

# Types and Features in Autobiography Writing



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## ABSTRACT

Autobiography writing in English in India has its own style and features which is sometimes stated to be imitation of the West form and style. The types of autobiography in English have been tried to summarize here with the key features which elevates the the aroma of reading to the readers. The writer should give his own relistic records without any biasness and without concealing the facts which increases the interest of the reader. Feature must include the writer's self-introspection and presentation of contemporary issues in his autobiography. This paper is meant for a lucid understanding of the autobiography, memoir, paersonal essay and key features of a pioneer autobiography.

**Keywords :** Memoir, Enormous, Self-Revelation, Genre, Embraces, Milieu, Fictitious, Ornamental, Artistic, Mangnitude

## Styles in Autobiography Writing

The style of an autobiography is the type of narration written by the writer about his own life. The nature of autobiography writing serves various purposes and its main purpose depends on the style of autobiography writing. There are many forms and ways of autobiography writing. In this paper four types of autobiography writing are focused.

### Autobiography:

An autobiography is the longest and the fullest story of a person written by him for himself. One can write it for one's personal reason and use with the intention of structure and carry on one's memories. It reveals the interesting and real facts of life which are read by others. If anyoneis sure that his life will be an interesting theme to read about, he may create an autobiography for readers.

### Memoir:

When a writer thinks that he needs not to write about his entire life in a systematic documentation because of not worth attention, the best way is to write a memoir. A memoir focuses on one special event, period, place, incident or relationship which might have influenced the personality of the writer to a great extent. The memoir should not be only list of the facts but it should be a reflection of the inner world of the writer which influences a lot to the readers.

### Personal Essay

Personal essay is an enormously touching and cherished type of writing by the writer. The writer shares his personal experiences with the readers in a well meticulous style. The audience gets an opportunity to see the event or person that has been

and understand the feelings of the writer. Any personal essay has two main characteristics: the description of a particular situation and how it has influenced view and life of the writer. Generally, the personal essay is the shortest narration of autobiographical writing.

### **Autobiographical essay for college**

The aim of such an essay is very clear and obvious. It is used to write and present for the convenience of getting admission in a college so that one can express about him completely. One should not be confused at all between the autobiographical essays and resume as both have different characteristics. In autobiographical essays, there is world limit and the writer need to present the salient things. The essay is aimed at portraying the personality of the writer about his personal life rather as a professional. An example of a full autobiography is Elia Kazan's "A Life." A famous memoir is "New York Days" by Willie Morris, in which the author focuses on his time in New York. Diane Ackerman has written one of the most popular personal essays, "A Natural History of the Senses."

### **Autobiographical Features:**

There are many elements in autobiography writing. Autobiography forms depend on the mode and mood of the writer. These aspects can be classified into introspection, self-revelation, self concealment and subjectivity while the center of any autobiography is life of the writer. Autobiography, as the very term suggests is a lifestory of a person written by the person himself. It includes all the events of a person's life right from his childhood till the period of his writing about himself. These events focus on the internal and external life of the person. The writer himself gives report of his own life. The basic necessity of writing about one's life arises from the sense of individuality.

### **Self-Centeredness**

Autobiography is a never-ending conversation with the self. All the other incidents, persons, nation, etc. should be narrated with focus to the author's self. The self of the author remains at the center. Sometimes when an autobiography is written by a social or political writer, he panders to himself in narrating about other persons, individuals and events so much so that his self is completely deviated. The writer should maintain a balance in giving account of other events and his own self. The self-centeredness of autobiography should be evident in the language, narrative and the structure of the work.

### **Realistic Record:**

The records recorded in the documentation by the writer should always be realistic. Literature grows out of life in different forms but the truth of literature is imaginative. Facts of life are dissolved in imagination and reshaped by literature. Facts are proposed and elevated in a distinct shape by getting the touch of the writer. Autobiography is a narration of the writer's realistic life, lived in a specific time and place. Autobiography deals with both personal and public lives of the people. It deals with the realities of life. It is a search of self through the archives of history, an act which embodies the self where the 'real' or 'actual' self is replaced "by a new self-made object. It poses life through the imaginative transformation and presentation of facts where the treatment of fact is very much different from others. An autobiography is beyond the limits of time-span where a perfect systematic chronology is not expected from him. For example, Amrita Pritam's autobiography 'The Revenue Stamp' starts with chronological description of her childhood while later on she is not able to carry on the same. However, readers appreciate her style and methods of narration.

### **Neutrality**

Autobiography is different from other literary genre in its way of narration and techniques of writing. A

writer has to be very careful here because he is narrating his own life story and he needs to keep a balance between his own praise and narration of other persons, events and places. In such a scenario, there is a huge chance by the writer to look like an egotistic writer. He needs to balance very well about the positive and negative elaboration during his writing and should be neutral while describing the events and story of his life. The great critic Erick Link later remarks in his autobiography *The Man on My Back*, that his aim is "...to reduce my ego to a little 'I' with whom I could live and never notice it."

### **Self-Introspection**

Man has always been glorified as the highest creature in the globe by our Puranas, Granthas and epics. The Upanishads preached to know the 'self' about man that everyone should look into his inner-self and try to visualize about him or her. A writer does not reveal only things, events and factual data about his life but also reveals his mental and religious reality as well. Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography honestly analyses Gandhi as a man, leader and seeker of truth. It is a vital record of his self-search and self-knowledge. He speaks all the truth of smoking and non-vegetarian habits and how his mother influenced his thoughts during his studies in Britain. The best self-introspection narration may be seen in the autobiography of Gandhi ji.

### **Contemporariness**

The features of an autobiography do not intake only one type of events or incidents, it embraces both internal and external things. It includes the entire society when it is written by the author and the events taking place in and around. Autobiography is a continuous combination of self and an integral part of the society which should be exhibited without separation in between them. The writing is always influenced with the race, milieu and moment of the writer. During the narration of the self, a writer always relates his experience with the contemporary

time and progression because without these elements the writer cannot write the originality of an autobiography. Indian writing is different from the West writing where focus has been given to the individualistic profile. Gandhi's autobiography 'My Experiments with Truth' is a finer example of this. Indian writers are much more influenced with contemporary social, religious, economic and political condition of the nation.

### **Conflict**

Conflict is one of the central figures in literary world. Conflict in autobiography is different as in fictitious literature as it is here at the central position rather placed at imaginative assumption as in fictitious literature. The writer himself acts as an actor and spectator. All the physical, mental, social, religious, political and moral conflicts are shown with the writer in autobiography. Nehru has written his autobiography in leisure time during the period in jail. He has written his views of Russia visit, his foresightedness for India's future and described his dreams about India through his work. His conflicts were mental for the betterment of the country which he has expressed in his autobiography. Therefore, autobiography reflects dreams and desires along with conflicts.

### **Memory**

The autobiographical work is written for the self and not for the external world however, forces of external world are taken into account because they cannot be avoided for describing about the self-hood. Creative and sustainable memory plays an important role for the writer as he has to recollect all the events well in systematic way and has to present in his work. An autobiography holds the past facts and put them in present. Through the constructive and powerful memory writer is able to recollect his farther past events and documents those feelings in the present scenario. Tolstoy was one of the strong memory writer who recollected his bath in the tub and was

able to describe the smell he used to feel in his childhood.

### Truth

Autobiography is not a fictitious tale, it is a real life history and real events happened in the past of the writer. Hence, truth is the core of an autobiography. Gandhi Ji has confessed in his autobiography that in order to find the truth he is ready to sacrifice his life. Truth expressed by an autobiographer may be an ornamental truth as absolute truth may be deviated in the writing because main goal of an autobiographer is to realize and recreate the self. The autobiographical work is a re-composition and reconstruction of writer's life and is collected from the past life.

### Style

Style is vital aspect of writing which provide artistic touch to an autobiography. A writer expresses him in the most meaningful terms in the genre of literature so that the history of his life may be tuned into the art of life which may impress enough to the readers. For instance, Amrita Pritam through her artistic style presents a picture of a blue-eyed child emerging from a Rose plant. Hence style is the key of the autobiographer's mind and heart.

An autobiography is an expression of history of life with factual data and it can be tremendously appreciated if, it is written in an impressive style which attracts the minds of the readers. It should have all the above features so that it may be able to create a kind of magnitude where writer wants to reveal his real past from a real realm to its external form.

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