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### **Autobiography**

An autobiography is an account of one's own self. Generally it presents a continuous narrative of major events in the life of an author. The word "Autobiography" is composed of two words; "Auto" means "self" and "biography" means "life-story". Therefore an autobiography is a story of experiences and achievements of writer's own life. It must suffer a constitutional flaw because it must come to an end before the author's death. Yet Dr. Johnson preferred autobiography to biography. His opinion is that "no man's life could be better written than himself." Longfellow says, "Autobiography is a product of firsthand experience, Biography of second hand knowledge." An autobiography presents personal experiences directly, unhampered by the artificiality of impersonal forms of an author. The psychoanalytic critics consider writing of an autobiography as writer's attempt to "reconstruct the self."

The earliest example of the full and candid expression of the self in Europe is found in St. Augustine's autobiography entitled Confessions in 5<sup>th</sup> century. Rousseau's autobiography published under the same title in 18<sup>th</sup> century becomes a model for the later writers. Some of the permanent contributions to English literature are the autobiographies of David Hume, Edward Gibbon, Benjamin Franklin, Leigh Hunt, H.G. Wells, Winston Churchill and Rudyard Kipling etc. Mahatma Gandhi's My Experiments with Truth and Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru's Discovery of India are Indian autobiographies of great literary significance.

### **Biography**

The terms 'biography' presents two meanings. First it means a written account of history of the life of an individual. Second it means the art of writing such accounts of or history. In literary criticism, biography is considered only the art of writing the life history of the individual. As such, Biography is a branch of history. Its purpose is to relate, as faithfully as possible, the life of person. But it is also a branch of portrait painting in words. So the biographer's duties are two fold. He has to function both as a historian as a portrait painter. As a historian, he has to be accurate and systematic. And as a literary artist, he has to represent facts in a pleasant manner.

#### **Definitions**

- (i) The **Oxford Dictionary** defines Biography as "history of the lives of individual mean as a branch of literature."
- (ii) In the words of **Harold Nicolson**- "The Biography is a truthful record of an individual, composed as a work of art."

**Art of Writing a Biography-** Biography presents a life history in the form of literature. The biographer has to gather all the facts and documents necessary to his work. He has to write his biography to present it as a work of art. In relation to history, he has to arrange facts in an intelligiate order. As a literary artist, he has to exhibit all his art to present the particular individual in all light and shade. So the biographer has also to be impartial with reference to represent central figure.

## **Memoir**

The word 'Memoir, has been derived from the Latin word 'Memoria, which means memory. It is a biographical sketch or a record of events from personal knowledge.

Memoir as a literary work, in fact a short record in literary language of the life history of a person written by someone with firsthand knowledge whose life history is being sketched. Two things are to be kept in mind in this respect.

- (i) The record is not kept systematically.
- (ii) It may not take into account the chronological sequence of events.

Memoirs are usually concerned with personality and actions other than those of the writer himself. Here we may notice the buoyant, lucid and high spirited Memoirs of Lady Fomshame, The tranquil high toned letters of Rachol and the pathetic memories of Queen Marry II. Among the numerous memoirs of Restoration, two biographers constitute in themselves a separate group, the general resemblance of their subject-matters associate the one with the other and also piquant contrast of the personalities therein revealed. The life of colonel Hutchinson by his widow and the life of William Cavendish, Duke of New Castle, by his wife, the duchess, are written at the same time, the first between 1664 and 1671 and the second during the years preceding 1667. Richard Baxter in the beautiful 'Breviate of the life of Marg and Baxter (1681) memorializes his wife's passion for spirituality.

## **Travelogue**

Travelogue is a narrative of the experiences of a travel (Journey to a long distance, to a religious or historical place or voyages) in an artistic form.

About the year 1356, there appeared in England an extra-ordinary book called the voyages and Travels of Sir John Mondeville written in excellent style in the Midland Dialect which was then becoming the literary language of England. For years, this interesting work and its unknown author were subjects of endless dispute. It was a 'traveller's tale compiled from many sources. Pearls, Buck (1883-1973), an American novelist, writer and biographer is well-known for travelogues. His famous book 'My several Words, is personal record of his life and shows her profound sense of humanity.

## Periodical Essays

The essay as a literary form in English originated with Francis Bacon and the periodical essay as a piece of Journalism began towards the end of the seventeenth century. It maintained a great popularity throughout the eighteenth century.

The periodical essay appeared in magazines and journals after fixed interval of time. It has a social aim that was to improve the manners and morals of the people of the age. Daniel Defoe, Addison, Steele, Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith made a great contribution to the development of the periodical essay in the eighteenth century. In fact the periodical essay was popular both with the writers and the readers.

**(i)The Review-** Daniel Defoe is considered the pioneer of the periodical essays in English. His review which as a major periodical, at first appeared weekly, then twice and later thrice a week, acquainted the English with this new genre of literature

**(ii) The Tatler** – The Tattler was the brain-child of Sir Richard Steele who started this periodical on April 12, 1709.

‘The Tatler’ appeared thrice a week and Steele painted almost the whole age of Queen Anne in this periodical.

**(iii)| The Spectator-** Steele joined with Joseph Addison in starting, The Spectator in 1711. This periodical contained only essays. This change was brought about by Steele to accommodate Addison’s genius who made both The Tatler and The Spectator popular.

## Other Periodicals

Steele’s **Guardian** that followed The Spectator was also a popular periodical of the eighteenth century. Swift wrote Journal of Stella (1710-13) which gives us an excellent information about contemporary political events. Dr. Samuel Johnson’s The Idler (1758-1760) and The Rambler (1750-1752) present him as a moralist and as a sage. Oliver Goldsmith also wrote many periodical essays. The Citizen of the World (1762), his best work, is a collection of essays.

Thus in the second half of the eighteenth century, the periodical essay showed a deep decline. Now, the periodical essay showed a tendency to get incorporated into a newspaper. But the spectacular rise of the periodical essay in the first half of the age helped in the development of the modern prose.

## **Formal Essay**

A formal essay is in conformity to the accepted rules or customs, follows them and is regular in design. In the formal essays the writer treats his subject objectively. He describes in his essays his point of view, and his attitude of mind regarding a particular topic. Bacon, the father of the English essay, adopted the formal form of the essay. In his essays we see Bacon as the practical philosopher and wise man of the world and not his private and personal life. He speaks from experience and his interest is not in himself but result of his observations.

These results take the form of clear cut theories and convictions, not the interesting uncertainties; and are organized into logically compact treatise which moves irresistibly from beginning to conclusion. The charm of Bacon's essays lies in the wise and weighty observations of the writer and the lucid, simple and at times poetic style in which they are written. He deviates from the tradition of Montaigne.

It is well-ordered kind of composition. In its own way it is as much a work of art as a picture is, like a picture is. Like a picture it must have unity of design, proportion of parts, and consistency of colouring. Mostly narrative and descriptive type of essays are included in this genre. But essays of expository and argumentative nature are generally excluded from this species.

## **Personal Essay**

The essay that reveals the writer's own personality is known as personal essay. It is also known as subjective essay.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century a long line of notable writers used the essay, like Montaigne, to reveal and was only a very disguise are the classic English example of this genre, a delightful blend of autobiography, erudition, fancy, humour and sentiment. As E.V. Lucas said, in his introduction to a modern edition of the work, "A good essay, more than a novel, a poem, a play or a treatise, is personality translated into print; between the line must gleam attractive features or we remain cold." Other writers of the subjective essay-Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Thackeray, De Quincey had remarkable gifts, but none of them equaled Lamb in his power of capturing the reader's affection. R.L.Stevenson in a later period exerted something of the same spell, but for most judges Lamb is still the prince of personal essayists.

## **Poetic Prose**

Poetic Prose may be explained as the prose which is elaborately constructed and in which may of the devices of poetry are used. It is so called from 'Euphues' a work by John Lyly (1522-1606). So it is a style invented in sixteenth century which has a silted expression.

‘Euphuus is Greek which means ‘graceful, witty’. John Lyly’s works illustrated the intellectual fashions and favourite themes of Renaissance society in a highly artificial and mannered style. In euphuism the plots are unimportant and exist merely as structural elements on which to display conversations, discourses and letters mostly concerning the subject of love.

Walter Pater, John Addington, Symonds and James Joyce are master of poetic prose. Many writes have used poetic prose for a short work or for passage of particular intensity in a longer one.

Walter Pater’s works have long been associated with the ‘art for art sake movement and the cultivation of decadence in the 1880 and 1890. W.B Yeats insisted that Pater’s writings are permanent in our literature because of their revolutionary importance.

Euphuism is an affected style of speech and writing that flourished in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century in English, especially in court circles. The name was derived from Euphuus (1579) by John Lyly, who developed the style partly in an effort to refine English prose style and partly in an effort to attract the interest of women readers.