

LIVING LIFE THROUGH WRITING: A FEMINIST AUTOETHNOGRAPHICAL READING OF ISMAT CHUGHTAI'S A LIFE IN WORDS, SAEEDA BANO'S OFF THE BEATEN TRACK AND ZARINA BHATTY'S PURDAH TO PICCADILLY

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ABSTRACT

Celebrating life through writing is one of the prominent features of life-writing, a popular genre that has gained significant traction in the current times. It serves as a sought-after genre to not only record one's lived experiences but also relive the experiences by recalling the memories that shaped the author's personality. This paper aims to explore the lives of three famous Indian Muslim women – Ismat Chughtai, Saeeda Bano and Zarina Bhatty through their powerful autobiographies. These three women belong to different professions – Chughtai is a prolific and accomplished writer who influenced the literary landscape of Indian women's writings, Bhatty is the former president of the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS), New Delhi and Saeeda Bano is the first Indian woman to work as a radio newsreader. Apart from being known for their unique achievements, these three women carried a common identity of being an Indian Muslim woman. Their personal narratives poignantly document the many struggles they undergo because of this common identity yet it also deeply reflects their spirit of resilience and cultural connection which the paper attempts to study through the lens of feminist autoethnography. What shines through their writings is a passion to live against all the odds by embracing both the changes and challenges – a much needed lesson in the times that we live.

Keywords: Life-Writing, Indian Muslim Women, Feminist Autoethnography, Literary Landscape, Resilience

Life-writing as a genre has played a significant role in recording the marginalized voices that have been suppressed and unheard for a long time. The genre simply escapes specific categorization by including a wide range of sub-genres such as journals, diary entries, personal narratives, biographies, autobiographies and semi-autobiographies. The popularity of the genre is evidently portrayed in the significant attention it has been gaining in the recent times and the surge in the celebrity autobiographies dominating the publishing industry truly testifies this statement. The veracity with which the genre creates a dynamic space for the expression of an individual's creativity exemplifies the versatility of the genre.

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