

## Auto/biographies: The Neglected Children of History.

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**Abstract:** *Auto/biographies are not accepted as the sources of history though these life writings provide some valuable information. Many historians indirectly use life writings as the sources of history. Such life writings help the historians to reach the unreached sources of history to find data. For example the autobiography of Fakir Mohan Senapati provides the real situation of the drought condition of Odisha in 1866.*

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Autobiography emerges as a new branch of literature after independence. But this new genre of literature is entangled into different controversies due to various reasons of misrepresentation and wrong interpretation of facts and findings. It is due to the controversial nature of life writings both history and literature treat it as their neglected child. What are the reasons for which W.B Yeats goes to the extent of saying that all autobiographies are false? After a long contemplation, I manage myself to find out the significance of Yeats' controversial statement. The autobiography is the highlighting portion of the autobiographer's life which he intentionally exposed to impress the readers and does not deal with dark side of his life because it may tarnish his reputation.

In the West life writing has its importance and in the same the East follows the west blindly according life writings as the status of university curriculum. In most of the universities, life writing is taught as one of the major subjects and in some other universities undertakes research activities in the life writing and also achieved a lot of success.

The famous personalities only write auto/biography or they are perused to write their life story. The first autobiographer of Odisha, Fakir Mohan Senapati, wrote his autobiography in 1916 and it was first published in *Utkal Sahitya* in 1917. When Senapati was mentally discarded and was severely losing his memory when he was writing his autobiography *Atmajibana Rachita*. The first autobiography Odisha is not free from the controversy of fictionalization of deferent incidents, one of them is the great drought of 1866 in which Senapati wrote that more than ten lakh people died in this draught. During the drought he was only 23 years old and did not have any access with either the administration or with public through the state. He goes on describing the drought just like an essay to which history does not accept it citing various reasonable grounds. Not one but many events Senapati narrated are questioned by historians because these are far from the facts and only based on the personal perceptions. What he

heard from other he describes it without citing the sources of information where he has got.

After independence the demand of autobiography began to increase because Indians were interested to know detail about their heroes who suffer even at the cost of their lives for independent. The autobiographies written by the freedom fighters are not that much controversial as the autobiographies of Indian politicians who deliberately add fiction with fact to create a controversy through preplanned and for a specific purpose. Now-a-days more than a dozen of autobiographies written by various politicians and bureaucrats hit the headlines of news papers only due to their controversial remarks. But the controversial and sensitive matter which they place in their autobiography may be for overnight popularity and for the selling of their books. One thing is clear that they go on writing about the controversial matters without any proofs or they write in such a way that the readers will be convinced that it cannot be proved. The clever politicians often dilute the public opinions by cleverly manipulating a fact into fiction and vice versa. They even paint the gold in the brush of tar in such a way that public is swayed away by such horrible remarks. To justify this statement I would like to take two autobiographies: one written by much controversial retired bureaucrat and former CBI director and another by Natwar Singh, a politician, diplomat, columnist and writer. It would be better to simplify the different controversial matters in their autobiographies for which are very much popular overnight due to containing some sensitive issues.

First the autobiography of former CBI director Joginder Singh, *Inside CBI* (2000) was written after his much controversial transfer from the post of CBI director because of his different controversial statements he aired against the so called corrupt politicians. He attempts to convince the readers that the CBI is protecting the corrupt politicians by destroying the evidences gathered against them. He took the advantage of his honesty and popularity handling the CBI which he

manipulated after his retirement in his autobiography to avenge the politicians who went against him by getting him transferred. Singh succeeds tarnishing the reputation of the government of H.D Devgauda both in the centre and in the Karnatak through his autobiography. Joginder Singh tries his level best to add fiction with fact in such a way that it sweetens the ears of the common readers who are fed up with corruption of politicians. He opines to give an autonomous status to the CBI by a constitutional amendment and to expand its jurisdiction by elevating the status and power of the CBI director to the level of Secretary. Singh knows well that CBI is an investigating agency and was created by the Delhi Police Act 1949 and its (CBI) legitimacy is always questioned by the legal experts. So the Gowahati High Court has pronounced a historical judgment declaring CBI as an illegal body (Case No-W.P(c) 543673/10). After this historical judgment regarding formation of CBI with deliberately leaving loop holes in it to dance to the tune of the central government has weakened the theory of Singh which he advocates in his autobiography. Singh attempts to manipulate the complex issues on the legal matters which are French and Latin to the common readers. In this autobiography the writer tries to take advantage of his popularity.

Natwar Singh's *One Life Is Not Enough* (2014) brews much more controversy by bringing out a quake in Indian politics. I made a review of this autobiography in *The Samaj Saptahik* (Dated 14 to 21 Oct, 2014) and a lot of reviews came out after that opining about the authenticity of Singh's though all of the controversial remarks sound truth convince the common readers only. But the researchers cast a doubt some sensitive remarks he air against the Gandhi family. Natwar Singh's relationship with the Nehru- Gandhi family goes back to the Nehruvian era but Singh only wrote negatively against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Natwar Singh, in the chapter devoted to Sonia, has remarked that she did not want to be the P.M in 2004 because Rahul Gandhi pressurized her to denounce the coveted post because her life was in

danger. Rahul Gandhi sensed danger and did not want to spare her mother for the sake of the prime minister's post. Sonia, actually did not want such post because of her foreign origin which the opposition demanded not to make her PM before the president. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was president by that time who was an NDA sponsored man. There was a chance that her candidature may not be accepted by the president because of her foreign origin. But Natwar Singh was one of the coteries of the Gandhi family and he had a closer access to both Sonia and Rahul as a result his reverse version sounds truth though it is mixture of fact and fiction. Natwar Singh avenged on Sonia Gandhi through his autobiography exposing their (Sonia and Rahul) cowardice nature to face the realities of life which every states man supposed to do. But Singh is indifferent to frank unveiling the oil-for-food programme in Iraq for which he has to resign from the the Manmohan Singh's government by the presser of Sonia. Natwar Singh and his son Jagat Singh were allegedly involved in the multi-crore rupees food for oil scam as result he was shown the door. When Singh said that he had done this by the direction of Sonia he was expelled from the party. Singh tries to take revenge on Sonia disclosing everything though his autobiography which authenticity is questioned but Singh succeeded damaging the reputation the Gandhi family beyond reparation. This is one of the reasons of the defeat of her party in the record margin in 2014 general election.

The autobiography has dramatically scaled down the reputation of Sonia Gandhi because denouncing the post of PM, she sprang to reputation and fame to such a high that the *Forbes* magazine ranked her as number one women among the thousand women of the world.

Life writings are some time Lie-writing when it is written for a specific hidden purpose either of becoming popular over night or to divert the attentions of the public to a different direction. The life writings are not free from the prejudiced notion and the writer does not write as he knows the fact but adds fact and fiction about others prejudiced by love and hate.

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