

ഇശൽ
വൈത്യകം
ഐത്രമാസിക ലക്കം: 41

Ishal Paithrkam

Online issue 26

print issue 41

March 2025



Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar

Mappila Kala Akademi

Department of Cultural Affairs

Government of Kerala-India

March 2025

ISSN:2582-550X

ഇശൽ പൈത്യകം

ത്രൈമാസിക

ലക്കം: 41

2025 മാർച്ച്

പകർപ്പാവകാശം: പ്രസാധകർക്ക്

ചീഫ് എഡിറ്റർ

ഡോ. ഹുസൈൻ രണ്ടത്താണി

എഡിറ്റർ

ഡോ. ഷംഷാദ് ഹുസൈൻ. കെ.ടി.

അസോസിയേറ്റ് എഡിറ്റർ

ഡോ. അനീസ് ആലങ്ങാടൻ

എഡിറ്റോറിയൽ ബോർഡ്

ബഷീർ ചുങ്കത്തറ

ഡോ. പി.പി അബ്ദുൽ റസാഖ്

എം.എൻ. കാരശ്ശേരി

സൈദലവി ചീരങ്ങോട്ട്

Ishal Paithrkam

ISSN: 2582-550X

Peer-Reviewed

UGC CARE indexed

Quarterly

Bilingual

Issue: 41

Online issue: 26

March: 2025

all rights reserved

Editor

Dr. Shamshad hussain. KT

Printed @

LIPI Offset

Malappuram

Publisher

Mahakavi Moyinkutty

Vaidyar

Mappila Kala Akademi

Kondotty, 673638

Ph: 0483-2711432

പ്രസാധകർ

മഹാകവി മോയിൻകുട്ടി വൈദ്യർ

മാപ്പിള കലാ അക്കാദമി

കൊണ്ടോട്ടി: 673 638

ഫോൺ: 0483 2711432

www.mappilakalaacademy.org

www.ishalpaithrkam.info

ഇശൽ പൈത്യകത്തിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കുന്ന രചനകളിലെ ആശയങ്ങൾ മാപ്പിളകലാ അക്കാദമിയുടേതോ, സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാരിന്റേതോ, സാംസ്കാരിക വകുപ്പിന്റേതോ ആയിരിക്കണമെന്നില്ല. - എഡിറ്റർ

copyright rests with the publisher. the authors are responsible for the contents and views expressed.

Life in Review: Exploring the Intersection of Obituaries and Biographies

**Anula J
Dr. Lekshmi R. Nair**

Narrative forms like obituaries and biographies contextualise and represent the human instinct to contemplate, mark and memorialise the life of a deceased individual. While both forms serve as tools for documenting the essence of an individual's life and achievements, the overlapping objective is unique – both forms offer distinctly diverse insights into how the dead are remembered. Obituaries, often considered as compressed biographies, serve as immediate public notices that announce a person's passing. These carefully curated narratives encapsulate the personal qualities, milestones and remarkable accomplishments of the deceased. They are a public acknowledgement of the significance of these lives to the socio-cultural and political milieu. Obituaries function as a cultural reflection on mortality as they represent the collective desire to honour not only the acclaimed, but also the ordinary lives, by offering a brief overview of impact of the deceased on their community and family. Biographies in contrast engage in deep exploration of an individual's life, after meticulous research and careful analysis. While obituaries are intended for immediate public readership, biographies function as an elaborate record, systematically investigating the complexities of the subject's life, offering a more layered interpretation extending beyond the concise nature inherent in traditional obituaries. The study seeks to examine the narrative differences and the socio-cultural functions of the two forms by analysing the newspaper obituaries and the biography of Phoolan Devi titled *The Bandit Queen of India: An Indian Woman's*

Amazing Journey from Peasant to International Legend. The study also tries to understand the distinct purpose served by these two forms of life writing and how they contribute to shaping public memory and societal perceptions about an individual.

Key words: Life Narratives, Obituary, Biography, Death, Memory

Human lives are intricately woven with countless moments, experiences and relationships, each turning into a unique personal narrative. These life narratives that reflect individual journeys document and communicate the essence of one's life within broader social, cultural and historical dimensions. Life writing encompasses diverse forms including biography, memoirs, obituary etc. where they serve complimentary but distinct purposes. A Biography acts as a personal account offering a comprehensive study of an individual's life, exploring everything from early childhood to their relationships, achievements and challenges. Extensive research goes into the process of understanding an individual's character, values and convictions. These narratives help the readers to engage with the experiences of the subject on a more intimate level and it also serve as a reflection of the social world these individuals inhabit. Life Writings are instrumental in determining socio-cultural conceptions on life and death. Such writings explicitly reflect on cultural norms, practices and social values, providing an insight into how societies value certain qualities, virtues and moral codes. Life writings are manifestations of a society's sense of what is considered as esteemed, admirable or worthy of remembrance. Moreover, through the distinct form of obituaries, life narratives reflect prevalent attitudes towards death and mortality, bearing on its interpretations on different cultures. In many traditions, death is perceived as a transition or continuation of legacy and not merely as an end. These narratives offer a foretaste of the ways in which diverse communities and cultures choose to commemorate and honour the deceased, their means of coming into terms with grief and loss, thereby opening a window into the cultural practices, rituals and sentiments associated with death in specific socio-cultural contexts. Genres like biographies and obituaries bridge the generational gap by transmitting historical memories and by preserving stories from the past.

Obituaries and biographies have distinct narrative approaches defined by their respective purposes, their unique structures and the depth of detail they provide about the subject's life. Although both forms offer an insight into the lives of people, they appeal to different audiences, ultimately influencing how a person's life is remembered. One of the major narrative differences between an obituary and a biography lies in their purpose. An obituary by nature serves as a public announcement written to inform the passing of an individual, often honouring and celebrating their life respectfully. Obituaries or Obits, typically appearing in newspapers and also as online publications, are expected to reach a broader set of audience that may not be familiar with the deceased. The primary function of an obituary is to commemorate and memorialise the deceased while conveying essential information about the person such as their notable achievements, personal qualities and the influence they have wielded within their family and community circles, the complexities of their life, the struggles and challenges that shaped their journey. Such narratives usually follow a reverent and balanced tone often emphasising and accentuating the positive attributes of the person so as to leave a dignified impression of the dead and to honour their legacy. Biographies, on the other hand offer a more expansive and deeply researched narrative, delving into everything from personal to professional affairs that may include interpersonal relationships, challenges, adversities and controversies. These are usually crafted for a more dedicated audience seeking a profound understanding of the subject. They usually involve interviews of the individual's family members and close acquaintances, review of their personal letters, critical analysis and scrutiny of their personal diaries, primary documents or even media appearances. This approach allows biographies to present a nuanced, layered portrayal that reveal a multidimensional and critical representation of the individual, balancing commendation with an objective examination of their character. Biographies thus offer the readers a more textured and richer understanding beyond the commemorating, celebratory tone of obituaries. The stylistic choices and structure are two other elements that further underscore the narrative differences between obituaries and biographies. Obituaries are typically brief and adhere to a concise format unless the deceased individual is a widely known, established

figure. Owing to space constraints, they generally focus on major accomplishments, excluding intricate details or controversial elements that may be less flattering. Biographies in contrast are expansive, spanning over hundreds of pages and often organized chronologically. Here, the biographer possesses the freedom to analyse and interpret life events, constructing narratives that offer the readers a more holistic, comprehensive and multifaceted view of the person, including their upbringing, education, relationships and also their psychological and emotional aspects.

Obituaries and biographies contribute to the cultural memory by recording the lives of prominent figures, reinforcing collective identity and preserving social heritage, and thus affirming the values the culture wants to uphold. These narratives often feature influential figures including national leaders, historical figures, artists, etc. whose lives reflect or challenge established societal norms, providing critical insight into cultural transformations and historical contexts, making them significant contributions in the understanding of cultural history. Through the social and cultural functions they serve, obituaries and biographies evolve as powerful instruments that transcend mere commemoration, and interpret life, mortality and meaningful living. Obituaries and biographies are powerful cultural artefacts that can profoundly influence societal perception of an individual, both during their lifetime and posthumously. These carefully curated narratives underscore specific characteristics, accomplishments and personal qualities, constructing a legacy that persuade and shape public or collective memory. Through the intentional selection of particular aspects from the subject's life, these forms of life writings craft an image of the individual that resonates and aligns with prevailing societal expectations, cultural values and collective memory. Life writings, especially biographies often play a substantial role in framing historical narratives by situating individual stories or lives within a broader socio-political context. They elucidate how personal decisions intersect with social, cultural and political events revealing how an individual's life has been influenced by or been contributory to major historical developments. These narratives shape collective memory and influence how societies remember individuals and how future generations interpret the past.

While obituaries mostly tend to adhere to conventional values, biographies sometimes contest these conventions by presenting lives that defy conventional normative expectations and diverge from traditional paths. Biographies of non-conformists, unconventional figures or activists reshape societal perceptions and understandings by questioning the dominant ideologies and proposing alternate interpretations of morality, integrity and success. Biographies have the power and potential to expand the cultural framework within which individuals are assessed, promoting a more inclusive and diverse perspective on what constitutes a meaningful life. The present study seeks to analyse the obituaries and the biography of Phoolan Devi to examine the narrative differences of the two forms that make them distinct and how these shape the public memory and societal perceptions of an individual. The death of Phoolan Devi on 25 July, 2001 prompted the publication of numerous newspaper obituaries in various languages. The obituary published by *Mathrubhumi* begins by addressing her as the former dacoit turned Member of Parliament and states how Phoolan Devi was assassinated by three masked men right outside her home. The assailants opened fire at her, killing her on the spot despite the presence of her personal body guard who also suffered minor injuries. Here, there is a detailed description of the circumstances surrounding her death, including the location, date and time of her death, and also the information regarding her funeral rites. Following this, the obituary briefly outlines an overview of her political journey, describing her rise from the tumultuous early life to her position in the public domain as a Member of Parliament. The obituary further discusses her personal life, particularly highlighting her strained relationships with her own family members including her brother. It notes that, towards the end of her life, Phoolan Devi and her brother Shivanarayanan, were not on amicable terms and their relationship was fraught with unresolved conflicts. Similarly, the obit also references tensions and estrangement in her marriage. Similarly, the obituary that appeared in the newspaper, *The Times of India*, follows the typical conventional style beginning with essential facts about the deceased and slowly expanding and shifting the focus to Phoolan Devi's political career. It states that the newspaper reporters were told by one of the

investigating police officers that it was a well-planned murder, as the assailants had been following Phoolan Devi since her return from the parliament. Once she was gunned down, the three men got away, abandoning their vehicle and escaping in a three-wheeler. The obituary also mentions the Lok Sabha observing a minute's solemn silence in respect of her passing.

The obituary featured in *Malayala Manorama* adopts a distinctly personal tone while offering an overview of Phoolan Devi's life. After a brief introductory account of her demise, the obit transitions to a recounting of her early life and struggles. The obituary in the beginning discusses the tumultuous period of her life prior to her emergence as an M.P. Fifty-three criminal cases were charged against her, leading to a eleven-year long imprisonment. During her tormenting years in jail, she got married to Maan Singh, one of her fellow inmates, who was also a member of her gang of bandits. In an interview she gave while in prison, Phoolan Devi vehemently rejected the idea of making an entry into politics, referring to the politicians as 'dogs' and firmly affirming that she would never follow that path. However, her position was later reversed upon her release, as she contested the elections from Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, with success and ultimately became the Member of Parliament. The narrative also mentions that Phoolan Devi later justified her entry into politics clarifying that her primary motivation was to ensure that no one else endured the exploitation and injustice that she had experienced. As an extension of her commitment to the welfare of the marginalized sections of the society, she also established the 'Ekalavya Sena', an organization to campaign for the welfare and upliftment of the Dalits and other backward communities by addressing their major economic and social needs. While the obituary appeared on the front page of the newspaper, the narrative continued with further stories about her early childhood and family relationships in a more subjective tone in the supplementary pages and this offered the readers a nuanced and better understanding of her life. This includes a succinct description of her family comprised of her parents and siblings, their poor socio-economic condition and the systemic hardships she had to endure since a very young age. Her early life was marked by the strained relationship

they had with her father's brother Bihari who continually put her family through various forms of torment. He once deliberately attempted to interfere in her sister's marriage, sabotaging and entirely disrupting it. Since the wedding was called off, Phoolan Devi's mother was forced to mitigate the family disgrace by arranging a marriage for the eleven year old Phoolan Devi to the thirty-one year old Puttilal. Marital life for Phoolan Devi was not a solace, the hostile environment and the significant suffering at her husband's house along with her deteriorating health forced her to go back home where her struggles just worsened. Her family under societal pressures tried to arrange another marriage for her, which she strongly resisted and for a brief period, she was compelled to seek refuge at some of her relatives' houses, but that too was short-lived and she soon had to return. In her precarious position, Phoolan Devi even tried to go back to her husband only to find that the man had remarried in her absence, leaving her in desolation. Alone and with no place of belonging, Phoolan Devi found herself finally retaliating against the relentless harassment of her uncle Bihari. Her first act of crime was throwing stones at him in order to protect herself from his torture and was subsequently sent to jail for a twenty-day imprisonment where she was subjected to brutal abuse by a corrupt police officer. Phoolan Devi's life took a drastic turn when a gang of Bandits led by Babu Gujjar and Vikram Mallah abducted her. She had to face further exploitation as Gujjar persistently tried to harm her. Vikram who had grown fond of her, kills Gujjar to protect her, takes up the leadership of the group and the two eventually fall in love. *Manorama* also briefly discusses the Bahmai massacre, one of the most harrowing episodes in her life. This violent massacre resulted from a deep-seated sense of avengement and vengeance which can be recounted as a culmination of the grief and trauma that shaped her very existence. The narrative includes the testimony of Santhoshi Devi, the wife of Banvari Singh, one of the Thakurs killed in the massacre, where she fearfully recalls the chilling incident when Phoolan Devi barged into their house looking for her husband. When she tried to protest, Phoolan Devi attacked her with aggression, throwing their baby on the floor leaving it permanently disabled and, this brutality to their four month old child underscores the ferocity of

Devi's hunt for retribution. The incident in Bahmai is an outcome of a deep-rooted vengeance and prolonged quest for revenge against a group that not only wronged her and exemplified the systemic oppression based on caste but also murdered Vikram Mallah, her partner. Sriram Singh and Lalaram, who belonged to the Thakur community were driven by caste prejudices and harboured unnecessarily strong hatred towards Vikram. After murdering Vikram, the two men held Phoolan Devi captive for weeks and raped her which traumatized her deeply and fuelled her desire to seek revenge. Upon escaping her captors, Phoolan Devi soon became affiliated with a gang of dacoits led by Mustakim, which marked a significant shift in her journey of transformation from a victim to a fierce figure of resistance. This is where she met Maan Singh, along with whom she orchestrated the violent attack on every household of the Thakurs in Bahmai, searching for Sriram Singh, the one responsible for the death of Vikram. Her attempt to avenge his death escalated and her actions resulted in a merciless massacre of twenty two Thakurs, sending a shock wave across the nation. The brutality of the incident reflects the cynical nature of violence and also exposed the injustices and caste-based oppression deeply embedded in the Indian society. The Bahmai massacre pushed Phoolan Devi into national infamy and as the police stood helpless and unable to apprehend her for a while, Phoolan Devi eventually surrendered. *Malayala Manorama* hence comprehensively delves into multiple facets of Phoolan Devi's life spanning from her younger days to her demise, with an emphasis on the significant events that defined her narrative.

Phoolan Devi's obituary published by *The Hindu* follows a similar narrative structure wherein the front page features the predominant details surrounding her passing, including the circumstances of her death, the location, the immediate aftermath and its societal impact. Similar to the newspapers mentioned above, the editorial and the supplementary pages have presented various dimensions of her life, going beyond merely reporting Phoolan Devi's death. However, in contrast to the other newspaper obituaries mentioned above, *The Hindu* adopts a distinct narrative approach as it refrains from highlighting Phoolan Devi's personal history, particularly

her difficult childhood and the transformative events that contributed to her transition into a controversial figure. Here, the obituary follows a formal tone and the focus mostly falls on her political career and her role as a Member of the Parliament. Steering away from making an emotional anecdote of the deceased, the obituary is quite analytical as it subtly criticizes her performance as a Parliament Member, suggesting that she failed to make significant contributions for the larger cause of social justice and also underscores her inability to emerge out of the shadow of Mulayam Singh Yadav, the founder of Samajvadi Party and to establish herself as an independent political figure. Furthermore, the narrative asserts that the idea of social justice was at times reduced to rhetoric and it was restricted primarily to mere empowerment of the backward castes. The latter part of the obituary states that it is unfair to judge her too harshly as she is not one among those who entered the political stage as part of the social churning, instead, she herself was one of those brutalised by the old order and also a victim of systemic oppression. It also comments on how the leaders of her own party responded to the tragic news of her demise. The director of the controversial film *Bandit Queen*, Shekhar Kapoor described her murder as “a very tragic end to a very tragic life”. “There has always been a threat to her from that source. I’m just surprised that she did not have more security”, states Mr. Kapur as he believes the Behmai massacre finally caught up with her. *The Hindu*, thus crafts a narrative that is less empathetic but more evaluative by downplaying the emotional dimensions and the personal aspects of her life and underlining her contributions and limitations within the public sphere. This narrative with its restrained approach and critical undertones contrasts with the more holistic and emotionally resonant perspectives of other obituaries, thereby providing a critical lens to analyse and interpret her legacy. This structure where the primary focus falls on conveying the fundamental details regarding her passing is consistent across most obituaries. These accounts providing a succinct overview of the deceased individual’s life is tailored for immediate consumption by the public. Unlike biographies that involve in-depth analysis of the subject, obituaries generally refrain from delving deep into the psychological and emotional dimensions of the deceased person’s life. And, this clearly reflects the primary purpose of both the genres.

Phoolan Devi's biography titled *The Bandit Queen of India: An Indian Woman's Amazing Journey from Peasant to International Legend* written by Marie Therese Cuny and Paul Rambali in association with Phoolan Devi offers a profound insight into her life which epitomizes both complexity and controversy. It discusses Phoolan Devi's childhood and early life marked by economic struggles, relentless caste discrimination, sexual abuse and other hurdles, illuminating the conditions and factors that shaped her life's trajectory. The book traces her journey from a young girl subjected to systemic abuse, gender and caste violence, into a bandit. Through a detailed, extensive description of the social, cultural and economic milieu that compelled her to follow the path of resistance and resilience, the biography tries to unravel Phoolan Devi's life beyond the label of a 'dacoit' or the 'bandit queen'. The prologue of the biography opens with Phoolan Devi's gruesome experiences in marital life. The obituaries that briefly mentions her marriage to Puttilal, fail to suggest the terror and profound trauma associated with this particular event in her life and these did not present the critical details of how a ten year old girl was forced into matrimony with a thirty one year old man who subjected her to marital rape. Puttilal asserted his authority as a husband to enforce his dominance. This early experience of violence left a lasting imprint on her emotional and psychological well-being, marking the first instance of trauma in her life.

He dragged me through the streets in front of the villagers. They had all come out to see what the shouting was about, but not one of them tried to stop him. It was the same with Uncle Bihari and Mayadin, but I could always get away from them. I was trapped with Puttilal. Nobody dared to come between us to defend me. Even the dogs shied away from us. The men just watched, cowards who saw what one of their kind was doing, but not one tried to intervene. (Devi et al., 2003)

Whenever Puttilal tried to harm her, it was her father-in-law who intervened and protected her from his violent outburst, often exhibiting a paternal attitude towards Phoolan Devi. The severe physical and emotional abuse made her ill. Her body was covered in boils, hair started to fall out, her stomach became so tense that she

could hardly drink a sip of water. Puttilal was infuriated and Phoolan Devi heard him scream, “Married! With a child like that? She’s no use for anything and now she’s sick! I hope God lets her die, and then I can get someone else.” Devi et al. (2003)

The chapter in the biography detailing Phoolan Devi’s life following her encounter with the bandit Vikram Mallah reveals a pivotal transformative phase in her journey as he emerged as a protector, shielding her from any form of harm. In contrast to the men Phoolan Devi had encountered before, Vikram treated her with genuine affection, introducing her to an emotional connection rooted in love rather than exploitation.

I felt strange - happy, but still frightened. A man had touched me softly, he had stroked my hair and touched my cheeks. A hand had caressed me like my poor father’s hand, but a hand with the strength he never had. I felt I could trust him, something I had never felt about a stranger or a man before. Gradually, I stopped sobbing, and my tears dried. If I stayed with him, perhaps I would be happy: no more beatings, no more pain, no more humiliation. (Devi., 2003)

There is an instance in the text where Phoolan Devi refers to Vikram as the only man who had acknowledged her as a human, and not as a slave or a piece of flesh. She resolved to request him to avenge her of Mayadin, her uncle Bihari’s son, and to deliver her from that demon and make the people of her village treat her like a human being too, so that she gets to taste victory for once. This sense of safety soon faded away as Vikram Mallah was killed by Sriram Singh, a Thakur who was also a part of their group. Sriram always harboured an unwanted animosity towards Phoolan Devi, primarily due to the caste she belonged to. The deep resentment was further fuelled by his inability to treat her as an equal within the gang and adding to this, she was always protected by Vikram who once gunned down one of the gang members for assaulting her. This made him feel powerless and it solidified the hatred towards her. After plotting and successfully orchestrating the murder of Vikram, Sriram Singh began his campaign of vengeance. Blindfolded and both the hands bound,

Phoolan Devi was paraded across villages, naked. Sriram asked the men from the villages to take advantage of her when they had her hands tied up like that. The extreme humiliation reached an unbearable extent and she begged them to kill her.

They dragged me and picked me up and I fell and they dragged me up by my hair again. I saw things I would never be able to forget. I saw crowds of faces and I was naked in front of them. Demons came without end from the fires of Naraka to rape me. I prayed to the gods and goddesses to help me, to let me live, to let me run through the damp fields, climb the ravines, to let me have my revenge and slay the red-haired demon. (Devi., 2003)

The biography meticulously documents the severe brutality inflicted upon Phoolan Devi by Shriram Singh, enabling the readers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intense rage and resentment that resulted in the infamous massacre in Behmai. It vividly presents how Phoolan Devi avenged Sriram Singh for the murder of Vikram Mallah by carefully curating a plan along with Maan Singh. More than twenty Thakur men were killed and for the next few days the newspaper headlines were about Phoolan Devi, the dacoit who wanted to slake her thirst on the blood of the Thakurs and the radio did not stop talking about Behmai, the little village in Uttar Pradesh. The newspapers described her as the blood-thirsty madwoman and there was such uproar in the State that the Chief Minister had to finally resign. There were orders to shoot them on sight but what bothered Phoolan Devi was, Sriram Singh was still alive while she was being hunted by the police. The biography quotes Phoolan Devi saying, “all the time, the only one I wanted to find and punish, to cut into pieces and throw to the dogs, was Sriram. I wanted to see the dogs devour him, tearing at his flesh and gnawing at his bones. My only craze was for his blood” (Devi et al. 2003).

Following her surrender, Phoolan Devi was sentenced to prison for eleven years, during which she became a subject of public curiosity and media fascination as she often had visitors who came to catch a glimpse of her. She grew tired and frustrated with the constant attention and the invasive photographers who clicked her pictures

without consent. The journalists often probed into her past trying to extract details particularly about the violent atrocities committed against her by Sriram Singh. Even within the confines of the prison, she could not maintain privacy, which highlights the exploitative tendencies of the media that prioritises sensationalism over humanity. The biography ends with Phoolan Devi's release in 1994, eleven years after she surrendered. Upon her release, she states, she is no longer the same person - the frightened child who believed the world ended where the fields ended and the sun drowned each night in the river.

Unlike traditional obituaries, her biography captures her mental conflicts, inner struggles and traumatic experiences which forced her to fight for justice which later led her to a path of crime and eventual surrender. Obituaries lack the depth required to entirely comprehend the complexities of such experiences that biographical narratives deal with in great detail. Her tale of resilience is emblematic of the challenges faced by the marginalized sections of the society, making her an unlikely, yet strong figure of resistance. Furthermore, her biography presents her transformation into an ordinary human from her role as a dacoit, thereby displaying Phoolan Devi as a vigilante figure and also a representative voice of the oppressed. Phoolan Devi's biography stands in stark contrast to the formal tone and brevity of the obituaries published in various newspapers. Biographies therefore serve as a rich source for understanding an individual and the complexities of their life, allowing the readers to view the subject not merely as a figure of public fascination but as someone shaped by numerous social, cultural, and economic factors along with intimate, yet fraught relationships. These life writings, through the selective recounting of the events in a person's life provide a condensed narrative that is easily accessible to the public, mostly serving as the primary source of information about an individual. These two forms together contribute to a layered understanding of an individual's life which in turn shapes the collective memory. They not only uphold cultural and social values but also act as tools for moral reflection. They influence how individuals are perceived and remembered by the society and this way both the forms serve as a rich medium for transmitting and preserving personal and public memory.

The intersection of obituaries and biographies offers a unique lens through which to examine the complexities of human life, revealing both the shared narrative threads that shape individual experiences and the distinctive storytelling conventions that govern each genre. By exploring this intersection, we gain a deeper understanding of how life stories are constructed, conveyed and remembered.

References

- Ashokan, N. (2001, July 26). Phoolan Deviye Vedivechu Konnu. *Mathrubhumi*, 1.
Binu, V.V. (2001, July 26). Phoolan Deviye Vedivechu Konnu. *Malayala Manorama*, 1.
Butler, Judith. (2004). *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso.
Fowler, B. (2007). *The Obituary as Collective Memory*. Routledge.
Devi, P., Cuny, M., & Rambali, P.(2003). *The Bandit Queen of India:An Indian Woman's Amazing Journey from Peasant to International Legend*. Lyons Press.
Prasad, Anurag. (2001, July 25). Phoolan Devi Shot Dead. *The Times of India*.

Anula J

Research Scholar
Department of English
Maharaja's College
Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
India
Pin: 689109
Ph: +91 8921626800
Email: anulajayakumar13@gmail.com
ORCID:0009-0000-9031-4684
&

Dr. Lekshmi R. Nair

Professor
Department of English
Government College, Kottayam, India
Pin:686013
Ph: +91 9846440008
Email: lekshmirnair@gckottayam.ac.in
ORCID:0000-0002-2599-6110