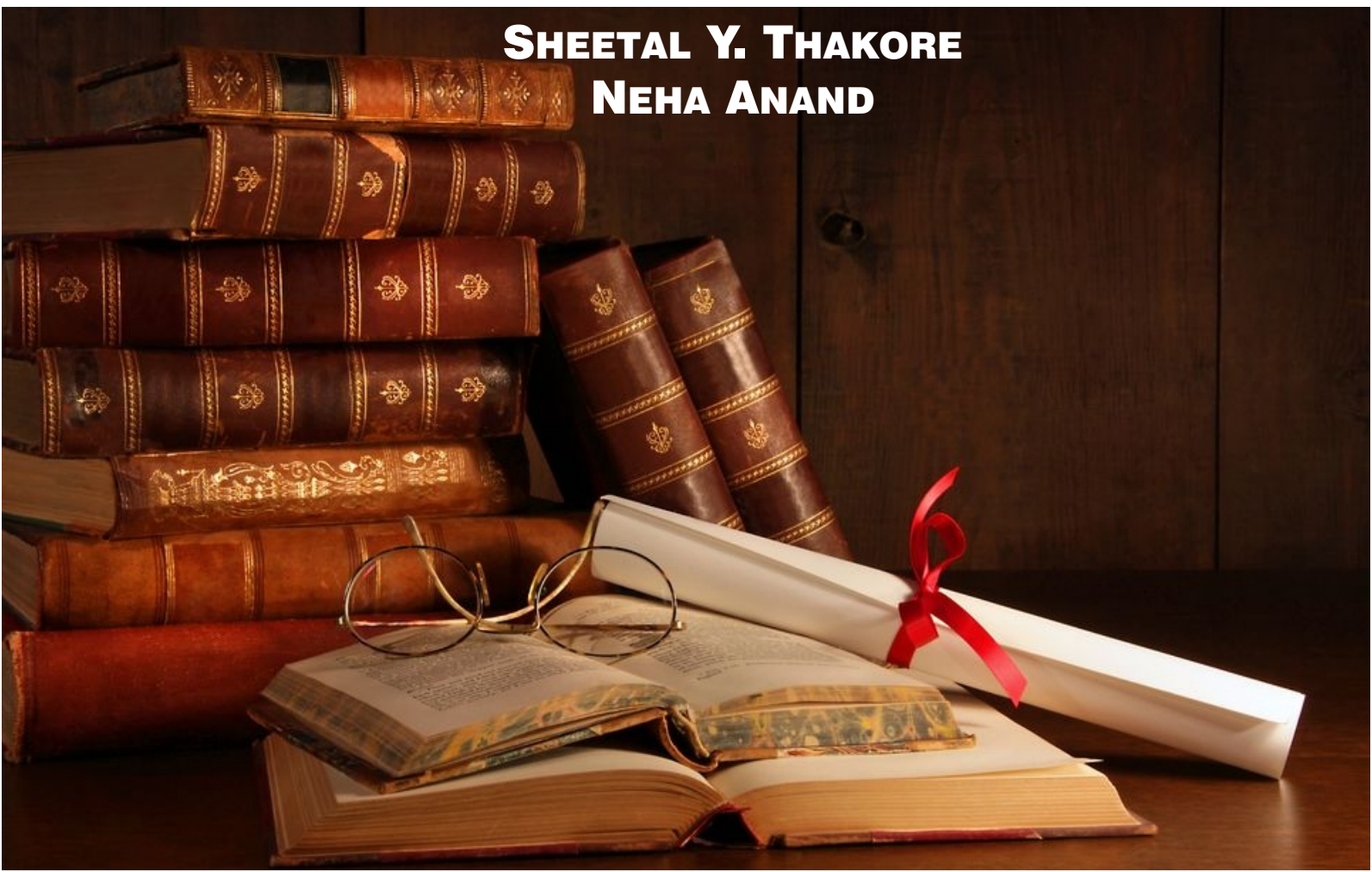




# **Indian Women Writers' Autobiographies A Critical Study**

**SHEETAL Y. THAKORE  
NEHA ANAND**





## *A Critical Study*

**Sheetal Y. Thakore, Neha Anand**





***Indian Women Writers' Autobiographies***  
***A Critical Study***

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**Dominant**  
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*Knowledge is Our Business*

**INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS' AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: A CRITICAL STUDY**

*By Sheetal Y. Thakore, Neha Anand*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS' AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The ability to study autobiographies as social documents and as insights into the ways in which individuals sought to present their version of "truth" as opposed to the point of view of a few select influential male members of the society that is commonly known as "history" is a significant aspect of autobiographies that makes the reading and study of such works relevant. Particularly, the autobiographies written by women take the readers on a voyage through previously unexplored parts of the feminine psyche that have mostly been ignored throughout recorded history. These autobiographical books serve as an alternate history, offering a totally different perspective on the world.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Autobiography, Interrelationship, Indian Writer, Marginalization, Self, Society.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Every person, at some point in their lives, finds fascination in the lives of others because life tales have such a broad appeal. We have all been exposed to life stories of one kind or another since we were young, either through oral storytelling customs, reading about them elsewhere, or watching them be performed on stage or film. They have also been encouraging and motivating to us in addition to amusing or correcting us. These days, life narratives have established themselves and are seen as a significant genre. They cover a wide range of platforms and mediums where a person has expressed their thoughts, memories, experiences, and other things. They could take the form of biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, travel diaries, papers, interviews conducted by illiterate informants, hagiographies of bhakti saints, etc.[1], [2].

#### **DISCUSSION**

##### **India's history of life stories:**

In India, compared to other countries, the study of life stories, and particularly autobiographies, had been neglected until recently. The study of autobiographies as a genre has gained traction in recent decades and is quickly rising in popularity among contemporary readers. Despite these facts, some Western critics did not view Indian conditions as being favorable for a variety of literary and critical approaches, especially in the field of autobiographical narratives as women's studies. Caste is one of the most important characteristics of Indian society, and critics contend that because of how much caste, gender, and religion influence people's identities, individual identity and the sense of self have never been at the center of Indian thought and behavior. One critic even contends that the term "dividuals" rather than "individuals" is a better way to describe Indians.



It was widely believed that while society in India was valued, the individual was not. As a pattern of "collectivity" tends to prevail in Indian life and society, it is a fact that the way in which autobiographies are approached in India differs from their Western models in conventions and modes of expression. As a result, one shouldn't expect to find the strange forms of individualism that emerge in the West. In his paper "Life Histories as Narrative Strategy" on Indian autobiographies, Stuart Blackburn notes that in a nation with such tremendous historical depth as India, "the felt need to tell a person's story is among the most powerful of cultural impulses" (203).

India is commonly thought of as primarily being a civilization made up of castes, religious groups, kinship networks, and regional assertiveness. Additionally, it is thought that as a result, a sense of self and individual identity is diminished and lost in the larger social and cultural structures. We can better understand the complex forces at play in contemporary societies by studying autobiographies, which also helps us focus on the key issues that are prevalent in the subcontinent, including gender, modernity, nationalism, ethnicity, social change, religion, family, and the interrelationship between one's self and society. In this regard, Arnold and Blackburn note that while writers may try to foretell history or define it in their own terms through the power of the written word, they did not always have the final say. For example, many Indian life histories owe more to ongoing social processes, popular reinterpretations, or the cultural accretions of generations than to an actual life as lived or defined in a single work [3], [4].

### **Women's autobiographies: An evolution**

In the field of autobiographies in general and the voice of women and the marginalized population in particular, extensive research has been done. Numerous critics of women's autobiographies, including Friedman, Georges Germaine Bree, Shirley Neumann, and Heilburn, have discussed the development of these works and examined the level of gender prejudice they include. The critics have been bothered by a number of difficulties for a long time.

Carolyn G. Heilburn addresses issues such as where the autobiography should start, the complexity of the subject's relationship with her mother, the reasons for her successful or unsuccessful marriage, etc. Susan Stanford Friedman emphasises that a man can think of himself as an individual, but a woman, who is constantly reminded of her sex, does not have this luxury while addressing the issue of gender discrimination in creative writing. Additionally, she claims that women develop a dual awareness that includes both their culturally prescribed selves and their own unique selves. Prof. Meena Sodhi believes that women may speak up for themselves and tell their stories with great courage, but she also points out that despite the fact that writing has never been seen as an unfeminine endeavor, women have seen more criticism than males.

Conway poses the following question in reference to the theoretical difficulties faced by female autobiographers: "For the woman autobiographer, the major question becomes how to see one's life as whole when one has been taught to see it as expressed through family and bonds with others." When linguistic convention places the female within the male, how can she show its authenticity? According to Gusdorf, a renowned critic of women's autobiographical writing, autobiographical work evolves as the author does, making the writing process into a quest for identity. In her critical article "Autobiography and Personal Criticism," Linda Anderson emphasises the importance of autobiographies in empowering marginalized communities and how they can be seen as the biography of a becoming.



The focus, the moods, and the means of expression of the Indian women autobiographers varied with time, along with the social mores and traditions of Indian civilization. The genre has evolved from its initial subjects of national and social relevance and the writers' reserved demeanour to giving voice to more private emotions and manifestations of the innermost feelings and passions of women[5], [6].

If she is willing, the woman next door will write down her life narrative if it will inspire and intrigue readers. The lost lives and voices of women have begun to emerge since the 1960s due to a growing interest in women's literature and in "the private, rather than public, history of oppressed groups" (Baer). Esstelle Jelinek, a respected critic in the field, describes the distinctiveness of women's autobiographies and notes that their writings exhibit three distinct characteristics:

- (i) Women's life tales tend to be more intimate and private than those on larger historical or social themes.
- (ii) They speak, act, and dress very differently from their male counterparts. Instead of the male writers' overblown, idealized, and self-assured writing style, female writers use irony, humor, directness, and understatement in their writing.
- (iii) Their memoirs are frequently not chronological and are either disjointed or set up such that each chapter might stand alone. In contrast to history, which allows her "the chance of finding other narratives, of rescuing herself from the bleak knowledge of what happened," writing an autobiography serves as a platform for "the figure of the writer doing the telling" for women. (Anderson).

In a subsequent paper about her well-known memoir *Landscape for a Good Woman*, Carolyn Steedman comments on the distinction between autobiography and history, saying, "I am extremely eager to remind readers, close to the beginning of the book, that what they are about to read is not history. Autobiographies by women writers offer insights not only into the lives and perspectives of the persons concerned but also into the unique society, cultural, regional, and tribal groups that the writers belong to (45). At the end, I want those readers to acknowledge that what I have written is history. This is extremely beneficial for comprehending and analyzing groups that are in some manner underrepresented and so not often heard, such as women, Dalits, people with disabilities, etc.

Today, in India, there is a partial shift away from the polished biographies and autobiographies of the 'great and famous' in favor of the representation and analysis of the more marginalized and lower classes of society. As the relations between the two poles the margins and the center have been greatly redefined since the 1960s, Singh notes the following when analyzing the change that can be easily noticed in the literary output by individuals in the margins: The center and margin arrangements in society were addressed by a variety of creative writers in their works. The creative and critical works by members of marginalized communities and on marginalized groups in our society, such as minorities, women, dalits, and tribals, examined a variety of themes that merit in-depth research and new perspectives[7], [8].

The reason for studying and analyzing the autobiographies of women whose culture has been referred to by some critics as "sub-culture," and especially women who have been further marginalized either socially, physically, geographically, or culturally, is that their lives are typically inaccessible by other means, and their individual voices, which actually represent the

plight of many other such marginalized groups, are silenced by the more dominant of Critics even refer to women from marginalized groups as experiencing "double discrimination."

### **Giving a fresh viewpoint**

The "Indian New-Woman" stereotype that evolved in the late nineteenth century as a result of British colonialist influences, including educational and socioreligious reforms, is discussed by Lokuge in the Preface to the OUP edition. The New-Woman fought for greater gender equality by rejecting institutional patriarchal notions that drove her into domesticity and subjectivity. When we first meet Saguna's mother Radha, she resides at her older brother's home with an elderly father and a helpless young brother. She has a nasty, spiteful sister-in-law who frequently loses her cool and acts violently. Radha silently accepts whatever punishment offered to her while working for her day and night. Sattianadhan makes a point of emphasizing that other young girls were also made to perform household chores for their families, not just Radha.

This early account of the lives of young Hindu girls prepares the ground for the book's two main themes, which are the Christian faith and how women are treated. Poor women? Krupabai queries, "What can we expect from such poor, stunted minds? These are the daughters of India, whose lot many of my countrymen, who are highly cultured and who are supposed to have benefited from Western civilization, consider as not needing any improvement. "The refined, civilized mind shudders or looks down with pity on the exhibition as a relic of savagery," the author writes.

After being made to move in with her husband's family, Radha's bad luck continues. Her mother-in-law is a strict, haughty lady. Radha is shown as a voiceless, frightened, and sensitive young woman who is totally reliant on other people. Her sexuality and the faith she was raised in are the two things that upset her so. Here is an excerpt concerning Radha's treatment by her mother-in-law that incorporates both concepts:

"Her treatment of Radha from an outsider's point of view was indeed objectionable, but we must make allowance for a Hindu notion of a daughter-in-law who is regarded as a lying, screaming wretch, ever ready to work any amount of ill to a mother-in-law, stealing the affections, when she can, of a good and dutiful son, turning like a serpent on those that have fed and clothed her, trying every means to get the power which the mother-in-law wields."

### **From hopelessness to faith**

In light of this, the author introduces us to a force that, in his opinion, has the ability to free people from oppression. After being severely beaten by her mother-in-law one evening and learning of the passing of her cherished little brother, Radha makes a failed attempt at suicide. In other words, this is her lowest point. On this particular night, she witnesses her husband whom she has previously interacted with very little deeply focused on Christian prayer. "She seemed to be held by the words he spoke, and her entire being was absorbed in listening. With untold balm and healing, the words reached her ears[9], [10].

Harichandra, Radha's spouse, is a bright, well-read young man who comes from a prosperous, "remarkably religious" Brahmin family noted for upholding strict morality and religious ceremonies. His family and relatives refer to Christianity as "the religion of the mlechas." And yet Harichandra converts to this religion after going through an existential crisis and doing some soul-searching. It goes without saying that the impact on the Brahmin community is disgraceful.

But Harichandra experiences a life of unadulterated happiness. Here, the infinite was unveiled in all its perfection, suggesting that God and man might form an unbreakable relationship. He appeared to be lifted above everything else. His body was filled with a wild, delirious excitement, and his entire heart was glowing with a newly discovered contentment. He was capable of enduring any suffering. All problems disappeared. From this point on, faith is a recurring subject in the book, and sections with such grandiose wording celebrating the person's magnificent connection with a higher spiritual power are frequently repeated. The experience is Harichandra's first, but it won't be the last for the family.

### **As competent as a man?**

When Radha first appears, she is "rebellious and uncontrollable," rejecting the Christians and sahibs and adhering to her fasts and festivals. However, she quickly starts to question her faith in "shastras and idols." She eventually changed her attitude towards the new religion as a result of "the calm of the Christian Sabbath, the call for morning and evening prayers, her husband's devotion, and the great forbearance shown to her ignorant, superstitious ways by those whom she felt were superior to her." Eventually, she gave in to the powerful influences of Christianity. It is demonstrated that the new faith is freeing. Harichandra and Radha no longer felt constrained to each other. The unnatural restraints of tradition have disappeared.

The offspring of Harichandra and Radha are devoted Christians who even labor as missionaries in rural areas to share the gospel. The texts that address this topic are ethereal and high, and they almost have a sermonic quality. The passages addressing "the woman question" on the other hand are more tangible and grounded in the personalities of the protagonists. Saguna is far more assertive and independent than her mother, who is sweet and subservient. She rebels against the gender roles assigned to girls even as a young child since she wants to be like her brothers, which is something they don't enjoy very much.

1. 'But she wanted to do just like us,' one of my brothers impulsively retorted in self-defense.
2. "And am I not a boy's equal in talent?" I hurried out of the room and declared, "I can do as many sums as they can, and I can read and write, too."

Saguna can read and write, and she does so fairly effectively. She is inspired by Bhasker, who also recommends novels to read and provides her with information about prominent guys. A wonderful education and a lifelong love of learning are beginning with this. Saguna declares, "I would now throw aside the fetters that bound me and be independent," later in the novel. I had become weary of the restrictions and limitations that made up the lot of most women, and I yearned for a chance to demonstrate that a woman is not in any way beneath a man. How difficult it appeared to me that a woman's desire should be marriage, that she should spend her days in the menial tasks of a home life, live to dress and look good, and never experience the thrill of independence and intellectual labor. In a scene near the book's conclusion, Saguna declines three marriage proposals in favor of independence and a profession.

Although Saguna wants to be independent, she still develops feelings for Samuel. While the book stops there, Krupabai continued to live a fairly typical married life and gave up her medical career, following her husband wherever his business brought him. Despite all of her rebellions, Krupabai was still, in Lokuge's opinion, a dependent woman. She used to look up to her older brother, who was her complete academic and psychological support system. She eventually got

reliant on her husband. She is torn apart by having to claim that she is "as good as a man" while also acknowledging the innate need to conform to the stereotype of being "only a woman." Overall, Sattianadhan exhibits intense internal strife between opposing forces, not just in one particular area.

### **An internal conflict**

She appears to adopt Western lifestyles on the one hand, starting with a Western religion. Her perspective on things appears to be colonialist. She consciously criticizes Western lifestyles, on the other hand. These times of self-division are acknowledged by the author herself. These, in my opinion, lend a level of complexity to the book, which, let's not forget, isn't merely designed to be a manifesto for women's rights or an evangelistic treatise. Above all else, it is a novel.

This book is described by Lokuge as "a literary masterpiece of its time." It is simple to understand why. This compact book is jam-packed with gorgeous language and vividly detailed characters. Evocative descriptions are used for places and scenes. When Sattianadhan writes about people, whom she undoubtedly personally knew, her empathy and insight make the scenes quite touching in contrast to the lofty rhetoric in the Christian sections. For instance, Radha is standing with her buddy beside the Ghats in the Shivagunga town the first time we encounter her. "In the midst of the vast, busy world around them, the two created a small universe for themselves. Nobody was aware of their emotions, joys, or regrets.

The fact that this book is a more or less factual account of the author's own life makes it twice as entertaining than it otherwise would be. She occasionally thinks about the nature of her recollection and how time has changed the way she sees things. These not only give insight into Krupabai's soul but also help Saguna become a more thoughtful and trustworthy individual. Bhasker frequently expressed to Saguna that his greatest wish was to do great things before he passed away. To his sister, he once begged, "Speak boldly to your countrywomen." Saguna's own early death at the age of 32 left behind a literary legacy that perhaps few modern Indian readers are aware of. The experiences and viewpoints of an educated, Anglicized Indian woman on matters of societal relevance at the end of the nineteenth century are fascinatingly documented in this book. The beloved older brother would have undoubtedly approved.

### **Life to literature and back**

The author of the book declares in the opening of the work that she wants to "present a faithful picture of the experiences and thoughts of a simple Indian girl." We first hear about Krupabai's autobiographical details, which are particularly intriguing given that she pursued an education and acquired knowledge at a time when both were uncommon for women. Here are some fundamentals. Born in Ahmednagar then in the Bombay Presidency to the first Brahmin Christians, Saguna/Krupabai was one of 14 siblings. She was left at home with four boys for companionship after her father passed away young and her three older sisters got married. The oldest brother, Bhasker, had a strong and long-lasting impact on the young Saguna.

Saguna was thirteen when he passed away, and it crushed her. She spent some time being cared for by two European women who taught her British customs while she was recovering. After that, she went to boarding school in Bombay, where she excelled academically and discovered a passion for medicine. She was even given a scholarship to study medicine in England, but owing to her ill health and the dominant patriarchal values, she was not permitted to go. Her medical

career was regrettably cut short due to depression and poor health after she enrolled in Madras Medical College, the first medical school in India to admit women. She met and fell in love with Samuel Sattianadhan, a reverend's son who had just returned from studying in England, in 1881. Although they are married at the end of the book, Krupabai went on to work as a teacher and a writer in real life.

She founded a tiny school for Muslim girls and taught in zenanas because she was a strong advocate for females' education. Her writings, including her papers, poems, travelogues, and fiction, were first published in regional periodicals before being collected in *Miscellaneous Writings of Krupabai Sattianadhan*. Her second book, which is interesting, was titled *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life*.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between an individual and society is thoroughly and in-depth examined in female autobiographies, as well as how the writer's gender has affected her life and social status, how much caste or culture influences an individual's life, and whether the writer's experience of being physically disabled or marginalized differs from that of her male counterpart. Even after significant research and efforts in the field of women's autobiographies, there is still room for improvement. One possibility is to shift the focus from well-known female figures, such as writers, artists, and social activists, to less well-known female authors. These are the women who are willing to share the advantages and chances, as well as the drawbacks and difficulties of a life that has been given to them. That is the main justification for choosing the autobiographies being examined in the proposed study. An autobiography's creation is not a goal in and of itself. However, they have served a vital historical purpose. They are the printed materials that allow for the analysis of social reality. The study of autobiographies is crucial for comprehending history in light of this element. Analysis of female autobiographies in particular helps to raise awareness of the social challenges that Indian women, particularly Dalit women, experience on a daily basis, including those related to gender, handicap, and Dalit sensibility.

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## CHAPTER 2

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENRE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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#### ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I examine the literary subgenre of autobiography, which straddles several fields, including anthropology and history. The majority of theorist's categories autobiography as literary non-fiction; others who reject these self-examinations as fact mockingly refer to it as fiction. The first-person pronoun "I," who serves as both the subject and the object of the autobiographical tale, is the most intriguing sign of an autobiography. The tale of a Being written by the person himself is, by definition, full of inconsistencies and complexity because this "I" is constantly changing either on a daily basis as a diary, in retrospect as memoirs, dispersed through works in a covert fashion, or preserved as oral history. The genre has its historical roots in the West's Catholic confessional tradition. Autobiography is not a native literary form in India, much like the book genre is not. I refer to Saint Augustine's Confessions, Günter Grass' Peeling the Onion, Gandhi's The Story of my Experiments with Truth and autobiographies of Dalit writers Omprakash Valmiki (Joothan), Baby Kamble (The Prisons we Broke) and Vasant Kamble (Growing up Untouchable in India) in order to trace the evolution of this genre and also to compare the typology of these texts which are otherwise very different in terms of content. Also highlighted is the complex relationship between memory and autobiography.

#### KEYWORDS:

Confessions, Genre, Individual, Non-Fiction, Memory, Modernity, Perception, Testimonials.

#### INTRODUCTION

A genre is typically thought of as a kind or group of textual creations with comparable conventions. It is hardly surprising that artists frequently struggle against this boxing in and favor the flexibility to try new things. German romanticists imagined a utopian story in which all forms of aesthetic expression including philosophy, rhetoric, and criticism would merge to produce what Friedrich Schlegel called a Universal Poesie. While still a critic of the youthful Romantics, the older Goethe acknowledged the genres by using them as titles for some of his works. The Fairy Tale (1795) was the title of a story. He wrote a novella titled On the Genre of Autobiography: Typology and Evolution after some time.

The issues that arise with genres are the same issues that arise with epochs. Writings from a specific historical era are frequently grouped together, and one might anticipate a priori comparable issues, motifs, and storytelling styles. The confusion surrounding the French word "genre" is also a result of the fact that it is used to refer to a number of sub-categories, including sonnet, elegy, ghazal, novel, novella, fairy tale, science fiction, comedy, tragedy, and others, in addition to the three major categories of literature: poetry, prose, and plays. Despite the flaws and shortcomings of the genre concept, it is nonetheless widely used in academia because it fills the requirement for a formal theoretical framework.



In this paper, I examine the types of memoirs and the autobiographical genre's relationship to memory. I examine the origins of the genre and how it developed from antiquity through modernity and into postmodernity with the aid of specific examples from the West and the East. The autobiography of Saint Augustine merits special attention because it is generally seen as the first unambiguous autobiography that launched the genre[1], [2].

To demonstrate how autobiographical writing of the late 20th century remained with the classical tradition in a secular Europe while simultaneously creating new narrative components like humor and irony, Günter Grass' most recent autobiography has been given equal weight, if not more. Both authors are intimately aware of the potential and constraints of memory. Without mentioning the non-Western world, which has created its own typological differences in autobiographies, the article will fall short of its intended purpose. For the purpose of highlighting some current tendencies and practises in this genre in the Indian context, Dalit autobiographies are used as a case study. The paper is also a comparative study, typologically comparing autobiographical texts that are written in several languages and are separated in time, space, and existential perspective. The study is intriguing and worthwhile due to both the parallels and contrasts found in the typological comparison. This piece is inspired by my edited book *Autobiography. A collection of 18 academic papers from around the world, Fact and Fiction* (2009). Furthermore, as German literature is my area of expertise, the article includes numerous examples from that genre[3], [4].

## DISCUSSION

### Confessions of Saint Augustine

The genre of autobiography has historically been associated with the West and the Catholic practise of confession. The traditional autobiographical genre, which centres on self-examination, confession of crimes, and expression of regret and sorrow, is in fact profoundly theological in both language and spirit. Most people agree that Saint Augustine invented the genre. One of the first and best examples of the European scholastic tradition that established the general parameters of the autobiographical genre is His Confessions in Latin, written in CE 397.

It is addressed to God and recounts the events in his life that have shaped and marked his spiritual growth (Augustine 2001). At the age of 33, Augustine, a neo-Platonic philosopher and professor of rhetoric at Carthage and Rome, finally decided to become a Christian after much deliberation. He is now usually acknowledged as the first significant Christian philosopher. He holds that repentance of crimes or evil deeds results in their cleaning, and that is how the sinner Augustine eventually becomes a saint. The confessions starting with his initial lack of faith in Christ, his theft of fruit as a child, his adultery, and his youthful arrogance might elicit a wry grin in today's society, but they must be understood in the context of early Christianity. His outstanding views on memory, which he illustrated with the metaphors of an attic and a cave, are essential from the perspective of this paper. A few of them are quoted below.

A being has visions of rivers, mountains, waves, and stars stored in its memory. This is how Augustine describes the function of perception in memory. He also makes it clear that ideas like logic and reason, which one learns from the liberal arts, are stored as ideas and not as images (2001: 90). Saint Augustine is in awe of memory's "immeasurable capacity" (2001: 90). The autobiography, which has philosophical comments on language, time, and memory and is

described as a "thanksgiving" (2001: 87), also represents the predicament of a philosopher whose intellect got in the way of his faith and vice versa[5], [6].

### **Grass, Gunter, "Peeling the Onion"**

Augustine's conception of autobiography initiated a historical tendency that persisted into European modernity. Numerous autobiographies, including those by Goethe, Wordsworth, and Rousseau, are indicative of the Romantic age, which placed a strong focus on the individual and subjectivity. It's interesting that Rousseau chose the same name for his autobiography as Augustine did. Another boom in autobiographical writing occurred in Europe during the twentieth century. *My Life* by Marc Chagall (1922), which features ink sketches, offers a poignant glimpse into the artist's upbringing in a Russian Jewish ghetto. It evokes memories of German Heimatliteratur and a longing for the past. One of the most poignant works of the 20th century is *The Diary of Anna Frank* (1942–44, Dutch original; published posthumously in 1947), written by a 13-year-old Jewish girl hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam. The diary falls under the category of Holocaust literature in general. However, a detailed study of the journal also gives a unique perspective into the world of a young girl nearing puberty, including her aspirations, desires, frustrations, and perspective on the world of adults. Max Frisch, Elias Canetti, and Thomas Bernhard were only a few of the autobiographical authors whose works appeared in the post-war German literary scene in the 1960s. The present generation of well-known German authors, like Peter Handke, Uwe Timm, Hans-Ulrich Treichel, and Herta Müller, also produces a lot of autofiction, or fiction that is highly influenced by the personal experiences of the author.

In order to conduct a more thorough analysis, I have chosen Günter Grass' most recent autobiography since it has many concepts with Saint Augustine's, such as the custom of confessions and the connection between memoirs and memory. The 78-year-old Grass makes a stunning confession of his Nazi history in *Peeling the Onion* (2007), even though it is a confession made "on his own terms" (Gardam 2007). The sinner is elevated to a saint, exactly like Augustine, by the voluntary public confession that is written in literary German. Grass admits to "hero-worshipping" the Nazis, saying, "My childhood years seem to have been completely unconfounded by doubt" (2007: 19). The collective inability of his generation of Germans to use the word *why* is highlighted. When recalling his time spent in the Hitler Youth, Grass conveys this point by substituting "we" for "I" in the book. *Schuld* is a loaded term in German, he claims:

Grass symbolically compares memory to an onion, whose layers of existence can be peeled away one at a time. But this "peeling" or "telling-all" is not an easy procedure. The choice of how thoroughly and finely to peel the onion is totally up to the cook. According to Grass (2007: 221), memory and its verbal replication are difficult because "what memory stores and preserves in condensed form blends with the story in whatever way it is told. The second half of this statement, "in whatever way it is told," is particularly poignant. He elaborates on this idea several times in the book: Grass is obviously hesitant to rely on his recollection, or what he refers to as his "rear-view mirror" (2007: 36). He pauses multiple times and uses the word "or" to indicate alternative choices[7], [8].

One can understand how challenging it is for him to restore the young Grass' sense of self. Perception based on the author's conceptual cosmos, reality is constantly misperceived. The *Wahrnehmung* is the German word for perception, meaning that there is in fact a component of

Wahrheit or reality as perceived. The impression of reality and this truth converge and drown converge into one another, realigning actual reality and transforming facts into objects, art.

According to Grass, his autobiography tells the tale of how he came to be an artist. He gives the typical father-son argument, life as a Waffen SS recruit, and the first half of the war years. Battles with starvation, acne, and cooking instruction in the camp for prisoners of war. The following half of the book is made up of memories from his travels and sculpture apprenticeship (Lehrjahre). (Wanderjahre) before experiencing literary stardom. The events and episodes throughout his life are also mentioned life that appear in his numerous literary creations. The autobiography includes a section for each.

### **Autobiography's troublesome aspects**

The first-person "I" tense, in which the author, the narrator, and the protagonist are all the same, is the most intriguing evidence of autobiographical writing. The impulse to delve deeply into oneself was referred to by the Romantics as the "mine" or "Bergwerk" cliché. Freud referred to it as the "talking cure" a century later. Jacques Lacan asserts that the Mirror Stage, or the first time a kid looks at its own reflection in a mirror, is when introspection of "I" begins. The child realizes itself across the mirror thanks to the dialectic between the "real" self and its "appearance" (Gestalt) in the mirror. It is mesmerised by its own image, and this moment of self-identification in relation to an adult frequently signals a turning point in its development because it represents the beginning of the complex problem of identity. From this point forward, self-representation or interpretation might turn into narcissism. It simultaneously receives historical, cultural, and political deposits that capture the zeitgeist.

Additionally, the "I" in an autobiography is not a static entity but rather is in flux due to shifting existential circumstances. Because of these complications, the autobiographical genre is challenging to categories both philosophically and structurally (Singh 2009). It cannot be referred to as fiction if it is interpreted as the life story of a Being. As a result, some critics refer to it as literary or creative non-fiction. Others who hold autobiographies in less favorable regard claim that they are typically works of fiction because they always "construct" a favorable image of the self (Wagner-Egelhaaf 2000). I use the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, which was written there in Pervade Prison in Pune. His autobiography, which was originally written in Gujarati and then translated into English by his secretary Mahadev Desai, was first released in 1927 and tells the tale of his life up until the year 1920.

With the title *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* (1927), Mahatma Gandhi cleverly attempted to make his autobiography (Gandhi 2008) appear honest. He placed emphasis on the word "truth" and the scientific nature of his "experiments." Gandhi emphasizes his point once more in the preface, saying, "I desire to fully familiarize the reader with all my shortcomings and errors. My goal is not to brag about how talented I am, but rather to describe experiments in the science of Satyagraha. I'll attempt to be as honest and brutal with my judgements of myself as I would want others to be [9], [10]."

That is what all autobiography writers would assert. The genre also contains other difficulties. It is difficult to travel back and forth in time and space. Across fields and genres, poets, philosophers, painters, and linguists have all been captivated by the enigma of time. The persistence and breakdown of the memory reservoir can also be used to explain it. Time is not depicted as a frozen but as a soft entity in Salvador Dali's famous painting *The Persistence of*

Memory (1931), also known as *Melting Clocks or Soft Watches*. A surrealist metaphor for the erosion or dissolution of time is ants chewing away at a clock.

Marc Chagall frequently depicted flying clocks with hefty pendulums that rocked. He occasionally painted clocks backwards. Then there is the dialectic between remembering and forgetting, which can both be spontaneous or deliberate, sequential or selective. Selective image enlargements from the memory are performed while leaving other images unaltered. This has a connection to the human propensity for boasting and its negative counterpart, humiliation and dishonor. A writer may find it easy to accentuate and exaggerate their triumphs, but Singh (2009) asks, "How far can one be honest about their failures and painful details of life?"

In spite of all these inherent inconsistencies and complexity, which Augustine and Grass serve as prime examples of, the autobiographical genre has not only withstood the test of time but is also flourishing in the postmodern literary landscape of today everywhere in the globe. Numerous recent research in the humanities and social sciences indicate a memory boom some even refer to it as a memory craze that is primarily explained by a rush of recollections of the 20th century's wars and holocaust. Even university professors particularly those who currently teach or have formerly taught literature, like Terry Eagleton and Edward Said have produced autobiographies, switching from critics to authors. Ironically, these intellectuals who exploit the literary concept of "exile" have come to be known as celebrities or stars (Singh 2009: 70–78). In addition, publishing autobiographies many of which were written by ghost writers by celebrities including football players, pop and movie stars, pop culture figures, and politicians has grown popular.

Cyberspace blogs are a more recent addition to this genre. Although each autobiographical discourse is unique, most authors usually start by outlining and defending why they chose to write about themselves. In addition to the historical factors already discussed, this genre's contemporary popularity is due to psychological factors as well. Selfies and Facebook have made it popular among everyone, so sharing the highs and lows of one's personal and/or professional life is no longer just for men of letters.

### **Additional types of autobiographies**

Throughout the form of journals, memoirs, and chronicles, autobiographies have a long history throughout Europe. In addition to this "pure" form, autobiographical threads can be found, purposefully or unwittingly, in a variety of works, including papers, letters, novels, travel diaries, philosophy, paintings, pictures, and films. Some book's opening dedications and acknowledgements are incredibly intimate, sometimes even hidden. Artists occasionally depict themselves in paintings as members of the audience. During the creation of his series about a circus, Pablo Picasso dressed like a harlequin. There is no shortage of instances. To recognize and interpret these disguised autobiographical narratives, one must be an astute observer. In these situations, the critic performs the role of an archaeologist excavating a site, sorting through information, gathering pieces, and assembling them. Picasso compared painting to keeping a diary. All art is autobiographical, according to acclaimed Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini, because the pearl represents the oyster's autobiography.

For these fictional works, "autobiographical writing" is a better term to use. Similar words were reportedly spoken by Flaubert: "Madame Bovary that is me." But according to Heckmann, Goethe argued that Werther was not him. Goethe attempted to downplay the significance of autobiographical experiences in literature whereas Flaubert emphasized their importance. Both

viewpoints are valid since a book is frequently a complicated synthesis of real and imagined elements. Although an artist's personal experiences serve as a starting point for his work, those experiences cannot be perfectly captured in art. There is a lot of churning, and facts are put into new combinations and permutations. In the end, Flaubert also produced a female protagonist that many women throughout the globe continue to identify with. Then there are novels like *Confessions of Felix Krull*, *Confidence Man* (1922) by Thomas Mann and *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Bragger* (1910) by Rainer Maria Rilke that are fictional autobiographies. Many of these self-discovery stories from Europe are now regarded as classics.

### **Indian autobiographies and contemporary trends**

Without mentioning specific tendencies and practises in the autobiographical genre that are relatively recent in origin, particularly but not only flourishing in the non-Western world with blatant disparities and injustices, not always of its making, a debate on the genre will fall short. Autobiographies with oral histories are a fascinating addition that are frequently used by historians and folklorists. These are the "as-told-to" memoirs, in which writing and authorship are divided. One individual speaks, while the other listens, documents, interprets, edits, and ultimately publishes. The conventional notion of the genre that the author, narrator, and protagonist are all the same person is abandoned in these cooperative autobiographies. A few notable examples are the autobiographies of Native Americans, Afro-American slave narratives (such as *Autobiography of Malcolm X*), and in the context of India, *The Other Side of Silence* (2000) with real stories of people directly affected by the partition of Punjab in 1947 as-told to Urvashi Butalia, and *Bandit Queen of India: An Indian Woman's Amazing Journey from Peasant to International Legend* (2006) the story of Phoolan Devi as-told. Such narratives frequently depend heavily on the power dynamics between the narrator and the recorder as well as business interests (Singh 2009: 12–24).

It's interesting that few clear-cut autobiographies can be found in India, especially in the ancient and mediaeval periods. *Babarnamah* (Memoirs of Babar, 1530), *Mirza Ghalib's Dastanbuy* (Diary, 1857), and *Guru Gobind Singh's Bichitra Natak* (Resplendent Play, 1730–32) are three examples of autobiographies written by notable historical figures from mediaeval India. Then there is Banarsi Das, a Jain merchant and poet, who wrote his memoirs in Hindi verse in 1641 under the title *Ardhakathanak* (Half a Story). There aren't many instances, and most of them are poems. Should we then draw the conclusion that autobiography is not a well-established literary form in India and that, like the novel genre, it is a modern-day Western borrowing? Gandhi's companion cautioned him that he was being influenced by Western ideals when he indicated a wish to write an autobiography. I'll come back to this issue later.

Dalit writing, which has embraced the Western genre of autobiography without hesitation, is an intriguing contribution to postcolonial Indian literature. These stories detail the harsh caste-based oppression that is unique to India. Here, I concentrate especially on Dalit autobiographies since they exhibit some novel typological traits that are distinct from those of Augustine and Grass. The caste system is appropriately referred to as "the principle of graded inequality" by Bhim Rao Ambedkar (1891–1956) (2013: 58). It's interesting that some have categorized it as a form of racial prejudice. Since Ambedkar began his movement in his home state of Marathi, Dalit memoirs initially appeared there in the 1960s and subsequently. Other Dalit autobiographies in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi came after them. I've chosen *The Prisons we broke* by Baby Kamble



(1986), *Growing up Untouchable in India* by Vasant Moon (1995), and *Joothan* by Omprakash Valmiki (1997), all of which were originally written in Marathi.

These writings serve as a "report card" on how untouchables are treated throughout India (Valmiki 2010: xi). However, some detractors use the term "former untouchables." I will not discuss the advantages or disadvantages of using this phrase in this article. *The Prisons we Broke* is a Dalit woman's first book of memoirs. *The Prisons we Broke* also exposes Dalit patriarchy, which results in the triple exploitation of caste, class, and gender, in contrast to Dalit autobiographical narratives written by Dalit men, where Dalit women merely make a "guest appearance" (Kamble 1986: 158–70). It also depicts the mundane living of Mahar Dalits in Maharashtra and how Ambedkar improved their miserable situation. The Chuhra cluster is a village in Uttar Pradesh's vicinity of Muzaffarnagar where Valmiki's book is located. *Growing up Untouchable in India* concentrates on the turbulent years of Dalit militancy in the 1940s, which culminated in widespread Buddhist conversions in Nagpur in 1956, the movement's zenith (Moon 2000).

Omprakash Valmiki and Baby Kamble describe their people's custom of taking leftover food from upper caste houses in great detail in their sections on eating habits. Both texts also detail how dead animals are disposed of in the village, as this was one of the Dalit people's customary jobs. Long, detailed descriptions of the cutting, preservation, and eating of meat from animal carcasses appear to be an intentional attempt by the authors to illustrate how distinct their society was from the mainstream Hindu culture, which in many respects was a subculture. Their uneasy relationship with the "Other," or the Hindu religion, its scriptures, and its gods and goddesses, is actually an interesting facet of these authors. Omprakash Valmiki claims: Vasant Moon also brings up the Dalit boycott of Hindu holidays like Ganesh Chaturthi, Holi, Janmashtami, and Diwali in favour of Ambedkar and Buddha Jayanti.

The other recurring theme in Dalit autobiographies is the prominence accorded to the disagreement over Dalit emancipation between the two intellectual and political titans Ambedkar and Gandhi. Autobiographies written by Dalits typically contain significant anti-Gandhi attitude. The authors are extremely critical of Gandhi for his patronising attitude towards untouchability because he was just looking for a voluntary "change of heart" among the higher castes, but they respect Ambedkar for his uncompromising stance demanding political power for the Dalits.

Both the terms Dalit (the crushed) and Harijan (children of God) were first used by Gandhi and the Congress Party, respectively. The Scheduled Caste Federation quickly embraced the word Dalit. Ambedkar is blunt: "I have condemned the Hindus. I have questioned the Mahatma's legitimacy, whom they hold in such high regard. They despise me. I am a snake in their garden in their eyes (Ambedkar 2007: 30). According to Valmiki (2010: 72), "after reading Ambedkar, I realised that by naming the untouchables Harijans, Gandhi had not assisted them in assimilating into society, but had prevented the Hindus from becoming a minority." actually protected their interests. In these publications, the identification issues of the burgeoning Dalit middle class are also expressed in terms of the willful efforts made by some of them to conceal or modify their family names.

Dalit autobiographical narratives have some formal characteristics. The "I" and the "we," or the individual and the group, always overlap. For instance, the word "we" appears in Baby Kamble's autobiography's title. The suffering of my community has always been more important to me than my own personal suffering, she asserts without equivocation. I have thoroughly identified

with my folks. Therefore, Jina Amucha was my entire community's autobiography (1986: 157). Vasti, Moon's autobiography's original Marathi title, emphatically emphasizes the value of the community over the individual.

Second, these authors don't suffer from memory problems. Trust and celebration are accorded collective memory, or the more current term "cultural memory," which derives from the memory theories of the German couple Aleida and Jan Assmann and the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. The authors place a strong focus on the veracity of their accounts and the truthfulness of their experiences. To highlight the profoundly ingrained feeling of purity and pollution in the Indian psyche, "experience" is actually placed above "contemplation." The vocabulary, textual architecture, and narrative devices in these books make them less than stellar literary works. But that makes sense given that Dalit literature is still in its infancy and that many Dalit autobiographies are first works.

They ought to be interpreted and valued as acts of assertion. Additionally, the goal is to recall and preserve Dalit heritage, maybe leading to eventual wound healing. In that sense, Ambedkar's speeches and writings are also autobiographical since they frequently combine the personal and the political. Although he was plainly far more educated than the majority of Indians of his time—indeed, he was an elite with a law degree from England he details the indignities he had to endure as an insider in his paper, "Reminiscences of Untouchability," even though he was clearly way ahead of most of them.

### CONCLUSION

In contrast to recent autobiographies in the non-Western world, which often record the collective experience of a specific group, often socially disadvantaged like Dalits, women, AIDS and cancer patients, sex workers, and most recently domestic maids, the genre of autobiography in Europe has mostly focused on individual experience and is often marked by a literary language and a sophisticated mode of presentation. In the latter scenario, the protagonist plays the roles of a victim or a witness or both, and the autobiography transforms into the testimonial voice of a subaltern people, regardless of ethnicity, religion, caste, color, gender, or physical problems. The injustices that have accumulated find a literary expression, and recounting one's narrative can be cathartic or a form of political opposition. In this situation, the truthfulness of the statements takes precedence above linguistic and creative writing abilities. The autobiography's "auto" gets changed into a group "auto."

The writing of autobiographies in the West was encouraged by some modernity-related characteristics, such as the stress on individuality. According to some theorists, such as Gopal Guru, the autobiographical genre is ineluctably absent from India since Indian traditions stress renunciation rather than the ego (Kamble 1986: 158). First, I contend that the absence of a certain genre should not be seen as a deficiency or a fault. The popularity of a genre is influenced by historical and cultural evolutionary tendencies. For instance, the ghazal has a long and well-established tradition in oriental poetry, yet it is conspicuously absent from western poetics. Second, several autobiographical traditions have existed in the Orient. The Orient does not produce explicit autobiographical works in prose, but it does so subtly in genres like poetry, travelogues, and correspondence.

The political changes of the time, as well as Mirza Ghalib's existential state, are all documented in his letters. Particularly in the Orient, where lyrical poetry has its roots, the impulse to write



about one's own life finds partial or complete expression. The development of Dalit autobiographies in recent decades is evidence that postcolonial India has welcomed the autobiographical genre with open arms, adapting its form and content to fit its particular demands.

There are many different types of autobiographical stories. From Saint Augustine's beautiful theological and philosophical paper confessing his early lack of trust in Christ to atheist Günter Grass confessing his young, "rock-solid" confidence in Hitler, the genre has come a long way. These public confessions have inherent components of guilt and regret. These confessional and guilty features are also present in Gandhi's autobiography. After all, he received his education in England, where he first encountered a number of concepts. The genre has traditionally changed both in terms of form and substance at the same time. The genre has changed recently, and I've tried to illustrate this with the example of Dalit memoirs, which describe the physical and mental abuse that the Dalit outcasts endured at the hands of the "Other." Such writing is known as *Abrechnungsliteratur*, according to the German-Swiss literary critic Adolf Muschg (Heckmann 1984: 32). Muschg was alluding to post-World War II German writers who criticized and denounced their parents' generation in their writings for its actions, beliefs, and child-rearing practises. Although it has a bad connotation, Muschg's word of "abrechnen," or "settling scores through writing," could also be applicable to Dalit literature. Although they are in a different order, the fundamental concept of confession is still present. There are also notable differences in the interaction with memory. Self frequently alludes to collective identification, and memory is frequently regarded as sacred.

To suggest that Indian and Western memoirs are fundamentally dissimilar would not be accurate. The concept or theory behind a genre establishes a common factor. The distinctiveness of each narrative's shape and substance comes next. Typologically, a genre's limits can always be widened to reflect how the outside world and worldviews change. It is always possible to adapt intellectual concepts from the past and from other cultures to fit modern requirements. All memoirs begin with memories, and memories are not on an equal footing with facts. However, all autobiographies share the fundamental concept of sharing your life story and finding healing through the written word. In the end, everyone struggles with the most fundamental yet baffling issue of life: "Who am I?" One final personal note before I close up this post. Involuntarily or through Freudian slips, teachers occasionally share anecdotes and experiences from their own life in the classroom. This gesture is also autobiographical.

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## CHAPTER 3

### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES AS FEMINIST DISCOURSE

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#### ABSTRACT:

Black women's autobiographical writings have been influenced by their specific literary tradition and the experiences that are also particular to them. Their stories end up serving as a platform from which they demolish and oppose any effort to downplay any clichéd portrayal of Black femininity. Thus, their stories turn into a place where they create and define a specifically black, powerful female selfhood based on their history and experiences. In this paper, an effort has been made to examine the significance of the autobiography genre in particular as expertly used by Black women autobiographers. The paper also aims to reflect on the inherent connections between the genre of autobiography and the ideology of gender.

#### KEYWORDS:

Autobiography, Gender, Genre, Feminist, Narratives, Self.

#### INTRODUCTION

Among all other narrative traditions, autobiography is one of the richest and most illuminating forms of expression for African Americans. African Americans have long used the autobiographical genre as a primary tool for introspection and to express their distinctive experiences and goals. It has been a potent means of articulation since its birth, and it has gradually changed the social, political, and cultural reality of the United States. By outlining a brief history of the African American autobiographical tradition, particularly the African American women's autobiographical tradition, the paper establishes the tone. The paper discusses how autobiography is a potent medium for black people to record their protests and communicate the specific realities of a racialized society in the West. One of the most common methods of preserving their realities and simultaneously documenting their resistance has been to ensconce themselves in narrative. The autobiographical form has a long history in the African American community, starting with the slave narrative and evolving into a well-known genre of protest literature in the 18th and 19th centuries in an effort to combat efforts to keep black people silent and invisible[1], [2].

For African Americans, the autobiography genre has been a very powerful and well-liked medium of expression. Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, which was published in 1945 and received a great deal of critical acclaim, is considered a turning point in the literary history of autobiography. The story grips America's attention in a very moving way by describing the riveting journey from initial suffering and adversity to the eventual triumph of soul. W.E. Du Bois was a significant author of the time who wrote the masterfully expressed narrative *Dusk of Dawn*. The subtitles for both stories, i.e. Richard Wright's *A Record of Childhood and Youth* and Du Bois' *An Paper towards an Autobiography of Race Concept* demonstrate the nature of black autobiography as a documentation of the true version of reality and not made up. The

autobiography genre has aided these authors in giving voice to all facets of black life. Like Du Bois and Wright, individuals from all walks of life—men and women, radicals and conformists, musicians and academics have used their personal histories to reestablish their identities[3], [4].

## DISCUSSION

Autobiography has met the needs of numerous talented people by serving as both literary and personal history. The result is a huge praise and reaches the heritage of Du Bois and Wright, who interns have inherited from slave narrators, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Ida Wells Barnett, and Booker T. Washington. The 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century were a particularly fruitful time for the overall growth of African Americans. Critically renowned autobiographies by Maya Angelou, Nate Shaw, Claude Brown, James Baldwin, and Dick Gregory Billie Holiday help to establish a connection between the author and the reader. Additionally, these narratives give voice to individual identities, which has prompted social scientists and critics to reframe and reexamine problems like class and race.

The paper makes an effort to analyse the relationship between gender and genre, examining problems through the lens of sexual difference and challenging romanticized gender norms. A detailed examination of autobiographies demonstrates how the ideology of gender has strengthened the views on masculine and feminine cell phones, supporting the sex system in the process. The concerns of gender and John Ryan's autobiography are so deeply intertwined that the many diagnostic strengths cannot stand alone from one another. As a result, women's conversations with the genre are now particularly problematic. In an effort to complicate the previously indicated concerns, the paper poses the relevant questions.

How old was the rendering of generic inflations? What impact did the gender issue have on the genre issue? How did the theoretical approach impact the study of self-precise writings? The female autobiographer struggles with conflicting postures as she shifts from one fiction of self-representation to the next while also participating in the discourse of cell food that aligns with the discourse of men and informs us of the power and hegemony of the melts subjectivity. Additionally, by selecting the genre, she reveals her subversive posture for literally authority, further complicating her woos her story is not exactly the one she had in mind. Additionally, she must define the female subjectivity and her relationship to language in the discourse that forms the idea of a woman in order to gain more knowledge and power. The gender theory views a woman's existence as a gaping hole or silent area, and his ideal lady is constantly reserved and centers her life on the lives of others. From this vantage point, it appears that women lack an autobiographical self.

When we consider the history of the autobiography tradition, we can see how the patriarchal discourse, with its own intrinsic inconsistencies and fractures, can never be a phenomenon that can be fully understood. The majority of women during the Renaissance kept a traditional silence, but by writing letters, diaries, and notebooks, they indirectly discussed themselves. The life story of Saint Teresa of Avila, The Book of Margery Kempe, The Life of Anne Bradstreet, The Life of Madame Guyon, and The Revelations of Julian of Norwich are just a few examples of women who wrote autobiography narratives that were contemporaneous with the development of the genre. All of these works are fascinating and unconventional on their own. The autobiographies and additions by other women that came after speak loudly of how women have decided to write autobiographical there by infusing meaning and authority out of cultural absence, despite the hegemonic efforts of the patriarchal discourse.

A woman transcends mere representational performances to become the creator of significance. However, a woman's own entry into the act of writing an autobiography is extremely precarious because she anticipates that the audience and readers will read about how, as a woman, she transgressed cultural expectations and formation as soon as she etched herself into the story. Furthermore, the dominant discourse uses the language she appropriates as a tool of oppression. She experiences tension as a result of her positioning between many discourses, including the discourse of men and the discourse of women and the female. The interaction between these two opposing discourses informs the female retrospective.

The tension between the two discourses in female autobiographies always affects the narrative's texture and structure, thematic concerns, and rhetorical techniques. Thus, the negotiation poses a danger to the androcentric discourse's paternal tales. Even though female autobiographies' attempts to self-representation are in jeopardy, they are quite active in educating society's standards on discipline under the patriarchal system. Now, in order to comprehend the complex relationship between gender and genre, it is also necessary to comprehend the history of autobiographical theories as put forth by various critics, from William C. Spengemann's theory in *Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of Literary Genre* to Paul John Eakin's views in *Fictions of Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. The writings of theorists like Mary G. Mason, Estelle Jelinek, Shari Benstock, Bella Brodsky, and Celeste Schenck, among others, provide a history of women's autobiographical theorization that needs to be examined in more detail. Theorists like Donna C. Stanton and Nancy K. Miller started the study of examining gender essentialism through the sexual difference hypothesis, drawing influence from French feminism[5], [6].

Other autobiography critics, like Felicity Nussbaum, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Barbara Green, have raised concerns about the absence of women's work from the canon of Western autobiography. Women's autobiographies have been read in a variety of ways, according to Elizabeth Genovese Fox. The idea of the self has always been the center of attention in all literary works, but especially in autobiographies. Over the years, much critical attention has been paid to the narrative's emphasis on the self and how it is constructed. Critics like Sheila Rowbotham and Nancy Chodorow have promoted the idea of female selfhood as positive, which has advanced our view of the self as being completely different from the main sales. When a woman of color is the subject, the problems with the female self would be more difficult to address.

Her anomalous posture and the propensity to understand her subjectivity purely in terms of race are what produce this dilemma. In a society that still emphasizes the male over the female and still has laws protecting black people's rights, 20th century female autobiographies continue to write about the self. Their identity construction model was influenced by black female autobiographers of the 19th century. The self that was created in the discourse was not a fixed self but rather a process of self-reinvention. When we examine the writings of Harriet Jacobs, the relevance of female cell phones takes on a greater meaning. Zora Neale Hurston, Annie Moody, and Mary Church Terrell all took bold private and public stands against their dehumanizing circumstances. These women mature at different ages, and while they employ quite diverse ways for dealing with their negative emotions, they nonetheless manage to regain some measure of control over their lives.

Transforming the finally victorious black experience self-using the operational some birds are racially inferior self of the patriarch context. Margo Perkins views these works as "extensions of the writers' political activism" in her award-winning monograph *Autobiography as action: Three Black Women of the Thirties* (cover): African American political opposition is exemplified by Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, and Elaine Brown. The type of autobiography anyone writes demonstrates their individual and group dedication to revolutionary struggle. Davis, Shakur, and Brown, like other leftist radicals, use their labor (as activists and writers, respectively) to challenge the established quo in a way that they hope would result in progressive social change[7][8].

Thus, we can observe how African American women's writing about their autobiographies, particularly how they negotiate their own identities within their tales, emphasizes the importance of the self. Black women's autobiographies are important because of how masterfully they may capture their experiences as African American women and as people. Writing by black women also purges the particular black American consciousness. Themes like the importance of community, black ancestry as a source of strength, and the role of elders in the black auto viral discourse are developed throughout their storylines. Societal etc. Their writings are particularly distinctive due to a few other topics, such as the themes of birth and death, the quest for selfhood, the passage from innocence to knowledge, and the significance of coming to one's own definitions of who one is.

These concerns are articulated, and their hilarious and occasionally caustic portrayals of their own lives have made black women's writing a very important voice. It is impossible to distinguish between the narrative self-justification and the historical obscurity and neglect while studying women's life in South Asia. Women's autobiographies have played a particularly significant role in feminist scholarship in India, serving as perhaps the single most crucial source for creating an archive of women's experience that could inform theory and activism. In contrast, there aren't many female biographies. A woman wrote the first narrative autobiography in Bengali, possibly the first in any Indian language to be printed. We have a significant amount of personal narratives from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first that have allowed us to recover the hidden lives of women "in their own words" and have created space for them in a social imaginary that has significant literary and aesthetic dimensions as well as exceptional ethical and cultural force.

I'll use two female autobiographical accounts that were written about 150 years apart but have had a profound cultural impact despite the historical insignificance of the lives they describe. The first is *Mr. Jiban (My Life)*, written by Rasasundari Devi and published in two parts in 1868 and 1897, with the second part having a foreword written by Jyotirindranath Tagore, the older brother of poet Rabindranath Tagore. The second is a memoir written by Sunanda Sikdar that was released in 2008 and won several literary awards. Anchita Ghatak translated it into English in 2012 for the feminist publisher Zubaan. Both works are set in rural East Bengal, and both authors would not be known if they had not written their personal histories: in Rasasundari's case, completely unknown because there is no archival record of her existence; in the second, in the case of Sunanda Sikdar, who is a member of the modern biopolitics of official documentation, comparatively unknown because her life-records might exist, but the memoir's subject, the child Dayamayee who spent her first ten



Rasasundari's text is a turning point in South Asian women's writing because it centres entirely on the acquisition of the means of self-representation writing and on becoming a "winner of letters," which is a stronger term than the neutral "lettered" or "literate." Rasasundari's struggle, which forms the basis of her autobiographical self-portrait, is waged throughout her adult life like guerrilla warfare: with sporadic raids, retreat, and consolidation. Since early childhood, when she was permitted to sit and observe the boys' studies in her paternal home, Rasasundari had been illiterate due to orthodox Hindu rules against educating women. In adulthood, learning to read turns into an uphill battle where Rasasundari's only tools are stealth and silence. One of her first attempts is to steal a page from her husband's *Caitanya-Bhagavata* when she finds it outside the kitchen, compare it to her son's writing assignments, and then recall any "letters of the mind" from her youth.

It is a tedious process that is nearly impossible to bear. She got married when she was twelve and learns to read the *Caitanya-Bhagavata* when she is twenty-five, taking short breaks from housekeeping to do so in the kitchen or her bedroom where her sisters-in-law can't see her. She waits until she is well over forty before she learns to write because, as she explains, writing requires a lot of different supplies, including paper, a quill, an inkstand, and a teacher. Only after becoming a widow, when she moves in with her son and is freed from the enormous amount of housekeeping she had to carry nearly from the beginning of her marriage, can she begin to chronicle her narrative.

After more than a century has passed, Sunanda Sikdar's memoir of her childhood in the 1950s is set in a small East Bengal village that became East Pakistan after India's Partition in 1947. Rasasundari's, on the other hand, is almost accidental; it comes virtually out of nowhere as a result of her incapacity to bear the weight of a past she purposefully "forgot" in another nation and left behind when she crossed the border into India at the age of eleven. Her autobiography is an effort to piece together the memories she suppressed about her formative years, which were torn apart by the processes of political division, migration, and resettlement. As a result, it makes an effort to recapture the girl who was abandoned and to give form to an identity that becomes whole via writing [9], [10].

Women can create their textual identities in two ways thanks to the personal narrative genre: identification as self-sameness, which refers to identifying with one's own event-history, and identity as sign, which refers to identifying as distinct from others. This assumes historical resonance because it calls for women to participate in two discourses that are related to one another: the philosophical discourse of a self-identical with its own event-history, as claimed by consciousness and memory, and the political discourse of the person as a forensic category identifiable as itself and none other, and claiming responsibility for its actions (as John Locke would put it). In many respects, it makes it possible for these narrative identities to join the archive and serves as the most crucial resource for a generation of feminist historians and researchers seeking to bring women's history to light. But for women in particular, creating a literary identity frequently appears to go against a liberal concept of the self, highlighting the challenge women face in balancing selfhood with publicly or socially created personhood in a glaringly unequal society. Women's history is made up of complex networks and meshes that are the result of the quest for women's lives, not as an afterthought to history but as its thorny undergrowth.



## CONCLUSION

This book begins with an analysis of spatial ideas and a consideration of how these can be helpful in the study of women's autobiographies. It specifically posed the topic of how the spatial turn might aid in rethinking the self in women's life stories. The current study, which is firmly grounded in a feminist paradigm, has attempted to avoid the dangers of exalting or degrading the self or seeing it as nothing more than a performance in the story. We have assumed that the self used in these autobiographies is embodied and situated in terms of culture and society by using spatial ideas. Finally, I'd like to discuss some ethical implications for the hermeneutics of the autobiographical self. To do this, I'd like to first discuss the spatial dimension of autobiographies that was revealed in each chapter, then highlight the critical role that narrative plays in articulating self and space.

First and foremost, autobiography should be viewed as a linguistic and cultural space with a number of thresholds represented by the numerous paratexts that surround the text itself. Every autobiography stages a meeting with the reader. Autobiography typically begins as a performance for the reader, an invitation to enter into another person's past, either directly or indirectly. I looked at numerous thresholds in order to investigate the particulars of this encounter and discovered that the most prevalent overarching metaphor of the autobiographies under consideration was an invitation to go on a journey. In New Zealand autobiographies, a trip into the interior is frequently mirrored by a physical journey, and the autobiographer frequently presents herself as a traveler through both place and time. This aspect of autobiography's rhetoric also corresponds with particular rites of passage. Birth, death, and traumatic crisis dramatise the author's introduction into the text's universe, while the act of writing the autobiography itself is frequently portrayed as a rite of passage that marks significant life events.

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## CHAPTER 4

### A BRIEF STUDY ON AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES AS RESISTANCE

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The paper is a modest attempt to look into how important Dalit autobiographies are for developing one's identity and asserting one's self, and how these writings not only offer an alternative political, economic, and social history of India, but also catalogue a history of Indian emotions that includes prejudice, carelessness, rage, resistance, and retaliation, among many other social ills. The method entails a drawn-out, laborious process of recording one's life in order to portray it. Such compositions do not draw on romanticized narratives but only experiential reality. They appear as heartrending representations of a suffering and ultimately freed spirit because they are direct, brutally honest, and naked expressions of the self. The readers become an active participant in the narration because of this reality. More than any other genre, autobiographies act as a bridge between Dalit writers and Dalit communities. The idea of "one for all and all for one" serves as its foundation. The concept was created and presented with a number of Dalit autobiographies in mind, which audaciously respond "Yes" to Gayatri Chakraborty's infamous query, "Can the subaltern speak?"

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Autobiographies, Dalits, Feelings, Human Rights, Identity Construction, Realism, Resistance, Subaltern.

### **INTRODUCTION**

With its glorification of the epic tale of the sovereign self, autobiography has been severely criticised as a canonical genre in the West in recent years. The discourse of life-writing, which highlights autobiography's failure to accommodate the varied life narratives in its corpus, is no longer suitable to the concept of a "sovereign" self. As the question of the ontology of the "autos" or the self in autobiography is directed towards the empirical dimension of life enclosed in life-writing, the transition from auto/biography to lifewriting in the present is germane to the philosophical debate between the transcendental and the empirical. In Greek, "autos" means "self," "bios" means "life," and "graphy" means "writing." 'Self-life-writing' refers to the climax of 'autobiography,' when 'autobiography' and 'life-writing' share the same semantic space. Autobiography is described as "the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his or her own existence when he or she puts the principal accent upon his or her life, especially upon the story of his or her own personality" by the French thinker Philippe Lejeune. According to Lejeune, the phrase "life" refers to the how or being of a self at a specific time in self-reflection, which autobiography as a term is insufficient to cover. Similarly, James Olney shows his dissatisfaction with the term "autobiography" and searches for a more encompassing term when he discusses the works of Augustine, Rousseau, and Beckett in *Memory and Narrative*.

Even though I've written about autobiography as a literary form a lot in the past, I have never felt particularly at ease doing it, mostly because I think that if one is to speak intelligently about a genre, one must first define it, and I have never encountered a definition. I could actually like reading an autobiography. Olney draws a crucial distinction between the adjective "autobiography" and the noun "autobiography," adding the problematic implication that a work may be 'autobiographical' without being a legitimate "autobiography" and vice versa. He also discusses the steady transformation of With regard to the "evolution or devolution" of autobiography over the course of sixteen centuries, the main changing from autobiographies, which describe the course of a life, to the self-writing and self-being[1], [2].

However, one may point to an internal change that occurred while the autobiographies were being written, i.e. writing about or around the self, reflecting the empirical, to writing the ontology of the autobiographies life's dimensions. Olney's inclination for utilizing a flexible term like autobiography is for per autobiography, also known as life writing, which is defined as "writing around or about the self." As for Olney such a phrase implies "in definition or the absence of generic rigour," which exactly corresponds to the ambiguity inherent in writing about a highly flexible term like "self."

## DISCUSSION

Autobiographies have long been used as accounts of how one's self and identity have developed, and in recent years, Dalit writers' autobiographies in particular have been given more attention than they would have otherwise received. In this post-colonial period, Dalit autobiographies in particular are crucial forms of literary expression more than any other type of writing. It differs significantly from the autobiographies of famous people or historical figures. They have long been denied access to any form of public discourse due to their status as a marginalized group in society, which has left them entirely silent and, thus, powerless. Therefore, rather than delving into fanciful stories, Dalit writers have opted for autobiographical accounts to express themselves against Brahmanism, elitism, and untouchability by focusing on lived experiences and experiential realities. "Literary writers and activists started to narrate the Dalit experiences, following Ambedhkar's theoretical foundation of the Dalit identity."

To raise awareness of the Dalit communities' lack of ensuing rights, not just among the ruling classes but also in those groups. Many Dalit groups had accepted their way of life as the way things were and the way things would turn out. The Ambedkarian teachings "honed their sensitivity, made them outward-looking, articulate, and assertive in their expressions." RaghavuluPurushottam, ageLike Limbale's autobiographical tale, many others have arisen as institutional spaces that challenge the dominant intellectual literary writing that was dominated by caste and class conventions until 1980. Additionally, they are viewed as a description of political conflict in which the voice of the oppressed individual challenges the institutionalised thesis of the predominate intellectual group. "DALIT LIFE is scorched by experiences and is terribly terrible. Omprakash Valmiki states in the Preface to Joothan, "Experiences that did not manage to find a room in literary creations" (Valmiki, vii). The fact that the author/narrator experiences humiliation and discrimination firsthand rather than as a bystander or spectator distinguishes Dalit autobiographies from other Dalit works and serves as a direct link in social, political, and cultural organisations between the Dalit communities and the urban areas[3], [4].

One must follow the topology of Dalit autobiographies "from antiquity across modernity to post modernity" (Singh 77) in order to comprehend their development and characteristics. Similar to the book genre, autobiography has its origins in the confessional Western Catholic tradition rather than the Indian past. The first book to define an autobiography was St. Augustine's *Confessions*, which was initially published in Latin. Self-narratives like Babur's *Baburnamah* or Ghalib's *Dastambu* are written in verse in India and many other non-Western countries. The prose autobiography genre in India was introduced by Gandhi and Nehru, and Dalit autobiographies were the first works of literature to continue this legacy in the postmodern era. The memoirs of the East and the West do share two characteristics, though.

Both of them struggle with the central question of "Who am I?" and use writing as a cathartic technique to let go of their past hatred and anger. "For the Dalit community, like many other marginalised groups, autobiography is not simply a kind of literature but is a form of assertion and resistance in its own right," argues Sarah Beth in her paper. (Beth 2) The institutionalised rules and form of material of the mainstream autobiography are challenged and broken in Dalit autobiographies, setting them apart from the rest of the genre. For instance, the majority of autobiographies have a close association with the concept of memory, whereas Western works tend to take a more cautious approach. Images of an attic, a cave, or the act of peeling an onion are frequently connected to memory.

Grunter refers to it as a "rear view mirror," frequently shifting his points of view and using phrases like "could be," "probably," and "Did I...?" to pose rhetorical inquiries. However, Dalit autobiographies seldom contain this kind of self-doubt, and the narrator is able to vividly recall the past events in his life that have made him angry and frustrated. In the Dalit autobiographies, where they base their works on "collective memory" or what we refer to as "cultural memory," the unreliability of memory is not a concern. Furthermore, the emphasis is mostly on the content and the meticulously told life story rather than the language's competence and aesthetics.

These autobiographies serve as a record of a certain urbanization and educational independence. From relatively small Dalit groups, they move on to occupy middle-class urban spaces in large cities where they can create as well as consume a variety of urban amenities, enjoy cultural advantages, and engage in the literary community. Consumption and production participation are very post-modern phenomena. It gives them a standing and the authority to challenge and question the upper castes' exclusive control systems. It raises questions about what it means to be a middle-class citizen and the extent to which the constitution, which guarantees all citizens equal rights, is being put into practice. They provide the Dalit movement with a morale boost by giving them a voice and a platform that they have long been denied. Margo Perkins highlights the way autobiographies serve as a real-world arena for power struggles and a vehicle for political declaration. Speaking specifically of Marathi autobiographies, of which Akkarmashi is a superb example, it makes spirited allusions to the contemporary Dalit uprising in Maharashtra. Many Hindus experienced a culture shock as a result of events like renaming the institution, acquiring self-esteem via education, and even reservation because they had long enjoyed prestige and position without protest. A lot of these indicate a disagreement in viewpoint between Gandhi and Ambedkar. They have harsh words for Gandhi and his patronizing treatment of the untouchables who were trying to persuade the upper castes in power to change their ways[5], [6].

Such a strategy was viewed as being utterly unworkable, and attempts to romanticize the term "Harijan" were received with frigid receptions. According to the majority of Dalit

autobiographies, Gandhi's decision to label them as untouchables prevented Hindus from becoming a minority rather than allowing them to integrate into society. On the other hand, Ambedkar coined the name "Dalit," which the SC Federation immediately embraced, through his aggressive and violent ways.

Exposing the persistence of caste-based discrimination, the hegemonic power structure, and a deeply ingrained belief system that seeps the deeply ingrained segregation farther down into the social structure is one of the key features of the Dalit autobiographies. It subtly undermines the idea that caste and class are no longer the driving forces behind existence in contemporary India. Due to a provision in the Indian Constitution, untouchability was officially eliminated in 1950. Still, it endures as a social stigma. All of Valmiki's descriptions of people's attitudes, including those of the school staff and the police inspector, provide indications at this pervasive social stigma. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Dr. Sharan Kumar Limbale makes assumptions about how discrimination has changed significantly in recent years. It has changed from being personal to collective, and the Dalits are still fighting to overcome the stigma that society still associates with them. Even after rising to positions of authority as officers, ministers, or academics, their efforts to include others are met with icy receptions. Even in large cities like Bombay, people were hesitant to integrate the so-called "untouchables" into their social structure. Surajpal Chauhan describes a personal occurrence from 1987 in his Tiraskrit writings. He recounts how he and his wife had visited a village and requested a zamindar for water.

He initially nodded in agreement, but after discovering the family's caste identification, he became furious and shunned them, demeaning and humiliating them. The zamindar finds it disturbing that the marginalised have taken over the attitudes, behaviours, and spaces once occupied by the hegemonic upper caste in metropolitan areas. When compared to peeling of an Onion (1996), where the narrator sees "a collective failure of his generation of German to utter the word 'why,'" (Singh 79), there is a clear distinction between Dalit autobiographical works.

For a known fact, Dalit autobiographies speak for and make requests on behalf of the entire community. Despite being in the first person, the narrative voice, like the narrator of Grunter's Grass, expresses the pain of the community as a whole. Baby Ramble's (2008) song, *The Prisons we breached*, reflects this sense of community. The question of the autobiographies' subjects does, however, come up. It is evident that it transcends individualism and embraces the entire caste community in an effort to reach a larger audience and achieve more power in the face of tyranny that is identical to their own. The focus changes from an individual to the neighbours, relatives, and eventually the entire community of the writer's buddy. The Dalit community extends a sense of marginal self to the writer, and this identity clashes with the narrator's identity as a resident of an urban area. The autobiography of a Dalit person speaks for the entire Dalit community. Of course, the author himself serves as the narrator, but his tales do not serve as singular or individualized accounts, but rather as portraits of the entire community.

Since the individual and the community are inextricably intertwined, Valmiki has a personal obligation to "improve his caste through his personal achievements" (Valmiki 56) in Joothan. This responsibility is typically brought about by education's emancipatory force. Through schooling and embrace of the urban middle class lifestyle, the writer distances themselves from their neighborhood not only physically but also socially and economically. These poems can therefore be viewed as an effort to reestablish that sense of belonging to the "bastis" where they had spent their formative years. Almost all Dalit autobiographies begin with reflections on their



formative years, those formative years spent in upheaval and struggle with both the exterior and internal worlds. The *Diary of a Young Girl* (1947), written with the same youthful naivety and aspirations, contains the same kind of frustration, despair, fantasies, and hopes. The use of marginalised mythological characters that portray them in a wholly positive light is another notable aspect of Dalit autobiographies that distinguishes them from those of the West and even the rest of the Indian self-narratives. There is a sense of sympathy and unity with people who are devalued by the dominant writings[7], [8].

As a result, the narrator of Akkarmashi frequently identifies with Karna, the suta-putra, and Eklavya, the tribal kid, exalting their miserable and impoverished conditions. It makes an effort to rebuild history from scratch as an alternative school of thought. While Dalit autobiographies are uneasy and restless and "refuse to employ the received categories of social knowledge and in constant search for social selfhood" (Punalekar, 222), mainstream works lack the expertise and empathy to appreciate the social intricacies of Dalit existence. S.P. Punalekar brings up the issue of the Dalit movement's apparent division. One segment tries to situate identity crisis in the social and economic intricacies of the society and views Ambedkar's movement as complete and the issue of cultural disparities as unresolvable. The other group views the aim as partially accomplished and asserts that because identity concerns are ingrained in contemporary social and cultural norms, economic and political difficulties alone are unable to address these moral dilemmas. Autobiographies by Dalits adhere to the latter and are crucial for revealing the social, cultural, and ethical realities of the modern world.

Factuality and authenticity of experiences are highly valued. But as Singh notes in his study, "some images from the memory are selectively enlarged, whereas others are allowed to lie dormant." All autobiographies, whether from the West and the East, share this distinctive trait. Time is a fluid concept that can travel back and forth in time and space based on the capacity of memory. The opposites of "remembering and forgetting" exist, and both might be unintentional or deliberate, chronological or selective. However, it is related to the human propensity to brag about one's status and achievement while keeping one's humiliation and misfortune hidden. (Singh 81) This raises the question of the writer's sincerity towards both his readers and himself.

In her work "A Critical Study of Marathi Dalit Autobiography Translated into English," Vandana Pathhak makes the case that autobiographical writings offer a psychological window into the writer's mentality and mindset. Such texts are written in exceptionally plain, free-flowing language that is devoid of superfluous words and imagery, hinting at the simplicity and clarity of their lives and communities. As a relatively new and emerging literary genre in India, Rosy Singh makes the point that Dalit autobiographies may not have the stature of a great literary genre and may be less vivid, but they are nevertheless important to read and appreciate as "acts of assertion" (Singh 84). Their goal is to accurately and minutely document Dalit history. The Indian tradition honours the renunciation of the self rather than its celebration, according to writers like Gopal Guru. Even their relationship with the "other," which in this case refers to the Hindu religion, texts, gods, and goddesses, is unsettling.

As Vandana Pathak puts it, these narratives have expanded the institutional space through which Dalit authors can access the literary public sphere. In contrast to the autobiographies of well-known people and historical figures, Dalit autobiographies place more emphasis on their everyday lives than on their uniqueness, which helps them to develop a feeling of community and self-identity. The voice of the individual challenges the institutionalised dominating groups'



voice. However, when we contrast these works with popular autobiographies like that of Nehru, the latter's concept of community encompasses the entire nation, but the Dalit authors' concept of community is restricted to their "bastis." Nehru's autobiography was written amid the anti-colonial uprising with the goal of regaining lost power and prestige, the latter in the wake of the shifting social landscape. The Dalit authors are able to create a Dalit consciousness or 'Chetna' among readers and those who have experienced comparable suffering by using such a unifying force. "Chetna" is a type of theoretical tool that establishes the parameters of Dalit literature as a developing genre and that also serves to introduce a particular Dalit criticism. In Sharankumar Limbale's *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, translated by Alok Mukherjee in 2004, the statement "By Dalit literature I mean writing about Dalits, by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness (chetna)" is reinforced. Only the Dalits who have experienced such trauma can really comprehend or express the sorrow and pain that the Dalits have described.

The Dalit readers had witnessed their own sorrow in those pages of mine, the author writes in the prologue to the Hindi edition of *Joothan* Valmiki. The people who write these autobiographical pieces are joined "into an imagined community of fellow sufferers" (Beth 3). Their slavery develops into a voice of resistance, tracing a path from silence to voice, and ultimately, to self-liberation. For instance, Nehru's autobiography's first chapter, "Descent from Kashmir," demonstrates how, in contrast to Dalit works, the narrative voice laments the loss of the renown and power of the ancestors and yearns for the bygone era of prosperity. Many autobiographies center on the exaltation of the self, but in a Dalit narrative, the search for the self takes precedence above the glorification of the self.

In conclusion, it is clear that Dalit memoirs are more than just clichés for urbanization, identity building, and self-aggrandizement. It is an effort to compile a history of Indian feelings. Due to the long-standing exclusion of this group from our society, the Dalit autobiographies also demonstrate the range of Indian emotions, including fury, negligence, retribution, discrimination, and assertiveness, as well as the history of the Indian worldview that has been forgotten or ignored. It offers an entirely fresh, different way to look at Indian history [9], [10].

## CONCLUSION

Life-writing in India differs from self-narration in the West both in theory and in practice, and this difference emphasizes the genre's resistance as well as the tension between self-narration and Indian self-metaphysics. As opposed to their Western equivalents, these narratives' self are driven towards the centrifugal forces of colonialism and other matrices rather than being unitary or sovereign. Life histories in India "do not necessarily conform to Western conventions and modes of expression (some do, many don't), nor should one expect to find the peculiar forms of individualism that emerged in the West and replicated in India," David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn write in the introduction to *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (2004). According to Chichi Parekh, the Hindu social structure is based on plurality and diversity rather than individuality since, like Hindu metaphysics, the self is restricted to a few predetermined positions with little importance placed on individuality.

Given the transience of human action and the fact that only moral truth can provide universality, he also contends that historical truth has no place in Hindu epistemology, even though there is much disagreement about what constitutes a consistent Hindu epistemology. However, because this prevailing worldview disregarded the specifics of each person's existence, moods, and sentiments because they were deemed unworthy of being written about, it resulted in life tales of

saints and religious luminaries with a didactic overtone. The increasing focus on self-narration in recent years has signaled a new turn to life-writing in the Indian subcontinent, where economically and socially disadvantaged, ordinary people, or "vulnerable subjects," have used life-writing as a powerful tool to assert their subjectivities and reclaim their sense of self while critically examining the practises that are prevalent in society.

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## CHAPTER 5

### A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON INFLUENCE OF COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM

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#### ABSTRACT:

Modern anthropology has undergone significant change as a result of the vast, interdisciplinary area of colonialism and postcolonialism studies. Its diverse viewpoints have been creatively applied by anthropologists, who have also made significant contributions to the challenging descriptions of past and present world life and experience. The call to prioritise colonial and postcolonial perspectives in the framing of anthropology's central research questions has significantly broadened the field's range and scope, including its distinctive approaches to the question of whether colonialism should be seen as the most significant forerunner of modernity and the source of its most toxic forms of subjugation and disempowerment. This entry highlights the sophistication with which anthropology has embraced and contested the cultural and social analytic methods used to record and theorise the epistemic and material shifts of the global empire and its afterlife. Additionally, it makes the case that colonialism and postcolonialism studies still have a bright future in a society that is increasingly believed to require the multifaceted frameworks offered by today's prominent theorists of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

#### KEYWORDS:

Anthropology, Colonialism, Globalization, Postcolonialism, Postcolonialism Prospective.

#### INTRODUCTION

Almost all academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences have undergone radical change as a result of the vast field of colonialism and postcolonialism studies. When practitioners of its deconstructive critiques accused anthropologists of being "handmaidens" of colonial power and the inheritors of the subjugating knowledge strategies that supported imperial rule, anthropologists responded with vigour and creativity. Anthropologists have been particularly innovative users of this multidisciplinary perspective. Due to theorists' insistence that the persistent forms of oppression and "epistemic violence" created by modern empires must be acknowledged as separate pathologies of the modern world, there have been significant shifts in the goals and claims of anthropology.

The demand to give colonial and postcolonial perspectives priority in constructing nearly all analytical accounts and research questions has significantly broadened the field of anthropology. It has encouraged the utilization of resources from both within and beyond the field, such as poststructuralist perspectives on subjectivity and power as well as the cyclical and unpredictability of historical change. These viewpoints have influenced discussion on a variety of subjects, including anticolonial nationalism, religious conversion, capitalist market reforms,

gender relations and domestic intimacy, urban experience and historicity, citizenship and migration, as well as resistance and the repercussions of hegemonic power[1], [2].

## DISCUSSION

### Colonialism

'Colonial' is currently mostly used in and outside of anthropology to describe the changes brought about by high modern empire, i.e., for contexts of Western conquest and domination in the era of globally pervasive commercial and industrial capitalism. The processes that were initially put into motion during the so-called early modern Age of Discovery, though greatly accelerated in their scope and impact by the early twentieth century, had brought about direct or indirect colonial rule over between 80 and 90 percent of the world's landmass and the majority of its population. The tremendous violence and displacement that characterize colonialism and postcolonialism must be acknowledged in order to fully understand these phenomena. These include, for instance, the infamous Partition of India, which resulted in up to 500,000 deaths and 14 million people being displaced, and the estimated 1 million deaths in Algeria's 1954–1962 liberation war.

The degree to which the colonized can be considered active participants in these displacements and dislocations is a topic of significant debate. The creation of a new type of person a colonial subject with a "colonized mind," painfully if never fully subordinated by the coercions and "othering" effects of the colonizer's power-knowledge is generally acknowledged as having resulted from modern empire, which produced previously unheard-of change and novelty. These processes have been studied in a variety of contexts, such as the contemporary colonial metropolis and other places where people are subjected to "panoptic" surveillance and self-subjugation.

The phrases colonial and colonialism are not frequently used to describe pre-modern and non-Western empires, despite their historical roots. The term imperial is frequently used to describe the authority of Rome, the Ottoman Empire, and China's Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, whereas the term colonial is frequently used to describe the control of the British in India, the French in Algeria, and the Dutch in insular Southeast Asia. These have served as the primary contexts for studies of colonial and postcolonial projects and practises, along with sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Islamic Middle East, frequently in terms that are sharply critical of the approaches taken by historians, political sociologists, and anthropologists. Classic ethnographies are among the books that are purportedly being attacked for failing to challenge Enlightenment epistemologies as the foundation of their research.

Binary conceptions of colonizer-colonized relations are criticized by some as being too limited to fully represent the dynamics of imperial and post-imperial modernity. The "rhizomatic" or open-ended characteristics of empire have led to a wealth of ethnographic research on individuals like the "mobile cosmopolitans," whose extensive trade and religious networks posed a threat to the containment efforts of all imperial systems (Ho 2004). However, according to theorists like Barlow (1997) and Chakrabarty (2012), colonialism is modernity's most significant forerunner as well as the origin of its most dangerous manifestations and penetrations. They range from the legalistic witch hunts of Peru's Spanish rule to the treaties and constitution-making of more recent colonial regimes (Benton 2002; Comaroff 2001; Silverblatt 2004). These include its

destructive powers of individuation and commodification, as well as its routineization of state violence through these practises[3], [4].

### **Postcolonialism**

In studies of the lingering consequences of colonial rule and the oppressive "necropolises" of post-independence nations and elites, postcolonialism has emerged as a term that is equally prevalent. Initially through the concept of colonial discourse: the use of signifying regimens that delegitimize the knowledge practises of the colonised and install as authoritative truths the conqueror's narratives of superior rationality and "civilizing mission," poststructuralist identity and language theory have been key resources for this work. These viewpoints were first grounded in Foucault's early work on govern mentality and the bio political foundations of contemporary power, as well as Said's critique of the self-glorifying cultural essentialism fostered by European Orientalists (Said 1995). By exposing the creation of scholar-officials' dictionaries, maps, and legal codes as tools of subjugation and disempowerment, their manipulation of foreign scripts and vernaculars, and their creation of subordinating "languages of command," those embracing these understandings of the colonizers' power were able to illuminate the psychological and cultural dislocations of colonial rule.

There has been substantial discussion regarding whether colonial interactions were always collisions of profoundly dissimilar epistemes as a result of the deconstructive examination of imperial texts and representational methods (Marglin & Marglin 1990). The representational techniques of British rule were regarded as disruptively foreign in Cohn's portrayals of the Census of India and the imperial darbar (ruler's audience) (1987, 1996), with its regimes of enumeration and visually a break from the far more fluid relations and identities of the pre-conquest period. Numerous arguments have been made against the notion of novel reality production during colonial rule, including those that claim that India's powerful Mughal dynasties and their successors were knowledge collectors in their own right and thus invented novel enumerating and classification techniques that predated and served as models for those used by the British Raj (Peabody 2001).

Some historians have questioned the validity of all deconstructive criticism, dismissing the study of knowledge politics and colonial subjectivities in favor of continuing efforts to comprehend the mechanisms underlying such significant changes as the impoverishment of peasantries and the spread of intercommoned bloodletting in colonised societies. Anthropologists have asked for better instruments to investigate colonialism's conceptual strength and repercussions rather than a shift in the research issues themselves. According to Kelly and Kaplan (2001), Bakhtin's concepts of dialogics and heteroglossia make visible a process of 'communicative traffic' between colonizers and the colonised in British-ruled Fiji, leading to 'co-production' rather than top-down imposition of authorizing power-knowledge in the turbulent interactions they explore [5], [6].

Despite these difficulties, the issues raised in the early seminal studies continue to fascinate academics who discuss the causes and consequences of imperial authority [9]. A similar emphasis is placed on the inherent violence of such inscriptions, as well as the "deferrals" of meaning inherent in their constitutive texts and narratives, in Spivak's radical feminist critique, which is frequently combined with Derrida's treatment of writing as the inscription of difference as both the source and the manifestation of the will to power. The notion of the desire for selfhood and the decentred nature of subjectivity in Lacanian psychology has served as a relevant

point of comparison (Bhabha 2004; Khanna 2004). Fanon's descriptions of the crippling identity effects of empire, entwining colonizers and the colonised in a mesh of mutual desires and delusions, have served as further inspiration for the treatment of colonial rule as agonising "psychodrama" produced in the "play of power within colonial discourse".

### **Changing circumstances and resistance**

Late in the 1970s, colonialism emerged as a significant academic concern, while postcolonialism gained ground in the 1980s. Both separately and collectively, their adoption served as a warning against viewpoints that were regarded outdated and insufficient for comprehending the global world order. The idea of imperialism, which had previously dominated Marxist and kindred "world systems" explanations of the global spread of capitalist modernity, has been a particular target for such critiques. The main issues in the study of imperialism were the motives and acts taken by the colonizers' metropolis, including the economic logic of empires and how they were built and grew. Their treatment of what is now referred to as "experience" in the colonial globe was mostly influenced by structural changes in the material world. The most notable of these were the significant social and environmental changes brought about by novel land control systems, such as coercive cash-cropping schemes and the widespread destruction of forests and grasslands, as well as the forcible creation of new production and labor systems to meet the commodifying needs of Western capitalist economies.

Some of the discipline's top inventors addressed the implications of empire and world systems theory as anthropologists began to focus on historically framed viewpoints from a global perspective in the 1980s. The Amerindian tin miners' stories of the Devil as the ruling agent of the commoditization of their labor under Spanish rule were the main subject of Tausig's (1980) study of the economics of empire in Bolivia. The killing was a transformative event, interpretable through the concept of "mythopraxis," and in the islanders' perceptions, an occurrence taking place in mythic rather than linear time, according to Sahlins's famed account of the English explorer-navigator James Cook's death at the hands of Hawaiians in 1779. According to Sahlins, this was not a description of a fixed Hawaiian cultural frame set against a similarly fixed Western "trade and empire" worldview. Instead, mythopraxis enabled the creation of something new in the setting of this early instance of imperial "fatal impact" (Moorehead 2000) by allowing for a notion of dialectical conjuncture between two dynamic historicities[7], [8].

### **Relating economic and cultural factors**

Although hotly debated, such studies forged provocative connections between anthropologists' interests in the economic and the cultural, as seen in Comaroff's (1985) treatment of the southern African Zion Church faith as symbolic bricolage: an expression of "cultural resistance" to the forced integration of adherents into the alienating structures of capitalist commodity production. In other studies as well, resistance to colonial power is seen not so much in confrontation or counter-hegemonic 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1990), but in poetics, or the expressiveness and play of the creative mind, as in the imagining of alternative spiritual realities in millenarian 'cargo cults'. Related studies of colonial contexts have revealed historicity in the form of invention or co-fabrication in what were once thought to be eternal ethnographic truths, such as the "tribe" in Africa and the caste and ethno-religious group in India. This sparked the divisive debate over whether even severely underprivileged subjects were actively shaping their own new



epistemic and material realities as opposed to being passive beneficiaries of whatever the colonizer created and imposed.

Anthropologists' research on the development of new economies through the widespread hiring of enslaved or indentured labor has fueled debate on how to connect the economic and the cultural in colonial contexts. Concepts long thought of as universals in economic anthropology are discovered to be the topic of highly diverse moral narratives about commerce, value, and production in another of Kelly's books dealing with plantation-based sugar production in Fiji (1992). These issues went beyond differences in viewpoints between whites and non-whites or even hostility to the island's enormous influx of Indian indentured laborers relative to local Fijians. What stands out about his story is how drastically different the two main groups of Indian immigrants the field laborers and the traders and shopkeepers thought they were on the morality of trade, value, and labor. Kelly also discovers a means to explain this that effectively rethinks and elasticizes both the Marxist legacy as applied to colonial political economy studies and the theories of culture that have been accepted as its replacement.

Even while they assert that they too view the world historically that is, marked and formed by the rapacious power of colonizers and their collaborators many scholars reject such sophisticated ethnographically grounded political economy approaches, notwithstanding their sophistication. For its alleged evolutionism, which identified the impacts of Western domination as violent and destructive for colonised nations but yet a precursor to development and emancipation in their transformative structural implications, Marxism's legacy in the study of empire has been widely rejected.

### **Colonialism's typologies**

But the point at which anthropologists used their expertise in ethnographic distinctiveness to the creation of typologies, separating, as many historians have done, between the impacts of various forms of imperial control and power, is what has come to represent a very sharp scientific divide. The comparison made by Wolfe (2006) between two drastically different kinds or styles of colonial control is instructive. First was administrative/extractive colonialism, such as that practiced in British India. According to Wolfe, the reasoning behind this was dehumanizing but not genocidal. It contained the concept of the "native" as a risky but valuable asset, generating revenue for the empire through cash-cropping and other shaky land uses.

For Wolfe, this was still fundamentally distinct from colonialism in its other conceptual mode, mass migration or settler colonialism, despite its numerous dehumanizing repercussions on indigenous peoples. In this situation, the concept of "terra nullius" unclaimed territory was crucial. It was this definition that determined who was and was not to be included inside the realm of productive humankind for British colonisers, and it stated that Aboriginal people lacked the capacity to comprehend land as an asset with use-value. The end consequence was overtly genocidal: depicting indigenous Australians as a nullity to be eliminated, whether by physical force or eugenicist child-seizures intended to "breed out" non-white "racial stock."

However, some critics view the thinking behind any etymologizing of colonialism's variants as inherently colonial; they see it as a defining of difference that replicates the colonizer's defining and, as a result, silences the colonised subject through the structural violence of "naming power" (Krautwurst 2003). Therefore, studies with a framework similar to Wolfe's have been criticized as a covert whitewashing of empire, at odds with the goal of postcolonial criticism to expose and

undermine Eurocentric master narratives and "discourses of domination" through "radical re-thinking and re-formulation of the forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and Western domination."

### **Ethnography's value**

However, there are important works that have been praised for offering in-depth assessments of colonial and postcolonial contexts rather than generalized narratives of the colonial and postcolonial as governments or traits by directing an ethnographer's eye to the specificities of place. Examples include the use of myth, narrative, and other processes of the imagination and embodied practice to consider colonial or formerly colonised areas as spaces of unique constructions of reality. Such works have significantly improved how culture is understood both within and outside of anthropology, exposing the wide range of its manifestations as an experience and a point of reference in many political and social contexts, for instance. Additionally, study on colonial cultural processes has successfully reframed the issues raised by traditional land and labor studies. Concerns about colonialism's disruptions of identity and selfhood have been supplemented by authors who note how it dissolves traditional forms of sovereignty and community and destroys livelihoods and habitats, such as those of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. Concepts like mimesis, hybridity, and creolization have served as important points of reference in these investigations of fragmented subjectivities and mental trauma in order to capture the blending and assimilations as well as the traumatizing disjunctions of the colonial encounter [9], [10].

As a result, Taussig's 1987 study on the excessive violence of colonial control in the Amazonian Putumayo places a spotlight on the region's brutally labor-intensive form of rubber production. Taussig, however, argues that the cruelty shown to the Amerindian plantation workers was not a tool used with the icy reason of means-and-ends 'trade and empire' logic to resolve a key issue of colonial political economy: how to control a workforce unconcerned with money, clock-time, and the market. Instead, he discovers a "culture of terror" that keeps both coloniser and colonised in a state of psychological dysfunction. The pathological effects of colonialism on the self and other are thus to be understood in terms of the processes of mimesis in the perceiving mind as described by Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, i.e., the compulsive force of our destabilizing identifications with those to whom we are 'other'. Therefore, it is appropriate to see the colonizers' heinous deeds as a reflection of their own anxieties and aggressions. The coloniser's disordered mind works nightmare-like through its mimetic image-making faculties to vest the colonised with an imagined subhuman otherness in the hopeless hope of expelling or deflecting the savage urges they find within themselves. This is done in the alienation and insecurity of colonial existence.

The ambiguities of desire and sexuality in colonial settings have been identified as important to the "tensions of empire" in various works, with psychic dysfunctionality serving as a primary point of reference (Cooper & Stoler 1997).[20] To investigate the potentially unstable bio political intimacies of mixed-race households and affective attachments in colonial Southeast Asian contexts, Stoler combined diverse strands of Foucault's work that dealt with themes of gender, race, and sexuality (1995; 2002). The political psychologist Ashis Nandy's theory that hyper masculinity is a crucial dysfunction of the colonizer's state has also been extensively used. Here, the male colonizer is to be viewed as constantly insecure of his authority, which

compulsively drives him to fetishize manly prowess and camaraderie in activities like hunting and team sports (Nandy 1989).

In Banerjee's account of the sexualized humiliations carried out by British officers against prisoners from one of India's most remarkable anti-colonial nationalist groups: the Red Shirts, composed of Muslim Pathans (Pukhthuns) based in what is now the North West Frontier of Pakistan (2000), a striking exploration of dysfunctional hyper masculinity in the relations of colonisers and their subjects is provided. Banerjee attributes this mistreatment to the fact that the Red Shirts were from a group the British classified as a "martial race" and had devotedly adopted Gandhi's philosophy of pacifist non-violent resistance. This indicated that they were no longer prepared to engage in the manly combat that was required of them in the form of the raids and counter raids that had supported the male identity of the white soldiers. Banerjee contends that this is what caused the psychological challenge that led to the disturbingly Abu Ghraib-like acts of brutality that they responded to.

The fundamental focus of Luhrmann's 1996 description of his study with the peculiar Parsi community in western India is psycho-sexual dysfunction. Under British control, this small urban elite group wielded disproportionate power in business and professional circles. They were well-off, Western-educated, and both sexes were very visible in the activities and pursuits of the colonial public sphere. However, she discovered that in postcolonial India, they had remarkably resembled what Nandy discovered for the colonial era: a community entangled in the torturous psychic existence of "intimate enemies." In their instance, it included complicated relationships with fellow Indians rather than the colonizing "other," which is startling. Luhrmann discovered that her informants had deep-seated concerns about their status in a society where they had lost their preeminent "collaborator" role. These tensions manifested as enduring worries about male Parsis' masculine strength and reproductive potential.

## CONCLUSION

What does this mean for the future of colonialism and postcolonialism studies in a society that is now commonly believed to require the multifaceted frameworks offered by today's prominent theorists of globalization and cosmopolitanism? The elasticity of the colonialism/postcolonialism field's methods and views, as shown in the ways its findings have been combined and synthesized with those of other history-conscious fields of research and debate, is one indication of the wealth of potential still available. This includes the work of socialism and post socialism scholars who, by productively reflecting on the ways in which central themes from the study of colonialism and postcolonialism can be engaged and expanded on, have addressed the transformations and problematic vernacularizations of modernity in their own complex research contexts.

Additionally, as Ania Loomba has demonstrated, the essential components of colonial and postcolonial studies have been absorbed rather than replaced by many modern globalization studies varieties (2005). In today's world of flexible citizenship and fractured sovereignties, their use has offered a potent means of avoiding the end-of-history triumphalism and ahistorical thinness with which many commentators have defined, celebrated, or demonized the conditions of globalized cultural and economic life. The numerous ways that scholars are currently trying to understand everything that is local, translocal, and global in the modern world can potentially be nuanced and grounded by awareness of empire and a continued engagement with the rich and varied literature on its effects and aftermath.

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## CHAPTER 6

### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING AND REGIONAL DIVERSITY

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Despite Bourdieu's caution that autobiography can devolve into narcissism and, in a sense, navel-gazing, the genre of autobiography is a well-recognized medium in modern study. Particularly, it has been acknowledged that subaltern people's autobiographies serve as representations of their actual experiences, which were previously unknown to larger audiences. These autobiographical works are becoming more and more popular as a way to comprehend the existence of marginalized, excluded "others," whose lives are obscured by the veils of difference, entitlement, and privilege. This paper aims to study this trend through the prism of a few Dalit autobiographies and to explore how these narratives vividly depict the daily struggles and joys of Dalit men and women. The Dalit subaltern is unintentionally forced into a narrative form that emphasizes their experience of misery, isolation, and exclusion through such autobiographical works. The memoirs simultaneously establish "subaltern counter publics," to use Nancy Fraser's eloquent phrase, by bringing in the battle, individual and collective acts of agency against caste supremacy. This demonstrates that autobiographies are a powerful medium for portraying Dalit subaltern existence as well as the prospects for transformation as they manifest themselves through the experience of Dalit writers. The dilemma is whether autobiography presents the issue of replicating subaltern subjectivity or, more concerningly, whether it is a genre that facilitates understanding lived experience. In light of the ferocious battle and independence they also symbolize, I come to the conclusion that Dalit autobiographies do indeed signify a trend towards transformation.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Autobiography, Agency, Counter Publics, Dalit, Education, Resistance.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

I investigate the dual-edged nature of Dalit writings as a means of identity replication and a foundation for confrontational politics in a larger societal context by portraying various aspects of Dalit writings. In the words of Hannah Arendt, "the capacity of making new beginnings in the world is the fundamental human capacity to be free a capacity possessed by each and every individual". In other words, people aren't just born to die; they're also born to start over. A "shared life" provides the opportunity for interaction from which action arises, yet there is also diversity in action. In other words, through their autobiographical works, can we establish Dalit subalternity as both an expression of shared experience and a kind of political resistance? Writings by Dalits are not solitary, anonymous tracts. Although they were written by different people, they nonetheless reflect a collective voice concerning the authors' struggles for freedom in the shared arena of struggle, voice, and agency as well as their complicated identities and existence. Although this group's voice suggests a shared identity, it goes beyond merely

expressing a uniform identity. Their work reveals a "communal identity" that is varied, diversified, and shared. There is no doubt that differences in Dalit experience due to gender, caste, and area are evident in the work. Thus, reading and listening to a singular voice within the context of a shared identity offers a distinctive viewpoint on a particular shared experience. Sharmila Rege (1999) further on this viewpoint by claiming that "Dalit life narratives are in fact testimonies, which forge a right to speak both for and beyond the individual, and contest explicitly or implicitly the "official forgetting" of caste oppression, struggles, and resistance." This gives the story agency and allows for the assertion of one's identity in relation to others, or in a collective spirit. This comprehension of the Dalit autobiography as both unique and communal gives it political agency, voice, and power.

Organizing themselves as a large-scale sociopolitical movement in the early 1970s, the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra rose to prominence as the voice of the Dalit subaltern. Their potent literary works and resistance poems contributed much to culture as well. The impact of the movement is best summed up by Gokhale-Turner (1979): "The movement created a new literature of protest whose scope goes far beyond the confines of a single caste, striving to articulate the hopes, fears, and aspirations of a whole class of exploited segments of Indian humanity, the Indian proletariat".

This movement, which created a platform for the subaltern voice that needed to be heard, also gave rise to the popular genre of autobiographical writings, which allowed authors to express their sorrow, suffering, and humiliation without restraint. The feeling of needing to break out of an imposed quiet and enter the public realm characterized subalternity, rather than being locked into a compromise with failure or acceptance of fate.<sup>5</sup> This entry into the public realm has been a powerful expression of Dalit identity, as it has provided "previously marginalized Dalit writers access to the public sphere and thus, the capacity to debate and assert an influence over the public perception of their own Dalit identity" (Beth 2007b:548). The Hindi Belt, Andhra Pradesh, and other regions of India have contributed to this extraordinary outpouring of their lives through autobiographical papers as an assertion of being Dalit, oppressed, humiliated, and excluded. It began in Maharashtra.

In Hindi, the word "Dalit" for the "untouchables" first gained popularity in the 1970s. Along with autobiographies, Dalit literature also encompasses a wide range of fiction, short tales, personal journey narratives, poetry, journalism, and other works. I use the term "Dalit" in the context of the place Dalits occupy in the caste hierarchy, though women, the landless, the impoverished, the working class, laborers, the oppressed, and others may fall into this group. In this sense, Dalit literature is produced by Dalits who possess a "Dalit consciousness" or "Dalit chetana," as noted by Brueck (2014). She continues by stating that while the majority of non-Dalit writers portray Dalit experience sympathetically, they frequently objectify Dalits, whereas Dalit writers give themselves an "aggressive and transformative role as subjects" in their own writing. In other words, the "authenticity" of a caste experience depends on the voice of the subaltern, not on whose behalf others speak. In this regard, it might not be acceptable for me to narrate their tale or interpret their writing. As a result, I immediately admit that this paper is inadequate[1], [2].

## DISCUSSION

The autobiography genre tries to address issues like self-awareness and identity, memory and place, voice and agency, "truth" and authenticity, as well as many other facets of a self-revelatory process that tries to hide, in layered forms, even as it bares itself to the outside world. This



investigation into understanding the experiences of the subaltern in the social world is consequently centred on subjectivity in its most personal sense. A trip that spans time as much as it moves through it can be made by becoming aware of this subjectivity and engaging with it, allowing it to thrive without denying or even giving it undue weight.

However, Bourdieu (1987) is cautious of autobiography and biography and views them as a "illusion." No life, according to Bourdieu, is a cohesive, unified whole with a linear, sequential course, and neither is it expressed by a cohesive, intentional agent. He disapproves of the straightforward life story, which may work in literature but not in biographical forms. Identity does not reside in the linear autobiographical account of the self, but rather in the interaction of the self with others in the range of intersecting social realities. Truth, according to Jackson, is a function of relationship rather than identity. Therefore, it is necessary to liberate the personal voice from the usual burden of tracing the history of a personal identity. Jackson is not advising us to remove identity or to seek selfhood and voice from subject hood. Instead, he is emphasizing the intersubjectivity of relationships between the self and the self, a subaltern and the social milieu she lives in, and experience and publics.

Such intersubjectivity is present in encounters of various kinds, in actual places, in various types of interactions, and in those mental encounters that might not find expression in the ordinary but instead stay on the edge of consciousness, on the edge of the mind, emerging and being reflected in comprehension and expression. These are frequently made clear in the recounting of specific events or interactions that are important to autobiographical writing. Their narratives are very individualized accounts that were originally written in regional languages and afterwards translated into English for a larger audience. Dalit authors provide their own characters the power to reject, modify, and re-articulate their circumstances as well as the potential to transcend caste. The Dalit consciousness is this. The purpose of this article is to explore the difficulties and issues that arise while writing about caste as well as gender, age, class, religion, and geography. There are numerous autobiographical and biographical works about the life of Dalits in existence today [3], [4].

Caste, gender, and age intersections provide additional hierarchies and inequities that are reflected in the autobiographies through a variety of subjective and experiential characteristics. In a superb paper, Brueck analyses two autobiographies written in Hindi by Dalit women to highlight the connection between gender and caste and, through the women's emphasis on the domestic sphere, to develop "a more capacious understanding of the individual self as the subject of autobiography".

Both autobiographies, however, reject an essentialized gendered existence because they don't represent a single way of life. Being a Dalit is a very varied, multifaceted experience that involves humiliation and shame, strength and battle, submission and survival.

Therefore, despite the fact that Dalit writers emphasize this through dense description, affect, and complex experiential narratives, it is insufficient to claim that Dalit autobiographies reflect a particularly similar experience. The stories portray not just their experiences but also their desire to get over feeling like an outsider and belonging to a certain identity while also getting over the shame and horrors associated with caste identification.

The significance of Dalit literature is highlighted by Gangly (2012), who describes it as "and articulation of aspiration of personhood through the realization of full citizenship". But Dalit

authors are conscious of both its "impossibility" and its failure to "address the singular nature of Dalit pain" at the same time. In the memoirs, the experience's ordinariness clearly reveals this grief, along with humiliation and rage at what causes it.

At the same time, through the texts, a discursive space for the challenge of dominant publics emerges. According to Pandian (2008), subaltern life-writings are a form of "radical empiricism" that bridges the gap between theory and reality and creates opportunities for alternative political systems for underrepresented people. Through representational forms like poetry, fiction, autobiography, and witness, this is accomplished by narrating the "self-conscious ordinariness of the lives narrated". However, Dalit life-writings are not merely literary works. They are "communicative acts" in the sense that they express "anticaste idioms, codes, and practises", bringing to light the complexity of the caste experience. Because they don't convey a sense of fulfilment or contentment, it has been stated that Dalit autobiographies differ from other autobiographies. Instead, they convey a sense of "insecurity" over their place in society. A text with a complex outcome also gives voice to Dalit writings: "It is in exposure or appearance in the realm of the other, that life narratives find their affective destination". In doing so, Dalit authors clearly convey their agency as story subjects as well as their lived experiences of marginalization, self-doubt, repressed sexual impulses, and unmet hunger [5], [6].

Life histories, while unquestionably individual in their description, are "collective in their social practice". They create a cultural category and a type of "narrative strategy, which is crucial to their function as important change-agents rather than merely recorders of experience. Their writing unquestionably may be called a "narrative strategy" due to a shared understanding of their collective experience and the potential for resistance as originating from the many situations and forms of resistance in their life. I must stress that, despite the fact that their common awareness is communal, their experiences are diverse and are shaped by factors such as class, gender, geography, and area. Thus, there is a conflict between privilege and hopelessness, lack of resources, exclusion, and access, gendered identities and patriarchy, regional movements, and ambitions for change at the local level.

Before I continue, I should make it clear that I am not an expert in Dalit studies. How, then, did I come to read and write about the Dalit experience? The fact that many sociologists rely on a plethora of numbers and factual explanations to describe the plight of Dalit children in the context of education struck me as I taught and conducted research in the sociology of education. For instance, the lived experience of Dalits who attend school is documented through succinct narratives and significant factual data, but rarely finds room for in-depth ethnographies regarding their lives or experience. The 2011 India Census. For instance, Nambissan (2009) and Krishna (2012) analyse the discrimination am aware of the effects that this may have on various student groups in a classroom.

Approximately 16.6% of all individuals in India are Dalits, and the 2011 census included almost 20.14 crore people as members of various scheduled castes. Despite having a literacy rate of 66.1% compared to 73% of the general population, Dalit children face prejudice, isolation, and marginalization at school, which has a significant impact on dropout rates.<sup>8</sup> The most severe types of exclusion are experienced by Dalit girl students, who also lack the drive to stay in school. They are made to clean the restrooms, sit and eat in different areas, and drink water separately. They are also verbally and physically mistreated. While studies on the education of Dalit children frequently repeat this situation, we rarely hear the voice of the Dalit child

describing her experience of schooling in modern India. Since the school serves as "a transitional space between childhood in the village, portrayed as a place of unchanging oppression and minimal opportunity," it has been noted that Dalit autobiographies emphasize their time in school. Since education is valued as a source that has the potential to give children of Dalits the skills and knowledge they need to be free from the oppression they have thus far, understanding how Dalit children's educational experiences shape their emergence from the home into the public sphere is essential. As a result, I used Dalit autobiographies in my classroom and advised university students to read Valmiki (2003) for a first-person, extremely moving description of a Dalit child's learning. Untouchables are also known by the name Chuhra, which refers to the caste of sweepers and scavengers.

No untouchable person, or "churha"<sup>10</sup> as they are known in his village, has a social right to attend school, according to Valmiki (2003), but his tenacious father manages to get him enrolled in the basic primary school run by the local government, where every child has a social right to enroll. Every day, Valmiki is subjected to insults, made to sit on the hallway floor while the teacher hits and yells at the children. As a result, Valmiki has lost all faith in the value of education and the belief that teachers make the best mentors.

### **Agency and Oppositional Publics**

To answer Gayatri Spivak's challenging question from 1988, "Can the subaltern speak?" or, alternatively, "Can the subaltern be heard?," we should rather ask, "Does the subaltern voice speak with agency?" According to Kapadia (1995), Dalit women's experiences in various socio-cultural contexts have been documented. The narrative form of Dalit autobiographies has been theorized to reflect struggle, conflict, and the resolution of challenges. This exemplifies the "agentive individualism" that has become intimately identified with the Dalit autobiographical genre. These autobiographies are said to open up a "critical space by presenting a complex account of the subject's inhabitation of the world".

It is via this presentation of the self as lived experience in daily life that we are able to comprehend how Dalit men and women, through their autobiographical writing, form a "counter public." However, I do not consider these as individual acts of agency; rather, I see them as making up a collective consciousness that results from their community's shared experience of oppression. The autobiographies of Dalit women provide a distinct perspective on Dalit lives by examining gender, family, and communal relations. Women's voices describe the experience of oppression by focusing on their gender and status as women in the home and community, as well as their identity as Dalits [7], [8].

I owe Sharmila Rege for her publications on Dalit women, particularly in regards to their autobiographies. Use the autobiographies of Dalit women as examples of the potent subaltern voices for resistance and transformation that are woven within their stories. In her paper "Subaltern Counter Publics," Nancy Fraser claims that "subordinated social groups women, workers, people of color, and gays and lesbians have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics." Additionally, she says that "they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs". In Fraser's description of the opposing "counter public," there is a certain amount of agency. There is also the ensuing belief that contestation is essential to the public realm.

However, Dalit subalternity creates publics in two different ways: Being Dalit is an identity that, in the "life-writings," has a strong connection with the feelings of difference, untouchability, and being on the wrong side of the purity/pollution divide. As a result, being Dalit makes one feel "outside," separate, or a thing, similar to Agamben's refugee (Agamben 1998). On the one hand, Dalit autobiographies unintentionally duplicate themselves as individuals who are different by their vivid and moving depictions. On the other hand, they express a yearning to stand up for themselves and tear down the barriers that have kept them in, creating a discursive space for the challenge of hegemonic publics. In their writings, the possible and the impossible, the feeling of confinement and the aroma of liberation, constantly interact, making Dalit autobiographies an exceptionally tense form of subaltern counter public.

Location is crucial to comprehending the viewpoints of Dalit women, as shown by the autobiographies' astute study of the link between gender and caste. For instance, Maharashtra Dalits 28 In Dalit women's autobiographical literature, the subaltern voice articulates resistance and conveys the group's mobilization of strength to combat dominance at home and in the community. The Dalit women's perspective, according to Guru (1995), "does not make a fetish of its own reality, and therefore prevents the ghettoization of dalithood". Such a defence gives their writing agency as it seeks to transcend their caste-based identity that seems to define them forever. The collaborative nature of the voice, which is no longer distinctive in its appeal, gives the story agency. According to Brueck's 2017 analysis of two Dalit women's autobiographies, the protagonists "suggest the intimate details of their intergenerational stories that they as subjects are themselves plurally constituted, products of their own experience as well as those of many generations of women in their families" through their representation. The autobiography of Babytai Kamble, published in 2008, contains this inner resource, making it a classic in the category of Dalit women's autobiographies[9], [10].

## CONCLUSION

The public sphere is not a uniform area dominated by a bourgeois or upper caste-based populace. There are obviously several competing publics, some of which may be contestatory. Insofar as these arenas are publics, they are by definition not enclaves, according to Nancy Fraser. However, this does not negate the fact that they are frequently unintentionally enclave. After all, engaging in discursive interaction as a member of the public, whether subaltern or not, entails spreading one's discourse across ever-widening spheres. Because of this, subaltern counter publics exhibit two traits: they maintain a separate identity that is repeated through circulation and, at the same time, they use the discursive space to challenge identities and engage in larger arenas. Voice and a synthesis of numerous experiences at the crossroads of caste, gender, poverty, and other intersecting categories are used to depict this discursive space. These stories emphasize the shared experience even more and combat the persistence of caste in many situations. For instance, Jodhka (2015) has investigated several facets of Punjabi Dalit claims to citizenship as well as social mobility and activism in the Dalit community in various situations.

In response to the social practises enforced by the dominant groups in society, including caste, gender, and social class, Dalit counter publics are produced through their autobiographical writings. This paper has attempted to demonstrate how they serve as a foundation for adversarial politics in the larger social sphere as well as essentializing Dalit subjectivity through the ongoing structuring of Dalit experience as one of submission, subordination, and harassment. Writings by Kamble, who belongs to the second category, have a considerable impact on the development of

Dalit autobiography as a counter public. However, they do help to unlock the potential for Dalit subaltern voice and agency in the face of millennia of oppression, even though this does not necessarily mean they are good arbiters of an egalitarian ethos.

Through autobiographical reflection and interaction with the autobiographical texts we were studying, the students in my sociology of schooling class and I began to understand the traumatizing and frequently violent nature of the experience Dalit children have at school. We also gained a better understanding of the educational inequities and the persistence of social attitudes rooted in a tradition of caste-based exclusionary practice. By examining caste-based violence through the lenses of gender, familial structures, region, and most importantly the potential for human agency and intervention in a changing society, we simultaneously acquired a more nuanced knowledge of its multifaceted context.

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## CHAPTER 7

### A BRIEF STUDY ON AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND INTERSECTIONALITY

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#### ABSTRACT:

When studying social characteristics, intersectionality is essentially an organizing principle that encourages reflexivity so that one marginality is not swapped for another and lived experiences are not viewed as uniform and undifferentiated. Intersectionality's detractors have expressed concern that it may split up the fight against structural oppression. We argue in favor of intersectionality's potentials as a reflexive tool rather than against it since it must be used as a research methodology. Lived experiences offer the chance to investigate how intersectionality functions practically. A lived-experience method enables us to be open to alternative interpretations by mapping the broken structure of the daily, which not only shows the complexity of what is built as dominant truth but also can write some resistance to it. As a result, this paper also supports a radical intersectional praxis as a strategy for forging alliances amongst marginalized groups.

#### KEYWORDS:

Caste, Dalit's, Gender, Feminism, Intersectionality, Lived Experience.

#### INTRODUCTION

Following the #metoo movement<sup>1</sup>, law student Raya Sarkar produced a list of names of suspected sexual offenders in higher education institutions in India and academics of Indian descent abroad. The identities apparently came from women who had been victims of the sexual harassment that the movement criticised. Thirteen frontline feminists made a statement after the list started to circulate requesting for its immediate removal. They stated concern that such a "manner of naming can delegitimize the long struggle against sexual harassment, and make our task as feminists more difficult" (Menon 2017, emphasis in original). The remark received a lot of criticism for having a dismissive and pedantic tone, which divided the discussion into two factions [1], [2].

Sarkar, a former OP Jindal Global University student, thinks that her Singaporean nationality is saying that the conflict was between Dalit-Bahujan feminists and feminists from the upper caste or savarna (of "higher birth") would be oversimplified. However, the formation and crystallization of those two groupings was significantly influenced by caste identification (assumed, claimed, or assigned). The voices that had demanded the removal of Sarkar's list were all well-known feminists who believed they occupied a position of authority due to their persistent battles against patriarchy and the substantial influence they had had on the development of the mainstream women's movement. These women were savarna, as their detractors pointed out. But in this instance, being savarna also meant having access to social and cultural riches, regardless of one's natal status. However, the Dalit heritage of Raya Sarkar and



her assertion that many of the students who emailed her the names of their harassers were also Dalit students raised the issue of caste hierarchy within the feminist movement. Sarkar's dual citizenship as a Singaporean and an American law student, which grants her relative access to privilege, as she herself pointed out, further complicates the issue.<sup>4</sup> Although it would go beyond the scope of this introduction to further elaborate on these crucial topics, some points pertinent to the current problem need to be raised here. These form the core of this volume's concerns and strive to comprehend how power and marginalisation are constituted through intersecting marginalities in daily life.

Shreya Iliya Anasuya (2017) makes the observation that the many power disparities within the feminist movement depend on a person's sexual orientation, caste, class, and other criteria in addition to their gender, and decide whose viewpoints are taken seriously when a feminist attitude is advocated. The conflict that developed amongst the women's movement's branches cannot be disregarded as just different viewpoints. Conflicts in this context are the result of lived experiences, which are shaped by one's position within social hierarchies. The way the issue has been presented leaves no opportunity for the recognition of diversity within the women's movement. The discussions have demonstrated that a naive belief in universal sisterhood is insufficient to comprehend the women's movement. It is characterised not only by gender but also, among other things, by caste ties. Depending on one's allegiance, there may be disagreements on who gets to define feminism and whose acts are subject to censorship. According to Srila Roy (2017), Dalit Bahujan and other minority activists have framed this debate in terms of power disparities between savarna and Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi feminists, bringing attention to the feminist movements' hidden caste issue and forcing participants to engage with it.

Important questions that contextualise this problem are brought to our attention by the debate's outline. Who is eligible for due process? Who are the social movement's gatekeepers, and who are they trying to exclude? How do solidarities form and dissolve? Who suffers the most when public shame is made acceptable? What exactly qualifies as marginalisation, and what qualifies as privilege and power as a result? This volume tries to answer a more precise issue of how caste and gender interact in fundamental parts of daily experiences, such as close connections with others and means of subsistence, through various interrogations.

Social positions are interrelated, and the conflict and cooperation between these positions create social life on a daily basis. Examining the numerous ways in which variations between distinct social categories are organised and arranged is made possible by locating the creation of subjectivities within the diverse processes of the daily. We suggest concentrating on the mechanisms by which the intersectionality of social features results in particular experiences of marginalisation in this topic. Purdie-Vaughn and Eibach (2008) identify this practise as occurring along three channels of invisibility: historical invisibility through misrepresentation or de-emphasis in the dominant historical narrative that reproduces in this case Brahmanical patriarchy; cultural invisibility through the failure of cultural representations to capture the distinctive experiences of these subordinate groups by organising themselves around the dominant prototypes, which are then suppressed; and social invisible[3], [4].

Intersectionality is an alternative research methodology as well as a normative theoretical approach. Intersectionality offers a framework that challenges universal categories and enables us to uncover complex, varied, and frequently contradictory effects that result "when multiple

axes of differentiation economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective, and experiential intersect in historically specific contexts" (Brah and Phoenix 2004:76). We contend that intersectionality serves as an organising concept first and foremost, one that calls for reflexivity in the examination of social traits so that one marginality is not replaced by another and lived experiences are not viewed as uniform and unexamined. The significance of intersectionality lies not just in identifying social class divisions but also in exploring how they are used as a form of currency for power, which is what this problem explores.

In this volume, we employ intersectionality as a method for doing empirical research that captures how many types of difference interact. Due to its essentialist overtones, we avoided using the term "identity" as an analytical category until specifically employed in certain work and instead used alternative analytical idioms. A thorough summary of the full intersectionality argument is outside the purview of this introduction. Instead, we give a brief overview of its caste- and gender-related history in India. Then, in order to further a discussion of intersectionality as a potential research and action framework, we engage with some of the critiques of intersectionality. Then, we suggest an interpretation of intersectionality as a methodology. Finally, we draw your attention to a few of the key concepts covered in the articles. However, we believe that outlining our own locational politics is crucial before moving forward.

It's crucial to have a discussion on whether non-Dalit feminists can refer to themselves as Dalit. We both grew up in a liberal environment with support and resources accessible for our aspirations in life because we were born into caste Hindu Bengali homes of the middle class and with educational backgrounds. The problem of caste was only briefly apparent in our childhood, hidden under issues with culture and hygiene. The prevalence of caste hierarchies only gradually became apparent, as caste Hindus dominated our educational institutions and larger social circles. Although we were interested in the lived experiences of marginalised populations, our early academic endeavours nevertheless kept a distance from caste-related issues. Supurna's research centred on tea plantation workers who were female. Nandini works on and with disabled women. In the course of our individual and group efforts, it became clear that caste cannot be ignored when attempting to understand India's marginalisation. This required us to face our own positions and circumstances—as feminists and as non-Dalit women in addition to the addition of caste as a category of study. It needed us to recognise and reject (the process of rejection is still ongoing) the standards and laws that enable us to continue this exploitative system, including the priceless notion of universal sisterhood. As a non-Dalit feminist, Rege (2006) stated, one can only try to redefine oneself as an anti-caste feminist and cannot speak as or for Dalit women. Becoming a comrade in the fight for Dalit feminism is a process that has started but is far from being finished. This book represents a move in that direction.

## DISCUSSION

### **India's intersectionality**

Although the concept of different identities working together to create marginalisations has long been apparent on India's socioeconomic and political landscape, the term intersectionality has only lately entered Indian academia. The non-Brahman movements in Tamil Nadu from the early 20th century onward, the Dalit literary and autobiographical upsurges in Maharashtra in the 1960s, and the ongoing incidents of honour killing and atrocities all serve as examples of the myriad complex ways that caste, gender, and class intersect to shape the daily conditions of marginalities.

An important social reformer and thinker from India's 19th century, Jotirao Phule, saw that the rise of Brahmanism and the restriction of women's freedom were related. He maintained that child marriage, forced widowhood, and the sati system were three particular ways in which gender and caste discrimination were brought out by the Aryan invasion and its practises. While recognising the power imbalances between men and women that led to the marginalisation of the latter, Phule spoke of dual marginalities; nonetheless, he saw caste and gender more as parallel categories of marginalities that moulded one's socio-economic reality. He formed a coalition with the non-Brahman forces known as Stri-Shudra-Ati Shudra women from lower castes and untouchables that was crucial in the fight against caste patriarchy, which is sustained by having control over women's bodies and choices. The work of his wife, Savitribai Phule, who rose to prominence as a proponent of anti-caste feminism, was as important. Savitribai was a radical nonconformist who dedicated her life to helping all disadvantaged people. She was also an educator and social activist. At the intersections of patriarchy and caste, she served as the driving force behind numerous progressive campaigns.

As Gandhi's rival, the Self-Respect Movement was led by E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar). Revolting against caste, Brahmanism, religion, and the dominance of men over women, it was a social and cultural movement. He shared Phule's belief that women and members of lower castes were the most oppressed groups in Indian history. For him, the caste system's foundational social order had to be turned upside down in order to free them. The Brahmanical order, he claimed, fostered multiple and not intersectional marginalisations for women and lower castes. In order to create a non-hierarchical society, the Self-Respect movement would renounce caste privileges and religion belief [5], [6].

A Hindu initiation rite that marks the male kid is only open to boys from the top three castes. This trend and the concepts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are consistent. Ambedkar's view of caste and gender identities has two facets. The first acknowledges the marginalised status Dalits and women possess in a Brahmanical society, much like Phule and Periyar. In *Who Were the Shudras*, he demonstrates how removing Dalits and women from Upanayana<sup>6</sup> and other fundamental Hindu ceremonies gave them the right to be denied property ownership, which had a substantial impact on their lives. As seen by his criticism of endogamy and support for inter-caste marriage, Ambedkar clearly understood that caste and gender identities were not only parallel but also intersecting systems. He emphasises the significance of endogamous marriages as the way to maintain the integrity of the caste system by asserting that the "superimposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste". It is implicit in this that caste norms are expressed through gender norms, and vice versa.

However, the mainstream women's movement in India did not take intersectionality into account when attempting to comprehend what social reality was. The women's movement demonstrated an uncritical acceptance of a class- and rural/urban-based division of the marginalised woman into a homogenous group. Although the upper-caste, middle-class, and urban affiliations of the mainstream Indian feminist community are elite, it has been somewhat reflective of these limits, so that the majority of their efforts on sexual violence and/or livelihood have been for impoverished and rural women. The idea of women belonging to "backward classes" has led to the collapse of caste and religion into categories of economic marginalisation, with poverty being the main cause of this. But the particularities of the lived experiences that shape their marginalisation have mostly gone unnoticed.

Rao (2005a) criticises Indian feminism for using a one-dimensional, normative gendered perspective while formulating intervention techniques. Women's material marginalisations cannot be reduced to a single, broad class group. This has caused the power disparity between the castes to endure and become invisible inside the women's movement, reproducing existing borders and hierarchies. Caste and class divisions, as well as acceptance of patriarchies and their compensatory systems, separate women whose unification is based on the systematic overlap of patriarchies. Feminist modes of organisation and struggle should "encompass all of the social inequalities that patriarchies are related to, embedded in, and structured by" in order to counteract this. The issue of caste and gender intersectionalities has, however, received increased attention in recent years. This is clear in the evolution of the Dalit feminist perspective as a critique of the savarnization of women and the masculinization of Dalits and Dalit studies. Such an intersectional perspective recognises the diversity, heterogeneity, and sometimes contradiction present in an individual's or group's lived experiences, as well as the ensuing hierarchical, numerous, and shifting power relations of caste, class, race, and ethnicity that shape their social realities. Such an intersectional analysis has recently been used in the context of gender and caste. For instance, Charu Gupta sheds some insight on the caste's hitherto obscure colonial history in "Gender of Caste" (2016). She demonstrates how early 20th-century conflicts over Dalit labour, political agency, and social value greatly influenced Indian politics[7], [8].

Dalit literary works have made one of the most significant contributions to the discourse in the modern era. The writing of autobiographies by Dalit women from various parts of the nation, like Urmila Pawar (Marathi), Bama (Tamil), and Kalyani Thakur or Chandalini (Bengali), represents the development of a counterpublic based on lived experiences situated through a complex intersection of caste, class, and gender. According to Rege (2006:4), upper-caste women's autobiographies play a significant role in the feminist discourse of experience by illustrating the tensions between tradition and their desire for the modern. The unique communitarian notion of the Dalit community is disrupted by Dalit testimonios (Rege 2006), which are life histories of struggle, oppression, and humiliation.

Asking the intersect question is also necessary for an intersectional feminist or Dalit movement. We contend that despite the fact that none of the works so far reviewed use the term intersectionality, their concept of marginal subjectivities is intersectional. The Menon-John argument (2015) has a significant impact on conceptualizing and problematizing the idea of intersectionality. The debate goes around the definitions and application of intersectionality to Indian feminism. The debate, as well as its publication in *Economic and Political Weekly*, a publication with significant readership among the left intelligentsia, showed that intersectionality, particularly in relation to caste and gender, was being acknowledged by the mainstream feminist movement. Some aspects of the debate will be covered in the next section.

### **Intersectionality's bounds**

Understanding complicated social realities requires the use of intersectionality as a key analytical tool. However, there are several misuses and restrictions on its use that must be taken into account. Menon offers a significant critique of the intersectional framework's applicability to feminism in India. Similar to Dhamoon, she has claimed that there has been a consistent theorization of various and interconnected vectors of identities from feminists of colour through poststructuralists. Works varyingly referred to as multiple consciousness, multi-dimensionality, and inter-connectivities have shown how the assumption of homogenous and singular

experiences is broken by the intertwining and constitutive nature of social traits. Because of this, a lot of the material that has been combined under the umbrella of intersectionality really predates the term, raising the question of whether it is simply a catchphrase.

Capitalist globalisation challenges traditional family structures by undermining traditional forms of patriarchy, enabling lower castes to leave their traditional occupations and join new, anonymous ones, and introducing women to new forms of employment that frequently cause them to become the primary earners. The articles in this book provide examples of how these developments introduce new hierarchies and types of marginalisation that the Brahmanical patriarchy uses to reproduce itself. Even if they appear to be weakening one another, dominant traits continue to exist in novel ways that emphasise control. Bilge contends that intersectionality's depoliticization through commodification and colonisation for neo-liberal regimes explains Menon's concern that intersectionality splits opposition to capitalism. As a tool for radical social justice and counter-publics, intersectionality is in danger of being undercut by what Bilge (2013) refers to as decorative intersectionality. Adajania (2015)8, a Vogue video on women's empowerment in India in 2015, brought to light this superficial use of intersectionality in which commonplace assertions of emancipation and empowerment were dismissed without any attempt to question the institutions that supported them. Intersectionality is made marketable by depoliticizing it.

The limit of intersectionality according to 19Bilge is disciplinary feminism, a dominant intellectual attitude with regard to knowledge formation that relies on fitting into these predetermined constraints rather than opposing them. The conflict over Raya Sarkar's list mentioned above is an example of such occluded stances where both parties refuse to consider the potential limitations of their positions. The outcome of excluding certain groups from the discussion's boundaries is the reproduction of marginalisation, such as the exclusion of students from non-elite, small rural colleges. These incidents show how opportunity systems and turf conflicts within particular fields frequently lead to power clashes.

Intersectionality can lead to the commodification of these analytical categories when it is used as a shopping list of categories, further marginalising particular oppressive experiences. Intersectionality can be utilised to draw attention away from racism, which is one particular risk. Casteism can be perceived as being avoided by such strategies of deflection argues that rather than engaging in a debate about the identification of the primary contradiction—the primary marker of difference—we should instead acknowledge that the salience of these boundaries will vary depending on the context, necessitating the tentative destabilisation of ossified categories by the other.

From a Marxist perspective, Shah and Lerche (2017) criticise intersectionality. They admit that "identity-based relations" have not disappeared as a result of the spread of capitalism in India, but have instead become more entrenched (Shah and Lerche 2017:1). They prioritise the analysis of political economy under which caste, class, gender, region, and religion are all connected using the concept of conjugated exploitation (Bourgois, 1988) (Shah and Lerche, 2017:13–15). Following Bourgois, they contend that the idea of conjugated oppression can be used to demonstrate the disparities within and fragmentation of the labour force that result in various challenges faced by various groups at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy.

However, Shah and Lerche's (2017) criticism of intersectionality falls flat because they believe it treats various social markers as distinct entities. However, we have shown in earlier sections that



intersectionality's usefulness actually comes in its recognition of the mutual constitutive nature of social categories and the ensuing location of groups. Shah and Lerchecentre their political-economic study on how identity-based social oppression affects people's access to resources for production and reproduction. Their adherence to Bourgois' theory of conjugated oppression distinguishes between ideological and economic dominance that reproduces the base-superstructure binary, pointing to a primary contradiction argument that the other categories conjugate class oppression rather than being acknowledged in their own particularities. The risk of interpreting such disparate categories as interchangeable arises from the inability to recognise the distinctiveness of how these categories precisely structure domination/marginalization. The benefit of this criticism is that it makes us aware of the fact that intersectionality can only be relevant if we pay attention to "historical contingencies, specific contexts, and the purposes of specific arguments" (Bilge 2013:420). If we are to consider intersectional politics, it is crucial to comprehend the workings of power, dominance, exploitation, and injustice via an intersectional perspective [9], [10].

Intersectional politics and intersectional analysis. These arguments encourage us to use the phrase more reflexively rather than to reject it. It's critical to continue working with intersectionality because it has the capacity to solve these problems on its own. We underline that intersectionality has the potential to engage and analyse particular empirical circumstances, even though we share the skepticism of any universal paradigm. It gives us the instrument required to precisely define the issue. Contrary to identity politics, intersectionality offers a perspective on honing the analysis and examining the precise ways in which various types of dominance reinforce one another by rejecting the idea of main contradiction. This offers marginalised groups the chance to communicate with one another, gives them a perspective on working together, and allows them to acknowledge one another's unique experiences with dominance.

Specific experiences of the marginalisation of various groups will be able to emerge thanks to the radical application of intersectionality with a context-focused orientation. While understanding marginalities as additives returning to the main contradiction argument is one effect of giving up intersectionality, the other is that it homogenises marginalisation experiences. This has the risk of resulting in a "add marginalities and stir" strategy. Rege (2006) draws attention to the issue of portraying the experiences of Black, Third World, and Dalit women as interchangeable in her discussion of curriculum creation. The divergences and similarities between these experiences offer room for more reflection and togetherness, as the papers in this anthology demonstrate. As seen by cases of landless Dalits being mobilised by Hindu right wing forces against the poor Muslim community, intersectional politics are crucial in India's current political context to avoid pitting one minority against the other. When marginal experiences are homogenised, the other's marginality is obscured, and competition for fringe benefits results rather than systemic changes that bring about fundamental change.

A radical intersectional praxis is required by the political environment in order to create non-oppressive political coalitions amongst the many social justice movements, which at the moment frequently appear to be at odds with one another under the neoliberal system. By confusing essentialism, categorical purity, and segregation in creating movements, intersectionality makes a political praxis of coalition-building possible. Intersectionality offers a perspective on the search for a shared interest by explaining how marginalisation is framed as a result of one's location at particular points of intersection between identifications, as was evident in the Dalit-Muslim alliance against right-wing fascism in the Gujarat elections of 2017, which resulted in the victory



of the independent candidate Jignesh Mevani. Intersectionality can be a potent tool for social change for varied social groups that come together on the basis of their shared experiences of inequality and/or agency without losing sight of their diversity.

### CONCLUSION

Untangling the simultaneity of subjugations is possible when intersectionality is engaged with intersecting social identities and associated systems of oppression, dominance, or discrimination. A shift from intersectional analysis to intersectional politics a politics of recognising differences and forging partnerships across them is urgently required in light of the current political climate. We must take extra care to prevent the term from being misused in this context in order to separate marginal groups and pit them against one another. According to Crenshaw (1991), political methods that just question some subordinating practises rather than attempting to overthrow existing hierarchies marginalise individuals who are already experiencing numerous marginalizations. In addition, it has the impact of pitting marginalised groups against one another by oppositional zing discourses on class, race, caste, religion, and gender, which is something we are currently seeing. It can be a potent weapon for overcoming our inability to "see" at the political and discursive levels as well as for making effective use of this newly acquired sight. Those who experience many forms of subordination use the idea and practise of intersectionality as an analytical and political tool. By using theoretical and empirical knowledge production integrated with activism, advocacy, and reflexive pedagogy, it can be a potent tool for forming coalitions across these marginalisations with the aim of confronting and combating the interconnected systems of power that shape their lives (Dill and Zambrana 2009). This volume is being offered in the hope that it will encourage more research into the elusive yet structurally stable and systemic axes of dominances and oppressions.

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## CHAPTER 8

### A BRIEF STUDY ON LITERARY INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATIONS

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

The Literature has always been a dynamic industry where authors take ideas and inspiration from a wide range of sources to develop original and captivating stories. This abstract examines the multidimensional nature of literary inspirations and influences, illuminating how authors are influenced by their social, political, and cultural environments. It looks at how different literary traditions interact, how other art forms affect literature, and how important personal experiences are in influencing the creative process. Authors frequently find themselves impacted by the works of their forebears in the field of literary influences. For instance, writers can alter, reinterpret, or criticize the concepts, themes, and narrative devices found in classic literature. Shakespeare's works had a significant impact on writers like William Faulkner, while Joseph Campbell's legendary tales served as an inspiration for modern authors like J.K. Rowling. In addition, writers frequently look outside the realm of literature for inspiration in fields like music, philosophy, history, and art. For instance, novelists and poets have been moved by the works of Pablo Picasso or Beethoven's music to create original literary works that encapsulate these other art forms. Beyond outside influences, a writer's writing is greatly influenced by their own personal experiences and life events. In order to give their stories realism, writers frequently use their personal feelings, challenges, and victories as inspiration. Both "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath and the autobiographical writings of Maya Angelou are excellent examples of how personal experiences may be incorporated into literature.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Cultural Environment, Inspirations, Literary Influences, Literature, Multidimensional Nature.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature has always been a place where words are woven into complex meaning-weaving tapestries, stories of varied lives are told, and ideas flow like a river of thought. Literature is a timeless and limitless domain of human expression. Literary influences and inspirations are at the center of this dynamic field, driving the very essence of creativity and storytelling. In this introduction, we set out on a trip to investigate the wide range of influences on writers and their work, from historical masterpieces to the subtleties of personal experience.

Writing is a collaborative process where authors interact, consciously or unconsciously, with the works of those who came before them. Through the pages of books, poems, and plays, the echoes of literary giants like Shakespeare, Austen, Faulkner, and Tolkien reverberate, influencing the ideas and imaginations of modern authors. These influences light the creative fires that fuel the literary landscape, much like a torch is transferred from one generation to the next.

One of the biggest effects on modern writers is the legacy of classic literature. Shakespeare's profound tragedies and nuanced characters, for instance, continue to influence current playwrights, and Jane Austen's wit and social commentary are still relevant in modern romance and satire. As authors reinterpret, adapt, and challenge the conventions established by their predecessors, the themes of these classics weave together with the stories of today. The symbiotic relationship between historical and contemporary literature creates a continuum that gives the tales we read now depth and meaning.

Beyond the written word, another important aspect of this creative interaction is how other art forms have influenced literature. At various times, writers' imaginations have been captured by the visual arts, music, film, and even dance, enhancing their storytelling. While Beethoven's compositions or jazz artists' improvisations have set the emotional tone for stories that resonate with life's rhythms, paintings like Picasso's "Guernica" have inspired books that explore the horrors of war. These inter-disciplinary influences draw attention to the flexibility of creativity and the slender distinctions between artistic forms.

But literature is not just a result of outside forces; it also represents the inner lives of its authors. The most meaningful and enduring works frequently come from the depths of individual experiences, feelings, and convictions. To give their characters and stories life, writers rely on their own experiences, achievements, and tribulations. Sylvia Plath's melancholic and brooding "The Bell Jar" is a striking illustration of how life events may serve as a source of creative inspiration for writers. Maya Angelou's personal writings, particularly "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," demonstrate the transforming potential of sharing one's particular experiences with the world.

This interaction between the author's own experiences and the larger literary scene is evidence of the varied sources of inspiration. It serves as a reminder that literature is a living, constantly-evolving art form rather than a timeless, unchanging object. Every author becomes both a listener and a contributor to this continual discussion between the past and present, tradition and innovation, the outside world and the inner self in their attempt to tell a tale or convey a message.

We will delve more into the complex web of literary influences and inspirations in the pages that follow. We will look at how authors forge their individual creative pathways while navigating the currents of tradition. We'll look at how inspiration from the outside, whether it comes from history, music, or the arts, gives books life. We will also consider the enormous influence that individual experiences, feelings, and beliefs have on the stories that capture our attention[1], [2].

## **DISCUSSION**

Without a doubt, let's start a thorough discussion of the subject of "Literary Influences and Inspirations." We will examine the varied nature of literary inspirations and influences. We will also look at how writers are influenced by their social, historical, and personal circumstances. We'll also explore how literary traditions interact, how other art forms affect literature, and how personal experiences affect the creative process.

### **The Function of Literary Traditions**

The foundation of writers' influence throughout the generations is provided by literary traditions. These traditions include the body of work, enduring themes, and enduring narrative strategies as

a whole. Authors frequently find themselves in conversation with and inspired by these traditions.

Shakespeare, Homer, and Leo Tolstoy, among other classic authors, continue to have an impact on modern literature. Talk about how these timeless works serve as a rich source of inspiration for contemporary authors, influencing the way tales are written and characters are created.

Literary genres have established rules that authors can either follow or deviate from, for example, the bildungsroman, the detective book, and Gothic fiction. Examine how these genre conventions affect modern writers' decision-making in terms of storytelling.

### **Outside Inspiring Sources**

Literature is not a standalone entity. It is influenced by a variety of other artistic mediums, historical moments, and societal shifts. These outside inspiration sources enhance the creative process.

**Visual Arts:** Examine the influences of paintings, sculptures, and other forms of visual art on writers. Talk about instances where a novel or poem's storyline or theme was heavily influenced by a work of art.

**Music:** Literature frequently references the emotional impact of music. Examine how mood, structure, or character development in literary works have been inspired by musicians like Beethoven or genres like jazz.

**History and Society:** Literary works frequently use historical incidents and cultural shifts as their settings. Consider how authors have used historical eras or social movements as inspiration to tackle modern concerns or explore timeless themes [3], [4].

### **Personal Experiences and Emotions**

The writer's personal life experiences, feelings, and beliefs have a significant impact on the work that they produce. Personal stories and observations can give storytelling more depth and authenticity.

**Autobiographical Writing:** Writers with compelling autobiographical writings include Maya Angelou and James Baldwin. Discuss how their personal experiences affected their writing and how people responded to these stories.

**Emotional Resonance:** Examine how writers use their own emotional experiences to develop believable characters and circumstances in their works. Consider the tremendous connections that these emotional resonances can have with readers.

**Ideologies and Beliefs:** Authors frequently utilize literature to discuss and express their ideologies and beliefs. Talk about the ways in which writers like George Orwell and Ayn Rand have incorporated political or philosophical messages into their writings.

### **Literature's Evolution**

Literary inspirations and influences change with time; they aid in the development of literature. While pushing the limits of creativity, writers build on the past. Highlight how modern authors innovate by fusing traditions, utilizing new technologies, or examining unexplored subject matter

in order to contribute to the constantly changing literary scene. Discuss how globalization has made it easier for authors from different cultures to share literary influences, creating a more inclusive and diversified literary landscape where authors from all walks of life can be heard. The Future of Literature: Consider how literature might develop in the digital era and in reaction to how society and politics are always changing. What could the next significant influences be on writing generations to come?

### **Influences from culture and geography**

Literature frequently reflects the cultural and geographic origins of its creators. In addition to the larger body of literature, writers are impacted by the particular cultures and geographic areas they are a part of or are exposed to. Examine how authors use the myths, legends, and folklore from their own cultures to inform their stories. Describe how the depth of storytelling is enhanced by this relationship to cultural mythology.

**Regional Settings:** Examine the effects that the setting urban or rural has on the themes and characters in a work of literature. Talk about how local settings and landscapes contribute to the storyline [5], [6].

**Language and dialects:** The very nature of language can have an impact. Study the ways in which authors use local languages or dialects to evoke a sense of place and authenticity.

### **Literary Movements and Periods**

Throughout history, various literary trends and eras have left their mark on literature. Writers frequently support or reject the current literary tendencies of their day.

**Romanticism to Modernism:** Examine how writers were influenced to experiment with diverse subjects, styles, and narrative structures as a result of the change from Romanticism to Modernism, for instance. Emphasize important writers and works from these movements. Examine how postcolonial literature reflects colonial history's effect as well as the battle for independence and identity. Talk about writers like Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe.

Examine the influence of the feminist and LGBTQ+ literary movements on the literature of the present. How have these movements altered stories and given voice to underrepresented viewpoints?

### **Intertextuality and Adaptations**

Writing professionals frequently use intertextuality, adapting or pulling ideas from other literary works. A significant literary influence comes from this process of adaptation and reinterpretation.

Study the various ways that classic literature has been transformed, such as in film, television, or graphic novels. Talk about the difficulties and imaginative possibilities presented by recreating well-known stories.

Investigate the ways in which modern writers have reinterpreted classical works to speak to current concerns and issues. Examine how these reinterpretations have altered the literary environment. Examine the use of intertextuality references, which are citations made by authors within their own texts. Describe how the depth and complexity that these references provide to the story can be discussed.



### **Literary Influences in a Global Context**

There are international literary influences. Cross-cultural interactions result from authors from different parts of the world drawing inspiration from their worldwide peers' works.

Discuss the emergence of transnational literature, as authors navigate many cultural influences and linguistic boundaries in their works, as a result of globalization and migration. Give some examples of these writers' writings.

**Literature in Translation:** Consider how translation affects how accessible works from one culture are to others. Talk about the difficulties and intricacies involved in translating literature while maintaining its core.

Examine how global literary movements like magical realism or existentialism have affected authors all throughout the world by transcending national borders [7], [8].

### **Reader and Critic Influence**

The literary ecology contains more members than only authors. Their following works and the creative process are also influenced by how readers and critics respond to their earlier works. Discuss the idea of reader response theory, which contends that readers actively participate in determining how to interpret and shape the meaning of a literary work. How do readers' comments on writers' work affect them?

Investigate how theoretical frameworks like structuralism, post-structuralism, or feminism, as well as literary criticism, might influence how writers approach their craft and tell stories. Examine the author-reader interactions that take place on social media, in book clubs, and at public events. Consider how these interactions can affect future works[9], [10].

The idea of literary influences and inspirations weaves a tapestry of interconnected threads that shapes the very essence of creativity in the wide terrain of literature, where words are the building blocks of worlds and stories. At the point where tradition, invention, culture, and personal experience converge as we come to the end of this fascinating topic, we are astounded by the written word's enduring power. Literature is not only a single act of creation but also a dialogue—a discourse between writers, both past and present, and the numerous sources of inspiration that surround them as revealed by the debate of literary influences and inspirations.

**Literary Traditions' Function:** We started off by recognising the enduring importance of literary traditions. With its eternal ideas and all-encompassing stories, classic literature continues to be an inspiration for modern writers. The classics, from Austen's wit to Shakespeare's tragedies, act as both benchmarks and challenges, encouraging writers to expand on the foundations set by their forebears. These traditions offer a feeling of continuity in a society where innovation frequently takes precedence and serve to remind us that creativity is a continuum rather than an isolated flash of brilliance.

**External Inspirational Sources:** Like a sponge, literature takes in the influences around it. Music and visual art both add to the vivid settings of literary works with their emotional impact and captivating imagery. Novels, poetry, and plays echo paintings, sculptures, and symphonies, enhancing the emotional richness and sensory pleasures they provide readers. This mutually beneficial relationship between various art forms serves as a reminder that inspiration has no

limitations; it transcends diverse mediums and entices the creative spirit to venture into unexplored territory.

**Experiences from within and feelings:** Beyond the influences of the outside world, literature is intensely personal. The richest reservoirs of human emotion and experience are mined for its inspiration. Authors can convey their most profound joys and sorrows in autobiographical narratives, memoirs, and works that are extremely introspective. These books appeal to readers not only because of their timeless subjects but also because the author's personal experience is evident in them. The human condition is reflected in literature, which invites readers to look into the souls of authors and, in turn, connect with their own experiences and feelings.

**Literature's Evolution:** Our investigation also showed that literature is a dynamic force that is constantly changing and adjusting to the social, technological, and cultural currents. Literary influences cross national boundaries in an increasingly globalizing globe, creating a more diverse and integrated literary landscape. New types of storytelling have emerged with the advent of the digital age, requiring authors to find creative methods to interact with readers.

**Regional and Cultural effects:** The topic of regional and cultural effects on literature was covered in more detail. The locations that authors call home are as much a part of them as their time. Literature is an effective means of conserving and disseminating cultural legacy since it is authenticated by cultural mythology, geographical locations, and the usage of native languages.

**Literary Movements and Periods:** The literary landscape has been permanently shaped by literary movements and periods, ranging from Romanticism to Modernism and beyond. They influence the topics, aesthetics, and ideologies of their respective times and give writers a base from which to continue tradition and rebel.

Stories are transformed, reinterpreted, and interlaced in the literary world, which is a living reservoir of ideas and narratives. A web of intertextuality links that improves the reading experience is created when classic writings are reworked to address modern issues.

**Literary Influences in a Global Context:** Literature is a universal phenomenon, much as the human experience. Cross-cultural interactions among authors from various backgrounds provide their writings a rich tapestry of perspectives. Global literary trends motivate authors all across the world, and translation acts as a bridge that enables stories to transcend linguistic boundaries.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, we recognized the crucial contribution that readers and critics make to the literary community. Writers interact constantly with their audience; they do not exist in solitude. The reader reaction hypothesis serves as a reminder that both the author and the reader contribute to the meaning of a literary work. Literature analysis can be viewed through lenses that offer new perspectives and insights, such as literary criticism and theoretical frameworks. As a result of researching literary influences and inspirations, it has become clear that literature is a living, breathing organism that is constantly changing and thriving on links between the past, present, and future. It is evidence of how stories have the persistent ability to cut beyond barriers of space, time, and culture. The rich tapestry of human expression known as literature is enriched by the contributions made by authors as they delve into the tradition-filled well, interact with outside influences, and share their own experiences. The written word continues to capture our

hearts and minds in this dynamic and ever-changing environment, serving as a constant reminder that literature is fundamentally a mirror of our shared humanity.

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## CHAPTER 9

### A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON MEMOIRS AND MEMOIRISTS

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Memoirs are a distinctive and intensely private literary genre that provide readers a close-up look at the lives, ideas, and experiences of people who have chosen to share their stories. The varied world of memoirs and memoirists is explored in this abstract, along with the reasons why people choose to write them, how personal stories affect readers, and the ethical issues surrounding this genre. Memoirs, in contrast to other types of autobiographical writing, concentrate on particular events, themes, or times in the author's life. These stories are influenced by the person's viewpoint and recollection, frequently fusing facts with feelings and views to produce a gripping story. Memoirists are driven by a number of reasons, such as the desire to preserve history, impart life lessons, face their own demons, or motivate others via their stories. One major topic covered in this abstract is the emotional impact of memoirs. Readers who put themselves in the memoirist's shoes and identify with their pleasures and tragedies frequently act as mirrors, reflecting the shared human experience. The common themes of resiliency, growth, and the quest of authenticity are highlighted in these narratives, which promote empathy and connection. But there are also moral issues with telling one's life narrative in a memoir. Memoirists deal with the duty of writing a narrative that is both honest and courteous, the narrow line between truth and embellishment, and the possible harm of disclosing sensitive or intimate information about others. The abstract explores the moral dilemmas that memoirists encounter, highlighting the difficult trade-off between the need for individual catharsis and the possible repercussions of their discoveries.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Autographical Writing, Emotional Impact, Growth, Memoirs, Memoirists.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Memoirs and memoirists stand as an exciting and intensely intimate genre in the limitless universe of literature, where words are the craftsman creating worlds. As the byproduct of reflection and introspection, memoirs provide readers with a close window into the lives, thoughts, and experiences of those who have chosen to share the story of their existence. This introduction sets out on a journey into the world of memoirs and memoirists in an effort to learn more about the inspirations behind writing these intensely personal accounts, the profound effect they have on readers, and the ethical issues involved in disclosing one's life to the public.

Memoirs occupy a special place in the literary world. Memoirs focus on individual events, themes, or time periods rather than tracing a person's entire life, capturing the essence of a particular stage in the author's journey. These stories are influenced by the events themselves as well as the author's point of view, recollection, and the emotions weaved into the story.

Memoirists are driven by a variety of reasons, including the need to record historical events, impart lessons that can change lives, face personal demons, or shed light on the human condition via their own experiences.

The discussion's main issue centers on the powerful emotional resonance of memoirs. These stories are incredibly intimate and contemplative by their very nature. Readers can see into the souls of memoirists and experience their victories, setbacks, and transformations by peering through their memoirs, which act as mirrors. Memoirs' strength rests in their capacity to develop empathy and connection between author and reader by bridging the gap between them. Readers frequently find aspects of their own life, pleasures, and tragedies in the pages of a well-written memoir, fostering a profound sense of shared humanity[1], [2].

## DISCUSSION

### Memoirs and Their Importance

A distinctive and personal literary genre, memoirs. By sharing their experiences, ideas, and feelings, they provide readers a firsthand glimpse into the authors' lives. Memoirs differ from autobiographies in that they frequently concentrate on particular themes, events, or times in the author's life rather than giving a detailed account of their entire life.

**Defining Memoirs:** Examine the traits that distinguish memoirs from other types of autobiographical writing, emphasizing their personal and thematic nature. Discuss the significance of memoirs and the reasons why readers are drawn to these intensely intimate experiences.

### Memoirists' Motives

Memoirists set out on a voyage of intense introspection, propelled by a variety of reasons. Knowing these causes helps people to better understand why they decide to tell the world about their lives.

**Preservation of History:** The urge to preserve historical occurrences, particularly those of societal or cultural significance, drives certain memoirists. Talk about several memoirs that were used as historical documents.

**Life Lessons and Wisdom:** Many memoir writers want to share insightful or priceless life lessons learned from their experiences. Examine how memoirs might serve as a resource for readers facing comparable difficulties.

Writing memoirs can be therapeutic for authors, assisting them in facing and processing inner demons or terrible experiences. Tell tales of writers who found solace in writing memoirs.

### Reader Impact

Readers are profoundly impacted by memoirs because they create empathy, connection, and a variety of viewpoints on the human condition.

**Empathy and Connection:** Talk about how memoirs enable readers to put themselves in the author's shoes and share their joys and sorrows by building a bridge of empathy between the author and reader. Examine how memoirs highlight the common humanity that people from many origins and cultures share. Give instances of memoirs that cut across borders and appeal to

a worldwide audience. Analyse how memoirs can spur readers' personal growth and transformation, encouraging them to take stock of their own situations and implement constructive adjustments.

### **"Ethical Considerations in Memoir Writing"**

A memoir's disclosure of one's life is not without its ethical challenges. Memoirists struggle with issues including telling the truth, the risk for hurting other people, and the need to strike a balance between their own need for catharsis and moral storytelling. Examine the moral conundrum of embellishing the facts in memoirs. How much creative license is appropriate when creating a gripping story, and where does it become exaggeration or deception? Discuss the moral obligations of memoirists when disclosing private or delicate information about others, particularly family members and friends. Emphasize the value of getting consent or handling these tricky situations.

**Impact on Relationships:** Consider how writing a memoir may affect the author's connections to friends, family, and acquaintances. Tell tales of memoirists who experienced retaliation or reconciliation because of their writings [3], [4].

### **Important Memoirs and Memoirists**

Discover some notable memoirs and memoir writers from diverse eras and origins, demonstrating the breadth and complexity of this genre. Highlight timeless memoirs like "The Diary of Anne Frank" and "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin," emphasizing their effect and continued relevance. Discuss contemporary memoirists who have received significant praise and whose works have struck a chord with modern readers, such as Michelle Obama ("Becoming") and Tara Westover ("Educated").

### **The Changing Memoir Landscape**

Like all literary forms, memoirs are prone to development and change. Discuss how the internet era, the globalized globe, and altering cultural standards have influenced memoir writing.

**Blogs and Digital Memoirs:** Examine how social media accounts and personal blogs have changed how personal narratives are shared and consumed, as well as the growth of digital memoirs. Examine the growing variety and inclusivity in memoirs, where writers from disadvantaged backgrounds share their experiences and viewpoints to create a more diverse and inclusive literary world.

### **Memoirs as Social Commentary**

Memoirs frequently act as social commentaries, providing insight into current affairs, cultural norms, and historical occurrences. Describe the ways in which memoirists use their own experiences to provide light on larger social and cultural contexts.

Explore memoirs that describe the fights for civil rights and social justice, offering firsthand views of significant historical occurrences.

**Mental Health and Stigma:** Talk about how memoirs that highlight problems with mental health, addiction, or trauma help to de-stigmatize these problems and promote empathy.



### **Memoirs in the Age of Celebrity**

There has been an increase in celebrity memoirs in recent years. Check to see if there are any notable differences between celebrity memoirs and those written by non-celebrities, as well as the phenomena of celebrity memoirs and its effect on the genre.

Discuss the reasons why famous people choose to write memoirs, the impact they have on book sales, and the particular difficulties they encounter when expressing their innermost feelings.

Examine the conflict between keeping a genuine voice and projecting a positive public image in celebrity memoirs. Look at instances where celebrities have utilized autobiographies to expose flaws or controversy [5], [6].

### **Memoirs and Identity**

Memoirs often emphasize identity, which includes race, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality. Examine the impact on readers and how memoirists deal with identity concerns in their writing. Discuss memoirs that explore the intricacies of identity, whether they are dealing with issues of race and ethnicity, gender identity, or cultural ancestry. Examine how certain memoirs examine the confluences of various parts of identity, illuminating the subtleties of lived experiences.

### **The Function of Memory in Memoir Writing**

Memoirs rely on subjective and prone to error memory. Describe the function of memory in memoir writing, including the possibility of selective recall, the problems of expressing emotional realities, and the reconstruction of events.

**The Fallibility of Memory:** Examine how authors deal with gaps, inconsistencies, and the passage of time, as well as the limitations of memory in memoirs. Examine the difference between factual correctness and emotional truth in memoirs. Emotional truth refers to the feelings and events that authors can clearly recall.

### **Memoirs and the Power of Vulnerability**

In memoirs, vulnerability frequently appears as authors relate their most intimate and frequently difficult experiences. Analyse the impact of vulnerability in memoir writing and how it encourages reader connection.

**The Courage to Share:** Talk about the courage it takes for authors to expose their flaws, wounds, and insecurities in order to expose themselves to scrutiny and criticism. Examine how memoirs' vulnerability evokes readers' empathy by allowing them to identify with the author's challenges and victories.

### **Memoirs in the Digital Age**

Examine how the rise of self-published e-books, the influence of social media, and online storytelling platforms have changed the landscape of memoirs in the digital age. Discuss how the democratization of memoir writing in the digital era has made it easier for more authors to tell their stories through self-publishing and e-books.

**Internet Memoirs and Blogs:** Examine how social media, internet platforms, and personal blogs help authors communicate continuous memoirs or personal narratives in real-time.

### **Memoirs Not Written Down**

Graphic novels, audio recordings, and other multimedia experiences are just a few of the many ways that memoirs can exist outside of the written word. Examine how these new formats enlarge the possibilities for memoirs.

Discuss the rise of graphic memoirs, which blend human narratives with visual storytelling, and their particular reader appeal. Analyse the popularity of memoirs in audio format, where authors frequently narrate their own story to provide a personal listening experience.

### **Memoirs and the Craft of the Story**

Memoir writing requires the art of telling a gripping story as opposed to just relaying events. Examine the strategies and stylistic elements that memoirists employ to hold readers' attention and produce memorable stories.

Discuss how memoirists build their stories and keep the reader interested by using different narrative structures, such as chronological, thematic, or nonlinear. Analyse how memoirists grow themselves and other people in their narratives to produce nuanced, relatable characters that readers may identify with [7], [8].

### **Memoirs in Education and Empathy**

Examine the function of memoirs in classrooms and how they might help students develop empathy and understanding. Discuss how memoirs are included into academic curricula, whether at the high school or collegiate level, to teach students about a variety of experiences, cultures, and historical events.

Examine how reading memoirs might help students develop empathy by giving them an understanding of people from various origins and viewpoints.

### **"Memoirs and the Healing Power of Writing"**

For writers, memoirs frequently act as a type of therapy to help them deal with trauma, bereavement, or other difficulties in their lives. Examine the potential therapeutic benefits of memoir writing.

Talk about how writing about one's experiences can encourage self-reflection, healing, and personal development for memoirists. Examine how memoirs published by those who have experienced hardship, such as sickness or addiction, can provide assistance and inspiration to others going through similar difficulties.

### **Memoirs and Cultural Representation**

In memoirs, diversity and representation are becoming more and more crucial. Examine how writers of memoir from various origins help to create a more diverse literary environment. Discuss the value of memoirs written by members of underrepresented or marginalized communities in order to highlight their experiences and viewpoints. Examine how memoirs,

especially those that include aspects of language, rituals, and identity, can assist maintain cultural heritage and traditions.

### **Memoirs and Literary Awards**

Examine the honors and recognition bestowed upon notable memoirists, such as major literary honors, and their effects on the genre. Highlight memoirs that have won prestigious literary honors and accolades, such the Pulitzer Prize for Autobiography or Biography.

**Influence on the Genre:** Talk about how critically acclaimed memoirs can influence the genre's development, encouraging future authors and improving the reputation of memoir writing in the literary community.

### **Memoirs and the Search for Authenticity**

The foundation of memoir writing is authenticity. Examine how memoir writers balance the challenges of subjectivity and memory while attempting to accurately communicate the truth of their experiences.

Discuss the difficulties memoirists confront in striking a balance between factual accuracy and emotional honesty, and how this search of authenticity affects their narratives. Examine what readers expect from memoirs in terms of authenticity, and how memoirists address these expectations in their work [9], [10].

### **Memoirs and Legacy**

Memoirs are a good way to leave a lasting impression and impart wisdom, morals, and life lessons to future generations. Discuss how memoirs can help authors pass on their life stories, values, and cultural legacy to their offspring and subsequent generations.

**Lessons for Posterity:** Examine the timeless wisdom and insights that memoirists impart to their readers, leaving a lasting impression.

### **Global Perspectives and Memoirs**

Examine how authors from many nations and cultures contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the human experience and the worldwide reach of memoirs.

**Cross-Cultural Memoirs:** Talk about authors' memoirs that cross cultural boundaries as a result of migration or life events, and how these stories contribute to the development of the world's literature.

Analyse how translation affects accessibility by bringing memoirs from many languages to a global audience and promoting intercultural dialogue.

### **Memoirs and Adaptations**

Numerous memoirs have been turned into films, documentaries, and plays, among other mediums. Investigate the method and effects of such adjustments. Discuss how memoirs are transformed into visual media, how they affect cinematic narrative, and how these transformations can expose the author's tale to a wider audience.

**Enhancing the tale:** Examine how the use of visual and aural elements in memoir adaptations might increase the emotional impact of the original tale.

## CONCLUSION

As a result, the field of memoirs and memoirists serves as evidence of the potency of personal narrative. Through this investigation, we have seen how memory, narrative technique, and the powerful effect of sharing one's experiences interact in a complex way. Memoirs are more than just summaries of what happened; they are also windows into the human experience, providing understanding, wisdom, and a sense of our common humanity.

Memoirists reach out to readers and invite them into the private moments of their lives for a variety of reasons. These authors set out on a brave voyage of self-disclosure, whether for catharsis, to preserve history, or to inspire. They attempt to strike a balance between the emotional depth that colors their storytelling and the reality of their experiences as they traverse the complexities of remembering.

As a result, memoir writers progress from mere writers to empathy and understanding brokers. Memoirs span the chasms of time, culture, and circumstance, enabling readers to journey with the authors through their highs and lows. They encourage empathy and forge ties that go beyond the confines of the page and the text. It's important to remember the responsibility that comes with sharing one's life on the printed page in light of the ethical issues surrounding memoir writing. Memoirists struggle with issues of privacy, permission, and possible effects on interpersonal relationships. The emotional realities at the core of their stories are what they aim to convey, not simply the facts, in the pursuit of authenticity.

In the internet age, memoirs have discovered new channels as they develop further. These narratives now have a wider audience and are more accessible thanks to online blogs and audio recordings. The variety of memoir writers' voices has increased, making the literary environment more diverse. Memoirs are now a dynamic and adaptable form of storytelling that are no longer limited to the written word. We embrace human tenacity, the strength of vulnerability, and the never-ending search for understanding by embracing the memoir world. Memoirs serve as a reminder that every life has a tale to tell and a lesson to impart. Memoirists inspire us to ponder, empathies, and eventually recognize the commonalities that unite us all via their storytelling.

Memoirs remain a source of inspiration and a monument to the unyielding spirit of storytelling in this ever-changing genre. We have the opportunity of seeing these stories as readers, and by doing so, we contribute to a legacy of universal experiences that transcends space and time. Memoirs are more than just stories; they are reflections of our shared humanity, and we find comfort and inspiration inside their pages.

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## CHAPTER 10

### A STUDY ON LITERARY CRITICISM AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Autobiographies are traditionally understood as means of self-redemption or self-validation of the respective autobiographers, but they seem to have become tools of self-assertion in the recent times. The writers of this paper noticed that the underlying patterns in major autobiographies of the respective centuries such as those of Augustine, Rousseau, Virginia Woolf, Han Suyin and other male or female autobiographers commonly evolve around one's ethical choices in response to the vices caused by one's natural will and when facing ethical dilemmas caused by life challenges. This paper examines the abovementioned autobiographies via the Ethical Literary Criticism (ELC). Developed by Professor NieZhenzhao since 2004, ELC is one of the most insightful critiques in expounding the relationship of the self with oneself, self with others, and self with the divine or higher moral order in the context of the literary world.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Autobiographical Studies, Ethical Literacy, Literacy Criticism, Self-Validation, Self-Redemption.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Literary criticism and autobiographical studies are two fields that come together to explore the depths of the written word in the world of literature, where words are the carriers of thought and meaning. These fields provide a prism through which we can examine the significant connections between literature and the human experience and act as windows into the complex and multidimensional world of storytelling. This introduction sets the foundation for a closer examination of the relevance, methodology, and priceless insights they provide into the craft of self-narration by taking the reader on a journey across the rich landscape of literary criticism and autobiographical studies.

As an analytical and interpretative discipline, literary criticism offers a framework for comprehending and analyzing the subtleties of literary works. It includes a wide range of methodologies, each of which offers a different viewpoint on the literary field, from historical and cultural analyses to structural and psychoanalytic interpretations. Through their in-depth analyses, literary critics aim to reveal the works' layered meanings, contexts, and intentions, shedding light on the complex interactions between language and story.

However, autobiographical studies provide a unique lens through which we can explore the tales of people who shift their attention inward and share their own personal histories, viewpoints, and experiences. This field's base is made up of autobiographies, memoirs, and personal tales that let us see inside the most private aspects of authors' lives and the subjective realities they reveal.



Inquiring into the complex fabric of human lives, autobiographical studies delve into issues of identity, self-representation, and the creation of personal narratives [1], [2].

The written word and the human tale meet at the nexus of literary criticism and autobiographical studies. In this context, autobiographical texts are discussed by critics in order to ascertain their literary value, cultural relevance, and the larger themes they shed light on. The skill of self-representation is illuminated by autobiographical studies, which utilize the tools of literary analysis to analyse the form, style, and literary devices used by autobiographers.

This investigation spans centuries and includes a variety of voices and genres; it is not limited to a particular period or society. From Augustine of Hippo's confessional accounts to Virginia Woolf's reflective writings, from Holocaust survivors' testimonies to the modern memoirs that line our bookcases, literary criticism and autobiographical studies offer a dynamic platform for revealing the universal and the peculiar in the human story.

We will examine the fundamental theories of literary criticism and autobiographical studies in the debate that follows, as well as their historical development and the critical frameworks that we use to analyse writings and lives. The deep effects of these disciplines on our comprehension of literature, identity, and the complex interaction between the author, the text, and the reader will also be covered.

We embark on a journey of exploration and discovery where the written word serves as a mirror reflecting not only the many facets of human existence but also the limitless possibilities of interpretation and understanding in honor of the dynamic interaction of literary criticism and autobiographical studies. Together, these fields shed light on the enormous parallels between literature and reality, allowing us to better understand the timeless value of narrative and the infinite complexity of the human condition.

## DISCUSSION

### **Aside from Literary Analysis Paper: Literary Analysis of Autobiographies**

Even advanced undergraduate English majors find it challenging to compose the thesis-driven literary analysis papers that we need in composition and beginning literature classes. Consider this: We urge beginning students to create "original" whatever that means in a classroom of undergraduates arguments about literature while separating their writing from their own interpretations of the text. Of course, that leads to poor student writing that both teachers and students detest to grade. And let's face it, even when required in college classes, the classic literary analysis paper can hardly stray from and really relies upon the derided five-paragraph paper structure.

No student enrolls in literary courses or declares English as their major with the intention of writing lab reports on literature. If we think that literature, reading, and writing have the ability to transform us, then we should create writing assignments that reflect that and allow us to evaluate it. The Society for the Study of American Women Writers conference's pedagogy-focused panels did in fact spotlight professors of American literature who frequently assign creative substitutes for the conventional literary analysis paper. Paper questions that are different from those for literary analysis papers can still encourage in-depth analysis of literature, which is important for the learning objectives of our course and department [3], [4].

In order to help students gain a deeper understanding of literature, the academic genre of autobiographical literary criticism integrates textual analysis, reader response criticism, and personal narrative. It transcends the lines separating "criticism and narrative, experience and expression, literature and life." We give students the chance to be open about the principles, "beliefs [,] and formative life experiences that inform their response" to the interpretation of literature through the use of autobiographical literary criticism assignments. Autobiographical literary criticism assignments combine but do not entirely rely upon personal narrative with the aim of attaining deeper textual analysis and insight into literature. The format, theme, and structure may vary depending on your teaching goals.

### **Autobiographical Literary Criticism in an American Transcendentalism Capstone Course**

I just gave an assignment for my capstone English major's course, "Secrets, Lives, and Legacies of American Transcendentalism," which was an autobiographical literary critique paper. After attending the 2017 NEH Summer Seminar on Transcendentalism, I created the course. The discussion in the course focused on how Mary Moody Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott's philosophy, writing, and creative expression were influenced by their lived experiences. Since the Transcendentalists crossed the lines between "criticism and narrative, experience and expression, literature and life," it seemed especially suitable to examine them through the lens of autobiographical literary critique.

The final project for the capstone course was a 13–15-page autobiographical literary criticism paper. One author and one key text were to be the students' main emphasis, and they were to "critically examine your own experiences in relation to a work of literature." The students were told that although though new assignment favored a more imaginative and individual approach to literary analysis, the papers still required a thesis or "focusing" statement that would discuss what the literature is accomplishing as a piece of art or what it is attempting to achieve in the world. "Your thesis statement, or major claim, isn't about you it is ultimately about the literature," I told the students. However, your own narrative can help others including, if pertinent, your current students or prospective students understand the value of the literature as well as your interpretation of it. The papers were to combine the student's narrative voice with layers of textual analysis, academic viewpoints, and cultural/historical study[5], [6].

The students had completed numerous scaffold assignments throughout the semester, including weekly response papers and a lengthy book review of a literary biography of the person they were writing about, which they could incorporate into their final papers. The writings were discussed and revised over the course of several class periods. The volumes *The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism* (Duke UP) and *Private Voices, Public Lives: Women Speak on the Literary Life* (U North Texas P) contained examples of autobiographical literary criticism. I read my own autobiographical literary critique in class to foster community and trust among the students as well as to provide more examples of structure, organization, and format.

### **Student Reactions to Literary Criticism of Autobiography**

Even the most eager students found it difficult to incorporate personal narrative, despite their excitement about the potential to connect their lives and experiences with the book. We've spent the last 15 years learning not to use the pronoun "I" or express personal thoughts in our papers,

and now you're telling us we have to!" was a typical complaint from the class. Students' comfort levels with sharing private thoughts and discovering genuine ways to relate to the literature varied. I gave them the choice of how and to what extent to incorporate personal narrative in their papers, allowing some to weave it throughout, others to use it to frame the opening and conclusion, and still others to restrict it to just one section. This helped by demonstrating a variety of models and techniques.

One student remarked that following our class trip at a nearby pond our 21st-century, rural Texas equivalent of a Walden experience he originally detested Thoreau but grew to adore Walden. Another student discussed how Margaret Fuller's rigid, patriarchal upbringing and authorial goals contrasted with her battles with her family's sexism and her desire to become a writer. In anpaper, a devout Catholic student compared her spiritual journal to Mary Moody Emerson's Almanacks, which describe her daily practice. A paper on our campus by the president of the student environmental group looked at how Thoreau's life and works can influence environmental advocacy today. And one student used Emerson's *Nature* to frame her account of switching from a business to an English major. Many students were inspired by this task to come up with novel and unexpected ideas about literature, like the one who fervently argued that Louisa May Alcott was the most "transcendental" of all the Transcendentalists despite at times being a fierce critic of it.

In general, the students expressed that they enjoyed writing the autobiographical literary criticism paper and that they were proud of their work. Those who had trouble incorporating personal narrative acknowledged that they typically struggle to produce content in general, regardless of the task. As with other papers of this length, several students struggled to keep their ideas and prose coherent throughout the whole paper. But generally, I was pleased with the amount of sophistication that the autobiographical literary criticism assignment inspired in terms of substance, structure, and writing style. The papers that the students wrote contained literary criticism, textual analysis, and observations on the relevance of literature to their personal and global experiences. What else could we possibly need as American literature instructors?

### **Will I assign it once more? Yes!**

I discovered that these papers were simpler to read and more enjoyable yes, I said enjoyable to grade than conventional literary analysis papers. In the 300-level class I'll be teaching this fall, I intend to give students a shorter autobiographical literary criticism paper assignment. I've come to the realization that if I ever gave students this kind of paper assignment at the introductory level, I would have to spend a lot of time helping them balance personal narrative with textual analysis. It was a success to assign autobiographical literary critique as a substitute for the conventional literary analysis paper, and I urge other authors to try this genre out in their own teaching and writing. Later this spring, I want to host a Google talk about teaching and writing autobiographical literary critique, so I'm developing online tools now. Those who are interested should get in touch with me[7], [8].

### **Literary Analysis and Autobiographical Research: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship**

Although they are separate fields, literary criticism and autobiographical studies have a close and mutually beneficial interaction that deepens our comprehension of both literature and the intricacies of self-narration. In this talk, we examine the relationship between these two

disciplines, looking at how they complement and inform one another while illuminating the complex craft of storytelling.

### **Using a literary analysis to evaluate autobiographical narratives**

Readers have long been enthralled with autobiographical tales such as memoirs, diaries, and personal papers because they offer readers a close-up look into the life of the authors. When analyzing these stories as works of art, literary theory provides a useful framework by emphasizing aspects like narrative voice, character development, and symbolism.

Autobiographical tales frequently use a variety of structural devices, such as chronological recounts and thematic investigations. The impact that these frameworks have on the reader's engagement with and comprehension of the author's life story is examined by literary critics.

**Characterization:** The "self" is an important character in autobiographical studies. Through literary analysis, we may delve into the complex nature of this character and examine its development, conflicts, and responsibilities within the story.

**Metaphor and Symbolism:** Just like in fiction, autobiographies frequently employ metaphor and symbolism to communicate deeper meanings. The symbolic aspects of autobiographical texts are revealed through literary analysis, along with their relevance in forming the story.

### **Identity, Self-Representation, and Cultural Context in Autobiographical Studies**

As a unique discipline, autobiographical studies explores the intricate interactions between self-representation, identity, and the cultural contexts in which autobiographers write. These studies incorporate sociological, psychological, and historical viewpoints while drawing on literary criticism.

**Identity Construction:** Studies of autobiography look at how authors create and renegotiate their identities inside their stories. Selfhood issues, identity markers (race, gender, and sexual orientation), and the intersections of numerous facets of identity are all issues that authors struggle with.

**Self-Representation and Authenticity:** A major concern is examining the veracity of autobiographical accounts. Autobiographers strike a balance between telling the world everything about themselves and maintaining a public character. The degree to which the self is revealed or hidden raises ethical questions.

Autobiographical studies situate autobiographies within their respective cultural and historical settings. This strategy takes into account how societal norms, historical occurrences, and cultural trends affect the content and interpretation of autobiographical narratives.

### **The Function of Literary Analysis in Studies of Autobiography**

Within the field of autobiographical studies, literary criticism is a useful instrument that enriches the understanding of autobiographical narratives in a number of ways, including:

**Craftsmanship:** When studying autobiographies, literary critics bring a keen grasp of literary devices and narrative approaches to the table. They look at how authors mould their life stories using these strategies. Autobiographical narratives frequently include symbols, repeating themes,

and motifs that can be read in several ways. Literary analysis reveals the author's objectives and emotional landscapes by deciphering the deeper meanings concealed in these parts.

**Comparative Analysis:** To place autobiographical texts into larger literary contexts, literary critics rely on their understanding of literary traditions and genres. The linkages and influences between autobiographical narratives and other literary genres are shown by this comparative examination.

### **Ethical issues and the function of autobiographical studies in literary criticism**

The importance of the ethical aspects of autobiographical research and the critical evaluation of personal tales cannot be overstated. Truth, privacy, permission, and representation are topics that academics in both fields debate. Autobiographers frequently wrestle with the conflict between factual accuracy and emotional truth. The discussion about the significance of artistic license and the hazy boundary between memory and imagination is aided by literary criticism.

**Privacy and Consent:** The privacy of people addressed in autobiographical tales is also a matter of ethical concern. Autobiographical studies explore issues of consent and the potential risk of injury or exposure from disclosing someone else's private or sensitive information.

**Authorial Intent and Ethical Criticism:** Ethical criticism in literary studies looks at writers' intentions as well as the content of autobiographical narratives. Critics examine if the author's self-representation and narrative choices are consistent with their ethical values [9], [10].

### **The Future of Autobiographical Studies and Literary Criticism**

The symbiotic relationship between literary criticism and autobiographical studies promises to produce fresh ideas and viewpoints as both fields develop. The potential for both professions have increased with the advent of the digital era and the democratization of narrative.

**Digital Narratives:** New types of autobiographical storytelling have emerged in the digital age, including blogs, vlogs, and social media. The distinctive characteristics and difficulties of digital self-narratives are being investigated by literary critics and autobiographical scholars.

**Global Perspectives:** Autobiographical stories from different cultures and languages help us appreciate the human condition from a more universal perspective. In order to promote cross-cultural conversations and shed light on the rich tapestry of global storytelling, literary criticism and autobiographical studies are essential.

**Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** The interdisciplinary collaborations that emerge from the interdisciplinary convergence of literary criticism and autobiographical studies with disciplines like psychology, sociology, and anthropology offer better understandings of the intricacies of human identity and narrative.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the complex interaction between literary analysis and studies of autobiography reveals a vibrant and profoundly enriching relationship between literature and self-narration. Even though these two fields take different techniques, they combine to show how storytelling, self-expression, and the intricate skill of creating narratives have fundamental linkages. Autobiographical narratives are elevated to the rank of literary works through the perspective of literary criticism, and are then subjected to critical analysis that explores their structural,

thematic, and symbolic components. Readers can connect with these narratives as more than just personal experiences and instead as creative interpretations of the human experience by carefully analyzing autobiographical texts.

In contrast, autobiographical studies offer a distinctive viewpoint by emphasizing identity construction, the moral implications of self-representation, and the social, cultural, and historical settings in which autobiographers write. This area of study goes deeply into the complexities of the individual self, looking at how writers deal with issues of authenticity and self-identity within the context of their stories.

The mutually beneficial interaction between these fields helps us to better grasp literature and the intricacies of self-narration. For the research of autobiographical tales, literary criticism provides vital tools that enable us to examine the narrative patterns, character arcs, and symbols that define these profoundly intimate stories. The author's ability in weaving their life into a literary tapestry is revealed, giving autobiographical works a newfound appreciation for the craft of storytelling.

On the other hand, by highlighting the ethical issues present in autobiographical narratives, autobiographical studies add a distinctive perspective to literary criticism. Truth, privacy, consent, and the author's responsibility are at the forefront of the discussion, which leads to a more thorough analysis of the moral implications of self-narration. This ethical dimension forces literary critics to take into account both the literary merits of a work and the ethical decisions the autobiographer made while narrating the story.

The opportunities provided by the internet era, the diversity of perspectives around the world, and multidisciplinary collaborations are welcomed by both disciplines as they continue to develop. New types of autobiographical tales have emerged in the digital age, broadening the field of self-expression through blogs, vlogs, and social media. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary study of literary criticism and autobiographical studies with other disciplines like psychology, sociology, and anthropology promises to provide new insights into the intricate relationship between identity and narrative.

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## CHAPTER 11

### A BRIEF STUDY ON AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AS CULTURAL DOCUMENTS

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#### ABSTRACT:

In this paper, a regional public institution in the Midwest examines the use of personal history as a qualitative methodology for teaching pre-service teachers. In order to advance its use, the writers specifically criticize the use of the cultural autobiography assignment for undergraduate teacher candidates participating in compulsory multicultural education courses. Life history can reinforce biased attitudes that already exist while also encouraging critical observations on one's place in the intricate web of power connections. The paper offers composite excerpts from 85 undergraduate students' papers as evidence for its claims and advises using digital tools to give this assignment greater significance as the writers look to explore its potential in the twenty-first century.

#### KEYWORDS:

Cultural Autobiography, College Teaching, Faculty Development, Multicultural Education, Student Disposition.

#### INTRODUCTION

Due to its compliance with Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standard 4 of the education preparation standards, multicultural education has become an obligatory course for the majority of pre-service teaching majors in teacher education programmes. Rational Major Framework, which is addressing research that suggests teachers are typically white, middle-class females from the suburbs with little exposure to cultures outside of their own. According to an apprenticeship of observation for teacher candidates that frequently contains preexisting bias, prejudice, and other dispositional characteristics that hinder effective teaching often includes a study of the various elements of culture as well as an explanation of why culture is a powerful aspect of life and its relationships to social justice, equity, and privilege based on elements of culture and power dynamics.

A key goal of the course is to provide students from the majority culture an understanding of their privilege and place in society in comparison to people from other cultures. The foods individuals eat, religious festivals, clothing preferences, and haircuts are some clear and explicit examples of cultural practises. Other cultural practises, however, are implicit, such as values and locus of control. According to the five criteria of how individuals relate to one another, define space, treat time, and learn, high-context and low-culture contexts are different from one another. Due to their less direct verbal and nonverbal communication patterns, Asian, African, Arabic, Central European, and Latin American cultures are typically regarded as high-context civilizations. The continuum of cultural identity, according to Valle, argues that there are three groups: Assimilationists, who have adopted mainstream values and identify as Americans while

ethnic membership is not considered important, are cultural traditionalists who strongly identify with their ethnic community, bicultural who identify with their ethnic background and can function successfully in mainstream society; and cultural traditionalists who strongly identify with their ethnic community.

Examining how cultural identity functions at many levels within the self, community, and greater society, as well as giving frames for thinking about this situation, are some other ways that educators might think about culture. What aspects of our identity command our attention first? Is a question posed by Tatum as a framework for considering what culture considers to be normal? As teacher candidates, we should take into account our interactions within that normalization system as well as identity formation as a lifelong process that leads to domination and subordination in society.

Similar to this, Kirk and Okanzawa-Rey present a look that asks candidates to rank and order the level of connection to a particular part of our identity, looking at those subordinate and dominant identities within us as they exist at the Micro, Meso, and Macro levels of our existence in society, and how these situations are maintained by stereotypes, bias, prejudice, and discrimination at the various levels. According to Patricia Hill Collins, the ego is centered inside a Matrix of Domination. This perspective aims to replace the either/or dichotomy with a both/and perspective. This can also be investigated in the model proposed by Jones and McEwen, allowing for a more sophisticated perspective of self-identity[1], [2].

## DISCUSSION

### **Personal Introspection and Self-Engagement: Cultural Autobiography as Life History**

The cultural autobiography assignment, while a potent instrument for self-reflection on one's life history, continues to reinforce bias and widely held beliefs about privilege and society rather than challenging the prevailing taught narratives of a candidate's life. It is evident from a review of a recent collection of these autobiographies that the assignment is valuable but needs some updating to be relevant in the twenty-first century. With the help of digital tools, teacher candidates can complete a cultural autobiographical assignment that goes beyond writing a paper. They can use multiple media, internet research, and a more robust and powerful expression of their lives in a sociopolitical context to challenge prevailing narratives.

It is designed to serve as a means for each pre-service secondary teaching candidate to engage their multicultural identities in connection to the larger social structure by serving as a mandatory artefact in the university's Introduction to Multicultural Education course. As a summative evaluation of their reflective learning, students submit this paper at the end of the semester after spending the entire semester writing it.

Most of the students at this regional public institution attend schools within a 90-mile radius of campus because it is situated in a rural area. The region is also a part of the "rust belt," a region of the state where many working-class families have lost an increasing number of jobs as factory and heavy manufacturing jobs associated with the automobile industry vanished. It is also known as a border state, and historically, the Ku Klux Klan has had a large presence there along with a long history of conservatism in politics. Additionally, because of its geographical proximity to the Bible Belt, students there are frequently conservative Christians. Eighty percent of all students are eligible for financial aid, and more than 30% of students are the first in their family

to attend college (Midwestern University Alumni Magazine). The cultural autobiography is intended to give students the opportunity to examine their lived experiences through the lens provided by the course, while the introductory multicultural course plays an important role in providing a safe learning and teaching environment for pre-service teachers to explore underlying assumptions and biases[3], [4].

### **Academic Context**

By examining historical and modern developments as well as prior experiences in American schools, the course itself examines the meanings and implications of multicultural education. It gives teacher candidates a way to reflect on their whiteness and privilege and understand the experiences they have had within a critique of that whiteness and privilege. It studies the connections between pedagogies and student cultures, the intellectual and sociopolitical histories of multicultural education, and the potential for changing education and society through culturally relevant approaches. The course serves as a prerequisite for admission to the teacher education program, and passing it with at least a C and a favorable disposition is necessary. The three criteria that make up the disposition evaluation are dedication to academic proficiency, interaction with others and ideas, and demonstration of suitable attitudes and behaviors connected to professional educators.

The cultural autobiography, which has its own assessment criteria, is one of the three competences that are evaluated throughout the entire course. The Cultural Autobiography (CA), which serves as the course's final assignment, is viewed as a beneficial instrument for pre-service teachers to analyse the world and situate themselves within it. This provides them with the opportunity to build examination energy. They are given the opportunity to write about the various multicultural concepts covered in the course, including equity and social justice, as well as the areas of the Disposition assessment. This may help students navigate a path beyond their learned experience to new conceptions. In order to question the existing quo, the CA is also especially intended and assigned for students to participate in a reflective focus on their life history and explore their understandings of education and society as presented via tales.

In order to break out from an individualistic view of American life and any myths they may buy into, such the myth of the bootstrap, the assignment is created with the purpose of having them explore the role of societal impact on their understandings, choices, and lives. The assignment seeks to normalize silenced voices as part of the wider purpose of questioning the status quo, promote the idea of oneself as a multicultural being, and develop critical analysis of one's own privileges and disadvantages, as stated below.

### **Normalize the sounds of silence**

The CA assignment aims to push teacher candidates to normalize their own voices while normalizing the experiences of others. Feminists (Freeman, 2002; Thomas, 2000; Reason, 1982) who aimed to normalize and affirm the voices of women who had been silenced in a sexist, male-dominated society have influenced this perspective. This method challenges aspiring teachers to consider whether what they perceive to be neutral, objective, or "normal" is actually a biased and subjective perspective.

Five knowledge that attempts to discredit the experiences and viewpoints of women and other members of the minority. In order to combat this, validating the silenced voices through the CA

begins with a procedure that pays attention to how one understands how things happened rather than what actually occurred, critically examining the times in their lives when they first encountered or learned about specific concepts like gender or race. For instance, according to Florio-Ruane and Williams (2008), "remembering the paths our foremothers have taken to teaching involves not only recalling previously known facts but also crafting narratives on the basis of learned information". To put it another way, CA can provide the teacher candidates a voice by giving them the chance to consider their "reasons and imaginations" for creating and recreating their own pasts. This should put the teacher candidates in a position where they can speak up for their own students, many of whom have been historically and still are silenced.

According to Tierney (1998), "I once wrote that the task of life history and personal narrative is not merely to develop a catalogue of silenced lives, as if the creation of a catalogue is sufficient. Instead, we undertake such research to challenge the oppressive structures that create the conditions for silencing".

### **Diversity in Existence**

In teacher education programmes, creating and reconstructing life histories using the CA can help students better understand themselves and others as cultural beings. The purpose of cultural autobiography as a teaching tool, for instance, according to Chang (1999), is "to demand students to unravel their cultural assumptions critically. She discovered that her students frequently identified as a-cultural despite linking culture with minorities and foreigners in her intercultural education programmes.

For these pupils, she discovered that the CA project effectively pushed the teacher candidates to perceive the students not as alien but as a part of the same social fabric as themselves by challenging them to comprehend how their own cultures are constructed as multicultural. To emphasize this point, Clendenin (2013) writes, "I live in cultural temporal stories, stories that have shaped each of our cultures, whether they be the narratives shaped by cultural plotlines of respect, cultural plotlines of the connections among all living things, or cultural plotlines of independence and self-reliance". Beyond cultural competence regarding other cultures, it could promote real empathy and respect in multicultural education classes[5], [6].

As they consider their own personal experiences with key facets of how their identity has provided advantage or necessitated subjugation, active participants in the power relations of society and schools are also reflecting on these relationships. According to Ramsey, this viewpoint has its roots in critical multiculturalism, which "focuses on issues of power and domination; identifies sources of race, class, and gender inequities; and analyses privileges all with a goal of social justice".

In their individual CA projects, teacher candidates are urged to highlight their own privileges and disadvantages based on their own class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientations as they assert their voices and position themselves as multicultural humans.

The task is to position themselves as educators against the dynamics that marginalize our less advantaged children by considering how these circumstances affected their own school experiences. By meaningfully "creating and recreating of meanings and values" of their own lives towards social justice as educators, the CA assignment effectively attempts to build what Apple (1992) terms their own critical literacy.

### **Critical Examination of Privilege**

The stated goal of the CA is for the student to construct a cogent narrative of his or her/their socialization that explores how perceptions of differences related to race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, language, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other social categories were formed and developed. This narrative will ultimately influence the student's own pedagogical efforts in the classroom. Since teachers serve as the curriculum gatekeepers for the classroom, their life experiences have a significant impact on how they engage in the difficult dialogue about material and students in the classroom. What, how, and whom teachers educate depends on how teacher candidates think and what they know and comprehend. The CA questions their presumptions and requires students to first describe the sociocultural context of their own personal development in order to help them expand beyond their constrained lived experience and development through interaction with scholarly literature, other texts, and fieldwork.

### **Evaluation of Life History**

The CA is given as part of a mandatory course that is scaffolded by predetermined expectations and has a foundation syllabus that is focused on critical intercultural education. Despite being a significant assessment in the teacher education programme, it is still taught by a changing roster of professors and instructors. The course may go differently depending on each educator's perspective, but the CA must still be submitted as a final project. This offers variety in the ideas and issues that the teacher candidates concentrate on as they engage with the information that, while similar, is presented in several contextual milieus.

A same rubric that is broken down into four categories Diversity, Connection, Analysis, and Communication is used to grade the CA in all course parts. The "Diversity" category examines a person's capacity to take into account socio-cultural nuances on issues of variety, social structure, origins of inequality, and relative advantage of dominating groups. The "Connection" assessment measures a student's capacity to relate prior knowledge and beliefs to the course material. "Analysis" calls for a student to exhibit their capacity for observation, analysis, reflection, and empathy. Last but not least, "Communication" assesses a candidate's proficiency in teacher-appropriate grammar and written organization[7], [8].

### **Practises of Cultural Autobiography**

The results of the assignment are unpredictable and variable, frequently falling short of the target mark for the course and assignment, according to an examination of 85 CAs given by students. They engage in discussions of race without using racial terms, allowing teacher candidates to pivot and avoid the need to criticise their own privilege and inequity. White students frequently report that they have no culture beyond recalling an ethnic dish that an Italian grandmother may have prepared.

### **Discussion, Relationships, and Support**

With the help of digital tools, the CA becomes more of a dialogue than a one-time performance, allowing for a more fluid give and take. Students who have trouble expressing themselves verbally may find it simpler and more natural to create a tale that has to be conveyed. With the conversational critique and growth built into the process, professors may more readily address any gaps or recommend additional readings, giving examples as teacher candidates build their



work. As a result, the assignment becomes just as much a formative assessment as a summative one. A multimodal interactive existence exists in Web 2.0 and 3.0.

Teacher candidates are active producers who create content that is not only meant to be consumed but also interacted with, modified, and evolved. Still Life History is still a narrative, but the changing media might make it seem more like a discussion. Providing pupils with the necessary liminal area, where they can feel comfortable sharing and conversing. As each teacher candidate can assess the work of others, this can also enable peer feedback and critique in a secure setting. In this way, the assignment can be extended and integrated with the classroom as an active place for learning and development. Digital resources give teacher candidates the possibility to visually represent the images they are urged to paint for examination when combined with the four turns of Currere, producing a vibrant image for investigation and deconstruction possibly even through a video paper. As an alternative, students could record audio podcasts that illustrate each turn and include interviews with people who have strong opinions about the issue as well as institutional representatives. After exploring the regressive turn, they could then move on to the progressive turn and wax poetic about the kind of classroom and teacher they want to be[9], [10].

## CONCLUSION

As cultural artefacts, autobiographies serve as essential archives of human experience and provide priceless insights on the historical, social, and cultural contexts from which they emerge. We travel the wider landscapes of the authors' eras as well as their own journeys through the pages of these personal novels. The value of autobiographies as cultural artefacts, their influence on molding collective memory, and their ongoing importance for comprehending the complex social fabric are all encapsulated in one conclusion. Autobiographies act as windows into the past, giving us access to people's actual experiences throughout time and space. These accounts, which are frequently firmly established in particular cultural contexts, provide a glimpse into the traditions, rituals, and societal norms that have influenced the authors' life. Readers obtain a thorough grasp of the customs, norms, and difficulties that prevailed in many times and places through their recollections.

Autobiographies also have the ability to alter and refute cultural narratives. By presenting many viewpoints and emphasizing voices from the margins, they offer a challenge to the historical narratives that have prevailed. Autobiographies show the wide range of reactions to societal shifts, from times of resistance to instances of adaptation and transformation, by emphasizing human experiences within larger cultural trends. Autobiographies, as cultural records, are essential for maintaining and passing down cultural legacy. They serve as safekeeping facilities for oral histories, kinship customs, and indigenous knowledge, protecting them from the corrosive effects of time. Generations can reconnect with their roots through these stories, feeling a strong sense of continuity and kinship.

Autobiographies also play a crucial role in the rapprochement and healing of cultures. Autobiographies are tools for empowerment and catharsis for marginalized populations, especially those who have experienced historical trauma and injustice. They give people a place to establish their identities, recover their stories, and confront the dominant narratives that may have marginalized or maligned them. Autobiographies are still changing in the modern world, showing how our globalized society is becoming more diverse and interconnected. They represent a wide range of voices from various cultures, languages, and life experiences. Readers

are exposed to a diverse range of human experiences through autobiographies, bridging geographical divides and promoting empathy and understanding across cultures. Autobiographies do have their limitations, just like any other type of historical or cultural documentation, it is vital to remember that. They are inevitably subjective and formed by the authors' viewpoints, prejudices, and memories. We must read these works critically as readers and acknowledge that they give a single perspective within a greater tapestry of experiences.

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## CHAPTER 12

### CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

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#### ABSTRACT:

In order to convey a comprehensive grasp of autobiography in theory and practice, this article surveys Western tradition autobiography theory and writing. It also aims to further the field of autobiography studies by bringing together a diversity of autobiographical writings and methodologies. It explores the historical, terminological, and critical approaches to autobiography. The five main sections cover the following topics: the evolution of autobiographical literature; the emergence of autobiography theorizing; generic borders and intersections; hybrid genres; and current trends. In terms of genre and critical inquiry, the paper explores the future of both autobiography and life-writing and highlights current theoretical developments in autobiography studies.

#### KEYWORDS:

Autobiography, Contemporary Trends, Genre, Portrayal Self, Life Writing.

#### INTRODUCTION

The autobiographical writing scene has changed dramatically in recent years, mirroring how narrative has evolved in our modern society. The ways that people create and share their life narratives have changed as we traverse the complexity of the 21st century. They have adapted to the digital era, diversified to include a wide range of voices, and increasingly embraced cutting-edge modes of self-expression. This introduction lays the groundwork for an investigation of current autobiographical writing trends, stressing the versatile and dynamic nature of this genre.

Autobiographical literature, which is typically defined by a first-person account of the author's life, has advanced well beyond its preconceived limitations. The distinctions between autobiography, memoir, personal papers, and other types of self-narration have become hazier in the age of digital storytelling, creating a complex tapestry of narrative that defies classification. There are a number of important changes in the autobiographical writing scene today that both test and deepen our knowledge of this form.

#### Online biographies and digital autobiographies

The digital presence of contemporary autobiographical writing is one of its defining traits. The development of the internet and social media platforms has democratized self-expression and given people a platform to tell their tales to the world. In the form of blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and social media narratives, digital autobiographies enable in-the-moment self-presentation and the development of global personal archives.

### **Marginalized Identities and Diverse Voices**

Diverse voices and marginalized identities are heavily emphasized in contemporary autobiographical literature. A more diverse literary landscape is a result of authors from marginalized communities sharing their experiences and viewpoints more frequently. These stories illuminate overlapping identities, dispelling myths and providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the human condition [1], [2].

### **Blurred Boundaries and Hybrid Forms**

Autobiography, fiction, and creative nonfiction are no longer clearly separated from one another. Authors today play around with hybrid formats that combine parts of narrative, poetry, and visual art. These ambiguous boundaries between genres encourage readers to interact with stories that transcend conventional classification, providing a new and creative way to express one's autobiography.

### **Activism on social and political issues**

In the modern period, action on social and political issues is frequently incorporated into autobiographical writing. In order to raise awareness of important problems including racial injustice, LGBTQ+ rights, mental health, and environmental concerns, authors use their own experiences as advocacy tools. When used as a tool for social change, autobiographical writing fosters empathy and motivates action.

### **International stories and cross-cultural encounters**

Autobiographical writing crosses international boundaries as the globe grows increasingly connected. Contemporary autobiographers frequently discuss their multicultural and transnational experiences while navigating the difficulties of diaspora, migration, and identity. These stories promote empathy and cross-cultural understanding by providing a worldwide view of the state of humanity.

### **The development of technology and self-representation**

Technology advancements, such as the widespread use of smartphones and multimedia tools, have given people the ability to chronicle their life in a variety of mediums. The reader experience in autobiographical writing is now deeper and more immersive thanks to the incorporation of visual components, audio recordings, and interactive storytelling.

### **Personal development and mental health**

Mental health, personal development, and resilience are major topics in many contemporary autobiographical accounts.

Authors openly discuss their battles with addiction, trauma, mental health issues, and recovery in order to offer readers who are on similar journeys comfort and inspiration. In the conversation that follows, we'll go further into these modern autobiographical writing patterns and examine how they affect self-expression, identity, and how storytelling is changing in the digital age. We will also look at some prominent cases and the significant effects that these narratives have had on readers and society at large.

## DISCUSSION

### **Autobiography Writing and Theory Trends**

In the Western humanities, autobiographical works have long stood between history and literature, with burgeoning critical discussions of identity, self-expression, and self-representation. This paper provides a survey of autobiography theory and writing in the Western canon, integrating historical and critical viewpoints while emphasizing the most recent advances in autobiography theorizing. The study clarifies the subgenres that deviate from traditional autobiography while highlighting the general distinctions and connections among autobiography, biography, and fiction. It also responds to inquiries regarding the historical, terminological, and critical approaches to autobiography. As a result, it is separated into five major portions. The first portion discusses the emergence and progression of autobiographical writing in the canon of European literature. Portion two then discusses the emergence of autobiography theorizing. I explore autobiography in connection to other closely related genres and subgenres including memoir, diaries, and letters as well as current changes of autobiography to life-writing in the third section to deal with terminology and general bounds. I then address the autobiographical novel and auto fiction, two hybrid forms that combine elements of both autobiography and fiction. With a focus on feminist autobiography, postcolonial autobiography, and Arab autobiography, I outline the most significant contemporary developments in autobiographical writing and theorizing in the last section. By fusing historical and critical perspectives, the paper aims to advance the field of autobiography studies (the critical investigation of autobiographical cross-genre modes of expression and theorizing). It does this by presenting a broad understanding of autobiography in theory and practice[3], [4].

### **How Autobiographical Writing Has Changed**

The earliest autobiographical writings can be found on tablets and texts from the Greek and Roman eras as well as personal recollections inscribed on the walls of ancient Egyptian temples. The autobiography theory takes into The Augustine's Confessions an early example of the literary genre of autobiography. Roy Pascal considers St. Augustine's Confessions to be the most important complete autobiography written in mediaeval Europe because it represents a significant advancement in personal writing that is influenced by the Christian tradition of confession and a person's spiritual journey. Similar to Linda Anderson, who acknowledges St. Augustine's Confessions' status as a pioneering work, Anderson views the book's primary contribution as a model of autobiographical writing that is praised for its literary form and spiritual content rather than its potential role as a mode of self-exploration and personal historiography.

Many mediaeval autobiographical books, particularly those written by women, have been eclipsed by St. Augustine's Confessions, according to feminist autobiography scholars. Estelle Jelinek creates a history of women's autobiography in her book *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography* (1986), highlighting the contributions made by women to autobiographical writing throughout history and giving voice to their experiences. She claims that an Egyptian princess from ancient Egypt who left prayers etched on the walls of her burial chamber<sup>5</sup> is the first woman to speak in her own voice. Similar voices can be found in the writings of women who expressed their spirituality in prose and verse during the early centuries of Christianity in Europe, including Dame Juliana of Norwich<sup>6</sup> who lived in the second half of the 14th century

and wrote *The Revelations of Divine Love*. This text describes Christ's suffering while making specific allusions to the author's own spiritual journey.

The Book of Margery Kempe (1436–1438) contains details about the author's personal life, marriage, and lavish lifestyle, which she left behind after having a spiritual epiphany, but it is this book that has the more pronounced voice. She goes beyond strictly autobiography and into travel writing by describing her trips to Spain, Germany, Italy, and the holy places in Jerusalem and Rome. Jelinek's examination of the texts of the two ladies highlights the presence of a tradition of women's autobiographical writing, the first mediaeval works serving as models for women's autobiography throughout the centuries up until the 20th century, and thematic and political analysis of this literary history. Cultural advancements and theoretical contributions have influenced autobiography writing and theorising during the last few decades. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify the following theoretical change from autobiography to life-writing in their collection of their own research in autobiography studies from the 1990s:

It is thus intriguing that the term "autobiographical genre" has been expanded to serve as more of an umbrella term for a variety of autobiographical subgenres, including traditional autobiography, memoir, letters, and diaries; as well as extending beyond the realm of prose to include autobiographical verse, autobiographical fiction, and non-fictional prose, such as the autobiographical paper, prison literature, among many others; and finally, crossing over to other forms in the arts, such as a The critical approaches that have influenced how autobiographies are read and categorized in terms of postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism, immigrant narratives, slave narratives, and even in terms of regional categories like Arab or Arab women's autobiography represent another aspect of autobiographical writing. With the growth of online personal writing, particularly in the form of Facebook statuses and probably more crucially, personal blogs, another shift has taken place, mainly in the last ten years. Thus, interdisciplinary has contributed to the idea of autobiography by enlarging its application to all types of life-writing and by adopting the word "life narratives" as a catch-all term that extends beyond the literary and historical confines of autobiography into the social sciences[5], [6].

### **Autobiography Theory's Development**

Felicity Nussbaum claims that the term "autobiography" as a genre first appeared in the late 18th century. Prior to that, the phrase "self-biography" was in use. James Goodwin distinguishes autobiography from biography and traces the beginnings of the genre to personal works like confessions, apologies, and memoirs in European prose. He claims that the Socrates' Apology from the 4th century B.C. is one of the earliest examples of the genre, though it was also popularized by *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (ca. 4th–5th century) and *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila* by herself (16th century), with *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* (ca. To further distinguish these subgenres from confessions, memoirs, and autobiographies written in retrospect at a period in the present reflecting on the past, Goodwin further distinguishes them from diaries and letters, which are characterized by the immediacy of experience. According to Goodwin, the 18th century backdrop, which was characterized by "the American and French revolutions, which greatly advanced the cultural and political importance of the common individual," is also responsible for the rise in interest in autobiography.

However, the origins of autobiography theorising can be traced to Georg Misch's two-volume book *History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, which was first published in German in 1907 and then made its English debut in 1950. In this book, Misch not only chronicles the history of



autobiography in ancient literature but also traces its influence on the evolution of the genre. After World War II, and notably from the 1950s onward, the definition of autobiography in connection to literature and history received a great deal of critical attention. Robert Sayre established links between autobiography and fiction through their shared reliance on the literary elements of themes, characters, structure, narrative technique, setting, and style, while Wayne Shumaker distinguished autobiography from biography by asserting its literary nature. William Spengemann establishes autobiography as a literary genre with a focus on the roles of memory, reflection, and imagination in relation to the use of language, creation of meaning, and stylistic expression. This shift in reading autobiography as a literary rather than historical text is consolidated by Spengemann. And the poetic, where the poetic side is expressed through the process of reflection and invention contained in allegorical language<sup>16</sup> and the historical manifests itself in the personal experience.

By asserting the difference between autobiographical writing and other prose-writing, Roy Pascal provides a more critical reading of autobiographical writings. He argues that autobiographies, memoirs, and recollections represent "true autobiography," which is characterized by a mature vision, reflective perspective, and sophisticated structure, while relegating diaries and letters to a supporting role<sup>17</sup>. However, he adds another characteristic of autobiographies (different from subgenres like diaries or letters) based on the emphasis on the ego in autobiographies, whereas memoirs position the individual in an intricately detailed socio-historical and political context<sup>18</sup>. Pascal further differentiates between biography and autobiography<sup>19</sup>, stating that the former uses true occurrences to tell its story while the latter depends on the author's memory. He goes on to define autobiography as a structured account of a life or a period in a person's personal life that is expressed, dividing it into various stages and experiences, while also making reflective and interpretive connections between the self and the world, relying on a process of selection and omission of events in a narrative style. James Olney emphasizes the formal literary elements and storytelling strategies of autobiography rather than paying attention to its historical content [7], [8].

The French critic Philippe Lejeune is credited with developing the most influential understanding of autobiography in Western literary theory. In his 1975 book *On Autobiography*, which was later translated into English in 1989, Lejeune defines autobiography as a retrospective narrative by a person about his or her life. The four categories of language, subject matter, author, and narrator serve as the foundation for his definition. He claims that an autobiography is a prose narrative about a person's life that is written from a "retrospective point of view" and in which the author, narrator, and protagonist are all the same person. The relationship between the author's identity and other more general yet nonetheless crucial features of the autobiography.

Narrator, and protagonist, wherein the author of the text is the same as the "I" narrator of the text, the central character (in literary terms), and the protagonist; thus offering what Lejeune has termed as "the autobiographical pact," where the identity of the author/narrator, and protagonist is asserted and not left to interpretation. The text is classified as an autobiographical novel rather than an autobiography in the strict sense due to the author, narrator, and protagonist's similarities. The fundamental element of autobiography is not the similarity of the story to real life but rather the identity of the name (as a genuine person). Since the 1990s, when it gained an interdisciplinary character in relation to diverse schools of literary theory like post-structuralism, deconstruction, and feminism, autobiography theory has undergone significant development.

At this point, even the terminology employed to denote the appropriate genres began to question, problematize, and muddy the distinct generic and ontological borderlines. For instance, Liz Stanley argues that biography and autobiography are two overlapping genres since they both offer a rewrite of the past through individual and collective memory, which is exposed to a process of selection and omission, in her seminal book *The Auto/Biographical I* (1992). According to Stanley, autobiographies and biographies include parts of realism and fantasy<sup>25</sup>. Leigh Gilmore's work on self-representation as a process of creating meaning and generating knowledge<sup>26</sup> and Julia Swindles' attention to autobiography as a site of individual awareness and struggle between the individual and society, in which the autobiography plays a key role, are two examples of how the cultural turn in literary studies added a further dimension to its growing concern with identity politics and discourse analysis.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's ongoing collaboration since the 1990s has demonstrated the relationship between postmodernism and autobiography, which has undermined conventional ideas of a monolithic self that can be expressed in a single set narrative.

The changes in autobiographical writing during the past century, from a classic autobiography's assertion of personal achievement to a site of action, negotiation, and resistance, are marked by the theory of autobiography. The act of actively participating in one's self-representation through the writing of an autobiography involves deliberate selection, omission, expression, and construction. In this way, current autobiography theory critically examines both the reasons for and the means by which silence and exclusion. Autobiography has acquired a political dimension where self-representation becomes an act of resistance against cultural and gender stereotypes and a weapon of empowerment thanks to the contributions of postcolonial and feminist critics.

### **Generic Boundaries and Intersections in Autobiography**

James Goodwin defines the genre of autobiography as deriving from the name itself with its three components: auto (the self), bio (life), and graphy (writing). This definition is found in his historical study of autobiographical literature, *Autobiography: The Self-Made Text* (1993). Here, autobiography is separated from biography, which is a written account of a person other than the author. These two phrases are self-explanatory in this sense because, for instance, any writing about one's life is considered an autobiography. The French critic Philippe Lejeune is credited with giving the most significant definition of autobiography in Western literary theory: "[r]etrospective 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." The terms "retrospective," "real," "own," "individual," and "personality" in this definition distinguish autobiography from other narratives like memoirs, biographies, autobiographical novels, and diaries based on the writer's temporal position in relation to the narrated events as well as the location of the self in relation to the socio-cultural and political context. Since it has long been assumed that all first-person referential writing falls under the umbrella of autobiography, the term has theoretically evolved into autobiography theory and autobiography studies, under which all types of self- and life-narratives have been conceptualized and theorized<sup>[9]</sup>, <sup>[10]</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper provides an overview of both literary theory and autobiography. It focuses on the emergence and growth of autobiography while also illuminating some of its most significant trends. As much as it tries to specify the boundaries of autobiography and other auto/biographical (sub) genres, it ultimately reveals how flexible and frequently ambiguous those boundaries are.

This has led to challenges to the inclusivity of autobiography. The paper also examines the transition from autobiography to life-writing and the various forms of personal narratives found both inside and outside of the humanities. It is important to remember that autobiography arose at the intersections of the social sciences and the humanities, on multidisciplinary foundations. A theoretical movement from oscillating between history and literature to forays into sociology, psychology, technology, and the media is reflected in the shift from autobiography to life-narrative. This study explores autobiography as a genre and theory that has been incredibly vibrant throughout the ages and in constant flux with ebbs and flows, rather than detailing the full life story of autobiography writing and theorising. The contemporary trends in particular open up new creative avenues for life narratives while also broadening the scope of theoretical and critical investigation, leaving more questions than answers concerning the future of autobiography.

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