discover that a man of truth must be a man of care as well. That was the first and last instance of his 'carelessness in school'. He faintly recollects that he was exempted from paying the fine since his father wrote himself to the headmaster saying that 'he wanted me at home after school'. This must have given the young Gandhi some solace at least.

In childhood Gandhi paid little attention to his handwriting which resulted in the poor script that became his companion in later age which he laments after seeing beautiful handwriting of professionals while staying abroad. He regards that bad handwriting should be taken as a sign of an imperfect education and good handwriting is a necessary part of education. An educationist to the core Gandhi opines that children should first be taught the art of drawing before learning how to write. He says: 'Let the child learn his letters by observation as he does different objects, such as flowers, birds, etc., and let him learn handwriting only after he has learnt to draw objects. He will then write a beautifully formed hand.'

Gandhi was always regarded as an industrious and studious boy, In spite of having lost one year due to his marriage, he was thought fit enough to be promoted six months through into the third standard. He found new subjects quite challenging and difficult. With the medium of instruction becoming English from the vernacular and did hardly any good to his flagging confidence. The man given to think of others over the self would thus habitually think that he was doing no justice to the faith bestowed upon him by his teacher.

Gandhi goes on to chronicle in a lucid way his attachment or detachment to

different subjects taught in the schools and his encounter with different teachers. Amongst all these stands out one with the Sanskrit teacher named Krishnashankar Pandya. As a subject Sanskrit demanded a lot of memorization and the young Gandhi was not quite adept in it. He distinctly remembers the teacher's affectionate words of kindness that restore his faith in learning the language. He now feels that 'if I had not acquired the little Samskrit that I learnt them, I should have found it difficult to take any interest in our sacred books. In fact I deeply regret that I was not able to acquire a more through knowledge of the language.' (Gandhi)

Gandhi finally projects his vision of language learning the sphere of higher education. He believes that there should be a place for Hindi, Samskrit, Persian, Arabic, and English, besides the vernacular in the scheme of things. He hastens to add that this big list need not frighten anyone as he categorically points out: 'If our education were more systematic, and the boys free from the burden of having to learn their subjects through a foreign medium, I am sure learning all these languages would not be an irksome task, but a perfect pleasure. A scientific knowledge of one language makes a knowledge of other languages comparatively easy.' (Gandhi)

Chapter VI: A TRAGEDY

Gandhi befriends a young man with a bad reputation going against the warnings of his wife and family simply because he wishes to reform the fellow. This can be considered another experiment of the young Gandhi.The friend reveals to him that many people of his own community secretly eat meat in violation of customs and religion. The friend also tells Gandhi that eating meat makes the English people who lord over the Indians physically fitter and stronger than the natives.This friend has a rather negative impact on Gandhi. Influenced by him and seeking strength for himself and other countrymen so that they may be able shake off English rule, Gandhi goes along with his friend to eat meat. This Gandhi refers to as another experiment.

3.8.4.5 Analysis

Gandhi, in his autobiography, is undoubtedly a great story-teller. He weaves different incidents that shaped his life, into fine blend of narrative that often appears fictional to the reader. In this chapter he recalls multiple episodes from his early youth which can qualify as being his experiments with truth.

In the first incident, going against the multiple warnings of his wife and family, Gandhi befriends a young man with a bad reputation because of his desire to reform the one who has gone astray. Gandhi has firm conviction as he himself puts out to his relatives: "I know he has the weaknesses you attribute to him, but you do not know his virtues. He cannot lead me astray, as my association with him is meant to reform him. For I am sure that if he reforms his ways, he will be a splendid man. I

beg you not to be anxious on my account." (Gandhi)Though his arguments did not convince Gandhi's family, but he was allowed the liberty to go his way. The friend then reveals to him that many people secretly eat meat violating customs and religion. The friend also says eating meat makes the English people physically bigger and stronger than the Indians. Under the friend's influence and seeking strength for himself and his countrymen so they may someday throw off English rule, Gandhi sets a date with his friend to eat meat—which Gandhi refers to as an experiment.

Coming from a staunch Vaishanvaite family in Gujarat where there is a strong Jain culture both of which were against meat-eating, Gandhi tries underscore these under the winds of reform that were blowing in Rajkot then. He states: 'It was not a question of pleasing the palate. I did not know that it had a particularly good relish. I wished to be strong and daring and wanted my countrymen also to be such, so that we might defeat the English and make India free. The word 'Swaraj' I had not yet heard. But I knew that freedom meant. The frenzy of the 'reform' blinded me. And having ensured secrecy, I persuaded myself that mere hiding [of] the deed from parents was no departure from truth.' (Gandhi)

Chapter VII: A TRAGEDY (Continued)

The day of reckoning arrives: Gandhi and his friend secretly goes out to eat meat. It is yet another experiment by him. However, goat meat makes Gandhi sick. and he feels greatly remorseful. He also dreams of a goat bleating inside him that night. Yet, he continues to eat meat with the friend and lies to his family about it. Eventually, the lying gets to him for Gandhi always stands for truth. As a result, he stops eating meat for the rest of his life.

Gandhi would talk of another experiment. This time the same friend would take him to a brothel. ButGandhi is too nervous to sleep with the sex worker. He says going at all, though, counts as a major moral failing.Ultimately, the friend somehow fuels Gandhi's jealousy about his wife.Gandhi's suspicions about her are not removed until much later in lifeonly when he finally comes to understand the value and virtue of *ahimsathrough his experiments with truth*.As an adult, when he thinks critically on days spent with this friend, he despises and deplores his devotion to him.

3.8.4.6 Analysis

Finally, the D-day arrived. Gandhi, admittedly, was torn between two extremes, as he says: 'There were on the one hand, the zeal for 'reform', and the novelty of making a momentous departure in life. There was, on the other, the shame of hiding like a thief to do this very thing. I cannot say which of the two swayed me more.' (Gandhi)

Gandhi and his friend secretly go out to eat meat. The first encounter happens on a river-side. However, goat meat makes Gandhi sick. and he feels greatly remorseful. He also dreams of a goat bleating inside him that night.Yet, he continues to eat with the friend bringing out several meat-delicacies and they shift to a state house for these occasions. Needless to say that Gandhi had to lie to his family about it. He says: 'Whenever I had occasion to indulge in these surreptitious feasts, dinner at home was out of the question. My mother would naturally ask me to come and take my food and want to know the reason why I did not wish to eat. I would say to her, 'I have no appetite today; there is something wrong with my digestion.' It was not without compunction that I devised these pretexts. I knew I was lying, and lying to my mother.' (Gandhi) This is something Gandhi can hardly reconcile with. Therefore, he says to himself: "Though it is essential to eat meat, and also essential to take up food 'reform' in the country, yet deceiving and lying to one's father and mother is worse than not eating meat. In their lifetime, therefore, meat-eating must be out of the question. When they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will eat meat openly, but until that moment arrives, I will abstain from it." (Gandhi)Ultimately, he stops eating meat and never takes it up again for the rest of his life. Undoubtedly, these speak volumes not only to his stick-to-itiveness to truth but his dedication and devotion to elders in the family.

But the larger cause of reforming the friend would still run deep in the young Gandhi as he says the he abjured meat 'out of the purity of my desire not to lie to my parents, but I did not abjure the company of my friend'. The same company leads him to a brothel to be faithless with his wife and he admits that he was 'saved by the skin of my teeth'. Gandhi thanks God for protecting him on this and some other occasion (which he would relate later on) from committing such grievous 'sin'. Gandhi believes that 'from a strictly ethical point of view, all these occasions must be regarded as moral lapses; for the carnal desire was there, and it was as good as the act. But from the ordinary point of view, a man who is saved from physically committing sin is regarded as saved. And I was saved only in that sense.' (Gandhi) He takes a rather ambivalent philosophical stance when he adds: "As we know that a man often succumbs to temptation, however much he may resist it, we also know that Providence often intercedes and saves him in spite of himself. How all this happens—how far a man is free and how far a creature of circumstances—how far free-will comes into play and where fate enters on the scene—all this is a mystery and will remain a mystery." (Gandhi)

Gandhi's dilemma of shame continues through the rest of this chapter since the friend also leads him to question the fidelity of his wife. He fanned suspicion on the mind of the devoted and jealous husband that Gandhi was. He now rues: "I never could doubt his veracity. And I have never forgiven myself the violence of which I

have been guilty, in often having pained my wife by acting on his information." (Gandhi) This later in his life goes on to firm up Gandhi's attitude and appraisal towards woman as he realises her as an incarnation of tolerance. He goes on to say: "A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father's roof, and a friend may put an end to the friendship. The wife, if she suspects her husband, will keep quiet, but if the husband suspects her, she is ruined. Where is she to go? A Hindu wife may not seek divorce in a law court. Law has no remedy for her. And I can never forget or forgive myself for having driven my wife to that desperation." (Gandhi) He also 'realized that the wife is not the husband's bond slave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows—as free as the husband to choose her own path.' (Gandhi) This clearly indicates that Gandhi, the man, has risen much above the patriarchal hierarchy that a closed Gujarati society had stored him up and thinks as woman as equal partners to human growth. Through his private experience thus Gandhi begins to shape his public image of the woman. He admits: 'Whenever I think of those dark days of doubts and suspicions, I am filled with loathing of my folly and my lustful cruelty, and I deplore my blind devotion to my friend.' (Gandhi)

Gandhi gains the truth behind friendship the hard way. As he had said in the beginning of the previous chapter: 'I have seen since I had calculated wrongly. A reformer cannot afford to have close intimacy with him whom he seeks to reform. True friendship is an identity of souls rarely to be found in this word. Only between like natures can friendship be altogether worthy and enduring. Friends react on one another. Hence in friendship there is very little scope for reform. I am of opinion that all exclusive intimacies are to be avoided; for man takes in vice far more readily than virtue. And he who would be friends with God must remain alone, or make the whole world his friend. I may be wrong, but my effort to cultivate an intimate friendship proved a failure.' (Gandhi)

This chapter also in way shapes the basic premises for Gandhi's ideas of Ahimsa and Brahmacharya. He gets remorseful of his acts of violence – something he abjures life long – and at the same time he veers towards his spiritual metamorphosis through self-restraint, particularly mastery over the sexual organ.

Chapter VIII: STEALING AND ATONEMENT

Gandhi narrates how he and one of his relatives began smoking – another experiment which teaches Gandhi the truth in a practical way. In order to carry out this habit< Gandhi used to steal from the servants at his residence. The lack of independence at home from the elders propels them to contemplate committing suicide. But, finally they chicken out from the endeavour. This also results in a positive turn

of events as Gandhi abandons not only the habit of smoking but also gives up stealing. Gandhi does steal one more time, when he was 15. Subsequently, he feels terribly bad about it and decides to confess his crime to his father in a letter.His father reads the confession and cries. Gandhi could clearly imagine the pain and agony it must have caused to his father and yet he could see the virtue of forgiveness oozing out from the senior Gandhi. He interprets it as a lesson in *ahimsa.*

3.8.4.7 Analysis

This chapter, as the title suggests, deals with two incidents of theft committed by Gandhi and its subsequent atonement. It shows most unequivocally not only his truthfulness but also how he learns non-violence of ahimsa can be inculcated in the self from none other than from his father.

The first incident narrates how he and of his relatives catch the bad habit of smoking for which he needs to pilfer money from the servants. Gandhi admits that they were not so much enamoured with the virtue of smoking but they simply wanted to emulate one of the senior relatives who had such habit. This appears to be an exercise indulged in by Gandhi in order to feel independent – an innocent exercise of early adolescence. Since they were strictly under the care of elders of the family, they could hardly proceed to gain further independence which leads them to contemplate committing suicide! But such an exercise was again proved to be futile as they chicken out of the enterprise midway through. He remarks: "I realized that it was not as easy to commit suicide as to contemplate it. And since then, whenever I have heard of someone threatening to commit suicide, it has had little or no effect on me.' The thought of suicide ultimately resulted in both of them bidding good-bye to the habit of smoking stumps of cigarettes and of stealing the servant's coppers for the purpose of smoking. Having grown up he never desired to smoke and 'have always regarded the habit of smoking as barbarous, dirty and harmful." (Gandhi)

The other theft was committed when Gandhi was fifteen when he stole 'a bit of gold out of my meat-eating brother's armlet' to pay off a debt. But this theft leaves a mark of sin and agony on Gandhi as decides to confess to his father about the guilt and promises to himself never to steal again. He is both ashamed and afraid not because he feared his father would beat him up but because he felt that his own action would agonise and pain his father much and Gandhi never wanted to do that. He writes: "I also made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. No. I do not recall his ever having beaten any of us. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him. But I felt that the risk should be taken; that there could not be a cleansing without a clean confession." (Gandhi)This speaks immensely of his deep devotion to his father. Finally, he decides to write down his confession. His father reads the confession and cries. He

vividly remembers how tears rolled down his father's cheek as he reads the letter. The teenager sees the forgiveness and interprets it as a lesson in *ahimsa*: "Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is." (Gandhi) For Gandhi in is an object-lesson in Ahimsa. He asserts: 'When such Ahimsa becomes all embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power. (Gandhi)' Thus, Gandhi learns the soulful lesson of ahimsa from his father.

Chapter IX: MY FATHER'S DEATH AND MY DOUBLE SHAME

His father becomes very ill when Gandhi is about 16 years of age. Gandhi remains beside his bedside and loves to care for him. This clearly indicates the deep sense of attachment, duty and devotion to his father that he has grown in himself ever since childhood. And yet he could not resist himself from slipping away to his bedroom at night due to lust for his wife, as he calls it.This practice of leaving his father for the bedroom at night leads Gandhi to be absent from the latter's bedside when his father ultimately dies.Recounting the story, Gandhi still feels ashamed about this and blames this on his carnal desire.The deep sense of loss multiplies as Gandhi informs us that shortly after the death of his father, he faces another personal tragedy since his first child dies within a couple of days of birth.

3.8.8 Analysis

This chapter graphically depicts the final few days of Gandhi's father before he breathes his last. Kaba Gandhi is seriously ill suffering from fistula. As a dutiful son Gandhi all but sixteen years of age, at that time, nurses him devotedly. Yet he during nights he slips away to his bedroom to be with his wife. He is ashamed of his carnal desire which continues still when his wife is pregnant. This resulted in Gandhi failing to be present by his father bedside when the latter breathed his last. He quite pathetically tells us with full view of hindsight: "This was also the time when my wife was expecting a baby, – a circumstance which, as I can see today, meant a double shame for me. For one thing I did not restrain myself, as I should have done, whilst I was yet a student. And secondly, this carnal lust got the better of what I regarded as my duty to study, and of what was even a greater duty, my devotion to my parents, Shravana having been my ideal since childhood. Every night whilst my hands were busy massaging my father's legs, my mind was hovering about the bedroom, – and that too at a time when religion, medical science and common sense alike forbade sexual intercourse. I was always glad to be relieved from my duty, and went straight to the bedroom after doing obeisance to my father." (Gandhi)

Recounting the story, he still feels ashamed about this and blames lust. He says quite pathetically that it "was this shame of my carnal desire even at the critical hour

of my father's death, which demanded wakeful service. It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought that although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds and I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust." (Gandhi) From his childhood that Gandhi modelled himself after Sharavana who always did his duty to his parents and Gandhi could hardly think of anything but to be by his father's bedside at the time of his death. It was a deep agony that he carries through the rest of his life. He warns all married men to be critically aware of their duty and responsibility towards their parents and not to emulate him and fall prey to lustfulness when their sense of duty and devotion should demand otherwise.

The chapter on double shame concludes in an even more sombre event with Gandhi informing us that his wife gives birth to a child around that time who could breathe no more than three or four days.

3.8.5 Summing Up

Bapu, as Mahatma Gandhi was often referred to by his countrypeople, has been a life-long devotee to truth. His exploration of truth through diverse experiences of life from childhood to mature adulthood forms the central core of his autobiography aptly subtitled as The Study of *My Experiments with Truth*. The present study, comprising of Chapters II to IX of the first part of the autobiography, deals uniquely with how Gandhi using a very non-complicated story-telling technique narrating to the reader events from his childhood to early youth that delve deep into his deep passion for the virtues associated with truth from an extremely age. They also unequivocally present his penchant for peace and purity, simplicity and honesty,and above all, honour and humanity. His life is a ceaseless journey to seek dignity and equality of all. Bapu practised and preached equality and brotherhood,fearlessness and non-stealing, the virtues of which he learnt from different events of life or his 'experiments with truth.' Gandhi's devotion to his elders and the family is legion. He truly believed in the ancient Indian tradition of dedication to the service and honour of seniors. He would always consider his experiments to be learning curves which taught him life's lessons the hard way and he was always prepared to atone for the 'sins' or mistakes that he had committed.

3.8.6 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer-Type Questions:

1. Critically examine Gandhi's penchant for honesty from his early childhood.

2. What does Gandhi mean by an 'experiment with truth'? Consider examples in the text where he changes his mind or make mistakes.
3. How did Gandhi play the role of a child-husband? How does marriage at a very early age shape his outlook?
4. Discuss the ramifications of Gandhi's friendship with the man having a bad reputation.
5. Show how Gandhi picks events from daily life to delve deep into his philosophy of atonement and *ahimsa.*

Medium Length Questions:

1. Discuss the impact of watching two plays, namely, *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* and *Harishchandra,* had on Gandhi.
2. How does Gandhi narrate his marriage with Kasturbai?
3. How were Gandhi's religious beliefs influenced by his family? Analyse to what extent he remained true to his parents' view?
4. Why does Gandhi think there is need to teach multiple Indian languages?
5. What are Gandhi's views on handwriting? Why does he favour good handwriting?
6. Why does Gandhi befriend the young man despite knowing his dubious nature?
7. How is Gandhi's marital life impacted by his friendship with the man with dubious reputation?
8. What is *Ahimsa* according to Gandhi? What does the teenaged Gandhi interpret as a lesson of *ahimsa* and why?
9. What seems to inspire Gandhi to give up sex? Narrate the story of what happens when his father is dying

Short Answer-Type Questions:

1. What narrative method does Gandhi employ to write his autobiography and why?
2. Which two books had a lasting impact on young Gandhi?
3. What is the relationship between our passions and seeking of truth, according to Gandhi?
4. What are the only companions to Gandhi in school?
5. What is the importance of learning Sanskrit according to Gandhi?
6. What double tragedy accompanies the death of his father for Gandhi?

3.8.7 Suggested Reading

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Unit 9 ❒ Childhood Memories:M.K. Gandhi

Structure

3.9.1 Objectives

The following are the objectives of this unit:

- To introduce the learners tothe important episodes in M.K. Gandhi's childhood
- To examine his childhood observations on honesty, education and marriage
- To analyse the impact of his childhood experiences on his moral and political thoughts.

3.9.2 Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly referred to as Mahatma Gandhi and also hailed as 'Bapu' or 'Father of the Nation,' has described his childhood days in his autobiography *The Story of My Experiment with Truth.* It was originally written in Gujarati and was translated into English by Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's Personal Secretary. The first edition of the autobiography was published in two volumes, Vol. I in 1927 and Vol. II in 1929.Though his description of 'childhood memories' is very brief, consisting of the first few chapters of the autobiography, a study of these helpsus to gain knowledge about his early encounters with truth and untruth from his own perspective. The episodes that he mentions in his brief but illuminating reminiscences of childhood days took place in the period when he was between seven and thirteen. Broadly, these include family background, his experiences at school and his marriage. This unit would enable the learners to historicise his engagement with

self-introspection and would also reveal the circumstances that led him to choose self-introspection as a method for living an ideal life. At the same time, it would help the learners to understand 'life-writing' as a literary genre for representing personal history, which often remains uncaptured in mainstream historical discourses.

3.9.3 Birth and Parentage

In his introduction to *My Experiments with Truth,* Gandhi said that he wished the narration of his story to be so simple that it could be understood easily by adults as well as by children. Indeed, it has the structure of a traditional narrative, in which the tale is told in linear synchronic mode describing Gandhi's parentage, birth and early days. A close reading of the narration of his family historyshows that the seeds of enlightenment, which later contributed to the shaping of the 'mahatma' or "the great soul," were sown in the early years of his growing up.

*Baniyas*or merchants by caste, the Gandhis originally sold grocery items. His great grandfather, however, joined the royal court in one of the Kathiawad states. Thereafter, his sons mostly held the post of Prime Ministers in the courts of the local princes.Uttamchand Gandhi alias Ota Gandhi, M.K. Gandhi's grandfather, worked as Diwan in Porbandar.Due to some conspiracies there, he had to move to Junagadh. Ota Gandhi married twice and had four sons by his first wife and two by his second wife. Among six brothers, M.K. Gandhi's father Karamchand Gandhi alias Kaba Gandhi wasthe fifth. Kaba Gandhi served as Prime Minister in the estates of Porbandar, Rajkot and Vankaner. He was also a member of Rajasthanik court, a local judicial body that settled disputes between chiefs and their kinsmen. Kaba Gandhi's younger brother Tulsidas also held the post of Prime Minister atPorbandar.

The fact that for three generations the Gandhis were associated with diplomacy and affairs of the state is a fitting prelude to M.K. Gandhi's involvement in national politics and anti-colonial struggle.His political thoughts were based on values and ethics. The memories of his childhood show that his future endeavours in this direction were influenced largely by the personalities of his forefathers. He imbibed the primary lessons of honesty and patriotism from his father during his early childhood days. Though Kaba Gandhi was short-tempered, he had high regards for his chief. He not only protested against a Sahib when the latter made humiliating comments about the Rajkot chief but also refused to apologise under any circumstance.

His grandfather too was an epitome of loyalty to his employer, which Gandhi recounts right in the first paragraph of his first chapter "Birth and Parentage."Even after migrating to Junagadh, Ota Ghandhi did not shun his allegiance to Porbandar

estate where he had been the Diwan for many years. On being interrogated for saluting the JunagadhNawab with left hand, he had explained that his right hand was pledged to the ruler of Porbandar. The reply underlines grandfather's straightforwardness and sincerity, at the same time, Gandhi's reminiscence of it in his mature yearsemphasises his urge to represent his devotion to Truth and self-respect as a legacy.

In his childhood memories, M.K. Gandhi recollects that his father studied till fifth standard in school and knew nothing of history and geography. Also, he was not a scholar in religious topics but, like most Hindus, he visited temples regularly and loved listening to discussions on religion. In spite of having little knowledge in academic subjects and scriptures, he did well in his job with his experience and practical wisdom. Kaba Gandhi's professional acumen was so sharp that he could handle intriguing situations and deal successfully with hundreds of people.

Kaba Gandhi married four times. When he got married for the fourth time, he was above forty. His three wives died in succession during childbirth. He had two daughters from his previous marriages. With Putlibai, his last wife, he had one daughter and three sons. M.K. Gandhi was their youngest child. He was born on 2nd October, 1869, at Porbandar inpresent-day Gujarat, India.

About his mother, Gandhi writes, "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness" (56). Putlibai was deeply religious. She visited the Vaishnava temple every day. Gandhi remembers her as one of the few people he knew who would follow all rituals scrupulously without complaining of anyinconvenience or caring for illness. She strictly adhered by the norms of *Chaturmas,* a four-month period of fasting and Lent during the rainy season.Gandhi recounts her tenacity to face hardships during her observation of the *chturmasvrat*in which once she took the vow of not having food without seeing the sun. If on any day, the sun remained hidden behind the clouds, she would get back to her chores cheerfully by saying, "God did not want me to eat today" (57). Besides her devotion in religious matters, she had "strong common sense" (57). She had up-to-date knowledge about the political matters of the state and the ladies of the court. Gandhi recalls, "I would accompany her, exercising the privilege of childhood, and I still remember many lively discussions she had with the widowed mother of the ThakoreSaheb" (57). The royal chiefs were addressed as 'Thakore.'

If Gandhi learned lessons of patriotism from his father and grandfather, he imbibed the traits ofpatience, sincerity and determination from his mother. It is obvious that his mother's sincerity in following the norms of Lent, later inspired him to opt for *upvas*(fasting)as a method of rectification and resistance.

3.9.4 Growing Up

Gandhi passed his early childhood in Porbandar and he says that he remembers "having been put to school" (57). He also reveals that he had great difficulty in memorising the multiplication tables. Like other children of his age, he was fond of playing games and had learned to call the teacher all kinds of name. As a sensible adult he does not appreciate thismischievous habit. However, he couldnot remember much of his early childhood days and for this forgetfulness he chastises his intellect and memory as "sluggish" and "raw."

At seven, he relocated to Rajkot. Migration to a new townbrought a transformation in his personality. He was no longer the mischievous kid that he used to be in Porbandar. Gradually, with the passing of each year he grew up and reached the high school at the age of twelve. He was so shy that he hardly talked to anyone at school. Due to this, his books and lessons were his only friends. He imbibed strong values. He recalls that between the age of seven and twelve he never told a lie either to his teachers or to his classmates. In particular, he mentions an incident at school which can be cited as one of his earliest experiments with truth.

Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had given a spelling exercise in the class where Gandhi was one of the students. Having noticed that he had misspelt 'kettle,' one of the teachers prompted him to copy the correct spelling from a neighbour's copy. While all the boys in the class copied the right spelling, he refrained from doing so. Consequently, he was the only student who, as it was discovered by the inspector, had written the spelling wrong. His honesty was taken as stupidity by the teacher. That teacher had several faults but Gandhi retained his regards for him. He defends his blindness in this matter on the following pretext: "For I had learnt to carry out the orders of elders, not to *scan their actions*" (59). His response to this incidentexhibits his adherence to high idealism that guided him not to judge the actions of elders but to follow them.

Gandhi refers to two other incidents of this period that throw light on his character. Though he was not fond of reading books outside his school curriculum, a book called *ShravanaPitribhaktiNataka*had a lasting influence on him. It is a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents. Taken from the Ramayana, the story is as follows: King Dasharatha unknowingly killedShravana while hunting in the forest of Ayodhya. When the king confessed his mistake to Shravana's parents, they were so grief-stricken that they cursed him of experiencing the same sorrow that they experienced on losing their son.Since ancient times, in Indian imaginationShravana is glorified as the prototype of an ideal son. Not only that Gandhi read the play with interest but also enjoyedits enactment by a group travelling showmen. One of the pictures in

which Shravana carried his blind parents to pilgrimage on his shoulders left a permanent mark on his mind and he vowed, "Here is an example for you to copy. I said to myself" (60). The other incident was that of his watching the play *Harishchandra.* King Harishchandra is an exemplar of honesty in Indian mythology and his story is cited as an anecdote to impart lessons on truthfulness to Indian youth down the generations. As a child Gandhi wondered why every individual could not follow the footsteps of this legendary figure. Recollecting the effect of this play on his budding mind, he acknowledges, "To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me" (60).

3.9.5 Marriage

In the third chapter of his *atmakatha,* Gandhi talks about his getting married to Kasturba at the age of thirteen. He titles the chapter as "Child Marriage" and remarks ruefully, "As I see the youngsters of the same age about me who are under my care, and think of my own marriage, I am inclined to pity myself and to congratulate them on having escaped my lot. I can see no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage" (61).Hecriticises the system in which his opinion was not asked for while fixing the marriage. Also, he despises the tradition of getting married at a tender age when one is ignorant ofthe implications of conjugal life. Immaturity of a child groom that he was is reflected in this observation of Gandhi, "I do not think it meant anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinner and a strange girl to play with" (63). Child marriage was a tradition in his family. His elder brother was already married. Another brother and a cousin, who were a couple of years senior to him,got married on the same day. While ruminating on this topic, hementions that although he was ignorant of carnal love at that time, he knew that marriage was a lifelong contract. He confesses that he often read the one-pice-pamphlets that discussed topics such as conjugal love and child marriage. From these, he had gathered that "[l]ifelong faithfulness to the wife, inculcated in these booklets as the duty of the husband remained permanently imprinted in my heart. Furthermore, the passion of truth was innate in me, and to be false to her was out of the question" (66).

3.9.6 Impact of the Childhood Memories on his Later Activities

M.K Gandhi went to England to study law in 1888. In 1893, he found job with an Indian firm in South Africa. He chose to be an anti-colonial nationalist whose political ideals and ideas of social progress merged with his self-introspective doctrines

of *satya*(truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). His non-violent mode of resistance, widely known as *satyagraha,* placed him among the most popular leaders of the world. His writings, though few in number, represent his moral and political thoughts. The corpus of his written works consists of *Hind Swaraj, Ethical Religion* (*Niti Dharma*), *Satyagraha in South Africa, The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and two collections of letters—*From YeravdaMandir*and *Ashram Observances.*

The last two works are collections of letters.*The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is an unfinished autobiography. Originally written in Gujarati as *Satya Na Prayogo*(*My Experiments with Truth*), it was serially published in 166 instalments in *Navajivan,* a journal, between 25th November, 1925, and 3rd February, 1929. The first episode was published a day after he started his fasting for *satyagraha* on 24th November, 1925. In this context, TridibSuhrudobserves, "The coming together of the autobiographical act and fasting… to Gandhi would have appeared as a sign—not from above, not from without and beyond but from within, from a voice which he described as 'a small, still voice'—that he was ready to lay bare what was hitherto known only to him and his God, Satyanarayan, God of Truth" (4).

Spread across an area of thirty-six acres, his ashram was situated along the banks of Sabarmati River. The ashram was located in between a prison house and a crematorium. According to Gandhi, this location was ideal because as a*satyagrahi*his mission in life was either to strive or to die. He believed that an ashram inmate should strive for an ideal conduct, which he/she would be able to achieve through self-introspective search for truth. Suhrud explains that this belief played a seminal role in Gandhi's writing:

If the *Autobiography* required him to dwell within himself, fasting was *upvas,* to dwell closer to Him, to be closer to Truth. Both the autobiographical act and *upvas*were models by which Gandhi dwelled closer to Truth. This in-dwelling had a physicality, not grossly in his body but within the Ashram and with the Ashram community. (4)

Suhrudalso informs us that instead of writing a *jivanvritant*or chronicle of life, Gandhi wished to pen an *atmakatha*or the story of his soul. However, as Suhrud points out, "The emphasis is captured in the Gujarati, where the title *Satya Na PrayogoathvaAtmakatha*foregrounds the experiments with Truth. The order is reversed in the English translation, where 'An Autobiography' has primacy" (16).

3.9.7 Summing Up

From the above discussion, it is clear that Gandhi valued ethics more than anything else in life since his childhood days. To him 'truth' was quintessential to one's search for God. His childhood memories reveal that his family backgroundand his perceptiveness contributed to the construction of his awe-inspiringpersonality as the

mahatma. In course of time his name 'Mahatma Gandhi' emerged as a byword for peaceful resistance in the world. While most people are familiar with hisincarnation of *Bapu*("father of the nation") very few are aware of his childhood personality, which he figures out in his early reminiscences.

3.9.8 Comprehensive Exercises

Long Answer Questions:

1) Write an essay on M.K. Gandhi's childhood.
2) Discuss the influence of Kaba Gandhi and Putlibai on Gandhi's understanding of value and ethics.
3) Explain the importance of Truth to the child Mohandas.
4) Discuss the role of childhood memories inmaking Gandhi a *mahatma* ("the great soul").

Mid-length Questions:

1) Write a note on the patriotism of Ota Gandhi.
2) What were the academic qualifications of Kaba Gandhi?
3) What would Putlibai say and do when the sun was not seen on the day of fasting?
4) What were the two occasions of her fasting?
5) What was the impact of reading*ShravanaPitribhaktiNataka*on Mohandas Gandhi?
6) What happened to Gandhi when the Education Inspector visited the school?
7) Why did Gandhi want to be like Harishchandra?
8) Describe his personality when he moved to Rajkot from Porbandar.
9) What were Gandhi's thoughts on marriage at the age of thirteen?
10) Why is the original title of Gandhi's autobiography more appropriate than the one in English translation?

Short Questions:

1) Who is Ota Gandhi?
2) Of which local body was Kaba Gandhi a member?
3) Where was M. K. Gandhi born?

4) Which word did Gandhi misspell during the inspector's visit?
5) How old was he at the time of his marriage?
6) What is the name of M.K. Gandhi's wife?
7) Where was Gandhi's autobiography first published?
8) What is the title of his autobiography in English?
9) How old was he when he wrote the first chapter of the autobiography?
10) Who translated the autobiography from Gujarati into English?

3.9.9 Suggested Reading

Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth.* Introduction by TridibSuhrud.Foreword by AshisNandy.Penguin Books, 2018.

Iyer, Raghavan. *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi.* OUP, 2000.

Sharma, Dinesh. *Gandhi: Thought and Philosophy.* Arise Publishers & Distributors, 2012.

Suhrud, Tridib. Introduction.*An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* by M.K. Gandhi, Penguin Books, 2018, pp. 1-35.

Unit 10 ❒ Experiments andAtonement: M.K. Gandhi

Structure

3.10.1 Objectives

The following are the objectives of this unit:

- to introduce the learners toM.K. Gandhi'sadolescent years;
- to explain to the learners the impact of his first experience of atonement, and
- todiscussthe importance of this experience on his moral and political thoughts.

3.10.2 Introduction

The first part of M.K. Gandhi's autobiography*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*(1948) offers a glimpse of his growing up years, from childhood through adolescence to a young adult. The growth, *perse,* was at both physical and mental levels. It manifested the gradual development of his personalitythrough small reminiscences that trace when and how the seeds of morality and idealism were sown into the perceptive soil of his mind.His childhood memories reveal his shy nature and his dislike for studies. At the same time, they reflect on the pious nature of his mother and the honesty of his father and grandfather, which came down to him as a genetic heirloom. Getting married at thirteen was a turning point in his life. Chapters such as "Child Marriage" and "Playing the Husband" underline his teenage encounters in heterosexual camaraderie. Unlike his childhood days, the periphery of his social life widened at the high school. There, he made new friends and enjoyed for the first time the small perks of youth which included

forbidden activities such as eating meat and smoking. To Gandhi, this transition from childhood to adolescence was fraught with dilemma and guilt. On the one hand, the temptations of youth seemed irresistible, on the other hand, the call of the soul urged for an atonement. This unit examines the teenage phase of Gandhi's life. It draws the learners' attention towards the perplexities he faced during this transitional phase and explains to them his strategies of atonement. At the same time, it motivates the learners to discover the relevance of Gandhi's thoughts in the present times.

3.10.3 Atonement: Understanding the Concept

In general, "atonement" refers to an action undertaken as penance for any wrongdoing. It involves a method of expiation that exonerates the wrongdoer from the burden of guilt. There are several methods of atonement, which manifest people's adherence to values and ethics in personal and community life. 'Atonement' is usually associated with religious practices. In Christianity, 'atonement' is described as 'propitiation.' Judaismobserves*Yom Kippur* as an occasion to commemorate the Day of Atonement. In almost all ancient civilizations and indigenous cultures, sacrificial rites are prominent.The ritual of scapegoat in the Hebrew Bible is akin to this tradition.

As per the interpretation offered in the Bible, God chose Jesus as the sacrificial model for absorbing God's wrath. Shai Linne explains, "The father pours out his anger towards sin on Christ, and his wrath is actually satisfied. And because of that the guilty sinner who trusts in Christ gets to go free" ["What Is Atonement? Biblical Meaning and Definition" (christianity.com)]. He further elucidates, "Adam's choice to sin made everyone guilty before God, without hope. But then, Christ stepped in, making atonement for sin. Christ, the innocent lamb, took upon himself the sins of many that they might receive the atonement for sins and be reconciled to God." According to New World Encyclopaedia, the word 'atonement' was coined by William Tyndale, the author of the Bible in English in 1526. He used 'atonement' "to express the nature of Christ's sacrifice better than 'reconciliation,'the English transliteration of the Latin *reconciliatio*seen in the biblical passages like Romans 5:11" (https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Atonement).

As a remorse ritual, atonementwas a common practice inalmost all ancient cultures. Though rare, some cultures practised human sacrifices to please the deities. Sacrifice of animals was popular among the ancient Greeks and the Aztecs in Mexico.Natural calamities such as storm, earthquake and flood and epidemics such as plague and pox were considered as consequences of evoking the wrath of gods. Therefore, the gods had to be appeased with rites of atonement. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* set in Thebes, a city in ancient Greece, Oedipus unknowingly murders his father King Laius and marries Queen Jocasta, his mother. Oedipus' ascent to the throne is followed by outbreak of plague in the city.The situation improved when the king realised his mistake, suffered

from guilt and punished himself by piercing his eyes with the queen's hairpin. The queen too atones by committing suicide.

Vedic literaturerefers to atonement as*Prâyaúcitta*and elucidates it as "one of the corrective measures in dharmaúâstra as an alternative to incarceration or other forms of danda (punishment) when someone is convicted of certain categories of crime" ["Prayascitta: Atonement in Hinduism" (slife.org)]. It is not always crime that requires penance. One may experience remorse for not fulfilling one's moral duties and also for engaging oneself in certain activities that flout the norms and standards of morality. Ancient texts such as Samaveda and Srutiprovide detailed interpretations on the consequences of going against dharma or righteousness, of which the most prominent ones are regret and sorrow. It is only through penance one can liberate one's soul from sorrow. Hindu dharmarecords performance of penance in different forms such as *abhiœasta*(public confession), *anutapa*(repentance), *pranâyâma* (restraint of breath), *tapas* (perseverance), *homa*and *yajna*(sacrificial rituals with fire), *japa*(saying prayer *mantra* silently), *dana*(charity), *upavasa*(fasting) and *tirthayatra*(pilgrimage). Even, a dip into the Ganges is believed to purify the soul.

3.10.4 Atonement: Significances

Confession is crucial in atonement. Its implications are moral, psychological and even social. It is through confession that an individual accepts his wrongdoing and expresses his desire for expiating from guilt through remorse and penance. Penance is not always compulsory. Buddhism, which abides by the notion of *mitta*or "loving kindness," lays emphasis on forgiving than on punishment. Thereby, in Buddhism, atonement does not include hardcore punitive measures and sacrifices. However, Buddhism like Hinduism follows the doctrine of *karma*(deeds). A remorse-driven urge to acknowledge the mistake/sin to a pious soul is prioritised in Catholic faith. The confession box in the church not only serves this purpose but also gives an opportunity to sinners to seek divine forgiveness by acknowledging their sins in either public or private. Confession acts as a trajectory transporting the individual from darkness to enlightenment. St. Augustine's *Confessions* (400 CE), originally written in Latin, is perhaps the earliest extant literary evidence to this transcendence.

Confession is also significant as a psychotherapeutic tool. It helps an individual to find relief from anxiety and guilt. In psychoanalysis, it is a method to explore the subconscious mind, which Sigmund Freud, the great 20th century psychologist, referred to in his case studies. In this regard, confession, which is integral to atonement, serves for mental well-being.

Activities:

1. Give two examples of religious atonement you donot appreciate.
2. What's the connection between atonement and morality?

3. Describe the custom of confession in the church.
4. Can religious confession abate crime in the society?
5. Give an example of atonement from any Indian epic.
6. Discuss psychoanalytical significance of confession with reference to Freud's observations.

3.10.5 Gandhi's Early Experiments

M.K. Gandhiwas born on 2nd October, 1869, at Porbandar in Gujarat, to Kaba Gandhi and Putlibai. For three generations, his ancestors were professionally associated with the affairs of the state in the princely states in the Kathiawad region. His early childhood was spent in Porbandar and Rajkot. He was shy and faced difficulty in memorising the lessons. At thirteen, he was married to Kasturba. She too was of the same age. Ignorant of carnal love and conjugal responsibilities, he thought that he had a new playmate and was often jealous of her. His elder brothers and cousins too were married early. Gandhi recounts that in those days small pamphlets on marital love were available and it was from these printed resources that he learned about life-long commitment in marriage. Unlike his brother, he continued his studies after marriage.

His family background played a key role in the development of his social and moral consciousness. His father's uprightness and mother's piety contributed immensely to the growth of hisethical outlook. However, as suggested by the title of his autobiography, his perception of truth came over through a set of experiences that he describes as 'experiments.' His early encounter with 'atonement' reflects on a few experiential-cum-experimental incidents of his teenage life. His responses to his own and others' activities during this phase not only mark his transition from childhood to adolescence but also reveal the perplexities of his teenage mind negotiating between the contradictory ideas of tradition and modernity.

3.10.5.1.Temptations

At high school, he fell in bad company and deviated from the strict regimen of his childhood days. The crisis began with the entry of a new friend, his brother's classmate, into his social circle. His mother and wife had warned him against that boy. However, he defended his friend by saying, "I know he has the weakness you attribute to him, but you do not know his virtues. He cannot lead me astray, as my association with him is meant to reform him" (76). The impact of this association is recorded in three chapters— "A Tragedy," "A Tragedy (Contd.)" and "Stealing and Atonement."

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a section of the Indian intelligentsia was swayed by Western modernity and the reform movements were eventually shaped by their exposure to English education and culture. These movements influenced Gandhi's friend, his elder brother and many other youths like them. They ate meat and drank wine to flout the traditional norms of the conservative Hindu society.They convinced Gandhi

to consume the forbidden food by telling him that meat-eaters were stronger and healthier than the vegetarians and also asked him to consider the superior discretion of the teachers who followed the socio-cultural practices of the West. In those days, these rebellious acts were a part of the nationalistrage against the colonial authority.

Raised in a strict Vaishnava family, where meat and wine were taboos, it was not easy for teenaged Gandhi to accept the invitations of the friend and his brother. Conflicts raved his mind as he thought about the traditional family to which he belonged.He recounts, "The opposition to and abhorrence of meat-eating that existed in Gujarat among the Jains and Vaishnavas were to be seen nowhere else in India…I knew that the moment they came to know of my having eaten meat, they would be shocked to death" (79). On the one hand, he wanted to participate in the nationalist movement that supportedbreaking conventions, and on the other hand, he did not want to deceive his parents.His friends got him involved in bold adventures that challenged the conventional and moral standards. The mischievous experiences, however, pricked his conscience and later the guilt had to be assuaged through confession and atonement.

3.10.5.2 Wrongdoings

It was quite impossible for him to resist the dishes his friend cooked with meat. First few times, they met at secret places on the banks of the river, but subsequently they managed to rent a government guest house that had a dining hall and a chief cook. There was both stealth and guilt in this adventure and above all it had a manipulating effect on his personality, which he confesses as follows: "I got over my dislike for bread, forswore my compassion for the goats, and became a relisher of meat-dishes…This went on for about a year" (81). At home, he refused food by giving excuses such as he did not have appetite or he had indigestion.

One temptation led to another. Once his friend took him to a brothel and paid the bill himself. Gandhi says that it was all pre-arranged to trap him. He was on the verge of turning unfaithful to his wife. He even sat on the bed of the sex-worker but she somehow lost patience with his shy nature and turned him out with insults and abuses. Next, being influenced by a relative he took to smoking. He had to satisfy himself with the butt ends, which he and his companions collected from here and there because they did not have enough money to buy cigarettes. Slowly, they mustered courage to steal servants' pocket-money. Later, at fifteen, he confesses to have stolen a bit of gold from his meat-eating brother's armlet.

3.10.6 The Burden of Guilt

The culpability of telling lies and the knowledge that his parents would be deeply shocked if they discovered his immoral deeds, disturbed him immensely. The wayward ways—meat-eating, visiting a brothel and stealing—dragged him into a cesspool of guilt.There was indeed thrill in the stealthy acts but he realised soon that "mere hiding

the deed from parents was no departure from truth" (80). In his mind, he thanked God for saving him from the sin of carnal desire. Bad company triggered differences between him and his wife. Although she did not support his activities, she bore with his jealous and short-tempered nature silently. His wife's patience and righteousness doubled his anguish. Also, he suffered terribly after stealing gold from his brother's armlet. The pain of betraying the trust of his loved ones chased him all the while. He even thought of committing suicide to get rid of the anguish. Eventually, he gave up smoking and decided to confess his wrongdoings to his father.

3.10.7 Confession and Atonement

The frenzy of doing bold things faded as his heart became heavy with guilt. He could bear it no more and decided to admit his wrongdoings to his father. Unable to tell him directly, he wrote a letter and handed it over to him. Recalling that moment of intense remorse and pain, he observes, "In this note not only did I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed it with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence" (88). He trembled as he thought that his father would scold him and beat him.

At that time, his father was bed-ridden with fistula. The pain in his body had made him weak. Reading the confession note, he was agonised. He didnot say anything but tears trickled down his cheeks and he tore the note in disgust. His silence was more eloquent than scoldings. His weeping had a profound effect on Gandhi. Though young, he understood that those tears welled up from pristine love and also from the pang of betrayal. In his own words, he describes how the confession was followed by atonement: "Those *pearl drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away*" (88, emphasis original). The impact of his father's peaceful yet powerful rebuke introduced him to the limitless power of *ahimsa* or non-violence.

That day, he realised the significance of love and non-violence in reforming one's character. The realisation dawned on him as a life-long lesson, which later on shaped his political consciousness as well. His doctrine of *ahimsa*is based on disseminating love and forgiveness. His ideal of *satyagraha* reveals that knowledge of truth can be achieved through atonement and austere living. He used fasting as a method of manifesting non-violent protest and also as a means for atonement. He promoted*ashramic*dwelling as a means for discovering truth through atonement. He followed these principles in his personal life as well as in the public domain where he gave leadership to various anti-colonial missions such as non-cooperation movement (1920-22)and Salt Satyagraha or Dandi March (12th March to 15th April, 1930).

3.10.8 Summing Up

The above reminiscences of M.K. Ghandhi shows his reflections on the gradual development of his ethical sense.His experiential and experimental incidents reveal that

only a person with clean conscience can muster enough courage to confess his offences to a righteous authority. While experiments broadened his exposure to the restless realities and disturbing desires, atonement restores the peace of mind. More than punishment, he prioritised and promoted love and forgiveness as corrective measures.

3.10.9 Comprehensive Exercises

Long Answer Questions:

1) Describe Gandhi's adolescence experiences with his friends.
2) Explain the concept of 'atonement.'
3) What was the impact of Gandhi's first experience with guilt and atonement on his political activities?
4) What is your impression of Gandhi's character as a teenager?

Mid-length Questions:

1) How did Gandhi deceive his parents?
2) Why did his wife and his mother warn him?
3) How did Gandhi and his friends enjoy the forbidden fare?
4) What did his father say after reading the confession note?
5) How was his soul cleansed?

Short Answer type questions:

1) Why did they steal the servants' pocket money?
2) Who stole gold from brother's armlet?
3) Where did they meet usually for eating meat?
4) Who coined the term 'atonement'?
5) Where do you find a confession box?

3.10.10 Suggested Readings

Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth.* Introduction by TridibSuhrud. Foreword by AshisNandy. Penguin Books, 2018.

Iyer, Raghavan. *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi.* OUP, 2000.

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MODULE-4
Charles Chaplin, My Autobiography

Unit 11 ❐ General Discussion of the Text

Structure

4.11.1 Objectives

This unitexplores autobiography as a distinct literary genre by charting its historical development, tracing its origins, and examining key figures in the field of self-narrative. The module also seeks to position Charlie Chaplin's autobiography within this literary tradition. To help deepen your understanding, a set of questions has also been provided at the end of the unit.The objectives of this unit are to:

- introduce the autobiography as a literary form and highlight its defining characteristics.
- offer a concise historical overview of the genre and mention notable autobiographers.
- examine the rise of stardom and the phenomenon of celebrity autobiographies.
- situate Chaplin's autobiography as an early example of the celebrity autobiography genre.

4.11.2 Defining the Genre: Autobiography

Autobiography is a story of the self, written by the self. The term was coined by William Taylor in 1797, specifically to describe a narrative form that was previously

referred to as 'self-biography', 'confessions', or 'memoirs'. The etymology of the word itself is revealing: 'auto'refers to 'self,''bios' to 'life,' and '*graphein*' to 'writing.'Autobiography thus literally signifies'self-life-writing', a self-biography. Autobiography differsfrom other forms of life-writing, namely biographies and memoirs. Biography is a complete account of a person's life written by someone else. Memoirs, on the other hand, are more selective and focus on specific events that the writer considers most important. Memoirs incline more towards major moments in the life of a person.In contrast, autobiography pursues a fuller narrative, focusing on the author's life from a more holistic perspective.Edward Seidensticker argues that "a memoir is almost any record of facts, set down either for itself or for use in a larger composition, and an autobiography is a memoir about the life of the writer" (221). Philippe Lejeune, a foremost scholar in the field of autobiography studies, defines autobiography is "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (Quoted in Anderson 2). Lejeune's definition emphasizes the retrospective nature of autobiography, a self-reflexiveaccount of personal experiences within a particular culturalcontext. An autobiography, in other words,is a "simultaneously historical record and literary artifact, psychological case history and spiritual confession, didactic essay and ideological testament" (Stone 2). The auto-biographer relates a personal narrative reflecting on his/her individual growth, and simultaneously situating his/her life within the broader historical events. This reflective component is what makes autobiographies particularly valuable, as it*self-reflexively* probes deeper into author's intentions and experiences.Sherif Hetata correctly observes that "Autobiography should tell the reader how the author became a self; it should tell of experiences, choices in life; . . .it should present the truth of the individual self, how the self relates to the world, to society, to family, to a spouse or a lover, to friends and rivals, to the system and values that govern life" (124).Anothersalient feature of autobiography is the merging of three roles—author, narrator, and protagonist—into one individual. Lejeune observes that the writer of an autobiography "implicitly declares that he is the person he says he is and that the author and the protagonist are the same" (Quoted in Anderson 3). Further, autobiography originates from supposedly accurate 'recollection' of the lived experiences of the author himself/ herself, it requires a sincere commitment to truth-telling. Since autobiography proper is a retrospective account that "involves a search for the true self" (Pascal 39), the author is expected to provide an authentic account of his/her life. In its adherence to truth-telling, autobiography differs from autobiographical fiction which attempts exploring the truth in fiction (Walter P. Rankin 311). In autobiographical fiction, the novelist blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction, whereas in autobiography, the purposeremains the quest for self-discovery through a precise reconstructionof the

past through based on memory and reflection. Although there remains the possibility of memory being selective and subjective, the ideal autobiography "describes a voyage of self-discovery, a life journey confused by frequent mis-directions and even crises of identity but reaching at last a sense of perspective and integration. It traces through the alert awakened memory a continuity from early childhood to maturity or even to old age . . .. And as a work of literature, it achieves a satisfying wholeness" (Quoted in H. Porter Abbott 599). The distinctive features of autobiographycan be briefly summarised as follows:

- **Self-reflexive narrative:** An autobiography is a retrospectivewritten reflection on one's own life wherein the author reconstructshis/her past with a view to understand how it has shaped his/her present.
- **Truth-telling narrative:**Truth-telling is a prerequisite to autobiography requiring the author to be honest about his/her life and experiences.
- **Developmental narrative:** Autobiographies often follow a developmental arc, charting the evolution of the author's self over time.
- **Unified author-narrator-protagonist:** In an autobiography, the author, the narrator, and the protagonist are the same person. This unity of identity distinguishes autobiography from other forms of life-writing, where the author and the subject may be different individuals.

Thus, autobiography, as a literary genre, offers a rich and complex means of exploring the self. Through this genre, authors can reflect on the events that have shaped their lives, offering readers insight into their personal journeys while also providing a record of the times in which they lived. This unique combination of personal narrative and historical reflection makes autobiography a powerful tool for understanding both the individual and the world around them.

4.11.3 Spiritual Autobiographies

Many scholars consider Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (about AD 398–400) to be the first Western autobiography. It details Saint Augustine's journey toward spirituality and eventual conversion to Christianity. This autobiography, a personal account of a person seeking to understand the mysterious riches of God, is rooted in Christian concepts such as 'the confession', 'sin', 'fall',and 'redemption', and it reflects the inward-looking gaze that is necessary for an autobiography.Peter Brown has called *Confessions* a "strictly intellectual autobiography" and "a manifesto of the inner world" (Quoted in Anderson 20).*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), written by John Bunyan when he was imprisoned for questioning and defying the rules of the Church of England, is another example of a strongly religious autobiography. *Grace Abounding* is a spiritual autobiography similar to Saint Augustine's *Confessions* in

that it reinforces the author's unwavering belief in God's providential plan. Bunyan presents himself by following the same Biblical themes of sin, repentance, revelation, and redemption involving spiritual adversity. The autobiography of Bunyan is a personal, allegorical, existentialist, and exemplary work.

4.11.4 Secular Autobiographies

With its obvious emphasis on the uniqueness and individuality of the autobiographer, Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, published posthumously between 1781 and 1789, departs from the previous spiritual models of Saint Augustine and John Bunyan.His autobiography is Rousseau's sincere endeavor for revelation of his inner self to his readers:

I should like in some way to make my soul transparent to the reader's eye, and for that purpose I am trying to present it from all points of view, to show it in all lights, and to contrive that none of its movements shall escape his notice, so that he may judge for himself of the principle which has produced them. (Quoted in Anderson 46).

Rousseau wanted to write about 'simply myself' and reveal his true nature to his readers, thereby positing the idea of the responsibility of the autobiographer not only to the self but also towards the reader. Rousseau's project is the revelation of himself, to offer a faithful, self-critical and sincere portrait of himselffor his readers, free from lies and hypocritical pretentions.

Under the influence of Rousseau, autobiography emerged as a unique literary genre during the Romantic era. The majority of this era's literature is autobiographical and individualist. *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind: An Autobiographical Poem* by William Wordsworth is the most notable example of this trend toward autobiographizing literature in romantic poetry. Thomas De Quincey also wrote two notable pieces that could be regarded as loose autobiographies: *Sketch from Childhood* (1852–1853), which detailed his time in the nursery and early education, and *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821), which documented his opium addiction.Rousseau, Wordsworth, and De Quincey contributed immensely to the secularisation of autobiography as a literary genre in the West with their focus on the revelation of the inner self. It distanced itself from its religious roots, incorporating the intricacies of individual experience, self-reflexive emotional outbursts, and criticalself-introspection. Thus, the Romanticism brought a radical change in the way autobiography evolved.

4.11.5:Public Autobiographies

As mankind moved further towards modernity and industrialization, the sense of

individualism increased. Many renowned individuals who have earned fame for their remarkable works in their respective fields were asked to write their personal stories to inspire and educate the common humanity. This gave birth to public autobiographies, written by famed individuals. Charles Darwin, the famed scientist of the Victorian era, wrote his *Autobiography*in 1876, which was posthumously published in 1892. The book is an interesting and engaging account into the mind of this illustrious figure. J. S. Mill's *An Autobiography* is another famous Victorian autobiographical account in which Mill traces the development of his mind, writes about his family and relationship with his father, the period of depression, and more importantly the philosophy of education. His autobiography is a self-exploration of both public and private life.

In fact, Public autobiographies became hugely popular in the first half of the twentieth century. The autobiographies of politicians, cinema or sports stars, or any other person who has made a great name for himself/herself in a particular field were to be in great demand. Politicians produced several autobiographical works. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) has remained oneof the most popular autobiographies which relates to the trials and tribulations of his early life, his dreams and desires, and later his rise into the Great Dictator. *Mein Kampf*recounts his hyper-nationalist political ideology, which he intended to use to rebuild Germany and conquer the entire Europe. It seems less a work of self-introspection and honest confession but rather providesan insight into the mind of a man who engineered the Holocaust.Churchill was another prominent politician of his times, and a contemporary of Hitler. In his autobiography, *My Early Life* (1930), Churchill called himself "a child of the Victorian era" and described his early life, education, revealing lots of insights into political ambition. His autobiography offers a glimpse into Churchill's egotism in addition to his social and political beliefs. Since the professional politician has to risk several things in the process of self-revelatory act of writing an autobiography, Churchill's autobiography alsodisplays the complexities of public autobiographies.

It was around the same time when Mahatma Gandhi wrote his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*. Written at the instance of Swami Anand, and published in *Navjivan* during 1925-28, Gandhi's autobiography is exceptionally unusual from other Western public autobiographies of professional politicians. Neither an exercise in self-praise nor written to disparage opponents, Gandhi's autobiography is a testament of truthfulness. Writing about its purpose, Gandhi contends that "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" (Gandhi *n. pag.)*. Realization of the Truth is the goal that Gandhi strives to attain in the process of writing. He states that

What I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years - is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end. (Gandhi *n. pag.)*

Thus,Gandhi applies both spiritual and secularprinciples to enumerate his experiments with Truth and his autobiography is a "confession of Gandhi's faith, a very basic document for the study of his thought".

Thus, public autobiographies have differed significantly contingent upon the cultural/ historical context in which they were written. From Darwin's contemplations on scientific pursuit, to Mill's intellectual inquiry, to the politically manoeuvrings of Hitler and Churchill, and finally, to Gandhi's spiritual sojourn, the autobiographies divulge much more than personal stories—they offer perceptive insights into the socio-cultural contexts of the writer, revealing the forces which influenced these public figures who left a lasting impression on the mankind.

4.11.6 Celebrity Autobiographies

With the rise of mass media in the twentieth century, celebrity culture took on a new prominence, fuelling the demand for celebrity autobiographies.Celebrity has now become the most predominant facet of contemporary life. Modern-day celebrities usually hail from cinema, music, arts, sports, politics etc. and are marked by immense hyper-visibility in the mass media. Their personal lives are subject to enormous public attention and prying. Celebrities are not merely popular youth icons but also mirror some of the best as well as worst aspects of contemporary culture. The detailed accounts of their personal lives are sometimes consumed by the masses for inspiration, life-style choices, entertainment and edification. Daniel Boorstin contends that the celebrity is a person "who is well-known for their wellknownness". Boorstin also distinguishes between heroic figures who are celebrated for "the great simple virtues of their character" and celebrities "who are differentiated "mainly by trivia of personality". Morgan argued that a "celebrity is a known individual who has become a marketable commodity". Sharon Marcus defined celebrities as "people known during their lifetimes". What needs to be understood is that figure of a celebrity is largely an invention of mass media platforms such as television, internet, newspapers etc. These mass media agencies/organization project all famous individuals as celebrity, benefitting from and to them through publicity.Therefore, the duration of celebrity life of an individual is often temporary, brief and soon dies away over time. In other words, often mere appearances such as handsome figures, good looks, designer clothes, swagger and pomp constitute the core of celebrity life, marked by scandalous gossip, glamour, money and power. Further, celebrity is often the creation of technology

The origin of celebrity dates back to the mid-eighteenth century. The famed scholar and critic Inglis associated it with "the rise of urban democracy, the two-hundred-year expansion of its media of communication, together with radical individualization of the modern sensibility made fame a more transitory reward and changed public acclaim from an expression of devotion into one of celebrity" (Inglis 5). Considering Samuel Johnson and the Prince Regent as early celebrities and traversing through the Romantic to modern times, he writes about the rise of political celebrities like Mussolini, Churchill, Hitler, Stalin etc., and its later democratization which paved the way for the inclusion of actors, pop singers and sports heroes as the foremost celebrity figures in the twentieth century.

Celebrity autobiographies are an immensely popular literary genre nowadays. These books promise to offer a peep into the lives of familiar yet distant celebrity figures foregrounding both immediacy and intimacy. Since celebrities are intensely familiar on the screen though physically distant, and their stardom and mass publicity had the potential to cater to the passions of modern society, the autobiographies of Cinema stars, like their political counterparts, offered men and women what they did not have i. e. an escape from the drudgery of everyday lives through a false sense of recognition. Ideas that these celebrities stood for such as a life of leisure, freedom, youthfulness, fun and frolic in the mind of the masses prompted the gossip columnists and photographers to write about them for the hungry masses. These public lives "embody key meanings of the day: success and wealth first, perhaps; then niceness, generosity, honesty, integrity, spontaneity, sympathy (on the good side); and arrogance, insolence, cruelty, narcissism, irresponsibility, greed (on the bad)" (Inglis 17). The 'true' story of such stars, who were living in the constant public gaze was much in demand, paving the way for an unprecedented spurt in celebrity autobiographies.

4.11.7 Chaplin's Autobiography

One of the earliest and most significant celebrity autobiographies is Charlie Chaplin's *My Autobiography* (1964), a seminal work that offers readers a deeply personal insight into the life of one of cinema's greatest legends. Chaplin was not only a pioneering figure in silent cinema but also one of the first true global stars, achieving worldwide fame with his iconic character, the Little Tramp. His autobiography stands out as more than a simple recounting of his personal and professional experiences. Chaplin's autobiography was first published in 1964. David Robinson, in his Introduction to the Penguin edition of the autobiography, calls it "a prodigious feat of memory" (3). It is almost a complete account of Chaplin's life, detailing the hardships of his childhood life, his mother's mental ill-health, his theatre and vaudeville days, his journey to America and the subsequent turn to silent films, associations with film-

making companies, and everything else which any Chaplin enthusiast would find riveting. Not only it includes accounts of what Chaplin was thinking/doing while making a particular movie but also lays bare his political/social/aesthetic commitments. Any avid reader of his autobiography would be able to know enough about the late Victorian and early modern world from the pages of his book, especially the history of cinema. The autobiography also records the scandalous controversies—both sexual and political—that Chaplin had to face, and his exile from a country that he lived in and loved. Chaplin was an entertainer, and he does so in his autobiography too.

Writing his autobiography for Chaplin was neither a means for making money nor an attempt to contribute to his declining fame. Written during a period of his life when he had almost retired and was leading a secluded but soothing life with his wife and children in the mountains of Switzerland, the book is an enlightening account of self-discovery. Chaplin called it 'an Odyssey of his life', which intended to offer "no design for living, no philosophy" but struggles of Chaplin's life, both love and hatred that he received. Francis Wyndham considered Chaplin's autobiography a beautiful record of "the rich and famous and fulfilled man whom the world sees" who still "considers himself a victim maimed for life by the early catastrophic shock" (Quoted in Chaplin19). The book describes Chaplin, the son, the husband, the actor, the director, the producer, and above all the little tramp that he was. It is an honest testament to what Chaplin thought himself to be:

I am what I am: an individual, unique and different, with a lineal history of ancestral promptings and urgings, a history of dreams, desires and of special experiences, of all of which I am the sum total. (Chaplin 20)

Chaplin's autobiography stands as a truthful testament to his life, offering readers an incomparableinsight into the mind of one of the most iconic stars of the twentieth century. It is not only the story of an individual's public life, but also a profound meditation on the nature of fame, creativity, and personal fulfilment.

4.11.8 Summing up

To sum up, Chaplin's autobiography provides an intimate account of Chaplin's life, beginning with his childhood in London and his rise to fame as one of the greatest actors and filmmakers of the silent era.In this autobiography, Chaplin shares details about his personal and professional life, including his experiences working in vaudeville, his struggles with poverty, and his relationships with women. He also offers insights into the creative process behind some of his most famous films. Chaplin's autobiography is notable for its candid and reflective tone, as he reflects on the challenges and successes of his life. He discusses his political beliefs and his experiences with controversy, including his departure from the United States in the 1950s following

accusations of Communist sympathies.*My Autobiography* remains a popular and influential work, providing a valuable glimpse into the life and career of one of cinema's greatest legends.In the units that follow, we are going to read autobiographical accounts of Chaplin, the unhappy childhood that Chaplin had to live owing to poverty, his early days as a child-actor and the sudden and lasting fame which he earned as an actor, director and filmmaker.

4.11.9 Comprehension Exercises

Long answer type Questions (20 marks)

1. Write an essay on the genesis and growth of autobiography as a genre.
2. Discuss the salient features of autobiography.
3. Critically analyze how the form and content of autobiographies have changed over time, providing examples.

Medium Length answer type Questions (12 marks)

1. Write an essay on the emergence of celebrity autobiographies.
2. Discuss the nature of spiritual autobiographies.
3. What is the primary purpose of writing an autobiography?

Short answer type Questions (6 marks)

1. Define autobiography.
2. Define public autobiography.
3. Differentiate between autobiography and memoir.

4.11.10 Suggested Readings

Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography*. Routledge, 2011.

Chaplin, Charlie. *My Autobiography*. Penguin, London, 1964.

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Inglis, Fred. *A Short History of Celebrity*. Princeton University Press, 2010.

Laura, Marcus. *Autobiography: A Very Short Introduction*. OUP, 2018.

Pascal, Roy. *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. Harvard UP, 1960.

Stone, Albert E., editor. *The American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice-Hall, 1981

Unit 12 ❒ Charlie Chaplin: Life of the Little Tramp

Structure

4.12.1 Objectives

In this unit, we shall learn about Charlie Chaplin's life, his childhood, and his performances at music halls and theatres of London. Our focus shall be on the incidents and events which deeply affected the mind of this little tramp, and was to shape and curate his artistic and theatrical journey later, as following:

- Charlie Chaplin's childhood in London Workhouse and his humble beginning as a music hall performer;
- Charlie Chaplin's arrival to the USA as a member of Fred Karno Company and his collaboration with film studious;
- Charlie Chaplin's emergence as the first international star and cultural icon;
- Charlie Chaplin's four marriages, his relocation to Europe and his contribution to the Western Cinema.

4.12.2 The Child Chaplin

Charles Chaplin was born on 16th April 1889 in London. His parents, Charles Chaplin Sr. and Hannah Chaplin had married in 1885. Chaplin Jr. had an older sibling, Sydney John Hill from Hannah' previous marriage. Both Chaplin Sr. and Hannah were music hall performers. His mother, whom Chaplin portrayed as "fair-complexion, violet-blue eyes and long light-brown hair"(Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 26), was

aquite successful soubrette. His fatherwas a vaudevillian with "a light baritone voice and . . . a very fine artist" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 29), but his career and marriage both suffered due to alcoholism, not so uncommon among vaudevillians. Only a year after Charlie was born, the couple got separated. Unfortunately, his mother too suffered from serious mental health conditions. Thus, Chaplin's childhood was difficult: he had to endure emotional turbulence caused by the absence of his father, mental illness of the mother and financial hardship. His father did not support Hannah and their lives became more difficult as his mother, once a "star in her own right, earning twenty-five pounds a week," lost her voice, unable to return to the stage (Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 32). Remembering those painful years of poverty, Chaplin writes:

When the fates deal in human destiny, they heed neither pity nor justice. Thus they dealt with mother. She never regained her voice. As autumn turns to winter, so our circumstances turned to bad from worse . . . from three comfortable rooms we moved into two, then into one, our belongings dwindling and the neighbourhoods into which we moved growing progressively drabber. (*My Autobiography* 35)

To raise the children, Hannah had to sell all her belongings. However, her poor health and financial adversity soon forced her to send her children to the Lambeth workhouse. Later, the two brotherswill be shifted to the Hanwell School for Orphans and Destitute Children. Writing about these trying times of Chalin's life, Constance Brown Kuriyama in "Chaplin's Impure Comedy: The Art of Survival" observes that

When Charlie was five his mother's failing health ended her stage career and forced her and her two sons to drift into and out of work- houses, poor schools, and the homes of relatives and friends, or to migrate from one lodging to another. After two hospitalizations for physical illness, Hannah Chaplin succumbed to periodic episodes of the insanity that later became a permanent condition. Chaplin ascribed his mother's col- lapse to malnutrition and nervous strain, but since his Grandmother Hill had a similar breakdown, he often feared that he too would become insane, and that his children would inherit the tendency. (27)

On 30th May 1896, Charlie and Sydney were admitted to Newington Workhouse. At first, the seven-year-old Charlie thought this to be "adventurous and a change from living in one stuffy room. But on that doleful day I didn't realise what was happening until we actually entered the workhouse gate" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 45). Life in the workhouse, although surely much better than before, was "a forlorn existence" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 49), reminding the readers of hardships portrayed in Charles Dickens'*Oliver Twist*. Chaplin hauntinglywrites about his'incarceration'at the workhouse. Fortunately, this traumatic period soon came to an end in August 1896 when Hannah requested a discharge, and the boys reunited with their mother.But then

again in July 1898, Hannah hadto readmit them to the workhouse, and the boys were swiftlysent to Norwood Schools, another institution for abandoned children. Recalling his childhood, Chaplin notes, "I was hardly aware of a crisis because we lived in a continual crisis; and, being a boy, I dismissed our troubles with gracious forgetfulness" (*My Autobiography* 23).In September 1898, Hannah Chaplin had to bere-admitted to Cane Hill Mental Hospital, suffering from psychosis. For about two months, Charlie and his brother Sydney lived with their father. Their stay, owing to his father's uncontrolled alcoholism, was brief and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was forced to intervene. Two years later, their father diedof liver cirrhosis at the very young age of 38.Hannah's mental health to deterioratedonce again in May 1903, Chaplin, then only fourteen, had to send her back to the hospital. Hannah returned home from the hospital after eight months, however her illness has turned chronic. Chaplin, recalling her suffering, observes, "There was nothing we could do but accept poor mother's fate" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography* 135). Even after her death in death in 1928, Chaplin continued to carry the emotional scars of her suffering throughout his life.

4.12.3 Chaplin's England

The music halls had a very prominent place in Chaplin's Victorian England. Both his parents were music hall performers, who could achieve moderate success in their stage career.One of the earliest music halls, the Canterbury Hall in Lambeth, South London, started in 1852.In the 1880s, London could boast of having around 500 music halls. By the 1890s, the largest 35 of these halls attracted a cumulative audience of over 45,000 people each evening. Gareth Stedman Jones rightly observes that "late Victorian England's 'dominant cultural institutions were not the school, the evening class, the library, the friendly society, the church or the chapel, but the pub, the sporting paper, the race course and the music hall" (Jones 479). From the early Victorian period until 1950s, the music halls, the most popular centres of dramatic entertainment in the United Kingdom, staged, followingAmerican vaudeville, well-known melodies with comedic drama. Several historians suggest that music halls signified the earliest commercial mass entertainment which offered the excitement of a modern variety show, blending melody, dance, humour, and comic performances in England.

Chaplin's first stage-experiencebefell at the age of five when his "mother's voice crackedand went into a whisper"(Chaplin 33). He was thrust upon stage to perform well-known song called *Jack Jones.* It was going to his first stage performance and his mother's last. Chaplin recounts this experience in his autobiography,

Half-way through, a shower of money poured on to the stage.Immediately I

stopped and announced that I would pick up themoney first and sing afterwards. This caused much laughter. Thestage manager came on with a handkerchief and helped me togather it up. I thought he was going to keep it. This thought wasconveyed to the audience and increased their laughter, especiallywhen he walked off with it with me anxiously following him. (Chaplin 34)

This impromptu comic performance marked the beginning of his enduringbondwith the stage.At the age of nine, Chaplin joined a troupe of juvenile clog performers, *The Eight Lancashire Lads*. However, Chaplin was little interested in remaining a clog dancer. His actual interest was somewhere else: "I wouldhave liked to be a boy comedian . . .my first impulse todo something other than dance was to be funny. My ideal was adouble act, two boys dressed as comedy tramps" (Chaplin 71). Chaplinwould eventuallybecome part ofFred Karno's famous comedy troupe. Victorian music halls provided young Chaplin ample opportunity to observe and interact with a wide range of performers, including comedians, dancers, musicians etc. who could help him hone his individual comedic style, marked by physical humour, pantomime, and social satire. The music hall tradition, with its emphasis on physical comedy, humour, and spectatorengagement, was to leave a major influence on Chaplin's growth as a performer and filmmaker.Chaplin's keen observations of human behaviour, combined with the hardships he endured growing up, gave his performances an authenticity that would resonate with his global audience.

4.12.4 Chaplin's Marital Life

Charlie Chaplin's marital life is aninstance of perfect irony: the architect of the 'happily ever after'storiesalways struggled to find genuine happiness in love and marriage.Mildred Harris was Charlie Chaplin's first spouse, and the couple married in 1918. Their marriage was built on the false presumption of pregnancy, but soon devolved into a disastrous relationship ending in divorce two years later in 1920. Chaplin thought that the marriage has adversely affected his creativity:

'Although I had grown fond of Mildred, we were irreconcilablymismated. Her character was not mean, but exasperatingly feline. Icould never reach her mind. It was cluttered with pink-ribbonedfoolishness. She seemed in a dither, looking always for otherhorizons. After we had been married a year, a child was born butlived only three days. This began the withering of our marriage.Although we lived in the same house, we seldom saw each other, forshe was as much occupied at her studio as I was at mine. It becamea sad house. I would come home to find the dinner table laid forone, and would eat alone. (Chaplin 347)

Chaplin believed that this tumultuous marriage had ruined his creativity and wreaked havoc in his life, leaving him emotionally drained. The couple's first and only child,

Norman Spencer Chaplin, was born malformed on July 7, 1919, and tragically died just three days later, delivering a devastating blow to the marriage. This heart-wrenching loss deeply affected Chaplin, and in his memoirs, he reflected on their union, stating that it was "irreconcilably mis-matched."

In 1924, Chaplin entered into his second marriage with Lita Grey, a woman who became publicly known as 'the child bride.' At thirty-five years old, Chaplin was significantly older than sixteen-year-old Lita. Due to Lita's pregnancy and her status as a minor, Chaplin risked accusations of statutory rape under California law. To avoid legal complications, they wed secretly in Mexico. The couple welcomed two sons: Sydney Earl Chaplin on March 30, 1926, and Charles Spencer Chaplin Jr. on May 5, 1925. However, their marriage was fraught with turmoil, ultimately leading to an acrimonious divorce in 1927. This split tarnished Chaplin's public image and significantly impacted his reputation. Lita moved out of their home in November 1926, shortly before filing for divorce. In her divorce petition, she portrayed Chaplin as an atheist, a thief, a pervert, a lousy husband, and a bad father. While not all of Lita's accusations were unfounded, as Chaplin did engage in multiple extramarital affairs during their marriage, the public revelation of her statements sparked political controversies that affected both his leftist and conservative fan bases, though these issues were quickly forgotten. The final divorce settlement amounted to a staggering $600,000. While his stardom remained intact, this marriage left a profound impact on Chaplin's mental and emotional well-being.

Chaplin's third marriage to Paulette Goddard was kept secret for a while until he publicly announced that they had wed in Canton in 1936 while vacationing together. Chaplin met Goddard in 1932 when she was just 21 years old, and she played the leading lady in *Modern Times* (1936). Their marriage marked a significant moment in Chaplin's life; however, by 1938, signs of their fading relationship began to surface. They ultimately divorced in 1942, and the couple never had any children together. Goddard later recalled her marriage to Chaplin as one characterized by incompatibility. However, their relationship cannot be described as bitter or disgraceful, perhaps because Goddard was an adult when they met, and they were both romantic and cinematic partners. Unlike his previous two marriages, this union lasted longer and was free of legal troubles.

When Charlie Chaplin finally wed Oona O'Neill, he appeared to have found the happiness he had long sought. Remarkably, Oona was only 18 years old at the time of their marriage, and Chaplin was just six months younger than her father. A month after O'Neill turned 18, on June 16, 1943, they secretly married in a civil ceremony in Carpinteria. Oona chose to abandon her aspirations of becoming an actress, fully embracing her role as Chaplin's devoted companion. In his autobiography, Chaplin

expressed profound joy, stating that meeting Oona was the happiest event in his life. Reflecting upon his relationship with Oona, Chaplin writes:

Schopenhauer said happiness is a negative state – but I disagree.For the last twenty years I have known what happiness means. Ihave the good fortune to be married to a wonderful wife. I wish Icould write more about this, but it involves love, and perfect love isthe most beautiful of all frustrations because it is more than one canexpress. As I live with Oona, the depth and beauty of her characterare a continual revelation to me. Even as she walks ahead of mealong the narrow sidewalks of Vevey with simple dignity, her neatlittle figure straight, her dark hair smoothed back showing a fewsilver threads, a sudden wave of love and admiration comes over mefor all that she is – and a lump comes into my throat. (Chaplin 707)

Soon after their marriage, they welcomed their first child, followed by seven more, creating a large and loving family. Oona expressed a desire to educate their children in Europe, and with the increasing political tensions of the era, Chaplin and his family relocated to Switzerland in 1953, establishing their permanent home in a serene setting that provided the stability they craved. The couple remained deeply in love and happily married for the rest of Chaplin's life. Oona never remarried after his passing and died from pancreatic cancer in 1991 at the age of 66. Throughout their time together, she provided Chaplin with the love and stability he had always sought, serving as a constant supporter, advisor, and the leading lady in the narrative of Chaplin's real life, transforming his tumultuous existence into a more fulfilling and contented journey.

4.12.5 Chaplin and the American Years

America was where Charlie Chaplin spent the majority of his life and found unimaginable success. He never asked for citizenship in the United States, but he has always been a highly popular star there. His impact on Hollywood has really been enormous.At the age of 19, Chaplin signed a deal with the Fred Karno Company and made his first journey to the United States. He began working at the Keystone Studios in 1914. His first appearance on the screen was *Making a Living* (1914). He started learning the process of film making. He started developing *the tramp* who appeared with full glory in the movie *Kid Auto Races at Venice* (1914). *Caught in the Rain* (1914) was his directorial debut. He appeared in a supporting role in Sennett's first full-length comedy movie, *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, which starred Marie Dressler and was a financial success, boosting his fame. He began working for Essanay Film Manufacturing Company in late December and received a $100,000 signing bonus. Together with Essanay, he produced fourteen movies, including *The Night Out* and *The Champion*. Chaplin began to establish himself as the first global star and an icon

of popular culture by 1915. He assimilated to the American way of life and soon turned into 'the American obsession'.Next, he started working with Mutual. Movies like *The Immigrant* (1917) and *The Pawnshop* (1917) were the results of this collaboration. Chaplin agreed to produce eight pictures for the First Nationals Exhibitors' Circuit in exchange for $1 million in June 1917. He made the decision to construct his own studio, complete with top-notch production facilities, on five acres of land off Sunset Boulevard. After it was finished in January 1918, Chaplin had unlimited creative control over his films. *A Dog's Life* was produced in 1918. Dissatisfied with funds and lack of quality, in January 1919 Chaplin co-founded United Artistswith Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and D.W. Griffith. He first produced the critically acclaimed and commercially successful films *The Kid* and *The Idle Class*.

Charlie Chaplin, who had numerous sexual relationships and was open about his political views, went against the grain of American political and social morals. His unconventional lifestyle and political views attracted adversaries. His movements and films were being monitored. He was frequently assailed by right-wingers who accused him of being a communist and engaging in un-American actions. His separation from Lita Grey also hurt his public image. He has been distancing himself from American ideology while networking on an international market. By 1940s, he became a controversial enigma; meanwhile, producing movies like *The Modern Times* and *The Dictator*, these political commentaries were his conscious decision and he was ready for the consequences. In 1953, he said goodbye to America amid all these controversies. His link with America could not be severed by his departure though. Hollywood has always remembered the little tramp and his contribution, without which the landscape of Hollywood movies would not have had the texture it has today. He was honored and showered with plaudits in the nation still after so many years of his departure.

4.12.6 Chaplin's Scandals

Richard Carr in his book *Charlie Chaplin* suggests that "Chaplin would not have been so politically exposed had he not been so sexually exposed, and this was a trend ingrained during the roaring twenties" (111).Chaplin's America was a politically conservative nation. Hollywood and the country were still trying to conceptualize its sexual morality. However, Charlie had already defined his. Chaplin's relationship with Grey remains one of the notable scandals in his life.The marriage between Chaplin and Grey was fraught with controversy and scandal.She was just 16 years old when she became involved with Chaplin, who was 35 at the time. In 1924, Grey became pregnant with Chaplin's child, and they got married when she was 17 and he was 36. Grey's pregnancy out of wedlock and her young age raised eyebrows, and the public was critical of Chaplin for his relationship with such a young girl. The scandal was

further compounded by the fact that Chaplin was already a well-known figure in the entertainment industry, and the age difference between him and Grey was seen as inappropriate.Chaplin's relationships with much younger women, including his multiple marriages to women significantly younger than him, were a source of controversy and scandal. He was often criticized for his romantic relationships with teenage girls, which were seen as inappropriate and morally questionable.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of the Hays Code which encouraged cinema in republican taste.The Hays Code, also known as the Motion Picture Production Code, was a set of guidelines that governed the content of Hollywood films from the 1930s to the 1960s. These guidelines were enforced by the Production Code Administration (PCA) and had strict rules about what could and could not be depicted in films, including issues related to morality, violence, and sexuality. Charlie Chaplin, being a prominent filmmaker during the era of the Hays Code, faced challenges and controversies with the enforcement of these guidelines.In the beginning, Chaplin defended himself under the camouflage of comedy, but in the 1930, the cover up started to wane and Chaplin's work became more political, breaking the code and displaying 'leftist' sympathies, as considered by his adversaries. In 1934, he showed support for the Democratic candidate Upton Sinclair.During the heyday of the Red Scare in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, Chaplin was accused of being a communist sympathizer and was targeted by the FBI. The FBI had been tracking Chaplin's activities since 1922, it was only in the mid- 1930s that the suspicion many had in Washington regarding Charlie's motives were publicly scrutinized. In this regard, Chaplin writes in his autobiography that "My prodigious sin was, and still is, being a non- conformist. Although I am not a Communist, I refused to fall in line by hating them" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography*17). He opposed the Committee on Un-American Activities, "a dishonest phrase to begin with, elastic enough to wrap around the throat and strangle the voice of any American citizen whose honest opinion is a minority one" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography*676).

Further, in 1943, Chaplin was accused of fathering a child out of wedlock with 22-year-old actress Joan Barry. This led to a highly publicized paternity suit and a scandalous trial that revealed Chaplin's extramarital affairs and tarnished his reputation. Although he was eventually acquitted, the scandal damaged his image as a family man.All these activities were being used against him as evidence to declare him a communist and a participant of unamerican activities. Charlie Chaplin boarded the Queen Elizabeth in New York on 17 September 1952 to sail to London to promote *Limelight*.He was denied re-entry into the United States. This controversy led to Chaplin being effectively exiled from the United States and facing accusations of being unpatriotic unless he presented himself before "an Immigration Board of Enquiry

to answer charges of a political nature and of moral turpitude" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography*672). He never returned to the USA and sent his wife to manage the assets. In April 1953, he announced that he had given up his residence status in the States. He would later refer to America as a 'police state'. It was the end of Charlie's American life, and of political and sexual scandals.

4.12.7 Return to Europe and Death

After America, Chaplin made Switzerland his home. The family relocated to Manoir de Ban in January 1953. When Chaplin sold the remaining shares of his stock in United Artists, a company that had been experiencing financial difficulties since the early 1940s, he severed the last of his professional ties to the United States. He persisted in voicing his political views and provoked controversies. Although he never identified as a communist, he consistently opposed the war. He was equally critical of scientists and politicians. He accused them of creating the Holocaust and atomic bombs. He spread the idea that such weapons ought to have never been created. The World Peace Council awarded him the International Peace Prize. In 1954, he started working on *A King in New York*, his first European film. The movie was an indictment of the American political system. Based on a script he had written for Paulette Goddard in the 1930s, Chaplin started his work on the romantic comedy *A Countess from Hong King* (1967). Chaplin focused on re-editing, re-scoring, and acquiring ownership and distribution rights for his older films over the latter two decades of his career. After having a stroke while sleeping on December 25, 1977, Chaplin passed away at home.

Chaplin was honoured by the film community in 1972 with a special Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Lincoln Center Film Society. The latter is now given to filmmakers on an annual basis as The Chaplin Award. Chaplin received a knighthood in the 1975 from Queen Elizabeth II. Chaplin received three Academy Awards. The Library of Congress of the United States has chosen six of Chaplin's movies for preservation in the National Film Registry: *The Immigrant* (1917), *The Kid* (1921), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *City Lights* (1931), *Modern Times* (1936), and *The Great Dictator* (1940).

4.12.8 Summing up

Charlie Chaplin's journey from poverty to affluence is the embodiment of the phrase rags to riches', but it was his artistic genius, sense of social responsibility, and genuine compassion that made him one of the most renowned filmmakers and one of the most benevolent public figures. His masterclass pantomime was the result of acute

observation of life, poverty and human struggles. A true perfectionist and a relentless hustler, Chaplin was driven by an unwavering commitment to his artistic vision. He meticulously crafted every aspect of his films, believing in the power of cinema as a medium for social commentary and change.His contributions to the film industry are unparalleled, but his work for humanity is phenomenal. He will always be cherished for his work as a comic, a filmmaker, and a pacifist.

4.12.9 Comprehension Exercises

Long answer type Questions (20 marks)

1. Charlie Chaplin's life is an imperfect fairy tale. Comment.
2. Do you think Charlie Chaplin became a politically motivated artist as his career advanced? Substantiate your answer with logical arguments.

Medium Length answer type Questions (12 marks)

1. Describe the bittersweet relationship between America and Charlie Chaplin.
2. Lita Grey and Oona O'Neil had impacted Chaplin's life. How?

Short answer type Questions (6 marks)

1. Comment on the influence of Chaplin's mother on his life.
2. Write a short note on Chaplin's England.

4.12.10 Suggested Readings

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Unit 13 ❐ Charlie Chaplin: The Sound of Silent Film

Structure

4.13.1 Objectives

This unit aims to analyse some of the selected films of Charlie Chaplin's career by taking a keen interest in the theme, content and style of the narrative. Special attention has been given to the various sociopolitical and biographical details that induced the possibilities of the narrative inherent in the films discussed. The Tramp, conceived as Chaplin's alter-ego has also been thoroughly discussed over here. With this, the contribution of Chaplin to silent films also constitutes an important segment in this module.

This module has been planned with the aim to:

- understand how Charlie Chaplin designed his acts to evoke the required humour and reaction in slapstick comedies;
- reflect on the production of the figure of the Tramp;

- contemplate on the use of this figure as a social commentary on the contemporary nuances of that period;
- illustrate Chaplin's contribution to silent cinema and the art of pantomime;
- Identify elements of pragmatism inherent in the films discussed.

4.13.2 Introduction

Charlie Chaplin dominated the era of Silent cinema. He conceptualised silent humour with slapstick comedy. His work as a film actor presented a vivid social milieu and often heralded the dynamics of social, political and economic reality. His construction of *the tramp* is one of his many contributions to fraternity and the art of filmmaking. His Victorian childhood, his confrontation with industrialisation and his encounter with Modernism allowed him to pursue an encompassing transition and polished his artistic genius. Like his predecessor Charles Lamb, he could also see humour in pathos, but he was the first to introduce this antithetical structure in cinema. His films inspired talents across the globe and his artistry was not only acknowledged as iconoclast but his name became synonymous with silent movies. The unit aims to discuss Charlie Chaplin, as a pioneering figure in the era of silent movies, his methods, innovation and his films while analysing the cinematic and social appeal he generated.

4.13.3 Charlie Chaplin, The Film Maker

Cinema, a medium of mass entertainment, is an experience of reflection, introspection and rendezvous, as known to modern civilisation. Charlie Chaplin, a man of numerous talents shaped the medium and glorified it with acute observation of society and presented it with brave humour. Chaplin started performing at the age of five, however, it took him another five years to develop a keen interest in performing arts. His first official initiation occurred as he joinedthe Eight Lancashire Ladsclog-dancing troupe, it did not satiate his thirst to perform and he started to aspire to a career as an actor. At the age 14, he started acting in plays, though the play did not run successfully but his debut was promising and his performance was praised. Chaplin debuted his film career with*Making a Living*(1914) at Keystone Studios. Although the picture was apparently not appreciated on the Keystone lot, it received favourable notices elsewhere; the *New York Telegraph* called it "a screaming piece of farce-comedy of the type that the Keystone Company turns out so successfully". His second shoot was *Mabel's Last Predicament* (1914) in which he created the persona of *the tramp*, however, the identity of *the tramp* was not established till *Kid Auto Races at Venice* (1914).

The rise of Charlie Chaplin accompanied the emergence of mass-amusement culture. He was the first international superstar. It was the beginning when the 'lowbrow' art form like cinema started to cater to the audience as something within their reach. Anybody with a few pennies could go to a theatre and treat himself to a movie but not anybody with a few pennies could buy a painting. Cinema, as a collective effort, required industrious creativity and a team spirit. Chaplin was more than capable of understanding the dynamics of mass-amusement. He harboured and honed all the skills required to be a filmmaker. He refined himself not only as an actor rather a director. His directorial debut was *Caught in the Rain* (1914). The success of this movie encouraged him to direct almost one short film every week at Keystone Studios. His fan base was constantly growing which finally had him his first role in a feature length comedy film, *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914). He started working for Chicago's Essanay Film Manufacturing Company in 1914. Actors such as Ben Turpin, Leo White, Bud Jamison, Paddy McGuire, Fred Goodwins, and Billy Armstrong collaborated with Chaplin to establish a stock company. For eight years, Edna Purviance played the role of Chaplin's leading lady.He became the driving force behind his productions, earning accolades from prominent critics for his inventive genius and thoughtful inventions. *A Night Out* (1915) was his second production and first of fourteen at Essanay. Chaplin began refining his on-screen persona, addressing criticism he had received at Keystone for being "mean, harsh, and brutish." The Tramp (1915) marked a pivotal moment in his exploration of pathos, a quality he deepened further in The Bank (1915), where he introduced a poignant, tragic ending.The character grew softer and more romantic. His ability to comprehend pathos in a very subtle and intrinsic way, along with his wit and slapstick antics, left an unforgettable impression on the audience. According to Robinson, this was a breakthrough in comedy movies and the moment when reputable critics started to recognise Chaplin's creativity in action. Chaplin discovered the Tramp's world at Essanay, according to film researcher Simon Louvish.

He first worked with Mutual after leaving Essaney, and then he signed on to make eight movies for the First National Exhibitors' Circuit, for which he eventually constructed his own studio on Sunset Boulevard. There he had the freedom he had always sought, he made some of his best movies, including *A Dog's Life* (1918). Later, he co-founded United Artists in 1919. He produced *The Kid* (1921) with more finesse. The movie addressed issues including poverty, parent-child separation, and the loss of his son in part. *A Woman in Paris* (1923), which received positive reviews, was followed by *Gold Rush* (1925), which is considered one of his best works. Later in life, he produced a number of films, such as *The Circus* (1928), *City Lights* (1931), *Modern Times* (1936), and *The Great Dictator* (1940).

4.13.4 Influence, Theme and Style

The first person who influenced Chaplin, in his opinion, was his mother, who entertained him as a young boy by imitating bystanders: "It was through watching her that I learned not only how to express emotions with my hands and face, but also how to observe and study people". He discovered the fundamentals of pathos from his mother's mental condition and his personal problems, which would later serve as the inspiration for the humour he used in his work. While explaining the reason his comedies often make fun of tragic circumstances, Chaplin remarks, "It is paradoxical that tragedy stimulates the spirit of ridicule ... ridicule, I suppose, is an attitude of defiance; we must laugh in the face of our helplessness against the forces of nature – or go insane" (Chaplin 441). He frequently used slapstick to create comical humour. In all of his films, the combination of pathos and slapstick served as his primary artistic device. He had a great deal of authority and control over his movies. He began overseeing every step of the production of the movies. According to his friend Ivor Montagu, "nothing but perfection would be right" for Chaplin, the filmmaker. He would take as many shots as he required achieving the perfection he had envisioned. He would often demand his actors to imitate to him. He worked with the inspiration of muse and worked only when he felt inspired to do so. This was one of his many ways to achieve the vigorous perfection. However, his methods were slightly unorthodox. He never started to shoot with a complete screenplay instead he would start with an idea and let the idea grow and develop itself in its environment. *A Woman in Paris* (1923) was his first film which started with a complete screenplay.

Charlie Chaplin, like many other comedians or actors, performed with a certain attitude which distinguished him from others. His acts had an emotional appeal which made those performances memorable. He devoted a great time to perfecting his acts. His perfection finally led the audience to feel the character instead of just watching him because he assimilated his on-screen persona and he would reshoot each frame till the assimilation was not complete. In the era of silent movies, it is important to understand that Chaplin's art was the art of movement and expression. His expressions were clean and captivating and often mirrored the audience which increased his appeal, impact and popularity. He was a supremely talented mime artist. As Raoul Sobel and David Francis commented in *Genesis of a Clown* (1977) that mime "was Chaplin's supreme gift. No amount of intelligence, perception, emotion and ideas could have taken its place, for without the ability to translate them into gesture and movement, the 'Little Fellow' would have remained a dead letter, a character Chaplin might have dreamed about but never have realized" (Qtd. in Cresswell 149).

As mentioned earlier, his chief device was slapstick which he instrumented with

great intelligence, care and uniformity. Usage of human props, misplaced objects, repetition of an obvious mistake in attempts to achieve success are some of his routines which suggest stupidity rather than insanity, but Chaplin's comedy lies at the core of this obvious stupidity and challenges the inevitable insanity.

4.13.5 The Tramp

The Tramp was Chaplin's alter-ego and a personification of the antithetical structure of humour and pathos. The character resembled no one; therefore, he became everyone. AsTheodore Huff concluded that the screen character, he created, was a little man buffeted by life. The comedian "worked out a common denominator of fun and feeling that accords with something in every age, class, and race of people the world over. Chaplin is universal and timeless" (Qtd. in Musser 41). The character of the tramp was not Chaplin's brainchild; rather it was an integral part of British and American popular culture. It already had a place in musical halls and vaudeville. Films about tramps were already in existence. In June 1897, the American Mutoscope Company produced *The Tramp and the Bathers*, a film where the tramp character steals the clothes of a man swimming in a small lake (Fuller, 166). In Sigmund Lubin's*The Tramp's Dream* (1899), a tramp dreams he is introduced into a bourgeois household and treated with respect: he is offered food and chats with his host's daughter. However, *the tramp* is not the tramp the public has always known. He is not just another comical presence but the hero with who displays character and will. In *Kid Auto Races At Venice*, the tramp is not beaten which is a traditional trope; rather he wins a war with the director and races the automobile. Chaplin's tramp is not the stock character but a heroic protagonist. As Walter Kerr remarked,

The tramp is a philosophical, not a social statement. And it was a conclusion to which Chaplin came, not a choice he imposed from the outset. The tramp is the residue of all the bricklayers and householders and bon vivants and women and fiddlers and floorwalkers and drunks and ministers Chaplin has played so well, too well. The tramp was all that was left. Sometimes the dark pain filling Chaplin's eyes is in excess of the situation at hand. It comes from the hopeless limitation of having no limitation. (Qtd. in Musser 43)

The sense of the ordinary, of being the universal victim is the strength of the tramp. He stands armless but fights with all his ordinary powers. He makes use of common sense and experience and earns the victory. The audience greets him not because he is a social commentator or he is fighting an evil; he is loved and appreciated because he wins over the everyday struggles of a common man who happens to be the audience too. His victimhood is not limited to a nation, race or an identity. His miseries are too human. Many critics have accused Chaplin of his unrealistic portrayal

of a tramp. However, this accusation can be refuted by the fact that Chaplin's tramp is a film character, therefore, fictionalisation is granted. By the end of the nineteenth century, the image of tramp was no more of a homeless, jobless, miserable man rather he was a natural man, unfettered by society's values, as registered in the words of *TheNew York Tribune*. Chaplin romanticised the notion and gave birth to *the tramp*, a man of experience, wisdom, flaws and common sense, yet a victim of circumstances and society.

4.13.6 Silent Cinema and Chaplin

Charlie Chaplin was the undisputed king of silence because he was the master of pantomime. His tiny body served as the metaphor for all human emotions and attributes. He never used complicated techniques of the art or pretended any galore but he acted as himself and as a very honest performer he performed the action stunts himself. For a man of such calibre, words might have been redundant, therefore, in the beginning the silence chose him but as Chaplin's glory spread and his artistry intensified, he chose silence. As an act of defiance, he continued making silent films and *The Great Dictator* (1940) became his first film to have dialogues.Chaplin, with his great work in the domain of silent cinema, defined the genre. To understand this great artist, it is pertinent to analyse some of his best silent films, as discussed in the following sections.

4.13.7 The Kid

This is the first feature length film directed by Chaplin and the second highest-grossing film of 1921, making the film a commercial and a critical success. The film opens with an unwed mother who has been abandoned by the father, therefore, a woman with little means she leaves a child in an expensive automobile with a note which requests that child be loved and cared for. The automobile is stolen and after much commotion, the baby is found by *the tramp* who initially tries to give away the child but he reads the note and it melts his heart. He decides to care for the child and names him John. After five years, *the tramp* and John live in perfect harmony until the authorities find out that John is not his child and the mother, a wealthy actress now starts to find the child and with the revelation of the note, she finally gets her child. Agonised in pain by the loss of the boy, *the tramp* dreams that his neighbours have turned into devils and angels in the strange place 'Dreamland', a policeman wakes him up and drives to the mansion where he is welcomed by the mother and the son. The film ends with a happy reunion.

The chief themes dealt with in this film are parenthood, unwed motherhood,

social evil, and poverty, along with care and happiness. All these ideas have been presented in a sentimental manner with comical sequences. In his autobiography, Chaplin recalled telling a friend that as *The Kid* developed, he was beginning to blend 'slapstick with sentiments', as it plays the source of laughter which gains its circumstances from the bleak world as created in the film. The film shows the class difference while not claiming any virtue in the poorer. *The tramp,* lives in a cruel neighbourhood and the fight sequence in the narrative shows the monstrosity of the poor neighbourhood. The flophouse owner gives them away for the reward of a thousand dollars. The audience can observe a vicious nexus of cruelty, greed, envy and on top there is the dark evil which consumes the rich and the poor equally. The central characters of the narration are the mother, the child and *the tramp.* All of them have been mistreated in some or the other way. Though the setting of the movie is bleak but the universe of the film still carries morality and never fails to depict figures who are the embodiment of goodness. The first scene shows the mother who gives birth in a charity hospital and she remains good even after attaining wealth; she uses her money for philanthropy and helps the boy without having the knowledge that it's her child. Her affection for the child is unconditional. The cruelty of her lover and the world does not change her and she remains who she is. Similarly, when *the tramp* decides to care for the boy despite the lack of resources and evil around him, he also exudes the spirit of charity. He is a caring father and a caregiver who does not give up on his child under the pressure of authorities. These characters provide texture to the narrative. It also established Chaplin as a serious film maker with his usage of detailed imagery, symbols and metaphors. The depiction of the Church and Christ, along with the halo created around the mother while she is standing outside the church, consumes the audience and it is one of the strongest images ever in the history of the cinema. While one aspect of the imagery suggests the divine, the other compares the mother to the Mother Mary with the halo, and the marriage shows the contradictory nature of social reality. This elaborate imagery foreshadows the narrative and forms the looming arc of goodness as the principal idea behind this silent film. It is the evil which distresses the audience but it's the goodness and morality depicted in the film which bring joy to the audience and he feels like revisiting Chaplin's art whenever he gets a chance as he is promised to laugh, experience happiness and receive satisfaction; the qualities which ensure success for any medium of mass-amusement.In 2011, the Library of Congress selected *The Kid* to be preserved in the United States National Film Registry, as being "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant".

4.13.8 A Woman in Paris

The film has a unique stature in Chaplin's filmography as it is a serious drama and

the protagonist is not Chaplin. The film's setting is France where a countryside girl becomes a courtesan and then caregiver. Marie St. Claire waits for Jean Millet as they are going to Paris to get married. Jean Millets' father dies and he fails to arrive at the station. Marie leaves without him and becomes the mistress of Pierre Revel. After a year, because of a fateful event, she meets Jean once again, and they revive their romance. She breaks off with Revel but after hearing Jean and his mother's conversation, disheartened Marie goes back to Revel. The film ends with Jean's death and Marie with Jean's mother goes back to the countryside and starts a shelter home for orphans. The last scene shows Marie's horse-drawn wagon and Revel's automobile passing each other in the opposite direction.

The film was feature-length and can be considered to be the first of United Artists' productions. The film did not achieve any commercial success for the absolute reason that Chaplin did not play any significant role in the film but a small cameo. The audience expected to see him but as they did not, the film bombed at the box office. However, it received a positive critical review, which established Charlie Chaplin's versatile talent and profound intelligence. The film is a simple story told with sophistication. The visual narrative is decorated with symbols, metaphors and metonymy. The famous scene at the train station is a metaphoric representation of Marie's departure from the life she had always known. The scene has inspired numerous film-makers to shoot similar sequences. Her transformation is represented by her extravagant clothes which is a bold use of metonymy. The last scene where the wagon and automobile pass each other completes Marie's character arc and her estrangement from life in Paris. In the beginning of the narrative, a locomotive is used to deliver a similar metaphor. Using vehicles as symbols and metaphor shows the subtle art which crafted the visual imagery of the woman in Paris. A few modern critics have criticised the film on the grounds that it didnot utilise France as it could have been or for the fact that the scenes of the narrative have lost their impact but it must be understood that the movie was produced in the 1920s with contemporary devices and the scenes from the film have been copied, imitated, or at least have inspired many filmmakers that the modern audience may not find it as novel and fresh as it was in 1923. Therefore, it is important to study this visual splendour than just watching it as another movie goer. The film deserves a careful viewing by the audience today to bring it some justice. Chaplin revisited the film in 1976 to edit the film and added a new musical score.

4.13.9 The Gold Rush

Charlie Chaplin once remarked that this is the film for which he would like to be remembered. *The Gold Rush* is Chaplin's most celebrated work. Disappointed with the box office failure of *A Woman in Paris*, Chaplin was determined to create the most

marvellous piece of his work, *The Gold Rush.* The film draws inspiration from photographs of the Klondike Gold Rush and the harrowing tale of the Donner Party, who, trapped in a blizzard in the Sierra Nevada, resorted to cannibalism.In the film, Chaplin plays the character of The Lone Prospector who gets lost in a blizzard while trying to find a gold deposit. He enters a cabin only to be frightened by Black Larsen but he is overpowered by Big Jim and all three make a truce and stay in the cabin. The blizzard gets terrible and in a blind draw Larsen is chosen to go out who finds Jim's gold deposit and decides to ambush him. Meanwhile, The Lone Prospector and Big Jim cook and eat a shoe, Big Jim imagines Prospector to be a chicken and attacks him. Finally, a grizzly attack the cabin who is eventually killed and his meat is used as food. During the misadventures, Jim is attacked by Larsen who loses his memory. Larsen is killed in an avalanche. Jim is helped by the Prospector to find his gold deposit. Meanwhile, in town Prospector falls in love with Georgia, a dance hall girl and promises her to come back as a millionaire. Another blizzard terrorises the land when Jim and Prospector try to find the gold. Jim saves Prospector as the cabin is destroyed during the storm. The scene shifts to the next year when Jim and Prospector are wealthy. While returning from a ship, he is reunited with Georgia as she was travelling on the same vessel, whom he was unable to find earlier.

The film is a deconstructed representation of The American Frontier, the pioneering experience. The glory of the gold rush became a legend-like story in the USA but the truth was little spoken though known. The gold rush was actually a lot less about gold because a few fortunate ones could lay their hand on it but it was mostly about hunger, cold, sickness, death and murders. Chaplin was brave enough to reveal the open secret with the popular medium of cinema. The narrative also discusses friendship and love but hesitantly and with uncertainty. Though, there is no hope for Prospector. He does not find any gold; his life is endangered and he fails to meet his love interest but the climax shows him to be prosperous and he reunites with his love. However, the climax is not a result of any skill or hard work but a sheer chance and a stroke of luck which would certainly have been the rarest of circumstances of most of the gold diggers. Unlike Prospector, they would have died in the blizzard or by hunger or the attack of grizzly or by sickness, this is the bitter truth Chaplin is telling us. He is telling the truth by not revealing it. He clearly contrives the climax which also tells the audience that this is the end one would meet in a film but real life was different and would have been a disaster. Therefore, Chaplin deconstructs the glorified mythology and reveals the truth by employing the presence of what is absent.

The desperation to find the gold is an analogy of dire poverty, it's a study of human depression and deprivation, and Chaplin mastered humour in pathos; hence, the delivery of slapsticks in the film remains unmatched till date. The comedic scenes

highlight the Prospector's innate cowardice, his ineptitude for surviving in the wilderness, and the sheer luck that spares him from a painful death at regular intervals throughout the narrative. These moments transform the hardships of an impoverished life into working-class humor and entertainment, while also cautioning viewers against the allure of the mythic frontier, tales of heroism, and the relentless greed for gold.However, the social commentary is not as deep as Chaplin's other films like *The Kid* (1921)*, The Great Dictator* (1940) or *Limelight* (1952),but it is redeemed with its comedy and satirical undertone.The film is a visual pleasure and a technical masterpiece. The film's photography is thoughtful, elegant and has been captured brilliantly. The camera has been creatively employed and the audience is amazed by some special effects as well. It received the Academy Award nominations for Best Music and Best Sound upon its re-release in 1942.

4.13.10 City Lights

The film is an innocent love story of *the tramp.* As the opening credits roll, the film is subtitled as 'AComedy Romance in Pantomime'. The film tells a tale of *the tramp* falling in love with blind flower girl who needs money for a surgery. He plans to raise funds to help his love interest. She mistakes him for a rich man and *the tramp* continues the facade. He becomes friends with a suicidal alcoholic millionaire whom he saves a few times from committing suicide. However, a millionaire treats him with affection only when intoxicated and as his sobriety returns, he throws *the tramp* out on the street. This becomes a routine. Meanwhile, *the tramp* continues to help and care for the blind girl by taking a job as a street sweeper, only to be fired later. He gets financial aid from the drunk millionaire to help the girl but is caught on the charges of theft. However, he manages to help the blind and informs him that he would be gone for some time. He is imprisoned and released after several months. When he returns, he is recognised by the flower girl who has her eye sight restored and now she knows that her benefactor is not a rich man but a tramp. She shows him affection, gives him a fresh flower and they unite.

The film displays the paradoxical realities of city life. The symbol of this life is the blind girl who fails to see *the tramp* for who he is during the daylight because of her blindness and the alcoholic millionaire who can only recognise *the tramp* as his friend when he is intoxicated in the dark. This multi-layered darkness which is present during the light of the day or of sobriety or of wealth is the core paradox of this delicate story which culminates humour in the pathos. The audience is moved by the emotions yet laughs at the comedic sequence which builds around the pomp of the city life. The very first scene where *the tramp* is shown to be asleep in the lap of the sculpture later to be shooed away, tells the audience about the silence of the inanimate

which comforts the hero but the animate mocks and condemn him without any kindness, establishing another sequence where the master has displayed the paradoxes of city life. However, the film ends with the flower realizing the truth and reciprocating his affection. The climax is optimistic as we see that the flower girl sees him as he is. The darkness caused by her blindness and his façade has been stripped away and the exchange of the flowers symbolises the exchange of love. Therefore, Chaplin is asking the audience not to give away hope but be kind to everyone who comes in their path and someday their kindness would not only be rewarded but reciprocated as well.The film can be considered an act of defiance because Chaplin decided it to be made in the silent mode with a synchronized musical score when sound films were already being produced. Chaplin composed the music and it was arranged by Arthur Johnston.The film has been selected by American Film Institute as one of the 100 greatest films of all time.

4.13.11 Modern Times

The film begins with the title card: *"Modern Times: a story of industry, of individual enterprise, humanity crusading in the pursuit of happiness."* It follows the life of the Tramp, portrayed as an industrial worker. His job on a conveyor belt leads to a gruelling routine, causing him to suffer a mental breakdown. In an ironic twist, he accidentally picks up a red flag and is mistaken for a communist leader, resulting in his imprisonment. Surprisingly, jail offers him a sense of comfort due to the food and shelter it provides, leaving him melancholic upon release.While incarcerated, the Tramp meets Gamine, an orphan whose determination to improve her life inspires him. Together, they dream of a better future, though the Tramp's attempts at various jobs repeatedly end in failure, often landing him back in jail. Ultimately, the film concludes with the Tramp and Gamine, hand in hand, walking toward the horizon. This symbolic ending marked the Tramp's final appearance, as Chaplin retired the character, signifying that despite hardships, the Tramp now has companionship and hope for a brighter future. The horizon embodies the boundless possibilities of life and happiness.

Modern Times is widely regarded as one of the greatest films of all time. Its enduring significance lies in its universal themes of poverty, unemployment, the struggles of the working class, and the deteriorating quality of life for many. The inspiration for this masterpiece came during Chaplin's sixteen-month world tour following the release of *City Lights* (1931). During his travels, Chaplin observed the devastating economic and political fallout of the Great Depression. He also engaged with notable figures of the era, such as Winston Churchill, Bernard Shaw, Albert Einstein, and Mahatma Gandhi, whose perspectives further shaped his vision.Upon returning to the United

States, Chaplin was struck by stories of young men who had abandoned farming to work in Detroit factories. After years of monotonous labour on assembly lines, many succumbed to nervous breakdowns—a condition that influenced the film's protagonist and guided the narrative.

Structurally, *Modern Times* is a deliberate homage to the silent film genre, which Chaplin had refined through his career. Though it includes sound effects and music composed by Chaplin himself, the dialogue is minimal. Notably, the Tramp sings a song in gibberish—the only time the character speaks. Through this clever performance, Chaplin underscores the futility of language barriers, creating a universally comprehensible moment.This silent film's brilliance lies in its blend of slapstick humour with profound social commentary. It reflects Chaplin's political and social awareness, elevating him from a mere entertainer to a universal artist

4.13.12 Summing up

The unit has aimed to discuss some of Charlie Chaplin's major works and its merits. These films contributed immensely to the genre of silent cinema, sometimes as a defiance against sound cinema. These films nurtured the genre and the fraternity to acquaint it with new methods and devices to enrich the art of filmmaking. The genre of silent cinema complemented and completed *the tramp* and bestowed it the universal appeal which still thrives the character, and the master's mime made it a classic sketch blessed with immortality. Charlie Chaplin is one of the most substantial figures of world cinema's early history. He invented, defined and redefined not only the art of silent films but the art of film making as an actor, a director, a producer, a composer and above all as Charlie Chaplin.

4.13.13 Comprehension Exercises

Long answer type Questions (20 marks)

1. Discuss Charlie Chaplin's major contribution as a director.
2. Charlie Chaplin defined the art of silent films. Elaborate.

Medium Length answer type Questions (12 marks)

1. "The Tramp" is essentially silent. Comment.
2. Why do you think *The Kid* is a sentimental comedy?

Short answer type Questions (6 marks)

1. What makes *A Woman in Paris* different from Charlie Chaplin's other films?
2. *The Gold Rush* deconstructs the myths of The Great American Frontier. How?

4.13.14 Suggested Readings

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Unit 14 ❐ Charlie Chaplin and the Play of Sound

Structure

4.14.1 Objectives

This module offers a detailed deliberation on selected films by Charlie Chaplin. The discussion has been done in close association with Chaplin's life and the various situations regulating the content of the films. A set of questions have also been provided at the end of the module to examine your understanding of the trajectory of events that stimulated the transformation from silent comedies to talking films.

This module has been designed with the aim to:

- contemplate on the socio-cultural and political phenomena amounting to the growth of Charlie Chaplin's talking films;
- understand the differential technique between Chaplin's silent comedies and talking films;
- reflect on the critical message inherent in these films;
- recognize these films as social commentaries on the contemporary period;
- assess the impact of Chaplin's films on the critical discourse of world cinema.

4.14.2 Introduction

Maestro of silent films, slapstick humour and comedies, Charlie Chaplin, remains to be an indelible personality in the realm of world cinema. As the master of pantomime, he has redefined the entire initiative to incorporate sound and silence in comedy. With modernization, "improvisation" through realistic sound came to be introduced in Buster Keaton's silent comedy feature,*The General* (1926). Adding realistic sound negated the stylized-fantasy world of silent comedy by placing it in a much more realistic world. As a result, the film became less funny than it was. The solution to this was conceived by Charlie Chaplin, who preferred to employ appropriate musical soundtracks without relying on realistic sound effects in his silent films. This absence of realistic sound becomes a liability when played out with silent feature films and silent non-comedies like D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Comedies usually employed sound effects that were very selective, less realistic, yet more stylized. Thus, this module aims to investigate how Chaplin's silent comedies began to be constructed within a different framework of dialogue and synchronous sounds and how it resulted in imparting a greater degree of stylization without drawing the films too close to realism.

4.14.3 Charlie Chaplin and His Social Philosophy

In his autobiography, Charlie Chaplin has talked about his religion- "How could I throw myself into feminine whimsy or think of romance or the problems of love when madness was being stirred up by a hideous grotesque, Adolf Hitler?" (Chaplin 568-569). He tried to explore his belief by developing a visual comedy rooted in facial expressions, human reactions and situational poses. Spending most of his boyhood life in impending hunger, he extracted his characterizations from the canvas of life. His silent films were embedded in a particular philosophy and message- hope. The sense of detachment from society and individual dignity associated with the figure of the wandering Jew became palpable characteristics in his films like *The Kid* (1921)*, The Gold Rush* (1925)*, The Circus* (1928),and *The City Lights* (1931).

Through unforgettable scenes, Chaplin tried to portray that the dignity of the 'common man' exceeded wealth, social status, and the vices of industrial society. In *The City Lights,* we find the change in expression on the flower girl's face, whose sight has now been restored, on discovering the truth about the person next to her. Through her sensitive sense of touch, she discovered that the miserable tramp before her was the benefactor whom she had taken earlier to be a millionaire. This moment of being discovered has been so poignantly captured in the distress of Charlie's countenance that the scene has evoked a sense of collective pain from the viewers.

Thus, converting this pain and disappointment into unconditional hope forms a significant constitutive element of his films.

When interviewed about his belief in religion, Chaplin had declared his aplomb in art which, for him, was a "feeling more than a belief" (574). His silent comedy *Easy Street* (1917) displays the tussle between spirit and matter, the ethereal and the corporeal. This is manifested in Charlie's transformation to a policeman after being in love with a minister's daughter. This transformation not only succeeded in subduing the powerful law-breaker by asphyxiating him with a gas burner, but also compelled the latter to imbibe honesty. Besides, Chaplin's *The Vagabond* (1916) and *Shoulder Arms* (1916), classified as slapstick comedies, rendered the theme of how such clowning had the potential to subvert as well as conserve the norms of western society.

4.14.4 Silence and His Slapstick Comedies

Taking Pïautus's cue of how hoary constituted the art of physical comedy in western cultures, slapstick becomes a compelling subject for analysis in response to Chaplin's comedies. Slapstick comedies also speculate about the complex dialogue between the representation of physical pain and the gut response of laughter. The basic elements of slapsticks symbolically transgress ideal performances. Chaplin's slapstick comedies can also be understood as "a quasi-ritualized and socially-sanctioned expression of proscribed behaviour" (Caron 5). Slapstick comedies operate through the dialectic between structure and anti-structure. But while conveying the message of the films, Charlie, the disruptive clown, embodies both structure and anti-structure. His slapstick comedies are replete with instances where entering the structure has been depicted through participation in the social order by having a job, or being within the narrative of the romantic melodrama. Subversion of these ideals narrated through Chaplin's comic personae of how the comforts of western technological society hindered the well-being of society have been categorized as the anti-structure.

Pratfalls, falling and tripping are regular features of his slapstick comedies. Laughter is evoked through the constant dehumanization of beings, almost to the state of being perceived as animals. In *Easy Street*, Charlie's constant act of descending the stairs of the mission, and dropping the stove from a second story window onto the ferocious bad guy and yet leaving acompletely uninjured bear witness to slapstick comedies. The hilarious element is imparted through characters represented as always on the verge of being completely out of control. The psychopathic character in *Easy Street* and the sadism of the gypsies toward the girl in *The Vagabond* convey this particular theme of how laughter and wonder are evoked through violence. At the same time, the notion of structure in such genres has been maintained in both these filmsby the classic comic ending of marriage without hints of illicit behavior. Besides, *Shoulder*

Arms, while still belonging to the same genre, also contains aspects of hope and humour. Chaplin, who played the role of a buck private in this film, identifies himself with the joy of the comrade reading out a letter after realizing that no mail had come for him. However, it is only in *The Great Dictator*, *Modern Times*, and *Monsieur Verdoux* that the prophetic quality of Chaplin reaches its crescendo.

4.14.5 Modern Times and the Transition to Talking Films

Silence can both repress as well as represent an enlargement of feeling. Taking *The Navigator* (1924) or *Seven Chances* (1925) as instances, Buster Keaton belongs to the former group. Keaton never really perceived the changed relationship between things which forms the crux of comedy. His realism, which has often been critiqued as surrealism, lacks the feeling or sentiment altogether. On the contrary, Chaplin takes it all on. The rendition of effects through a silent film comedy depends on a high degree of stylization and the constituent material which differ from non-comedies. In silent comedies, the unrealistic is meted out by the absence of realistic sound. His last silent or near-silent films - *The Circus* (1928)*, City Lights* (1931), and *Modern Times* (1936) employ silence as a medium and an instrument: "Speech supplies a hypothetical space; silence can operate only in terms of the given, physical space" (Cott 103).

The notion of people being consumed by the horror and voluptuousness of the Henry Ford type of factory forms the crux of *Modern Times.* The theme of Depression and its effects of joblessness and homelessness have been evoked through silence. Silence actualizes these possibilities without giving any alternatives. In the absence of sound, Chaplin has worked on gestures to transform pain without transforming it. However, silent films shut the possibility to improvise as depicted in Keaton's words:"There's nothing wrong with sound that a little silence won't cure" (Cott 106). Silence, conceived as a universal language, conferred the silent comedies with a suggestive completeness that nullified any credibility to succeeding languages.

With the arrival of sound, dialogue and synchronous sounds came to be considered inevitable components in comedies. Both these effects resulted in imparting a greater degree of stylization without drawing the films too close to realism that would have otherwise destroyed the conventions on which his comedies sustained. In *The Great Dictator* (1940), Chaplin employed a conventional soundtrack, with extensive dialogue and synchronous sound while trying to retain the stylistic traits of silent comedies. It was only later in *Limelight* (1952) that he discarded these forms of silent comedies and use of the realistic sounds.

4.14.6 The Great Dictator

I'M SORRY, but I don't want to be an emperor.

The Great Dictator was opened at the Capital to a glamorous audience. Though it turned out to be the biggest grosser of all his films up to that time, Chaplin has narrated in his autobiography that the New York Daily News said he had "pointed a finger of Communism at the audience" (579). Besides being the most experimental of all his films, it also marks the first film without Charlie the tramp. He altogether abandoned his "rejection of the talkies" in this film, which comes across as a coincidence as the same period also gave rise to broadcast technologies that made political speeches available to listeners. It also heralded the moment of how "Chaplin the comedian was fast yielding place to Chaplin the humanist" (Hickey 52).

Chaplin has opted to play two roles- Adenoid Hynkel, the autocratic ruler of Tomainia, and also a humble, unnamed 'Jewish Barber'.While dictator Hynkel has been allotted the comedic gibberish speech, the Jewish barber delivered a sentimental speech in the everyman's English. As the Barber was hustled onto a stage where his doppelganger was due to make a speech, Chaplin's plea for decency and brotherhood takes the centrestage: "More than machinery, we need humanity! More than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness!" (The Great Dictator).Chaplin's alternation between the two characters' separate storylines makes it impossible to elude either the victims of Nazi persecution or the man responsible for it.

The various discourses of language, speech and accents have raised several criticism as to the identification of the target listener. The way in which the Jews- Mr. Jaeckel and Mr. Mann, for instance, have been assigned with a range of "Jewish" accent-signifiers in their English dialogue lies contrary to how neither the Jewish barber nor his love interest Hannah have been provided with any such. Even the great dictator speaks in a quasi-language that is partly close to German. This particular language has been regarded as a private language "gone public and thus always obscene, in particular because it is just meaninglessly out there" (Daub 454). On the contrary, the tramp's individual language gains universal status as it is comprehended by everyone.

Many critics have cited the film as an instance of trivialising Nazi atrocities. Chaplin has recorded in his autobiography that his film began creating chaos amongst many Christian communities and accused him of producing a propagandist film. And he replied- "One doesn't have to be a Jew to be anti-Nazi. All one has to be is a normal decent human being" (587). That the accusations lack proper grounds can be verified from Chaplin's words:

But I was determined to go ahead, for Hitler must be laughed at. Had I known of the actual horrors of the German concentration camps, I could not have made *The*

Great Dictator; I could not have made fun of the homicidal insanity of the Nazis. (570)

The film coincided with the atmosphere charged with the horror of the Nazi threat. And Chaplin's decision to confront Fascism on his own terms, however, could not be distanced from the social and moral quality of the film. This obviated the possibility of achieving a fine balance between his comic sensibility and rational sensitivity reflected in various moments in the film.

4.14.7 Monsieur Verdoux

Don't believe too much. This is a ruthless world, and one must be ruthless to cope with it.

As discussed earlier, Chaplin had displayed his competence in working out the balance between melodrama and comedy without pushing melodramatic elements to the point of burlesque or absurdity. One such instance can be located in *Monsieur Verdoux*where the hero is a respectable bourgeois with a wife and kids, and a house in the country. However, the paradox lies in how he separates his business from his personal ethics and gets involved in murdering rich hags for supporting and protecting his family. His indulgence in mass murders leaves him detached from his family. This estrangement has left his wife as literally as well as symbolically crippled. The challenge of keeping up his contradictory selves keeps him going in his intentions so much so that he has sought "pleasure" in "winning over and subduing pliant women", and "the sheer fun of role-playing" (Hirsch 22). The only positive reference has been embodied in the character of Anabelle, whose financial instability and spontaneity offer clear association between the two. And perhaps it is the reason that Verdoux has not been able to kill her, which marks a defeat for the serial ladykiller.

Towards the end of the film in the courtroom, Verdoux has been portrayed as one who seems to be the mouthpiece of the director. His argumentative framework of how mass killings refer to war and selective killings makes murderers seems to have been aligned with capitalism and war. However, Chaplin's treatment of Verdoux is ambivalent since he has allowed him the space to relish his crime and indulge in a self-celebratory mood before being served with his punishment. In fact, Chaplin has himself narrated in his autobiography:

Verdoux's claim is, derivatively, that it is ridiculous to be shocked by the extent of his atrocities, that they are a mere 'comedy of murders' in comparison with the legalized mass murders of war, which are embellished with gold braid by the 'System'. Without at all entering into any dialectics on the question of whether wars are mass murders or justifiable killings, the fact still remains that Verdoux, during the course

of his speeches, makes a serious attempt to evaluate the moral quality of his crimes. (Chaplin 633)

There has also been constant speculation to relate the content of the film with Chaplin's own attitude towards life. His progressive, anti-fascist views leading to support for the Allies, and the economic breakdown of the Depression affirm progressive political assumptions underlying the film. Besides, the feeling of being betrayed by his own mother after his parents divorced, his negative experience with Joan Barry and his healthy relationship with O'Neill when he was working on the screenplay have somehow culminated in the film's varied portrayal of women.

These can be analysed to count as social criticism embedded in the narrative. Chaplin has shown his improvisation through intricate documentary montage. The montage of headlines and newsreel footage, which immediately succeeds a scene at the police station indicating the imminent capture of Verdoux is relevant in this context. Through this, Verdoux's eventual demise has been rendered as a microcosm of the disintegrated society of the Great Depression. Besides these, the film also exhibits Chaplin as the master of silent film pantomime, comedy, and pathos combined within the bounds of sound films. In the scene where Verdoux is shown to counting bills or riffling through the phone book with extreme swiftness, the audience is immediately exposed to the comic reminder of the skill he developed as a bank clerk. Embracing both slapstick and pathos, satire and sentiment, *Monsieur Verdoux* has often been heralded as a problematic romance and a sardonic piece complemented with streaks of schizophrenia rendered by none other than Charlie Chaplin himself.

4.14.8 Limelight

Life is not a meaning but a desire.

This theme fits seamlessly into the Tramp films, as Chaplin's works have always prioritized "desire" over "meanings." Both Chaplin and Calvero, the film's protagonist, long for bold freedom, unrestrained by limitations. However, these aspirations seem to reach a "moral apocalypse" in light of the atmosphere Chaplin previously established in *Monsieur Verdoux*.The film begins with Thereza, a failed ballerina, attempting suicide, only to be interrupted by Calvero, who assures her, *"Life can be wonderful if you're not afraid of it. All it needs is courage."* This line partially sets the tone for the film, which explores the interplay between devotion and desperation in the context of performance. The narrative is shadowed by the metaphorical ghosts of clowns and comedians such as Marceline Orbes and Francis "Slivers" Oakley, who once inspired Chaplin but eventually faded into obscurity. Often seen as a reflection of Chaplin's own life and his waning popularity during that era, *Limelight* serves as both a twentieth-

century tribute and a memorial to performers like these, who left behind no cinematic legacy. This homage is evident in Calvero's costume, which closely resembles Marceline's, emphasizing the connection. Marceline, the tragic clown struggling with irrelevance, provides one of the film's most poignant images. Additionally, the opening scene, in which Calvero finds a young ballerina suffocating in her room, strikingly parallels the circumstances of Slivers Oakley's death in 1916.

The film centers on the relationship between an aging Calvero and the much younger ballerina, Thereza. Despite their bond, Calvero's age weighs heavily on him, prompting him to temporarily distance himself, believing he is unworthy of her love. *Limelight* can also be seen as Chaplin's attempt at psychological redemption for his past. The meeting between Thereza and Calvero in the latter's dressing room towards the end echoes Chaplin's own guilt over his ineffective efforts to prevent Marceline's suicide in 1918. Through this narrative, Chaplin allows Calvero to succeed where he once failed—portraying him as someone who inspires and, in turn, is inspired by his peers. In the film's climactic moments, a benefit gala is held in Calvero'shonor. As the house erupts with applause for his performance, Calvero finds redemption and accepts his inevitable death.Comedy in *Limelight* is understated and restrained. Chaplin intentionally separates Calvero from the overt comic sequences typical of his earlier and later films, reflecting a comedian who has lost his creative spark. The autobiographical undertones become even clearer through Chaplin's nearly Brechtian commentary on stage, reminiscent of his style in *The Great Dictator*. When Calvero steps out of character to declare, *"Truth is all I have left,"* the scene poignantly underscores the urgency of confronting his own mortality. Both Calvero and Chaplin seem to embrace the belief that, *"Time is the best author. It always writes the perfect ending."*

4.14.9 Summing up

Through these critical analyses of Charlie Chaplin's films, especially encompassing silent comedies and those produced with the introduction of synchronous sounds, this module has served to explore the subtle stability between material reality and the means to distance the audience from the realistic domain. Reading in close association with Charlie Chaplin's *My Autobiography* has definitely served to trace the social and political panorama of affective realities that seem to have been embedded in these narratives discussed here. Through the play of sound and silence, Chaplin used the figure of the disruptive clown to embody his confidence in art which, for him, exceeded his belief. Being one of the most substantial figures of world cinema, these films narrate how the man behind these different personas had innovated and reinvented himself to emerge as the Charlie Chaplin who is still celebrated even to this day.

4.14.10 Comprehension Exercises

Long answer type Questions (20 marks)

1. Write an essay on Charlie Chaplin's social philosophy taking into close consideration the films discussed in the context.
2. Illustrate the transition in form and structure in Charlie Chaplin's film with the introduction of sound in the medium.

Medium Length answer type Questions (12 marks)

1. Elucidate the functional realities of Charlie Chaplin's life and their relation with the films discussed.
2. Critically examine the politics of *The Great Dictator*.

Short answer type Questions (6 marks)

1. Is *Limelight* autobiographical? Comment.
2. Comment on the comic element in the films of Chaplin.

4.14.11 Suggested Readings

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MODULE-5
Sunil Manohar Gavaskar, Sunny Days

Unit 15 ❐ General Discussion of the Text

Structure

5.15.1 Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Critically analyse the text as a sports autobiography,
- Be able to appreciate the text both as a medium for mass consumption as well as academic discussion and endeavour,
- Connect the text with the theoretical and academic discussions of sports autobiographies as dealt with in the previous unit.

5.15.2 Introduction

In this unit, we are going to study *Sunny Days*, the autobiography of Sunil Gavaskar. This is a wonderful read for every cricket fan. It talks about those days when cricket was on the verge of getting popular in India and the sub-continent. It is interesting to read how India won the first test match and the series against the mighty West Indies in difficult conditionsaway from home and about India's first series win in England, again, in trying away conditions. Those were the memorable days for the Indian team as the entire squad had begun winning the foreign tours.

Since the first two chapters are given in the syllabus, we shall go through them in detail, analysing various aspects of those two chapters while keeping the entire book into consideration. Apart from going through these two chapters in detail, we shall attempt to excavate certain features and themes which shall be recurrent throughout the book.

5.15.3 "The First Step": Early Reminiscences

The first chapter begins with an anecdote – the story of how Gavaskar was almost exchanged with the son of a fisherwoman in the hospital but for the intervention of his acutely observant uncle 'Nan-kaka'. The uncle had come to see newborn Gavaskar and had noticed a little hole near the top of his left ear lobe. However, he was flummoxed to see no hole on the top of the left ear lobe on his visit the next day. Therefore, a search was undertaken and little Gavaskar was found to be sleeping happily beside a fisherwoman mother. Gavaskar ruminates on the outcome of his life had such a providential intervention not taken place. Perhaps he would have been a fisherman, and the baby who would have taken his place might never have been a cricketer.

Does this contemplation lead to any philosophical considerations within Gavaskar? Or does it lead to any existential questions in him? This is left completely unclear. Although we may surmise from his 'wondering' about the fateful occurrence that it did lead to something of that sort, it has not been stated either explicitly or implicitly. We would perhaps have been happier if he would have mentioned, either here or later in the book, that his knowledge of such a near experience with possible obscurity made him aware of his fate and spurred him to work harder or something similar. However, this absence conforms to a long trend in the structure and matter of autobiographical writing, which is marked by a sense of modesty and humbleness.

Gavaskar then into the role of his family in his development into one of the finest batsmen of all time. We shall be well advised to savour this familial adventure since the rest of the book hardly mentions his family at all. In fact, his marriage has been mentioned in two lines, and the birth of his son has been mentioned retrospectively. We can almost visualize small Sunil playing a front foot drive to hammer the ball onto his mother's nose, causing her to bleed out of the nose. He says: "For the rest of the day it was only forward defence for me." (Gavaskar 4) Again, the readers are left to wonder whether this episode left any lasting impression. upon Sunny (which is Sunil Gavaskar's nickname as we come to know later) which contributed to his defensive batting technique for which he was famous, or whether it is simply mentioned as an anecdote. We shall be well-advised not to venture into any romantic or hypothetical deliberations about whether the episode shaped the way Gavaskar approached his

game. This is another illustration of the event-narrative way adopted by Gavaskar in this book, which often besides being fast-paced and engaging, shall leave the readers wanting for more. Gavaskar, also introduces us to his father, "a good club cricketer and a keen student of the game." (Gavaskar 4) He confesses that he found his father's advice invaluable in the development of his career.

We are also introduced to his uncle Madhav Mantri, a former national team player and a very good first-class player. Gavaskar recounts an incident where he had asked Madhav Mantri to give him an Indian Test pullover, of which Mr. Mantri owned many. Mr. Mantri did not concur and informed young Sunil that it takes a lot of hard work for someone to earn the privilege of wearing the national colour. Gavaskar reveals the profound impact such a piece of advice 'had' on him. It must have been disappointing and hurtful for the young man to have been spurned thus, especially since Mantri "had so many" (Gavaskar 5) jerseys. However, he realized that there is no short cut to the top. Such moments of epiphany or at least such moments which engraved upon Gavaskar's mind as significant memories are frequent in the book, and the cathartic experience the readers get from such anecdotes are to be relished when they are found.

5.15.4 The Growing Years

Gavaskar continues his very brief exploration into his childhood memories. We are taken from his earliest memories of playing with his childhood friends in which he expresses his fascination for batting long hours, to his friends' stratagems to stop him from doing precisely that. Many of us are led to nostalgia for our own childhood while reading about his fights with his friends when he would get out.We are also led into wonder at how he managed to keep his friendships intact when he took away the bat and ball (which were his) after getting out, leading to stoppage in play! He takes the names of his future Bombay Ranji team colleagues Sudhir Naik, Sharad Hajar and Milind Rege – who stayed in the same locality and how later when all of them were in the Bombay Ranji Team it appeared to him as if Chikalwadi and Shivaji Park were representing Bombay. However, with such a fascinating pronouncements come no other information, no small incidents, no anecdotes of these players or his later interactions with these players which might have led him into childhood nostalgia.

The chronology at this juncture appears to have been suspended into a sense of timelessness. We do not know exactly which year Sunny is living in, even when he states that he has joined St. Xavier's High School. Another confusion the readers shall encounter is the recounting of various tournaments Gavaskar has played in or won, especially in the first few chapters. Some of us may be cricket aficionados, but most of us are generally ignorant of the domestic cricket structure in our country beyond

the Ranji Trophy. And here we have Gavaskar recounting competitions such as the Harris Shield, the Rohinton-Baria Trophy, the Vizzy trophy – which few people have heard of. We the readers must use our capacity of compartmentalization, of not being goaded into a simple gathering of information about such competitions and take the essences out of all factual details provided. This detailing also serves the purpose of highlighting the rigours which a prospective cricketer has to go through before being able to play for the national level. He shares his first outing in such a Harris Shield match when he went at no. 10 and scored 30 not out. However, the newspaper printed his name wrong the next day, as G. Sunil.

In the first couple of chapters, we come to know of various people who influenced Gavaskar's playing style. Kamal Bhandarkar, a former Maharashtra player, gave young Sunil some valuable advice; T.S. Worthington, a former English player, changed Gavaskar's Indian technique to English one; and there is Conrad Hunte, for whom Gavaskar keeps the highest of accolades. Gavaskar confesses that he has tried to model his batting on Hunte's style. An extremely significant feature of all these ruminations is the dispassionate way Gavaskar recounts them. Only for Hunte does he say that it was an "unforgettable and rewarding" (Gavaskar 12) experience to watch him play. When we see throughout the book the details which he has gone into about particular matches, it shall seem incongruous to read none or very few words of emotion about such stalwarts who Gavaskar asserts have influenced him. However, that is the way the book has been written, and again, we the readers are left to our imagination.

As we progress gradually, the very personal and intimate anecdotes seem to be fading away. Going forward, we encounter very few of those. One such occasion is when he shares an experience which stirred him and led to his development, when he reveals that after being dropped from the Bombay Schools Team primarily due to poor fielding, he worked really hard and improved his fielding to a great extent, using his concentration to become a close-in fielder specializing in the slips.

5.15.5 "Lotuses in the Slush": The Formative Years

In the second chapter titled" Lotuses in the Slush" which begins with his university life, the readers are taken further into a journey through Gavaskar's formative years, which contain some entertaining anecdotes for the readers. He shares with us the encouragement he received from his family in his journey to becoming a cricketing great, with his father promising him ten rupees for every hundred he scored and keeping that promise even though Gavaskar almost ruined the family's budget with a flurry of centuries in one season. However, his parents were also serious about his studies and were extremely disappointed when he got a bad report from his college.

The principal's intervention was necessary to resolve the situation afterward. As seen in the first chapter, these contributions of his family do not elicit any outpour of gratitude or outbursts of emotion. The writing moves in a controlled manner, marked by subtle humour and objectivity.

The anecdote about his first match against Siddharth College is interesting for all the readers. The humorous way in which the entire sequence of events is delineated is laudable, right from the Xavierites driving a car into the field to garland their centurion Ashok Mankad, to the Siddharth College boys doing the same, albeit on a bike, for their centurion Kiran Adhikar in the next innings, to the umpires refusing to declare the number eleven batsman of Siddharth College out of fear of the menacing-looking and stick-wielding supporters of the college. After Siddharth College won, the situation took a turn for the worse with Siddharth College boys indulging in indiscipline. Sunny was protected from the rowdy mob by a senior from Siddharth College while their cars and other vehicles were damaged. However, all these are told with a wry humour which would mark the rest of the autobiography.

The paragraph where Gavaskar states he has been selected for the Ranji Trophy for the first time is again told in an impassive tone. It is not surprising, as he later accepts his failure to get into the Bombay Ranji Trophy team with an equal sense of fatalism without any bitterness to unsettle his poise. In his mental approach to his cricketing career which was uneven till then, there is a balance that one would seldom expect from a young player anxious to make the grade. His meeting with the great Ajit Wadekar also elicits no effusion of boundless happiness. The readers are free to gather Gavaskar's happiness from small incidents like his memory when Ajit Wadekar chose his bat, and after hitting three boundaries with it, got out. Gavaskar told him,"It brought out bad luck", to which Wadekar replied,"May be, but those three shots were the best of the innings" (Gavaskar 13). Gavaskar's remarks about bad luck are not said with sadness or any emotion, he simply uses the phrase "I ventured to say". (Gavaskar 13). These dispassionate and distanced remarks are the standard characteristics of the rest of the book. He mentions Ramakant Desai and Baloo Gupte as good people who kept him in good spirits.

We who have heard Gavaskar commentating on matches have often heard him wonder why reserves get dropped from the fourteen or fifteen chosen in the team without even playing a single match. We have heard his confusion and irritation often, and it is interesting to have those sentiments expressed in this book too when he expresses utter bewilderment at being dropped from the Ranji team without playing a single match. It is this feeling of connection between the Gavaskar we have heard commentating, and the Gavaskar who played cricket, which is another reason for sustaining the emotion and the fun throughout the book.

The rest of the second chapter goes on to recount various cricketing experiences, notable incidents being his criticism of the umpires during an inter-university match between Bombay University and Indore, and that Vasu Paranjpen, the captain of Dadar Union Sporting Club of which Gavaskar was a member, gave him the nickname Sunny. Although he shares some incidents about the man who gave him the nickname which has stuck with him for so long, we are left asking for more yet again. The most significant portion of the second chapter comes towards the end when Gavaskar reveals the poor condition in which university players have to live and survive while on tours playing matches. Gavaskar asserts that it is the university players who mostly go on to make a mark in the Indian cricketing scene since many schoolboy prodigies often fail to live up to their promise. These players are forced to stay in the cold season without hot water and often without any bed, sometimes eight to ten players in a single room. The financial aspect is also criticised as the players receive a very meager amount for sustaining themselves, and they often have to pay out of their own pockets. He, therefore, emphasizes on the need for better infrastructural facilities and better care for those players, since the investment shall go a long way in creating a structure that would properly motivate the players and develop their talents. We have heard Gavaskar often say the same thing, about the need to continuously improve the domestic structure through which players mature and develop, and it is striking to read the same in his autobiography which he had penned more than thirty years ago at a very young age. He reserves a few paragraphs for Vithal 'Marshall' Patil and P. K. 'Joe' Kamat, his colleagues in the Dadar Union Sporting Club, and describes their influence on him.

5.15.6 General Discussion

It has often been seen in the analysis of sports autobiographies across the decades that most of them are modest in their tone; characterized by an element of self-effacement. The authors are much more comfortable while discussing techniques and skills and analysing other personalities, stories of opponents, teams, and competitions - personal contemplations are assigned a relatively marginal role. Any expectations the readers may have that they are going to delve deep into the psyche of the person or shall be introduced into a world of self-examinations and/or discovery shall be met with disappointment. This book synchronizes with such an analysis.

Further, a sense of timelessness prevails at the beginning of the autobiography; Gavaskar has thrown a disclaimer at the very beginning, in the preface, when he states he has attempted "to put down my stray and random thoughts in some order." This is an oft mentioned criticism sports autobiographies have found from many quarters. Critics discard the historical significance and reliability of sports autobiographies on

the grounds of these very chronological inconsistencies or lacunae because this approach necessarily leads to a possibility that many important things are missing which might be very significant in threading together a comprehensive historical picture. Such an inconsistent depiction of events thus fails to portray the true picture of the lives of young cricketers during those times in general and Sunil in particular.

However, we would be well-advised to remember that Gavaskar is not a theoretician or an academic; he is a sportsman, a cricketer, who is writing his own story. We as students of literature might be inclined to critically analyse the text, and we ought to, but the primary expectation from Sunil Manohar Gavaskar then was that he would score loads and loads of runs for our country and win us matches, and what is expected of him now is he would continue exciting the cricket lovers through his deep understanding of the game as a commentator. Therefore, in locating the text within a corpus of sports autobiographies we would, of course, discuss similarities and differences, realize the uniqueness of a text; but we shall be wary of disparaging the author keeping in view the above argument.

As we progress from the first and second chapters to the next stages of the book, it feels like an extended tour log. The book covers only six seasons of Gavaskar's career, bereft of any insight into his personal life, and at some places, the practice matches have got the number of pages and importance Gavaskar gives to a test match. However, he does forgo this statistical delineation for some charming moments; such as when Rohan Kanhai of West Indies told him, "Well played, son" (Gavaskar 44) after Sunil had scored a fifty in the second test of India's tour of West Indies in 1970-71. Gavaskar reveals his elation and the motivation he received from the remark from such a stalwart. It is moments like these that keep the readers hooked to the book. As is revealed later, he names his first boy Rohan, after the great West Indies player.

Gavaskar's tenderness and humanity often come across in this book. When he is selected for the West Indies tour, his first thought is for his friend, Saeed Ahmed Hattea, who is left out. On his way to the Caribbean, he is the young cricketer, yet unspoiled by success, finding everything and everybody wonderful - a kind word for friend and foe alike, and the capacity to see the funny side of things. Such 'funny' sides are the heart and soul of this book, such as when he recounts an episode during the fifth test: Solkar before going in to bat jokingly states "Watch and learn from me." Gavaskar's poise and graceful writing are evident when he says, "Well, he was out the third ball, and I couldn't learn much from him as he had played and missed the earlier two deliveries." (Gavaskar 62). Even his phenomenal successes in the West Indies left him unaffected, except that he was happy that he didn't disappoint the members of the Cricket Control Board's Selection Committee, which had placed confidence in him, and the vast legion of cricket lovers at home.

One episode which occurs late in the book but is extremely significant is Gavaskar's 36 not out in sixty overs against England which was the first match of the first-ever Prudential World Cup in 1975. Gavaskar commits a lot of lines to explain his mental block, his complete inability to play shots, and his inability to take singles due to the defensive nature of field placement. Chasing 334 scored by England in the first innings was impossible, yet Gavaskar's score was below par. Gavaskar admits that it deserved condemnation and censure, and it was not in conformity to accepted norms of limited-overs cricket. However, the consequences were ignominious to say the least. Sunil Gavaskar has, with considerable justification, pointed out the peculiar behaviour of the then Cricket Control Board's President, K. M. Rungta, who asked for Gavaskar's explanation for his slow batting in the first World Cup match against England after his return from England. This was the same Mr. Rungta who had reprimanded Gavaskar for going home during World Cup preparations in Mumbai when he had taken the permission from the team manager himself. The unkindest cut of all was the accusation that Gavaskar's batting "had a demoralizing effect on the younger players, and was also against the country's interest," (Gavaskar 190), as alleged by Manager G. S. Ramchand. The same manager had seemed content with Gavaskar's explanations on the day of the match! One can sympathize with Gavaskar for the irrational action of the Board President. The revelation also goes to show the hazards that Indian sportsmen face and the indignities to which they are subjected to by over-zealous officials. Although it must be admitted that the officials themselves are in pressure as well due to the fan-following the game possesses, they should have done much better than putting the blame squarely on a young batsman playing for his country. It was one inning of failure, which every cricketer faces, but the way Gavaskar had to deal with it was not in consonance with his stature even at that young age.

The bureaucratic maze of BCCI and its penchant for reacting to popular sentiments are evident here and although with time there has been injected an element of transparency within the functioning of BCCI, it still continues to indulge in activities which are unnecessary from a purely cricketing point of view. The controversy over remarks made by Hardik Pandya and K. L. Rahul in a television show'Koffee with Karan' which was aired in the first week of January 2019 is enough to establish this. In that show, the two players were accused of making certain remarks which were quite insulting as well as misogynistic.However, any misogynistic remarks Pandya might have made is socially censurable, but it is not the BCCI's prerogative to give moral lessons or social lessons to the players. It might be argued that since players have become role-models for the entire country due to the fame of cricket, they should be quite conscious of their actions and what effect that might have on the youth of the country. However, the BCCI got involved in the controversy to a degree not commensurate with the seriousness of the action of the players. Interestingly

enough, the wife of Mohammad Shami, the Indian pacer, accused Shami of infidelity, domestic violence and tangentially alleged that he might have been in contact with a bookie. BCCI investigated whether Shami had any contact with any bookie, and upon finding him not guilty, categorically stated that it is the police's task to investigate accusations of domestic violence, and till they find him guilty of any such wrongdoing, Shami shall continue to play for India. BCCI investigated what they are mandated to do: into the allegations of contact with bookie which is related to maintaining the transparency of the game. But they steered clear of socially censurable actions such as infidelity or legal ones such as domestic violence. However, they decided to get involved in the remarks aired by Pandya in a television show because of the public reaction it caused. If Pandya is misogynistic, it is not the duty of BCCI to punish him for that. If Pandya has had relationships with multiple women which were consensual, BCCI has no business penalizing him. However, the BCCI reacted to a public outcry over Pandya's misogynistic remarks and recalled him and his teammate K. L. Rahul from India's tour of Australia 2018-19, which was ongoing during that time, over an issue completely unrelated to cricket. Again, it might be argued that since cricket and cricketers have an influence over the people and especially the youth which is quite powerful, the BCCI should have a say in the social activities of the players. However, the extent to which the BCCI acted was quite unprecedented and not commensurate to the crime, and which can be attributed to the public hue and cry it had caused.

5.15.7 Telling it the Straight Way

Gavaskar, whenever he narrates his own feelings, never minces his words. A typical example is his comment about the Lord's, which has always been regarded as the 'Mecca of Cricket'. He says, "Quite frankly, I don't understand why cricketers are overawed by Lord's. The members are the stuffiest know-alls you can come across, and the ground is most uninspiring. It slopes from one end to the other. I shuddered to think of it as the Headquarters of Cricket!"(Gavaskar 68). Other prominent examples would be his criticism of umpires. He is particularly critical of England's umpire David Constant, about whom he says, "Umpire Constant was 'constant' in his support for England that year" (Gavaskar 69). When Gavaskar talks about his visit to New Zealand and the West Indies he eloquently gives expression to his views about the umpires. He found the umpiring in New Zealand "was so partial that we thought we must have really played well to win the first Test". He adds, "but for the umpiring decisions we would have won the first Test by an innings. Also, we were denied victory in the second Test because of the bias shown by the umpires for the home team" (Gavaskar 208). In every sport, the decisions of the umpire or referee are not always palatable to the players concerned; and this may lead to some of us criticizing

Gavaskar for being so direct in his criticisms of umpires, but this must be seen in context. Following the introduction of the neutral umpire policy to either of 1994, which mandated at least one neutral umpire (not belonging from the two countries playing the match) as against the practice of both the umpires being from the host country, there was a significant reduction in bias against visiting teams, Gavaskar is often honest about his own failings, his own lucky survivals, often he criticizes his own teammates. He lambasts himself as well in one episode for failing to go out of the field immediately and glaring at the umpire when given out by him.

In the chapter "Riding on Euphoria", Gavaskar's fervent anger and irritation at the British Press comes out. He is incensed at their cavalier attitude and the sense of which the English press seems to consider their birthright. Thus, the moment they are successful against the English people everyone in the opposition team is seen to be either conspiring in some way or indulging in illegal or immoral or unsportsmanlike activities. They have the audacity to criticize the spin-friendly nature of Indian wickets when their own pitches are designed decisively to favour the quick bowlers! This aura of entitlement, this penchant for 'Euro-centrism' is upbraided by Gavaskar. Even in his avatar as a commentator, he had a running feud with Stuart Broad and his Match Referee father Chris Broad, because of this same reason. He alleged that Stuart's truant behaviours get hushed up or receive lighter punishments because firstly, his father is a match referee and secondly, he is an Englishman.

A misguided criticism has been leveled against the spectators who came to watch the Test at Kingston (Jamaica) in 1975. The provocation for this was the "way they shrieked and howled every time Holding bowled" (Gavaskar 230). Gavaskar makes this astounding statement: "All this proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that these people still belonged to the jungles and forests, instead of a civilized country." This latter statement has been removed from later editions of the autobiography; however, it was present in the earlier editions.Although the activities that the spectators were indulging in seems extremely vicious apart from being in bad taste; such sentiments cannot create friendliness among peoples, and should be avoided.We can attribute this coarse remark to Gavaskar's immaturity, and it is an exception to an otherwise genial temper throughout the book.

His recollection of the players is often a treat, and those remembrances are the heart and soul of this book, especially for cricket lovers of the 1970s and the 1980s. In the chapter 'Blight on Blighty', he recounts Ashok Mankad's humorous remark- "A pity the tests are over, I was just getting into my stride and by the fifth test, I would surely have scored 25 runs" (Gavaskar 75) which was a self-deprecatingly funny remark about his poor form in the tour of England. In the chapter "On the Hop, Down Under", we even get to read about the great Sir Donald Bradman! His charm,

his geniality become evident through the various snippets Gavaskar shares with us. The chapter, in fact, is a storehouse of tremendous satisfaction and joy for all the cricket lovers since Gavaskar recounts his experiences while on tour as a member of the World XI, and thus various memories associated with great players such as Zaheer Abbas, Rohan Kanhai, Intikhab Alam, Richard Hutton, Gary Sobers, Tony Greig, the Pollock brothers,etc. are presented. Farokh Engineer comes in for criticism from Gavaskar for his insensitive remarks about the Indo-Pakistan war going on during that time when he says he was afraid for the security of his family because his house in Mumbai was facing the sea! This was especially glaring because Bishen Singh Bedi's house was located in Amritsar, which was far nearer to Pakistan and he too must have been worried, more reasonably so. Apart from these, other funny incidents are narrated, like the World XI players making fun of the war by devising fantastic scenarios like Intikhab and Farokh facing each other with bayonets and Sunny in a fighter plane with Asif Masood on his tail! The general feeling between the Indian and the Pakistani players were cordial. He has stories about almost all of his cricketers, most of it jovial and positive with some critical comments. Farokh comes in for criticism due to other characteristics as well, like his tendency to give sometimes ludicrous excuses for his failings and his inability to take jokes on himself. The best characterization is reserved for Bishen Singh Bedi. Gavaskar expresses his displeasure at some of Bedi's acts; however, the readers mostly find funny quips of Bedi: his cavalier attitude, his brilliant performances, his confrontational nature and his playful mischiefs and pranks. The hallmark of his penchant for pranking would have to be his prank call supposedly from the Indian High Commissioner in Trinidad to the manager of the Indian Cricket Team Polly Umrigar asking the latter to explain the team's apparently bad behaviour in a test. Poor Umrigar had to run here and there only to realize it was a prank. Gavaskar also compassionately recounts the scandal of Sudhir Naik's alleged shoplifting, and his kindheartedness and loyalty are evident in his writing. Other anecdotes regarding the likes of Mankad, Sardesai, Vengsarkar, etc. are strewn throughout the book.

5.15.8 The Final Chapters

The final three chapters are reserved for his personal opinions. The twenty-first chapter, named "Pleasures and Pains Touring", reveals his experiences about going on tours abroad. It is a fascinating read in terms of the details of food, weather, and traveling itinerary. The readers are regaled with funny stories about players breaking curfew, pulling pranks, the camaraderie that develops between the players of various countries and the sweet moments they share with each other. Gavaskar in a tone of mock sincerity even warns of the grave danger the Caribbean islands pose to the bachelors! Even he had an offer of marriage from a local girl!

The twenty second chapter, "Bombay, My Bombay" mostly details the sports set up in the city which is by far the best in the country. This leads to technical superiority of the Bombay players which is reflected in the proportion of them in the national team. He reveals that during those days "Bombay players accounted for half the Indian teams. In fact, on one occasion, nine of the eleven Test players were from Bombay" (Gavaskar 243). He also endeavours to dispel the misconception some people have regarding the arrogance of Bombay players. Gavaskar completely disagrees with this view, and categorically states that Bombay players are friendly and genial. They have to get into the national team on merit, whereas often players from other states are picked due to the states' pressures and backing. Gavaskar supports this latter contention by pointing out that many players from the other states only managed to play one Test for the national side; whereas the number of Bombay players who have played only one Test is negligible - which indicates the technical insufficiency of players of the other states vis-à-vis players from Bombay. He then goes on to narrate the extremely difficult cricketing structure an average Bombay player has to navigate to be even considered for the Bombay Ranji Team.

The final chapter "Men and Memories" is what the title states: it is about memories associated with various cricketers. Gavaskar spends a considerable amount of time on individual players, in order to properly portray a picture of them into the readers' minds. The players who find themselves prominently described are Salim Durrani, Farokh Engineer, Ekki Solkar, Vishwanath, Ashok Mankad, and Richard Hutton. Gavaskar is at his best in this section. He takes up player after player, and goes into deep analysis and description accompanied by illustrative tales.

5.15.9 Summing up

The most appropriate criticism against this autobiography is that it is not a well-timed one. It was published in 1976 when Gavaskar was in the sixth year of his international career. Although Gavaskar tried to justify writing the autobiography at such a young age, the reader might be a bit unsatisfied with the end product. Neither does the autobiography deal with intense psychological travails or emotional upheavals, neither does it deal with extremely significant achievements in his career; like the Prudential World Cup victory in 1983, the Benson & Hedges World Championship of Cricket victory in 1985, when he broke Sir Don Bradman's record for most centuries or when he became the first player in Test history to score more than 10000 runs. Yes, his performance in the first test series of his career is nothing short of exemplary, especially against the mighty West Indians, where he scores 774 runs with an average of 154.80; but that is all the reader gets. It is not so that updated versions of the book were released later. As a result of this what could have been one of the most cherished

books in Indian/World cricket feels like an incomplete autobiography for the readers of this generation. The best time, perhaps, to write an autobiography would have been just after retirement, like Sachin Tendulkar has done, or maybe late in his career when he might have felt he had achieved enough and the end is near, like A.B. De Villiers.

Such an autobiography which has been written at a very young age is difficult to be analysed through the critical jargon of sports autobiography. A recurrent feature running through the text is the complete lack of self-absorption of Gavaskar. He is much more comfortable while discussing techniques and skills and analysing other personalities, stories of opponents, teams, and competitions - personal contemplations are assigned a relatively marginal role. This is in sync with the traditions of sports autobiographies in England during those times.

If we look at Gary Osmond and his theory of autobiographies as social memory, the book is a treasure trove of 'social memories'. The intricate and detailed way Gavaskar has delineated almost every phenomenon, every match, is sometimes at odds with what history or statistics tell us. Various perspectives on a particular incident are offered to us – the perspective of Gavaskar himself, the opposition team and its players, sometimes the press, and sometimes the spectators. Gavaskar is often critical of the press, of the players of his own team and of the opposition team and of the spectators. But through all these stem conflicting perceptions around a singular incident, and therein lies the crux of Osmond's argument: multifarious opinions on one single incident ultimately go on to form a social memory – which might be in variance to what historical or statistical figures are saying, or in variance to the opinion circulated in one newspaper article. The final three chapters further open newer landscapes for the readers to engage themselves in.

Andrew Sparks emphasizes the role of dominant cultural constructs of the age in crystallising the events that occur during that age. Gavaskar gives us precious little information to know how events have been fortified in public memory. Some exceptions to this would include the character depictions Gavaskar indulges in. Gavaskar relates the story of Salim Durrani and how he has been perceived as a 'wayward genius' by people, and that he is completely against the waywardness Durrani was accused of. According to him, Durrani had his own approach and his own style, which was in contrast to prevalent notions of behaviour or seriousness, and thus was labeled 'wayward'. Sunny's own tryst with such incongruousness occurred when he scored a paltry 36 not out in sixty overs in the first match of Prudential World Cup in 1975. His score was extremely bad, to say the least, but as a sportsman he just had a bad game. However, this simple fact was overshadowed by the over-absorption with a fast rate of scoring, a sense of inadequacy and a culture of taking reactionary measures without proper comprehension of the situation. Gavaskar is at various points a friend,

a colleague, an opponent, a fierce critic: and through the delineation of events pertaining to all of these identities, the readers sometimes get information which is at odds with what has generally been believed in by the general public. It is then the readers can deconstruct the prevalent notions and look into the social factors that caused such notions, and then can look beyond them. Of course, these would be much easier for people who are contemporary to Gavaskar or who have followed cricket during those times, and therefore would be more knowledgeable of opinions circulating amongst the public and thus would be able to scrutinize them through the lens of this book.

Another interesting fact that might be introduced here for the readers to ponder over is the issue of authorship of this autobiography. The lucid language and the confident handling had raised the possibility that this autobiography was actually penned by his wife who is a graduate in English. Although Gavaskar had categorically denied such a possibility, it is worth considering that if the accusation were indeed true, then whether we shall look at the autobiography in a different light or judge it differently. Of course, questions such as integrity of the feelings expressed or whether the ghostwriter has successfully conveyed the feelings and emotions of the 'subject' would be there. However, another dimension to the discussion would be whether it is possible for a person or should be expected of a person who is excellent in one field (Gavaskar as a cricketer) to be excellent in a creative field such as penning one's own autobiography, which requires a technical nuance and balanced approach to writing which is quite demanding. If indeed it is difficult for that to happen, it is worth deliberating whether ghostwriting might not be a good way to proceed so that readers can be entertained, informed and regaled thematically as well as a technically accurate portrayal of incidents.

In conclusion, it must be said that the book is a commendable effort on the part of one who has no pretensions to being a "writer". Gavaskar's story is told in simple language and is a sincere and honest effort to record his personal experiences as a cricketer and as a man. It is a book which everyone who loves the game will enjoy reading.

5.15.10 Important points

1. The autobiography opens with Gavaskar recounting his earliest experiences as a child. Through those experiences, we are introduced to the family of Sunil Gavaskar.
2. In sub-units 18.2 and 18.3, Gavaskar continues to explore his childhood memories and recounts experiences with his friends, the memories associated with his school. He also mentions the influence of various batsmen on his

batting style.

3. The fourth sub-unit begins with Gavaskar's university life and goes on to recount various experiences during that period. Interspersed within that discussion is some commentary regarding Gavaskar's style and other textual discussions.
4. The following sub-units contain textual discussion beyond the first two chapters. An attempt has been made to emphasize significant events that occur in those chapters. Further, various perspectives that arise while reading the autobiography has been written.

5.15.11 Comprehension Exercises

1. Write an essay on the control and poise Gavaskar demonstrates when he is expressing his admiration and respect for a fellow cricketer.
2. Do you agree with Gavaskar's approach when expressing his criticism about a player or a situation or another person? Give arguments for your answer.
3. Do you agree with the view that Gavaskar should have introduced more anecdotes from his childhood and formative years? Give arguments in support of your answer.
4. Write an essay about the camaraderie and bonding Gavaskar enjoyed with his teammates and peers.
5. Give your views about the relationship Gavaskar shared with his opponents as a recorder in the autobiography.
6. Do you concur with the opinion that the autobiography is not timed well and should have been published later? Elucidate your thoughts.
7. Record your first impression after reading this autobiography. Try to keep it free of any analytical or academic knowledge you have gained later.
8. Write a note on Gavaskar's style of writing.
9. Write a short note on the people who have influenced Gavaskar.
10. Do you think thatpeople who had watched Gavaskar play would read the book differently as compared to those who have never watched him play but heard him commentating? If so, how?

5.15.12 Suggested Reading

Gavaskar, Sunil. *Straight Drive*. Rupa, 2009.

Gavaskar, Sunil. *Sunny Days: An Autobiography*. Rupa, 1976.

'A Theory of Autobiography' in *Metaphors of Self: the meaning of autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)

Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Olney, James. *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton University Press, 1972.

Pipkin, James W. *Sporting Lives: Metaphor and Myth in American Sports Autobiographies*. University of Missouri Press, 2008.

Popkin, Jeremy D. *History, Historians and Autobiography*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Unit 16 ❐ Sports, Autobiography, Cricket, and India

Structure

5.16.1 Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- understand the distinct nature of 'sports autobiography' vis-à-vis the genre of 'autobiography',
- have a brief foray into the critical discussion about sports autobiography,
- engage in a discussion regarding the historical acceptability of the genre,
- recognize and appreciate the development of the genre across the ages,
- recognize and be able to analyse some of the features pertaining to the genre,
- appreciate the unique position cricket holds within the psyche of the Indian population, and therefore be in a better place to analyse sports autobiographies related to cricketing personalities.

5.16.2 Introduction

In this unit, we shall deal with the analysis of sports autobiographies as a distinct genre of literature. It would do us good to completely understand the meaning, significance, and implications of such an exercise. If any group of literature(s) is treated as a separate genre, it must have its own unique charactersitics. And, as far as identities go, it must have some 'similarities', and more importantly, some 'dissimilarities' or 'differences' from other genres. It is outside the scope of this unit

to analyse the differences of this genre with other 'main' genres like poetry, drama, novel, etc. since those have been covered in Module 1. However, it is imperative that we understand the distinctiveness of this genre in relation to other 'autobiographies'. We must understand though that 'sports autobiography' being a kind of autobiography, this exercise shall take the basic definitions of autobiography in order to define and further expand our comprehension of 'sports autobiography'.

Gary Osmond in his article 'Shimmering Waters: Swimming, Autobiography and Social Memory' published in *Sporting Traditions 20* in 2003, analyses autobiographies as a type of social memory. We all categorize ourselves in various groups – and those groups may have as the basis for their origin certain identities attached. Those identities may be as varied as ethnicity, nationality, religion as well as loyalty towards a football club. However, this sense of belonging shall be untenable without experiences, without histories that are common to all members of a particular group. The shared history that shapes our perception of ourselves as part of those groups are called social memory. According to Osmond, the significance of autobiographies lies in the reproduction of social events as perceived by individuals as well as by the general public. This analysis places the emphasis both on the writer as well as the readers, and therefore highlights the potential of autobiographies to act as "instances of social memory for the individual and their period" (Osmond 66). What is being said is that an event, as it happened and as it has been recorded in the history, may be different from how it has been recognized by an individual, by the media and by the public in general, and autobiographies serve as a vehicle to crystallize these latter opinions.

From a very different perspective, Andrew Sparks, in his article "Bodies, Narratives, Selves, and Autobiography: The Example of Lance Armstrong" published in the *Journal of Sports & Social Issues 28* in 2004, views the importance of autobiographies in the multiple identities and selves that are contained within them. Identity is never a constant: we are never limited to a single identity. Even in the course of a single day, each of us negotiates with and performs numerous identities assigned to us as well as borne by us – the identity may be of a son/daughter, a sibling, a friend, a cousin, a football fan, an Indian, etc. Of course, identities are never innate: social and cultural constructs play a very important role in crystallizing an identity. Without such constructs, we perhaps would never have identified with any religion, caste, race, ethnicity, and gender. Sparks assesses the construction and co-existence of such multi-faceted identities within an autobiography. He also assesses how individual stories get shaped by culture. Culture may change with time, and therefore an identity as has been constructed by a particular culture is unique in its features. The culture may act itself through its markers and signifiers, such as narratives of the body, individualism, masculinity and illness. Therefore, an event as it transpired is fortified in public memory and discourse through the dominant cultural concerns of that age, and it is those identities that rise

through the multiple cultural markers which become important for Sparks.

James W. Pipkin in his book *Sporting Lives: Metaphor and Myth in American Sports Autobiographies* (2008), studies American sports autobiographies through the literary techniques we employ to study the traditional texts in our syllabi – use of language, metaphor, rhetorical strategies, etc. – to unearth and delineate themes and motifs running through those 'texts'. He therefore puts the emphasis firmly on the deeper meanings and truths revealed by the texts instead of the informative and testimonial understanding of autobiographies propagated by the likes of Osmond and Sparks. He finds recurring motifs such as 'childhood', 'youth', 'body image', 'anxiety over performance and retirement' embedded within the sports autobiographies.

5.16.3 Autobiographies and History

Some of us may identify sports autobiographies as being records of history which are stated from the perspective of a sportsman.Such an approach would also mean that they contain prominent information which may be complementary to understanding history. However, sports historians have often criticized sports autobiographies as being too frivolous and not-so-reliable for academic study. Their condemnation stems primarily from two points. Firstly, they feel there is a probability of prevarication and therefore an attempt to construct a complimentary self-image. Secondly, they perceive in such autobiographies a general lack of analysis of the inner world. In other words, they accuse these texts of simple delineation of data and phenomena without any in-depth analysis of the same. Thus, it could not be relied upon for the most important task of history – analysing and understanding past societies and their complexities. The very subjectivity that is fundamentally the chief component of autobiographies is the bone of contention for these historians. Since a subject is a person, subjectivity refers to how a person's own uniqueness influences their perceptions. It naturally follows that those events which have been depicted are based on individual personal impressions, feelings, beliefs or opinions rather than on hard facts. This is an anathema to most historians, who prefer the elimination of subjective perspectives and a process that is purely based on hard facts, also known as 'objectivity'. The complete disregard of autobiographies for chronology, their selective exposition and omission of events, enhancements of certain aspects of life while being silent about the rest, lack of confidentiality, literary construction which foregrounds personal experiences rather than the traditionally accepted concept of cause-and-effect ; and the general fallibility of memory – all these factors have contributed to a general lack of trust towards autobiographies as useful vehicles of historical information. For British historian G. Kitson Clark, memoirs and autobiographies are "the least convincing of all personal records" (Popkin 16), and A. P. J. Taylor goes so far as to say that written memoirs

are "set down to mislead historians" (Thompson, 104). What Stephen Wagg, Professor, Leeds Beckett University has to say is very illuminating: "Whatever else these books may be, they are personal accounts; they don't analyze the football world—they only provide the raw materials for doing so" (xiii).

On the other hand, critics who are not so decisively anti-autobiography in their stance note some features in autobiographies which, according to them, would serve the purpose of a historian or a student of history. This may be achieved through treating autobiographies as a cultural artefacts which are capable of producing reality. Autobiographies may thus be treated as texts which have the ability to change the readers' comprehension of the world in which the subjects lived. Despite the gaps and lacunae which shall inevitably exist in any autobiography, they act as cultural texts: through their production and reproduction, and ultimately consumption by the readers, they possess a capacity to affect the judgment of the readers as to how the stars and the sports were perceived in the society.

However, alternate perspectives to the historical and academic significance of autobiographies gradually came into being. German Philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey was the first to argue in favour of autobiographies by stating that they were the "highest and most instructive" (Popkin 18) form in which the readers could understand life. He opined that it was the self-reflection of individuals which translate into an autobiography. Thus, it is significant in its historical potential because the person has succeeded in recognizing the 'connecting threads' through different points of view. This recognition of the 'connecting threads' among multiple points of view, among many incidents across the years, is significant. That person, therefore, is in a very good position to present a narrative with proper historical connections, choosing those events which are significant while discarding the superfluous ones. It provides an acute insight into particular human experiences. In the 1970s, Kenneth Barkin further demonstrated the usefulness of autobiographies in its capacity to delineate the feelings, experiences, prejudices of the individual.

Further, literary critics have been more inclined to consider autobiography through the traditional lens of structure, language, plot, theme and such other instruments we employ in our quest to analyse a text. Since historical texts generally were not subjected to such analysis, this created an implicit assumption that a gap, a difference exists between history, which is factual and autobiography, which is fictional. However, from the 1990s, this distinction gradually became weak. The fictional character of autobiography was accepted, but it was realized that autobiographies provided 'access to history' – that they not only created meaning but reflected it as well. What was extremely crucial to the critics was the potential of these texts to create meaning rather than simply being passive reflectors of the same. Simply put, the emphasis was much more on the effect of autobiographies on the readers, on the ground zero if it

can be said so, and the conclusion was that the audience does recognise the relation between the text, the author and the historical life. As such, a meaning, quite possibly a new outlook on prevalent notions of history, could be created. Thus, we see the critics move away from the arguments regarding the capacity of these texts as passive carriers of historical information and acknowledge their potential to formulate ideas and notions about those specific historical times in the minds of the readers.

The development of the 'history from below' approach in studying, analysing and understanding historical representations in the 1970s gave another impetus to the academic study of autobiographies. In the study of philosophy and literature, a new conceptual framework often leads to new and insightful analysis of textual works, as if the readers were always concerned about and thinking along those very lines, while simply lacking a theoretical paradigm to place their ideas in. The 'history from below' approach is a historical narrative that attempts to recount historical events from the perspective of the common people rather than the leaders. This new approach gave an impetus to the study of autobiography, simply because it championed its 'subjectivity', which earlier was the major cause for its derision. The autobiographies came to be treated as important sources of information for unearthing the prevailing ideas of the self.

This led to important critical activities such as John Burnett's and David Vincent's studies of nineteenth and early twentieth-century working-class autobiographies, as well as Mary Jo Maynes' and James S. Amelang's studies on nineteenth century and early modern Europe which foregrounded the potential of first-person accounts as records of the dynamics of class identities.

Popkin's attempts to reconcile the prevailing conflict between the historical and the fictional strands within autobiographies is most helpful. His conclusion was that autobiography needed to be recognised as a third genre, with similarities with both fiction and history, yet containing distinct qualities of its own. According to him, history and autobiography attempt to narrate true stories, and it does so through maintaining a chronological unity. However, autobiography is different from history in its experimentation with various literary techniques (such as the use of time as it is occurring in the subject's psyche rather than the realtime), its lack of documentation, etc.

5.16.4 Sports Autobiography and its Development

The earliest sports autobiographies were primarily written by wealthy, upper-class gentlemen in sports like golf, horse-racing, and cricket. These aristocrats would also be owners of horses or would patronize cricket teams. However, autobiographies from sportsmen with working-class origins would come up sometimes – like *Genius Genuine* by the jockey Sam Chifney in 1805, and the memoir of Daniel Mendoza, a late eighteenth-century Jewish prize-fighter, published originally in 1816.

Some Victorian and Edwardian sportsmen wrote their autobiographies as well. One was W. G. Grace, the best-known sporting figure of his day, whose two volumes were *Cricket* (1891) and *Cricketing Reminiscences and Personal Recollections* (1899). There were eight cricket memoirs published between 1890 and 1909, including these two. The others include the Nottinghamshire and England bowler, coach, and umpire Albert Shaw's *Cricketer: His Career and Reminiscences* published in 1901, and Richard Gorton Barlow's *Forty Seasons of First Class Cricket*, which appeared in 1908. But these were few and far between since the demand was mostly for non-fiction sports writing which would include instructions on skills, techniques, and social etiquette of the sport.

The earliest writings which may be called a precursor to sports autobiographies were the ones published in newspapers and journals. They were either short biographical accounts or pen-portraits of sportsmen, often coming up in national and local presses. Gradually, newspapers would make such sections on individual sportsmen, their experiences and ambitions, a regular feature, and the newspapers would also include sections on officials, referees, and administrators. This further led to a serialization across a long period of time of sportspersons' lives, and they would include narrative accounts of significant events in their career from schooldays or their attitude towards other sportsmen. Heavyweight boxer Bombardier Billy Wells had the story of his life serialized continuously from May 1914 to March1915 in the weekly *Answers*. *Thomson's Weekly News* published a new autobiography of Wells over forty installments in 1920. The gradual increase in national weekly newspapers and their increasing emphasis on sensational sporting news such as the conflict between the players and the management, disputes among teammates and rivals, discussions regarding wage structure, etc., acted as further incentives for the autobiographical stories to be acceptedby the general reading public.

Although there was an increase in book-length sports autobiographies during the inter-war period in England, they were still quite rare, with sixteen autobiographies of sportsmen recorded. Memoirs, however, were in vogue. Jack Hobbs, England opening batsman, produced three, while Wimbledon champion Fred Perry published *My Story* in 1934. Other memoirs by professional golfers, boxers, officials and administrators were also common. From the late 1940s, there was a renewed interest in sports books by leading publishers. These publishers contracted leading sportsmen to write their autobiographies. Companies such as Sporting Handbooks were established which specialised in sporting topics. Sporting Handbooks published Eddie Hapgood's *Football Ambassador* (1945) and Tommy Lawton's *Football Is My Business* (1946), alongside popular sporting literature. The establishment of book clubs, like the Sportsmans Book Club, which ran from the 1950s to the 1960s, further nurtured this

instinct of writing sports autobiographies, since they themselves published their own editions of biographies and autobiographies by sportspersons. These factors led to a surge in sports autobiographies –whereas about sixty of them were published in Britain in the 1920s and about seventy in the 1930s, 123 were published in the 1950s and 175 in the 1960s. Well-known personalities could sell their repackaged and updated lives to the masses for consumption on a regular basis. This boom led to a transformation in the status of the sporting personalities – they became recognized and celebrated as household names. Another factor that exacerbated such a surge was a palpable change in the status of sports and sportsmen within the minds of the general public. While earlier the recognition of sportsmen would be limited to the sporting world, various factors, like the second world war and peoples' disenchantment with political figures as popular idols led to an increase in interest in sports. Thus, it was this rush of curiosity into sportspersons' lives which made the publishers aware of the financial possibilities of tapping into this newfound excitement. This in turn was directly proportional to such an increase in output of sports autobiographies. The arrival of radio and television which broadcast sports events live was also extremely vital in aiding such an interest in sports, which proportionately increased curiosity in the lives of sportspersons. Leading sportsmen became stars, who were increasingly viewed as representatives of national character and prestige. Publishing life stories were reflective of stardom, while it also contributed to the process of becoming a star.

5.16.5 Authorship

It becomes important at this juncture of our brief introduction to the genre of sports autobiography to analyse the characteristics of the genre from two perspectives –the issue of authorship and external influences on the patterns and structures. French academic Philippe Lejeune defined autobiography as a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular, the story of his personality" (4). What Lejeune crucially argues is that the most important feature of the genre is an implicit agreement between the reader and the author that the author, narrator, and protagonist of the text are the same. In other words, the name of the author as it appears on the cover and the title page is the same person as the narrator and the protagonist of the text. The reader should, according to Lejeune, attribute the life and "production of the whole written text" (11) to him. However, one complicacy that arises regarding this issue of authorship is the influence of the 'ghostwriter'. A ghostwriter is a person who is hired or appointed to write the autobiography of another person, although the autobiography is credited to the latter. This seems to be in direct contravention to the basic tenets of the genre. However, a deeper analysis might be useful in deconstructing this

apparent duality in the 'memory' of the subject and its'writing' by another person. A useful distinction may be made in these cases between the 'subject' whose life is being told and the 'writer', the ghostwriter who actually writes the piece. Basically, what transpires is that the subject of the autobiography becomes the source of the matter while the writer is responsible for the structure, control,andcommunication of the matter. It is imperative for the writer in such a scenario to imagine himself as the subject so that he can effectively write in his place. The writer further ensures that authenticity is maintained between the matter and the tone of the text, as well as adapting the matter to the conventions of the genre and also to the demands of the market. This notion of authorshipis related to the spirit of the autobiography as much as it is related to the production of a text which can be consumed by a large number of people. The publisher here acts as the linchpin – after he commissions the book, the ghostwriter exploits the memory of the subject in order to produce a compelling product eligible for consumption by the masses, and it helps those subjects who either cannot write or are not skillful enough to synchronise the matters to the tastes of the reading audience. Ultimately it would matter little, for the subject himself signs the book and is recognized and accepted as the 'author'. He is in symbolic control of the writing, and the reader accepts this and has faith in the authenticity of the writing.

5.16.6 Structures

The second aspect worth a brief introduction would be the various structures of the sports autobiographies. It shall stand us in good stead to remember the crucial role played by the media as they take the stories of these subjects to the people. The media is always engaged in reshaping the stories of these personalities as per their achievements and their activities. Garry Whannel has identified two major structures which sports autobiographies generally follow – firstly, the 'golden success story', and secondly, the 'ups and downs' narrative. The former was mostly written on the occasion of or preceded by a major sporting achievement. In this structural scheme, the events follow the chronologicalprogression through the life of the subject, while that climactic event both acts as preface as well as climax to the narrative. The latter, on the other hand, which was mostly preferred by sporting figures who were not very popular, follows a pattern of oscillation between success and failures. This kind foregoes any climactic conclusion.

A major influence that shaped the way stories were told in sports autobiographies was the tradition of oral reminiscence. Early nineteenth-century working-class autobiographies followed such a narrative pattern immensely – it was like a family or communal storytelling, and therefore many memoirs began as stories told to friends and families, and then were turned into formally constructed literary pieces. This

formal construction was either to make the life-story permanent or to reach a wider reading public. This trend continued in the autobiographies written by sportspersons as well, and therefore, the autobiographies often had a story-telling like quality, where the 'voice' of the author as the storyteller assumes great significance. The memories and spoken reminiscences form a major part of those sports autobiographies and reading those autobiographies often felt like hearing the stories directly from the authors. As such, they often included anecdotes and were linear in structure. They were often divided into a score or two very short chapters of a few pages each, which were further subdivided into specific episodes. All these were combined together in a loose chronological sequence. The structure so created often imitated a picaresque form which constituted numerous fragments of experiences and events.

Structure and content were related to each other. The life stories often followed a familiar pattern – it began with the family background, then introduction into childhood to schooling and then the struggles associated with the professional arena before establishing a career in sport. Most of the autobiographies were written when the individual was relatively young, either midway into a successful career or shortly after taking retirement from active sport. These types of sports autobiographies were more of career narratives than actual life stories since the spotlight was majorly on public activities, achievements, and failures of the author; private relations, psychological phenomena or domestic life were relegated to tertiary roles, and often given very little space. They were characterised by a foregrounding of the outer rather than the inner life. There was almost no space for self-reflection or introspection. The autobiographies offered to the general public a personal account of various events with an insider version of the game, the raw information already available to them via radio and newspapers. However, sports autobiographies were never really self-absorbed. Most of them were modest in their tone, characterized by an element of self-effacement. The authors were much more comfortable while discussing techniques and skills and analysing other personalities, delineating stories of opponents, teams, and competitions – personal contemplations were assigned a relatively marginal role. Any expectation the readers may have of going to delve deep into the psyche of the person or shall be introduced to a world of self-examinations and/or discovery shall be met with disappointment.

5.16.7 Cricket and India

Since the module is on Sunil Manohar Gavaskar and his autobiography, it becomes imperative to have a brief introduction on the extent and significance of cricket in India, since Gavaskar was a cricketer. This is significant because without having proper knowledge of cricket's overwhelming significance in India, we shall fail to

properly contextualize the autobiography of Sunil Gavaskar. The sheer scale of cricket in India, the passion the sport generates within the hearts of millions of its followers, is unprecedented in its magnitude. Therefore, all the various features and perspectives of a sports autobiography we have discussed – the role of media, social memory, cultural markers, and its significance, the effect on and acceptance by the readers – are magnified owing to the overbearing presence of cricket in India. Thus, the readers must also keep this factor in their minds while critically evaluating and analysing Gavaskar and his autobiography.

Cricket is, without a doubt, the most celebrated and followed sport in India. According to the largest-ever market research into the sport conducted by the ICC, cricket has over one billion fans globally, with the Indian sub-continent alone constituting more than 90 percent of them. That in itself is an absolutely staggering data. Out of 11 Test-playing nations, out of 104 nations playing limited-overs cricket, the Indian subcontinent accounts for over 90 percent cricket fans. Of course, it also includes countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, but the sheer population of India with respect to other nations of the subcontinent positively concludes that India accounts for more than 50 percent of cricket fans. I think we all, whether we follow any sport or not, know the current skipper of the Indian cricket team, or that Sachin Tendulkar is an icon in the game of cricket. Very few of us, who do not follow any sport seriously, can claim to know the same about any other sport in India, including famous ones such as football or hockey. There probably isn't another market in the world where one sport matters so much disproportionately to everything else.

A statistic into the might of cricket shall be significant in this regard. Star India in 2017 paid $2.55 billion to buy the five-year global media rights of the Indian Premier League (IPL) while advertising slots of IPL are sold approximately at a premium of 250 percent over other TV shows. The BCCI earns 600 million dollars from IPL alone per year. India contributed approximately 70 percent of all the revenue generated under the ICC umbrella. The deregulation of the Indian television market, which ended the monopoly of state-owned Doordarshan, and more importantly, the legal victory of the Board for the Control of Cricket in India over the Indian government which granted the former the right to auction broadcasting rights, made it possible for millions of rupees to be circulated into the cricketing market, which would not have been possible had it remained under the red tape and bureaucratic control of the Indian government. The World Cup victory of 1983 had already created a class of intensely passionate cricket lovers. The situation was ripe to monetise such an intense fan-base. The BCCI with its professionalism did it brilliantly. BCCI's former secretary Anurag Thakur sees the moment BCCI got the broadcast rights as a "game-

changer," one that altered "the fate of Indian cricket." To underline the governing body's wealth, the BCCI is expected to earn $405 million in the new ICC cycle until 2023 – the next richest governing body being the England and Wales Cricket Board with $139 million.

If we list the important autobiographies published by and biographies published on Indian sportspersons in the last thirty or forty-odd years, it would look like this: Sunil Gavaskar's *Sunny Days*, *Straight Drive*, *One Day Wonders*, *Khel Aur Khiladi,* Milkha Singh's *Race of My Life*, Mary Kom's *Unbreakable*, Abhinav Bindra's *Shot at History*, Sania Mirza's *Ace against Odds*, Yuvraj Singh's *The Test of my Life*, Sachin Tendulkar's *Playing it My Way*, Sania Nehwal's *Playing to Win*, Anil Kumble's *Wide Angle*, Kapil Dev's *Straight from My Heart*, Vijay Hazare's *A Long Innings*, E. A. S. Prasanna's *One More Over*, *One Century is Not Enough* by Saurav Ganguly, *Imperfect* by Sanjay Manjrekar and *Unguarded* by Mithali Raj. Out of the fifteen autobiographies, nine are by cricketers. This further establishes the presence of cricket at the forefront of consciousness among the sports aficionados of this country. Otherwise,why would publishers put such an emphasis on cricketers? It is only because they have realized the marketability of stories told about and by the cricketers.

In the list of richest sportspersons of India released by Forbes in 2018, eight of the top ten positions are taken by cricketers and the first three sportsmen are all cricketers. The third member on the list, Sachin Tendulkar, earned Rs. 80 crores in 2018, whereas P. V. Sindhu, who is fourth on the list, earned less than half that amount, Rs. 36 crores. Virat Kohli, the richest sportsperson in India, has earned a staggering Rs. 228 crores. These statistics establish the pre-eminence cricket enjoys within the psyche of the general public which is reflected in the marketing supremacy of cricketers.

5.16.8 Summing Up

1. Sports Autobiographies need to be analysed as a distinct genre, with its similarities as well as differences with other genres as well as other autobiographies.
2. Some theorists and their theories of autobiography are discussed. Autobiographies can be treated as a social memory that delineates how individual events have been perceived and remembered by the general public. They can also be important in realizing the multiple personalities of the same subject in different scenarios.
3. If analysed through traditional literary devices such as metaphors, language, etc, autobiographies can help readers (perceive) hidden motifs and themes

running through them.

4. A continuous conflict exists regarding the acceptability of sports autobiographies as useful sources of historical information. Serious charges have been leveled against autobiographies on various points regarding their suitability as historical pieces. Alternate opinions have also been presented, which might exonerate the serious charges leveled against them.
5. The arrival of the 'history from below' approach resulted in a new and reinvigorated interest in the sports autobiographies, which allowed for newer and deeper analysis into prevailing conditions both of the society as well as the sporting world.
6. A history of the development of sporting autobiographies has been presented, taking into account the British history of the genre. It takes the readers through a short historical journey of the development of sports autobiography, and it introduces the readers to some factors which influenced the development.
7. Authorship has become a significant focal point for analysing autobiographies. The students are introduced to discussions regarding issues of authorship with special emphasis on the concept of 'ghostwriter'.
8. The structure is another significant focal point for analysing autobiographies. External influences on the patterns and structures of autobiographies are given a brief introduction.
9. A section that briefly analyses the significance and prominence of cricket in India and its effect on the marketing might of cricket is presented.

5.16.9 Comprehensive Exercises

1) Write a short essay on the significance of the readers as an active 'agency' in creating and recreating perspectives on various sportsmen.
2) Give an account of the various theorists and their theories about the genre of sports autobiography.
3) Write a short essay on the development of sports autobiography across the decades.
4) Give an account of the differences in opinions regarding the historical significance and reliability of sports autobiographies.
5) How do you think media influenced the themes and their presentation in sports autobiographies? Write a well-reasoned answer.

5.16.10 Suggested Readings

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Unit 17 ❐ Gavaskar: Beyond the 22 Yards

Structure

5.17.1: Objectives

The goal of this unitis to:

- introduce Sunil Gavaskar as a person (and not as a cricketer) as he appears in his autobiography *Sunny Days*
- familiarise you with the character and writing style of Gavaskar;
- enable you to understand the relevance of non-sporting elements as a backdrop to a sports autobiography
- help you contextualise *Sunny Days*in terms of other sports autobiographies written in and outside India.

5.17.2 Introduction: Off the Ground

Gavaskar was so much of a legendary figure on the cricket field that it is very difficult to look for an identity of the person beyond that. Nevertheless, Gavaskar,the batting stalwart, is neither the beginning nor the end of the cricket icon. This is despite the fact that Gavaskar in his works, *Sunny Days, One Day Wonders* and *Idols* is seldom concerned with anything that does not figure him, his team, or any other cricket team on the ground. He does talk about his other side in the book called

Straight Drive, an anthology of columns which he wrote over a period of time. Moreover, Gavaskar wrote with such candour and spontaneity about his cricketing journey in *Sunny Days* that while he discusses people and peers on the ground, it is equally revealing about his personality off the ground. In fact, Gavaskar's casual honesty in his books is in itself a statement about his character and attitude towards life. Recording various instances while dubbing them with sarcasm and irony, Gavaskar gives an insight to his ways of looking at things critically without missing out much on wit and humour.

5.17.3 The Odds and the Chance before Setting Off

Gavaskar is a believer in destiny. He as a person does not believe that what we become or achieve in our lives is only a product of calculable actions. Thus, it is of little surprise when he counts without fail various incidences where odd chances and events went his way. One of the first such odds is highlighted in bold in the very first chapter of *Sunny Days*. Gavaskar believes that it was only a stroke of luck aided by a keen observation from his uncle (Nan-kaka) that saved him from getting swapped mistakenly right after his birth. For Gavaskar, it was not something that could be simply signed off as irrelevant to his cricketing career. Contrarily, he would say

"I WOULD NOT HAVE BECOME A CRICKETER AND THIS BOOK WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE NOT BEEN WRITTEN, if an eagle-eyed relation, Mr. Narayan Masurekar, had not come into my life the day I was born." (*Sunny Days*1)

The chapter's name 'The First Step' also adds to the testimony.

Gavaskar was not at much odds in his destiny to become a cricketer though, as he says, "Cricket, to use a cliché, is in my blood". And yet, his father was not a big cricketing name and just a club cricketer which was nota big deal. The biggest name in his family associated with cricket was that of his uncle, Madhav Mantri, who had played just a few tests for India. But even with a history of cricket in the family and a fair amount of exposure to quality cricket ever since he was born, it was not an easy task for Gavaskar to enter the list of the best eleven in a country of hundreds of millions where almost everyone was crazy about cricket. To reach there required grit, determination, passion, and a considerable amount of talent, but most importantly, it also needed the odd moment or two that went one's way and chances and opportunities that favoured one against a whole lot of others. Gavaskar is very humble and honest in his admission of such moments that helped him get that 'extra' advantage over hundreds of others who were in contention.

One such instance is the incidence of his selection in the Bombay team for the Ranji trophy tournament. Gavaskar's first chance in the state side was literally a no-

show. He did not get included in the final eleven and was dropped immediately afterwards, leaving him feeling dejected. After that he had to wait for another year to get a Ranji outing, in which he was a complete failure. Gavaskar's name once again resurfaced and he was included in the Bombay Ranji squad in the early 1970s but at a time when he was having an utterly poor run of form, to which his reaction is one of surprise, as he mentions in chapter 3 of *Sunny Days*. Exceptionally straightforward, he says:

"Obviously my selection was not prompted by my performance. In the university matches it had been awful, and my only big score was a double-century in the intercollegiate final against a none-too impressive attack." (*Sunny Days*21)

5.17.4 The Personal and Not So Public

Gavaskar seldom discusses those aspects of his personal life that does not include him in a dressing room or on a cricket ground, in any of his books. Nevertheless, he does give some references to some of this not so public side of his. Gavaskar fell in love with Marshniel Mehrotra, whom he fondly calls Pammi, while she was doing her Bachelor of Arts from Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi, and the two got married within two years of their first meeting. Gavaskar talks about his first meeting with his future wife in reference to a match arranged in New Delhi, which he wanted to skip and had taken permission from the Board in order to do so, but somehow because of pressure from the organising side had to ultimately play. He says:

"My decision to go turned out to be an important one eventually. For, during the game I was introduced by Dileep Doshi, the Bengal left-arm bowler, to Marshniel Mehrotra who, two years later, was to become my wife." (*Sunny Days*106)

Sometime afterthis first meeting,Gavaskar met Marshniel's family when he went to Kanpur for a cricket match. And in September 1974, the two got married. Although details of the marriage do not feature at much length in his book, Gavaskar considers this event as one the most important events of his life. He has a pleasant way of looking at the event retrospectively as he says,

"On 23 September 1974 Marshniel Mehrotra became Mrs. Sunil Gavaskar and almost overnight I was properly hooked." (*Sunny Days*167)

The couple has been together since then and their only child Rohan was born on February 20, 1976.

An interesting thing concerning the two happened when Gavaskar wrote his autobiography *Sunny Days*. The language and flow of the book is so crisp and impressive in its presentation that many people thought that it had been ghost-written by his wife, who happened to be a graduate in English. Haresh Pandya, a columnist

at *Rediff*, talks at length about these unfounded accusations and how Gavaskar responded to them. Gavaskar was very open and direct in his defense as he categorically said:

"Pammi can do a lot of things, and quite possibly one day she will write something. But all the books I've published, I've written myself. The first one, *Sunny Days* — well, the manuscript in longhand still exists. Surely that's some kind of proof that I wrote it myself."(Pandya)

5.17.5 Friendship and Camaraderie

Gavaskar is often full of praise and compliments for people he knows on and off the field. While he narrates his cricketing journey, he takes forward other stories of his friends and mates along with his own. Looking back at his days at Dadar Union Sporting club, Gavaskar talks about Vasu Paranjape who used to be the captain of the team then, elaborating on his mirthful personality and his fascination for the Australian team. Gavaskar discusses how Vasu envisioned that his team would be a dynamic combination of the Windies and the Aussies in its approach, and gave Gavaskar the famous nickname, Sunny, by which he is known even today. The fact that Gavaskar titles his autobiography *Sunny Days* is also very telling of how much such friends and their friendships mean to him. A similar affectionate narration is in evidence when Gavaskar talks about Dileep Sardesai, who played with him first in Ranji games for the Bombay side and then later on as a teammate in the national team. Gavaskar is full of effusiveness as he begins to talk about one of the most historical comebacks in Indian cricket history, that of Sardesai, who was on the verge of getting dropped for the Caribbean tour but ended up knocking three classic centuries in that series. It comes as no surprise that Gavaskar in his autobiography discusses this comeback in an entire chapter devoted to Sardesai. Titled "'Sardee Maan' Tops" to Dilip, the chapter focusses on his fun-loving personality, popularity and love for the team and the teammates.

"And Dilip with a double century and century in two Tests was the hero of all the West Indies. Everywhere we went, people wanted to see 'Sardee mann', as Dilip was affectionately called. Dilip was prepared to talk cricket with anybody, which made him a big hit…

I remember, once Dilip had charged out leaving his food which he loves, to take up cudgels against a young Indian who has said to me in Jamaica, 'Sobers will get you out, first ball, bowled behind the legs." (*Sunny Days*47)

A much closer chemistry was the one between Gavaskar and his contemporary Gundappa Vishwanath. Gavaskar admittedly was always in awe of the latter, much of

it due to Vishwanath's immense talent. Gavaskar fondly shares howboth Vishwanath and he, on their very first tour, repeatedly suffered injuries and hence had much time to spend in each other's company. Gavaskar describes Vishwanath as not only the most prolific batsman in the team along with Ajit Wadekar but also as the most popular player in the team loved equally all over the country – be it Bangalore, Bombay or Calcutta. Gavaskar's admiration for his friend is fully in evidencewhen he discusses Vishwanath's first test innings in West Indies:

"From the beginning Vishwanath was middling the ball. With him there is no edging. He either middles it or misses and more often than not it is the sweet sound of the bat meeting the ball." (*Sunny Days*50)

Gavaskar's camaraderie with Vishwanath was so strong that he would not mind him using all his clothes when the two shared a room during the West Indies tour. Eventually, the friendship turned into a relationship when Vishwanath got married to Gavaskar's younger sister.

Gavaskar also talks of one event where, right after playing a tournament in Madras, he departed for Bombay to attend the engagement ceremony of his friend Milind Rege, also a Ranji player from Bombay, who had kept postponing his engagement ceremony so that Gavaskar could attend it. Gavaskar recalls his growing years with Rege and states that Rege is like an elder brother to him (*Sunny Days* 82). This incident is a reminder of how close Gavaskar was to his friends and how affectionately that feeling was reciprocated by them.

Even with people whom he did not spend a very long time with, Gavaskar develops special connections and forms empathetic emotions. While playing for the 'Rest of the World' team against Australia's zonal teams, Gavaskar made some special friends like Hylton Ackerman and the Pollock brothers, Peter and Graeme. The sincerity and depth of Gavaskar's friendship is in evidence when he writes about Ackerman:

"I wasn't sure whether I would ever play with them again… I hope someday to meet Ackerman again." (*Sunny Days*103)

One of the highlights of Gavaskar's deepest regard and love for his friendships is his son's name. Gavaskar named the boy Rohan Jaivishwa- a name that is a combination of the names of three of his dearest cricketing mates, Rohan Kanhai, M.L. Jaisimha and Gundappa Vishwanath!

5.17.6 Bombay Love

Gavaskar's love for Bombay, particular its Ranji Team, is something that is regularly communicated to the reader as he pens down his autobiography. It is clearly there right from the time he starts playing for St. Xavier's College, Bombay, and is evident

in his narration even after he becomes a popular Indian cricketer. On more than one occasion in *Sunny Days*, Gavaskar writes about how much it meant for him to play for the pride of Bombay. Right after his selection in the Indian cricket team, Gavaskar was denied permission to play for Bombay University in the finals of the inter-university matches and was asked to play against a visiting Sri Lankan squad. Gavaskar shows clear contempt for the decision:

"At the same time, I was surprised at being asked to play against the Sri Lankan team, apparently because 'it was always nice to be in the good books of the south'. This stunned me but I had no choice, and so I went." (*Sunny Days*31)

Not only that, Gavaskar also carries a significant sense of remorse and guilt for the eventual loss that Bombay University faced in the final against Madras.

"I am sure all the boys must still be thinking that I had let them down. I hope, after reading this, they will change their minds. If I hadn't played any game at all, it would have been all right, but the reasons given as to why I should play against the Sri Lankan team were stupid…" (*Sunny Days* 31)

Even when Gavaskar was not playing for Bombay, a significant part of him was with the Bombay team. This can be inferred from how, even as he is narrating his own story, the story of Bombay Ranji team keeps recurring and he provides updates about the team's journey as if no matter what, the Bombay team's story is always a part of his own story irrespective of where he is and for which team he is playing. That is why even after coming back after successful campaigns against the West Indies and England, it is important for him to see Bombay victorious. On several occasions in *Sunny Days* Gavaskar is full of praise for the Bombay team and the chemistry between the players in the team.

"Captaining a Bombay side is one of the easiest things in the world. Everybody knows exactly what he is expected to do. Besides, the camaraderie that exists between the players has to be seen to be believed." (*Sunny Days*169)

A similar thought echoes through his narrative when he is talking about touring with the Bombay team.

"Touring with the Bombay team is the easiest… The journey is hardly felt! The camaraderie of the Bombay team is unbelievable."(*Sunny Days* 238)

Gavaskar is not just fascinated with the Bombay Ranji team but also with the city's culture of cricket as well as its cricket loving crowd.

"If there is one crowd I positively love to play in front of, it's in Bombay. The average man in this home of cricket knows a lot more about the game than anywhere else in the country… For the Bombay crowd good Cricket is important and it does

not matter whether it is from the home team or a visiting side. The applause will be there only for good cricket… Bombay crowd are also noted for their sense of humour which is not evident at other centres in India." (*Sunny Days*178)

He outrightly negates the generally held belief of the time that the Bombay cricketer is proud, maybe even arrogant. On the contrary, he calls it a misconception and contends that Bombay cricketers are usually the friendliest. He also observes that the Bombay cricket structure is one of the most efficiently organized spaces and there is little to complain about. He considers that this great harmony between excellent cricketers and brilliant officials is the key to Bombay being champion of India's cricket. It is no surprise that Gavaskar names one of the chapters in *Sunny Days* as "Bombay, My Bombay".

5.17.7 Unapologetic Honesty and Quirky Humour

Two things that mark Gavaskar's character are his directness and his sense of humour. An example of the first quality is how Gavaskar never minces words when he sees things happening in a way they should not be happening. For instance, Gavaskar is honest and very straightforward when he questions the selection process in which players on the bench are disregarded for the next match without even getting a chance to prove their mettle. He puts it in a forthright manner:

"Do they suddenly become so bad after one game that they do not merit a place, even as a 'reserve'? How can one merit such treatment, even without playing?" (*Sunny Days*56)

In a similar event, Gavaskar questions the decision to drop Ajit Wadekar from the West Zone team in the strongest of words knowing full well that this would not go down well with many people who were part of such committees. Discussing the Wadekar incident he writes "to drop him from the side altogether was ridiculous. Ajit was among the top two batsmen in the country then, the other being Vishwanath**"**(*Sunny Days*168).

He also brings up for analysis a similar decision where the Board for Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) had decided not to select Bishan Singh Bedi on grounds of indiscipline. Gavaskar calls the decision shocking, while, in very clear terms, also making clear that Bedi's behavior had not been very ideal in the time leading up to him being dropped. Gavaskar is also very direct and unapologetic when he talks about people. For his friend and teammate Farokh Engineer, he has very critical feedback. When comparing him with Vishwanath, Gavaskar suggests that he does not have a sense of humour that could allow him to take a joke on himself. Gavaskar is extremely

unhappy but exceptionally candid when Indian team lost a series badly in the England. Very upfront, he says,

"There was no such thing as team spirit. Instead there were a lot of pretty squabbles, which didn't do anybody any good." (*Sunny Days*166)

Gavaskar is vocal about his discontent with poor umpiring at several occasions as he mentions, in *Sunny Days,* his immense dislike for such incidents. In the West Indies, he got out under low-light conditions after having made an appeal to the umpires that play be stopped as light conditions were not good. Right after, the umpire gave a call for the day's game to be over, which Gavaskar records with his typical sarcastic humour.

"It is amazing how the light could have deteriorated after just two deliveries, which justified the umpires calling it a day!" (*Sunny Days*13)

Another not so subtle criticism of poor umpiring comes from him, coated with his typical wit and sarcasm, when he is in England and David Constant, the umpire, gave a not-out decision for an English batsman, which Gavaskar felt was unjust. Gavaskar remarks,

"Incidentally,Umpire Constant was constant in his support for England that year."

In another similar incident in Sri Lanka where Gavaskar felt that the umpires let Sri Lankan batsmen get away with so many chances but were intentionally being too strict on Indian batsmen, he is equally blunt and no less sarcastic as he says,

"I really should have applauded the umpire for giving the last man run-out. So what if the batsman was a good two yards out of his crease as long as he was in his half of the wicket, and could have easily been given not out. But horror of horrors, the umpire actually gave him out. Surprises never cease! I should have known that the umpires were actually practising raising their fingers for the time when we would bat." (*Sunny Day*137)

To get a feel of Gavaskar's keen sense of humour, it is enough to experience his narration when he discusses some funny story, but his narrative style is not the only indicator of his wittiness. In a game against England in Kanpur, Gavaskar survived an LBW appeal to which Tony Greig remarked, "It was close wasn't it". Always spot on with his wit, as Gavaskar was, he responded, "Yeah, sure. But the umpire is my uncle." In order to make sure that the fun continued, when Greig asked the umpire's name, Gavaskar responded, "Gothoskar, but he had changed it, or else he would never get to be a Test umpire." (*Sunny Days* 122) Soon enough there were talks on the ground and he was asked by many about the truth of his relationship with the

umpire. One need not explain that Gavaskar was simply pulling Greig's leg, but the spontaneity and believability of that response gives a clear insight to Gavaskar's sharp wit and humour. Adding to that, one can also see how Gavaskar makes a very subtle but sarcastic comment on the irony that he felt was there in an English cricketer questioning an Indian cricketer on biased umpiring.

5.17.8 Summing Up

Gavaskar's autobiography *Sunny Days,* along with his other books, reflects his candid take on the game of cricket as well as life. Gavaskar is not shy of telling the little secret stories that go on in grounds and in pavilions. He is very expressive about what he thinks and about his own emotional take on issues that concern cricket and sports.

He wrote about incidences which few dared to speak about publicly at that time: from fights in the dressing room to a critical reflection on the temper of his peers, from talking about the high-handed attitude of journalists to criticism of crowds that were hostile to visiting teams to showing his distaste for poor umpiring standards and at the same time addressing a few tough and critical moments that he had with the BCCI and its decisions, his books have all.

Gavaskar's work *Sunny Days* opened up a remarkable chapter in the genre of sports-memoirs in India. People and fans have since been waiting for him to write a sequel to the book, but he never did. Sports journalist Clayton Murzello, at *midday*,calls it the best autobiography written by an Indian cricketer and it is a difficult task to challenge that.

The one thing that stands out in *Sunny Days* is Gavaskar's love and respect for the game of cricket and for his fellow mates. He is humble when he talks about his own achievements but is very generous when it comes to talking about the skills and achievements of his friends. *Sunny Days* has served as a model for other cricket autobiographies in its detailing of events and its fluid narration. For what it counts, Gavaskar also holds the credit for writing the maximum number of books as a cricketer, which shows his flair for writing as well as his marketability.

5.17.9 Glossary

Nan-Kaka	Gavaskar's Uncle, Mr. Narayan Masurekar, who visited the hospital at his birth and rescued him from being switched with another newborn.

Pammi: Gavaskar's wife Marshniel Mehrotra

Ranji Trophy: Domestic First-Class cricket championship played in India

5.17.10 Comprehensive Exercises

1. "As in any 'Century' there are some good shots, some bad ones, some playing and missing and some edging. I hope I've given you more of the first than the others", wrote Gavaskar. Looking at the statement above and in the light of what you have read from Gavaskar's books in this chapter, what do you make of his style of writing?
2. Reflect upon how you see Gavaskar's *Sunny Days* as a sports autobiography.
3. As you look at Gavaskar's bonding with his fellow cricketers, do you feel cricketers these days have tendency to be less cordial and more professional with their peers? Record your thoughts.

5.17.11 Suggested Reading List

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Unit 18 ❐ Gavaskar Beyond the 'Sunny Days'

Structure

5.18.1 Objectives

The aim of this module is to:

- discuss a few aspects of Gavaskar's life such as money, stardom and religion;
- talk about the other career options which Gavaskar opted for after his retirement as a cricketer;
- reflect upon Gavaskar's love for sports other than cricket;
- introduce you to the writings of Gavaskar on issues other than cricket;
- give an account of other people's perspectives on how Gavaskar carried himself through various phases of his journey.

5.18.2 Introduction

Gavaskar lived the life of an icon and celebrity not just because of the wonderful cricketing abilities he possessed but also due to how cricket in India carried (and still does) a status that was unmatched by any other sport in the country. Such stardom and fandom is, however, inevitably followed by a tremendous scrutiny of actions of the person as well as unreal standards to adhere to in the expectations of the public. The fact that there are always people to watch you and listen to you even when you stop doing the thing that brought stardom is both the bright side and the flip side of

the coin.While the much-desired sequel to*Sunny Days* was never written by Gavaskar, he continued to express his opinions and views on subjects of his concern, be it cricket, the commentary box or his simple admiration for other sports and sportspersons, which continued getting people's attention and admiration.This unit looks at certain things Gavaskar said and did in the latter half of his career. Alongside, people who worked with Gavaskar in different capacities have always had things to say about his conduct and attitude away from the cricket ground. As we carry the discussion forward in the unit, we will look at some of these sources to get a glimpse of Gavaskar's personality away from his on-field or dressing room activities and recollections.

5.18.3 The Commercial Angle and Demonisation

Gavaskar was a professional cricketer and sportsman in the true sense of the term. When it came to money, he never shied or showed any pretense of being unrealistically humble, neither did he bring in any subterfuge or diplomacy to the floor. He was as upright and upfront about money as one could be. This did not do him much good in terms of respect of his teammates and the public. Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, who captained the Indian team for a brief period of time, writes in his autobiography, *The Decline of Indian Cricket*, about Gavaskar's 'tryst' with money. He says that while the idea of prize money came to India in 1969 and became a matter of dispute in relation to how it was to be shared, Gavaskar was not much bothered with it, and rather opened up new ventures for creating money from cricket. Gavaskar, as per Pataudi, would explore almost every opportunity available in the market that would help him gain some money – from doing advertisements to producing films to organising matches to writing books while also spicing them up for bigger sale. There was very little he wouldn't do – he knew that cricketers tend to fade from public memory quickly once they retire but money always mattered. Pataudi feels that while what Gavaskar did could be categorised as financial innovativeness, people in the country wrongly attributed to him the tag of mercenary. He says that sheer envy led others in the team to tag him thus as they could never even imagine attaining the heights that Gavaskar reached, and also because Gavaskar was quite articulate and could afford to be controversial and this made him an ideal material for the media. Mihir Bose, the writer of the book *The Magic of Indian Cricket* takes Pataudi's argument and develops it further as he talks about the Indian mentality that often demonises a person's public acceptance of wealth. Bose talks about the phenomenon where several Indians thought that Gavaskar was 'money-mad' and he attended functions and had 'flirtations' with the Kerry-Packer series as he had an extreme lust for money. Bose contradicts these assumptions by bringing in figures that tell that

Gavaskar was only earning a fraction of what sports icons were earning globally in those times, and by any global standard, Gavaskar's figures were modest and decent and nowhere flabbergasting. Gavaskar was much more on the receiving end of hostility because he was the first sports icon in India to have made it so big in terms of money. Bose theorises that Indian societies are not anti-materialistic but are somewhat averse to flaunting of materialistic gains, and so do not like their heroes to proclaim openly their desire for money. So, defending Gavaskar with the utmost conviction from the charge of 'money-madness', he says,

"Gavaskar's supposed crime was that he did not accept the Indian dichotomy about money." (*The Magic of Indian Cricket* 178)

Talking on the basis of a first-hand account, Bose reflects upon an incident when he asked Gavaskar to write foreword for his upcoming book and Gavaskar, in a very straightforward manner, negotiated the charges for doing that. Bose terms Gavaskar's attitude that of a professional, which he found lacking in many other cricketers he engaged with in course of his career as a journalist.

5.18.4 Sathya Sai: Faith, Devotion and the Cult

Sanjay Manjrekar, another cricketer from Bombay who became part of the Indian cricket team shortly after Gavaskar retired has this to say about religion in his autobiography, *Imperfect*: "Religion has no place in my life. I feel it's an outdated concept" (Lokpalli). Gavaskar has been quite opposite when it comes to religion and been open about his religiosity in his life. While he does not talk much about this aspect of his life in his autobiographies, he has been quite public about his devotional self. A big part of his religious side comes in relation to his faith and devotion towards one particular figure – Satya Sai. Gavaskar has been an ardent follower of the 'godman' and has unshakeable faith in him. Gavaskar gave a number of interviews and lectures praising Sathya Sai and talking about the importance of the faith he had in him. In an article titled "Realising Supreme Beatitude", accessible at a website attributed to Sathya Sai, Gavaskar writes about his "Bhagavan". Gavaskar tells how he was born and raised in a religious family where idols of Hindu deities were a part of home. And it so happened that his mother once saw a vision on the wall which after many attempts to identify she found to be of Shree Sathya Sai. After that incident a photograph of the 'godman' was a part of Gavaskar's bedroom in his growing years. To reflect upon the power of faith and the power of his 'Bhagavan', Gavaskar narrates a story where, after being wounded in the leg, he was waiting to recover, but it was slow. Luckily for him, members of his family managed to send the Swami's 'vibhuti', applying which he had a miraculous recovery and wase fit to play the game he was being considered ruled out of.

"It was unbelievable. Nobody including me had given myself a chance of playing the Second Test, leave alone the First Test and here I was, thanks to the Vibhuti, playing in the First Test Match."(Gavaskar, "Realising Supreme Beatitude")

Gavaskar also describes the time he first happened to see 'Bhagavan' along with the West Indian cricketer Alwin Kallicharan in the middle of a test match. For him, the joy of the experience of being in vicinity with the 'Bhagavan' is superior to the happiness that comes from a century or a win. He writes:

"That first sight of Bhagavan was the most humbling experience of my life. It made me realise that there was a superior being, the Supreme Authority. He was standing in human form and sending these happy vibrations to all who had come there! It was the kind of happiness that even a century or a victory for the side could not bring about. It just made one's heart feel lighter. I have been lucky to experience it time and again since then and I consider myself blessed to do so."(Gavaskar, "Realising Supreme Beatitude")

Gavaskar also feels that not just him but anyone who gets blessings from 'Bhagavan' is entitled to success and happiness, as he discusses how Tendulkar, another ardent follower of Sathya Sai, had got a pat on his back from 'Bhagavan' before he demolished Australia's bowling.

A collection of Gavaskar's columns published as a book *Straight Drive* in 2009 starts with his homage to his 'Bhagavan' as it reads: "At the lotus feet of Bhagvan Sathya Sai Baba".

5.18.5 The Columnist, the Commentator and the Failure

While Gavaskar was a successful cricketer, his second innings has been no less. Turning to writing columns and doing cricket commentary after he retired from the field, his words and face have been a regular part of cricket columns and television commentary for the Indian cricket fan.

Gavaskar started his career as a TV commentator in 1990 and since then has been a popular face in TV cricket commentary. When it comes to joining as a cricket commentator, it wasn't something that Gavaskar started doing out of passion. In an interview to *Midday*, Gavaskar recollects that he was not very enthusiastic at first in taking up the job, but once he started doing it, he gave it his everything. This is not, however, the case with his writing, be it his books or his columns. In his preface to *Straight Drive*, Gavaskar admits that his love for writing has only increased with time. Talking about his special relationship with the pen, he says,

"I love writing. Perhaps even more than I loved batting… There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that I am writing too much but then I really do enjoy it.

I write from the heart; very, very seldom with the head and that's why I get into controversies." (Preface to *Straight Drive*, xiii)

In *Straight Drive*, Gavaskar includes a column that was his hundredth column and in it, he talks about his experience of column writing and the difficult balance one has to negotiate while doing it. Gavaskar mentions the first column that he wrote in early the 1970s for *Sports week*, about the future of Indian cricket and how his peer's sons could take over the next generation of cricket. Gavaskar prefers to see that particular column as non-serious and more of the 'tongue-in-cheek' kind. He then addresses the problems that a cricketer-cum-columnist encounters, as the laws and regulations of the cricket board restrict the person, signaling once again towards his love for writing which remained under-fulfilled due to such restrictions. Gavaskar looks at the mushrooming of media with a critical lens as he feels that journalists and columnists in the modern era try to put too much pressure on cricketers by creating theories of motivated underperformances. Reflecting upon his career as a columnist, Gavaskar says that he has always tried his best to present a balanced view, while admitting that there cannot be a thing such as a perfect column. In the conclusion of this column written in 1989, we can get a glimpse of Gavaskar's ease and flow with words and the magic that he creates his words"

"As in any 'Century' there are some good shots, some bad ones, some playing and missing and some edging. I hope I've given you more of the first than the others." (*Straight Drive* 27)

Gavaskar got chance to work with some of the best in the business while he was a cricket commentator on television. He recalls a bit of it in one of his columns included in *Straight Drive.* Gavaskar discusses his working hours at BBC where there was a very fine level of professional coordination between the commentator, the summariser, the producer and the cameramen on the field. Gavaskar worked with some of the greatest commentators and analysts of the game including Richie Benaud, Jack Bannister, Tony Lewis, Ray Illingworth and Geoff Boycott, but he was specifically in awe of the persona and brilliance of Richie Benaud, who was perhaps the greatest of the cricket commentators in history. Gavaskar discusses how it was a perfect schooling and nurturing of him as a cricket commentator and summariser working with such greats. He talks about an incident which changed his opinion about Richie Benaud whom he considered to be intimidating at first, because of the poker-face expression he always had on. Before the commencement of a one-day game at Trentbridge, Benaud gave him some crucial tips about commentary that included a tip to keep his mike on his thighs when he is not speaking. Gavaskar found that the suggestion was very smart and practical, as it would be a signal to his fellow-commentator that there was no comment from his side, and at other times give him an extra second to think and collect his thoughts before

answering. When Benaud passed away, Gavaskar, in his tribute, showed his gratitude for whatever he learnt from the man, and showed his admiration for the ideal form of commentary that Richie was so well known for. He said:

"I learnt plenty from him in my first stint as a commentator for BBC way back in 1990. He taught me when to speak, when to pause and some of the subtleties of live TV commentary. If all of us could be as detached as Richie was during commentary then none of the home team bias would come through in the commentary."(Tendulkar, Gavaskar, Kohli salute 'wonderful personality' Benaud)

Haresh Pandya, a columnist at Rediff, also talks about Gavaskar's skills as a columnist and his unprecedented legacy as a sports icon who could write and write well. While talking about Gavaskar's skills as a writer, Pandya is confident enough to claim that even if Gavaskar had not played a single game at any level, he would still have been a very eminent cricket writer – though not the best, but certainly one of his kind. Pandya also appreciates his commentary on television screen by calling it "a breath of fresh air" (Pandya).

However, it would not be true to say that whatever Gavaskar touched turned out to be gold. He was a celebrity and that helped him gain success which was of course backed up by his own abilities. But he had his share of failures and not just those restricted to the cricket ground. Pandya discusses some of the major failures in Gavaskar's career off the field. Gavaskar happened to be a very successful 'model' at commercials but when he tried capitalising on his popularity through cinema, it did not bring him great success or fortune. Neither Gavaskar's lead performance in the Marathi film *Savli Premachi* nor his cameo in the Hindi film *Malamaal* was able to catch audience attention. Pandya writes:

"Maybe, just maybe, acting was one discipline that did not come naturally to Gavaskar."

Apart from his acting career, Gavaskar was also a flop as a sports editor. Pandya describes how one of Bengal's leading newspapers *Aajkal* appointed Gavaskar as editor-in-chief for their sports monthly *Indian Cricketer* which succumbed in the face of fierce competition from the market. Later, another leading sports magazine *Sportsweek* roped in Gavaskar to save their market but failed as the magazine closed down in a few years. Despite his successful career as an author, Gavaskar was unable to fulfill the expectations of the owners as well as readers of these magazines.

5.18.6 Celebrity as a Fan and Follower: Other Sports

Gavaskar was an icon of cricket in his days and still carries the role of an ambassador for the game. But his sports interests are not solely governed by the game

played on a 22-yard pitch. He is quite fond of several other games and is not just a keen observer of the things happening in other sports but also a very enthusiastic and excited 'fan' who likes to see his 'champions' in their moment of glory. While badminton and tennis are seemingly two of his favourite sports when it comes to the intensity with which he is involved in the discussion of issues pertaining to these two sports on and off court, he is also alert about and has his eyes glued to happenings in several other sports. Gavaskar's *Straight Drive* includes several columns written by him about these "other sports". In the very first chapter of the book itself, Gavaskar gives his eyewitness account of the All England Badminton Tournament, where he is mesmerized by the efficiency of the management as well as the quality of the game. Gavaskar is so careful in writing about the details of the tournament – be it number of courts per day to number of shots per rally – that it exemplifies how closely he follows the game. He narrates his conversation with Prakash Padukone, India's badminton star, whose knack of reading a game of badminton is something Gavaskar captures beautifully. Gavaskar shows clear bewilderment and amazement at the spectacle of the games and the players in action, as he reports:

"The action was so fast and non-stop that if one blinked then there was the danger of missing a shot…

All one could do was to shake one's head in admiration for the fitness of these players and their remarkable stamina." (*Straight Drive* 1-2)

Gavaskar is simply not the kind of person who would follow a game just as a distant observer, but rather, as all the cricket fans in India would do with cricket, he would supply his own piece of advice, suggestions and solutions to any difficult situation. At a time when India's greatest ever male singles tennis player Vijay Amritraj had got into an issue with the All India Tennis Association (AITA) and was at the receiving end from media as well, Gavaskar did not just support the man facing the heatbut also made suggestions to the board members about how to deal with the entire issue. He opines that the association should not go charging down on Vijay but should negotiate by taking Vijay into confidence. In his write-up, one can see Gavaskar not just showing his enthusiasm and understanding for tennis in India but also his passionate defense of his icon. He writes,

"But Vijay will always be Vijay. Not just a superb tennis player but a magnificent ambassador for the country and for the game of tennis." (*Straight Drive* 10)

In a column in *Straight Drive*, titled "Tiger, Tiger So Bright", Gavaskar, while admitting his low-key interest in the game of golf, discusses the US Masters Tournament and its then winner, Tiger Woods. Gavaskar is full of praise for Woods who has won the prestigious tournament in his first attempt and compares him with Tendulkar, the

greatest emerging star in cricket then, and feels that the two serve as wonderful ambassadors and role models for their respective games. He feels that while the golfer had started rewriting the record books, the cricketer was still practicing that art and needed to up his game in this aspect. (As it turns out, Tendulkar too went on a record-breaking spree with batting records, as he eventually made a good number of batting records his own, more than anyone else in modern cricket, transcending Gavaskar's expectations.)

In another column, Gavaskar welcomes the appointment of Prakash Padukone, India's badminton icon, as head of the Indian Badminton Federation while severely criticising some other officials who made distasteful comments against Padukone. In yet another, Gavaskar records his joy and pride after Pulela Gopichand won the All England Badminton championship and became only the second Indian ever to achieve that feat. He also rues the fact that neither the national media nor the Indian public gave much recognition to such an astonishing individual and national achievement. One can understand Gavaskar's elation and spirit for this win as he calls it the greatest of all moments in India's sporting history that included 1983 cricket World Cup win. He adds,

"…on a lighter note between watching Aishwarya Rai in a commercial and Gopichand doing the arm raising act, one would opt for the latter with not the slightest disrespect intended to the delightful former Miss World." (*Straight Drive* 138)

In another column, Gavaskar discusses the occupational hazards in a sporting career where he is worried about the physical as well as psychological damage that comes along with it. He talks about Monica Seles, once world number one in tennis, being attacked by a spectator with a knife and how it scarred her psychologically and damaged her excellent career. He records the disturbing deaths and near-deaths on Formula-1 circuits and the damages that come to boxers as a part of their sport, making someone like Muhammad Ali suffer from Parkinson's disease.

In a different column, Gavaskar records his admiration for Andre Agassi, the tennis great, who retired at that time. Gavaskar celebrates his legacy on and off the tennis court and discusses how he created a fandom not just with his game, but also with his attire, his behaviour and his casual and passionate conversation with the media. Gavaskar praises his humanitarian works and his approach with which he was able to build a connection with people who would happily help him raise funds for his charity. Gavaskar writes,

"Agassi, the tennis player, will go down in history as one of its greatest exponents and entertainers but the legacy that his humanitarian work will leave behind is going to be far more important than his tennis deeds." (*Straight Drive* 214)

5.18.7 Summing up

While neither the works by an author of topical nature nor the works which convey other authors' views or opinions about an individual qualify as either autobiographical or biographical writings, they do help in evaluating various important aspects of an author's life whose autobiography is to be considered. Not only that, it also helps us understand several elements of the autobiography in a comprehensive manner, giving us newer possibilities to approach sections of the text. In Gavaskar's case, however, it is not just a matter of a better understanding or of approaching the text, but also the fact that his only autobiographical work till date has been *Sunny Days* which was written quite early in his life, thus making it imperative that other, non-autobiographical sources be used to understand the life and the character of India's once leading cricketer.

Gavaskar never shied of positioning himself clearly, be it his religious devotion to Sathya Sai or a straightforward professional approach to money making. His attempt at acting and a subsequent failure too reflect an uninhibited nature as well as a maximum cashing in on opportunities. Gavaskar's love and respect for Tony Greig shows his admiration for excellence on the field, something that marks his autobiography as well. Gavaskar's assertive opinions on games other than cricket show his ability to examine sports in general and also showcase his critical thought process. And the most important of all, Gavaskar's declared love for writing over playing shows how serious he is about his writings and helps us understand that the success and love received by *Sunny Days* was never just about the journey of a cricket celebrity.

5.18.8 Glossary

All England Badminton Tournament:	One of the major badminton championships held annually in England, and is the oldest badminton championship.
Bhagavan:	Sri Sathya Sai, to whom Gavaskar is very devoted and calls this name, synonymous for 'God'.
Kerry-Packer Series:	World Series Cricket organized by Kerry Packer, an Australian Media tycoon between 1977 and 1979
US Masters Tournament:	One of the four major championship in professional golf.

5.18.9 Comprehensive Exercises

1. Comment on Bose's views on Gavaskar's professionalism. Discuss the negative side of a sportsperson's thrust on earning money. You may choose your examples from recent generations of cricketers or other sportsmen.
2. How do you see Gavaskar's endorsement of Sathya Sai? Should public celebrities endorse and valourise religious figures? Give your reasons.
3. Briefly discuss the trajectory of Gavaskar's career as a commentator, author and an occasional cine actor.
4. "Agassi, the tennis player will go down in history as one of its greatest exponents and entertainer but the legacy that his humanitarian work will leave behind is going to be far more important than his tennis deeds". What could these lines by Gavaskar possibly tell about his perspective on 'achievement'?

5.18.10 Suggested Reading List

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