

Towards a Pedagogy of Selfhood and Life Worlds: Integrating Life Writing in the Law Curriculum for Justice Education

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Abstract

The study examines how integrating select categories of life writing in the curriculum for undergraduate programs in law may contribute to justice education by tapping into the informative, inspirational, and transformative potential of the genre. In the curriculum and reading lists for legal studies, auto/biographical accounts by legal luminaries, survivors of crimes against humanity, or the oppressed who use life writing as dissent and social critique can be included. Scholars and practitioners of law may gather glimpses of legal history and a nuanced understanding of politico-legal concepts by reading auto/biographies and memoirs. The study argues that auto/biographies and memoirs promote socio-cultural awareness, narrative skills, and emotional intelligence that contribute to justice education.

Keywords: Dissent and Writing; Inspirational auto/biography; Justice Education; Life Writing as survival; Pedagogy of Life Writing; Politico-legal concepts in Life Writing.

Introduction: Life Writing for Justice Education

This study examines conceptual understanding, socio-historical knowledge, emotional insights, and life skills ensuing from integrating such diverse genres of life writing as autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, and experiential anecdotes in the undergraduate curriculum for law. The paper argues that life writing can fulfill multiple epistemic and pedagogical functions in the study, research, and practice of law for promoting justice education and informing the process of justice administration. Justice education is liberal and interdisciplinary in orientation and focuses on

justice as a concept and a socio-legal practice to trace the interconnections of justice with rights, liberty, equality, and the systemic organization of a society. Justice education through life writing liberates justice from a narrow procedural interpretation and brings in the much-needed historical, political, and cultural approaches to ideation and analysis. The paper maps how sociocultural and experiential dimensions unwrapped by life writing if matched with a suitable pedagogy, can potentially enable justice education.

As a genre offering an intense reading experience and a glimpse into life worlds, life writing can generate reflections and debates around politico-legal concepts and hence be roped into teaching and research in law for nurturing justice education. Politico-legal concepts give contextual rigor to the study of law and position it against larger social and cultural frameworks. Politico-legal concepts channel the study of law to expand beyond mere functional and institutional concerns, facilitating justice education. Life writing offers a perspective that may effectively challenge media falsifications and sensational representations that affect the process of justice.

Life writing offers new lenses for observing and comprehending lives, milieus, and societies. Engagement with the genre releases the reader from the narrow confines of one's own space and time, hence opening out an expansive worldview. Though the commonly accepted notion is that life writing facilitates a search for the self that is fleshed out through narration and reminiscing, one should see life writing as encompassing a larger cultural project that is not limited by 'selfhood'. Life writing integrates locales, periods of history, and sensibilities into the narrative of selfhood. The changes and transitions in society arising from interventions of individuals may also be documented in life writing.

Life writing that gives accounts of injustice and captures individual and collective endeavors for justice can be fused into the pedagogy of justice education. The quest for justice may have moments of triumphs and disappointments that contain lessons for generations to come. The stories of pursuits and striving for justice, including experiential accounts about anti-colonial movements, emancipatory struggles for social and religious reform, and socio-political transformations leading to the realization of democratic principles call for serious reading and analysis by academicians and practitioners from the field of law. Engagement with life writing can exponentially enhance qualities of cultural responsiveness, respect for diversity, and a deeper understanding of feelings which can complement

justice education. This alone is a justification for making life writing an integral part of the curriculum for law courses.

Life Writing and Its Relevance in Justice Education

Life writing is a hybrid domain as it is part history, part fiction, and part social document. Difficult to categorize epistemologically, life writing has been acknowledged as a supporting resource in various disciplinary fields, including sociology, legal studies, political theory, history, feminist studies, queer studies, and cultural studies in general. The art of telling the story of one's or another's life from a subjective point of view is the approach commonly used in life writing. A writer of auto/biography depends on memory, hearsay, archives, and several other documents for an imaginative recreation of moments and stages in life. The truth claims in memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies are not comparable to scientific veracity, but that does not diminish the relevance of life writing in complementing justice education.

With new developments in criticism and literary theory, life writing as a literary genre is not to be judged by a narrow framework of accuracy and authenticity. Being a blend of lived reality, perception and imaginative interpretations of the experiential, life writing can be viewed as a site for constructing, evolving, and exhibiting selves and life worlds. As a genre, it also indicates entering into the multiverse of socio-cultural and political contexts and historical phases, using narration as the key. Life writing can goad our reasoning and emotions to diverse spaces, temporalities, and people, and such multidirectional inquiry, as a methodology, is important for nurturing the discipline of law. What life writing does to the study of law is to give numerous contexts and situations as reference points and supplement one's understanding of people and the workings of their minds, institutions, and societies. This approach contributes to the readers' understanding of legal history and striving for justice. Integrating life writing into the curriculum helps in establishing a contextualized and interdisciplinary approach to legal scholarship.

Life writing as narratives about the self (memoirs and autobiography) and others (biography) ushers the readers into microcosmic and macrocosmic spheres of existence, facilitating vicarious participation in diverse scenarios of life, which may lead to a culture of human connections based on shared understanding. Life writing offering opportunities for vicariously experiencing emotions could be a pedagogical means for developing emotional intelligence and affective sensibility (a cultural and contextual

understanding of a wide range of emotions). Life writing which grants access to manifold mindscapes and social realms has an enabling effect on empathy. Leafing through accounts of life, one gets to make sense of the aspirations, visions, triumphs, and failures of individuals and communities. Life writing may sensitize its readers to a more humane outlook through a candid and non-judgmental approach to the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of people whose lives are the subject of narration. Reading autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs can be a disconcerting experience as these accounts can radically alter how we perceive or interact with ourselves, others, and the world.

Another factor about life writing contributing to justice education is the awareness of accountability. In her *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler creates a theoretical map of the construction and performance of the self, using the tropes of agency, accountability, and ethics. Giving an account of oneself is about the narration of the self and how the process makes the self both accounted for and accountable in an ethical sense. In other words, the self that gives an account of itself or the other is entrusted with accountability and is morally answerable. This perspective encloses life writing in a framework of ethical responsiveness to the other. This is a pertinent rationale for integrating life writing into justice education, as justice in action relies heavily on responsiveness and accountability.

For students of law, life writing is also a training in reading and interpretation. Life writing straddling literature and history raises questions about perspective, attitude towards the addressee or the readers, the politics of selection and omission of detail, and the tonality of narration. Besides the expansion of disciplinary domains pertinent to law, strategy, and aesthetics of narration in life writing provides lessons in stylistics, models for self-expression, and training in the skill of writing for legal scholars and practitioners. As a literary trope, life writing also provides scholars and practitioners of law with opportunities for cultivating effective language and communication skills, not to mention, life skills. Life writing may help readers master the arts of imagination, narration, and creative expression.

The paper has identified certain tropes of life writing relevant to the study of law and justice education. The focus is on the benefits that accrue if students of law read them: 1. Accounts that inspire, reassure, or provide the readers with an imitable model: Autobiographies, memoirs, and biographies that capture the lives of those who have impacted societies and people around them contain inspirational and cautionary moments, which encourages critical thinking and generates ethical debates relevant

to justice education. This is a category of life writing that could contribute to the curriculum for law through a narration of lives that are filled with instances one can relate to and learn from; 2.

Accounts that capture the plight of those who were victims of such crimes against humanity as pogroms, genocides, ethnic violence, and wars: Life writing that documents the experiences of those who have witnessed and survived crimes against humanity could be included in the legal curriculum for investigations on human agency, liability, and vulnerability. Representations in life writing of such incidents demonstrating how human beings can sabotage and destroy the lives of fellow beings compel us to review our faith in human civilization, moral values, and justice; 3. Accounts of those who have faced subjugation and oppression, and used life writing for social critique or as a powerful strategy in the struggles for rights, liberty, and equality: Life writing, through its potential to represent society and the experiences of individuals can facilitate social critique, initiate dialogues about justice as an idea and realizable goal, and shed light on how justice is interrelated and interdependent on politico-legal concepts. Moreover, the oppressed and the victimized have used life writing to document their plight and also as a site for voicing their dissent, hence creating a sense of collective accountability and moral shame in the readers. Interventions and movements for social change documented in life writing through the stories of the marginalized and the oppressed revitalize justice education.

The following sections of the paper will shed light on the educational advantages and pedagogical approaches to each of the above-mentioned categories of life writing.

Accounts that inspire, Reassure, or Provide the Readers with an Imitable Model

The category of life writing that revolves around exemplary individuals and celebrates their lives and accomplishments has been quite popular. Accounts that persuade, reassure, or provide the readers with an imitable model and cues for a pragmatic approach have always been an acceptable component in legal scholarship. The autobiographies, memoirs, or biographies of individuals instrumental in social or legal reforms and judges or lawyers with illustrious careers are generally integrated into the curriculum for law for instruction and inspiration. In the stories capturing the struggles, moments of self-doubt, perseverance, failures, and extraordinary accomplishments of legal scholars and professionals, the

readers search for certain incidents that they can relate to, benefit from, or emulate. Important personalities who are not from the field of law also embody behaviours, attitudes, and principles that are worth examining and imbibing.

Autobiographies, memoirs, and personal anecdotes discussing the narrator's failures and flaws can be read as cautionary accounts. Such accounts warn about the perils and pitfalls constituting the everyday lives and careers of legal professionals. Learnings from the experiences of others have immense value as those accounts are also resources for exploring the terrains of life's opportunities, times of crises, and practical remedies to problems. The accounts of the lives of eminent people are made part of the curriculum for legal studies with the rationale that students can learn from the success and struggles of others. As readers of life writing, law students, legal scholars, and practitioners of law may garner a variety of models that they can follow and antimodels that they should be wary of in their own lives, education, and professional pursuits. From a utility-based approach to life writing, it is expected that one seeks exemplary models to emulate. Life writing provides role models and antimodels. An antimodel is something that cautions the reader about destructive or troublesome patterns of thinking and behaviour. The life of a criminal could be a simple example of an antimodel. Even in the lives of people with remarkable success and accomplishments, there could be moments, personality traits, and misjudgments that warn the readers, hence constituting an 'antimodel'.

Gandhi gives an engaging narrative of his life as a student in India when he decided to be a legal professional, and in England where he studied to become a barrister, followed by his career as a lawyer in South Africa. All these phases of Gandhi's life can be read from the autobiographical account, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, a text that illustrates how life writing becomes a resource for models and antimodels. The compilation of anecdotal narratives and excerpts from other sources on Gandhi as a legal expert and practitioner in *The Law and the Lawyers* fulfills the triple functions of informing, instructing, and inspiring. There are incidents from Gandhi's life and candid accounts of his vulnerable moments, which remain etched in our memory and illumine our darkest hours of apprehensions, uncertainty, and fears with certitude, courage, and clarity. These sparks of insight may guide many students pursuing law, people who are at various stages of legal scholarship and career, and also those who use their training in law for social and humanitarian causes.

The lives of the leaders of the Indian National Movement and the guiding forces in social and religious reform such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, Dayananda Saraswati, Sarojini Naidu, and several others can be studied by students of law for enriching justice education as these accounts capture moments of victory against colonialism, discriminatory and superstitious practices, and social evils. APJ Abdul Kalam's *Wings of Fire* is an autobiography present in the curriculum across disciplines as the youth find it particularly moving and encouraging. *I am Malala: The Girl who Stood up for Education and was Shot up by the Taliban* is a text that gives a message of courage and perseverance to students. *Waiting for a Visa*, by Ambedkar is a short poignant autobiographical account of his struggles in a phase in Indian history where caste discrimination was inhuman and dehumanizing. How Ambedkar prevailed over this heartless treatment can be a source of motivation for its readers.

A category of texts that can claim a position of great importance in the curriculum for law in Indian universities is autobiographies and biographies of legal luminaries. *Roses in December* by Mahomedali Currim Chagla, in its honest accounts of a range of experiences that the narrator had during his eventful career as a legal expert, minister, and diplomat raises crucial questions about a fruitful relationship that is conscious of boundaries to be established between the judiciary and the legislature. Chagla, a public intellectual whose opinions of law and justice influenced many generations and an unwavering champion of civil liberties, had a clear vision for Indian democracy, which was not completely crushed by the horrors of Emergency. Nani Palkhivala's inspiring life has been the subject of many biographies penned by other legal experts. *Nani Palkhivala: The Courtroom Genius* by Soli J Sorabjee, *Nani A Palkhivala: A Life* by M V Kamath, and *The Wit and Wisdom of Nani A. Palkhivala* written by Jignesh R. Shah narrates the life, career and socio-legal interventions of the illustrious judge. Leila Seth's *On Balance: An Autobiography*, and *Before Memory Fades: An Autobiography* by Fali S. Nariman are examples of autobiographies that offer glimpses of the personal and professional lives of the narrators along with the history of Indian Judiciary and judicial reforms.

In courses like political theory and law, American universities have incorporated life writing as crucial reading and reference materials. Numerous biographies of Abraham Lincoln, as an illustrious lawyer-statesman, besides historical fiction and films based on his life and career have found a place of prominence in legal scholarship. The life narratives of legal luminaries who later became Presidents of America are perused for

inspiration from their tumultuous and triumphant political careers and also for gathering information about important phases in American political and legal history. Presidents and First Ladies have explored the potential of life writing to offer subtexts to the historical evolutions and transitions of America as a nation, its domestic and foreign policies, and interventions in the events of the world. In the memoirs or autobiographies by presidents and first ladies who were legal professionals, the recent additions are *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, and *A Promised Land*, two autobiographical accounts by Barack Obama, *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, *Living History: Memoirs*, and *Hard Choices* by Hilary Rodham Clinton, and *My Life* by Bill Clinton. These texts incorporated into the curriculum and reading lists are not just moving personal accounts; they reinforce the understanding of socio-legal histories, hence promoting justice education.

As an integral component of the 'Law and Literature Movement', Life writing has made its entry into the undergraduate programs in Law. The 'Law and Literature' movement in American and European academia has argued for integrating various genres of literature, including life writing into the curriculum for law. A scrutiny of the autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs that are part of the curricula and reading list of the academic programs in the USA and UK reveals an overwhelming presence of accounts about or by white male judges and lawyers, many of whom later wielded political power and important institutional positions. The comparatively rare presence of the lives and careers of women judges or other legal experts in the domain of life writing is hard to ignore. The narrative voices and lives of legal experts or practitioners of other genders outside of the scope of a conventional binary framework are practically absent. Similarly, narratives about or by people of colour and representing continents other than North America and Europe in the legal domain are also hard to find in the syllabi of the universities of the United States and the UK. A cursory examination of legal biography points to the fact that most of the texts revolve around the lives of the elite (i.e., white, male, and heterosexual) and seldom find an interest in the lives of the less privileged and affluent. A similar trait of elitism is prevalent in the domain of judicial life writing in India.

New categories of life writing such as graphic life writing and video biographies will make the genre more appealing to the students and can be easily included in the curriculum across disciplines. One of the reasons for readership for life writing is its educational potential as a resource for experiential wisdom and skills for conducting our private, public, and

professional lives. The ideas and experiences that one gathers from life writing are perceived to be edifying, didactic, and stimulating, besides having the power to challenge our preconceived notions about people and periods in history. During crises and adversity in personal or professional lives, life writing may act as a beacon of hope and aid the reader in strategizing problem-solving.

The story of a 'successful' and fulfilling life is sometimes used as a role model or a toolkit that may come in handy in enhancing the quality of life for the reader. Life writing is also read to set things right in the reader's life by learning from examples and comparable situations. Beyond such self-evident utility and practical advantage, life writing encourages critical thinking leading to a demystification of those who occupy lofty pedestals in our imagination. While using life writing as a pedagogical means, we should guard against blind admiration or complete dismissal of individuals. Analytical and affective readings of life writing help students and scholars of law nurture informed scepticism as opposed to unreasonable eulogizing of famous people. Life writing is not always hagiographical in intent; it can also be subversive and iconoclastic. Life writing can demythologize individuals and incidents, being a source of alternative perspectives about the lives and times of the narrative subjects.

Stories of the Victims of Crimes against Humanity: Lessons in Accountability, Ethics, and Justice

Crimes against humanity spread across history compels the readers to look at power, guilt, redemption, and mercy in a more nuanced manner. Crimes against humanity are numerous and have affected nations and milieus. In this section of the paper, I focus on memoirs and auto/biographies about the experiences of the Holocaust and communal violence and displacement during the Partition of India and Pakistan. The narrative politics surrounding the Holocaust guides us to multiple inquiries about justice, veracity, ethics, accountability, and credibility. In the context of the Holocaust, the testimonies of the survivors and the accounts by the victims about their experiences in the concentration camps were admitted in the Nuremberg Trials, Nuremberg Medical Trials, and the Trial of Adolf Eichmann.

The autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs of human beings who have witnessed or survived excruciating crimes against humanity such as the Holocaust and the violence during the Partition point to the precarity of our lives and socio-political arrangements. Reading Anne Frank and

Elie Wiesel is not limited to seeking historical knowledge. Getting motivated by survivors' attitudes to adversity and gathering awareness about the injustice that sabotages the lives of the masses is important. Texts that capture horrendous crimes against humanity guard us against apathy and indifference to the suffering of others. As long as the crimes against humanity do not affect us and those who are close to us, we are rarely moved to strong feelings or actions by them. Tragic incidents in the history of humanity, including ethnic violence, wars and autocratic regimes that have been brutally unjust and oppressive have generated life writings and testimonies. Such categories of writing hurl at us pertinent questions about violence, victimization, and justice.

As part of their 'Law and Literature' course in Semester II, the students are encouraged to explore aspects of totalitarianism. They read certain memoirs and watch films based on the Holocaust. *The Choice* by Edith Eger, who had been pulled from a pile of dead bodies by a soldier when Auschwitz was liberated has documented her brave survival of the horrors of the concentration camp and elaborated on the difficult process of healing. *Night* by Elie Wiesel is a poignant account of his adolescent life spent in the Nazi death camps that raises existential concerns around experience, the memory of suffering, and the history of human cruelty. Accounts by the victims or survivors of the crimes against humanity validate the life-sustaining power of literature by illustrating how the act of remembering and writing is an assertion of vitality. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is an important account of the Holocaust, narrating the tragic details of the horrors, the shattering of dreams, and the lingering hope from the perspective of a Jewish girl living in hiding.

Primo-Levi's narratives, writings of Amos Oz, and Viktor Frankl, along with literary works and films based on the Holocaust give the students a nuanced perspective on one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. In the pedagogical scheme, the reading of life writing based on the Holocaust is supplemented by the imaginative or realistic portrayal of it in fiction and films from different parts of the world. This approach creates a learning culture and epistemic approach around justice far richer and varied than a perusal of historical accounts could provide.

A similar approach is followed for the Partition of India, which is studied through the accounts collected by Urvashi Butalia and Alok Bhalla in their works, along with films and literary works, especially by Saadat Hasan Manto and Ismat Chughtai. The narratives from *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* by Urvashi Butalia are read and

discussed so that students fathom the extent of personal trauma and historical tragedy that Partition represents. *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* by Ritu Menon and Alok Bhalla's *Partition Dialogues* are discussed in the class to learn about partition from the experiential point-of-view and to understand a dark phase in the histories of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Crimes against humanity give rise to myriad issues to ponder for students of law. The basic questions about culpability, responsibility, and answerability and the larger debates on ethics and justice can be brought up in classroom discussions around narratives by or on victims and survivors of crimes against humanity. Incorporating life writing or experiential anecdotes on the Holocaust and the Partition has unleashed discourses and debates on justice and the (im)possibility of forgiveness in the classroom.

Writing and Reading that Make a Difference: Life Writing and Social Change

Human societies where inequalities, denial of freedom, and a culture of oppression are validated and allowed to thrive need not be the ideal spaces for justice and human rights. Generating a sense of shame and concern around injustice through the life writing of the oppressed is important. Life writing is an opportunity for salvaging the voice of the silenced and selves that have been made invisible by the clandestine exercise of authority. That is the reason for life writing being woven into the struggles against oppression and victimization. In emancipatory and liberatory movements, Dalits, feminists, and oppressed people, in general, have used memoirs, experiential anecdotes, and autobiographies as a site for voicing their disagreements and registering their protests.

The commencement and continuation of struggles for human rights have often relied on the power of life writing and narrative interventions. The role of autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs in bringing to light the violation of human rights and creating a sense of moral obligation and accountability cannot be undermined. For the victims of injustice and discrimination, narrating the journey of their lives is a powerful form of expressing discontentment, resistance, and retribution. Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith find close connections between human rights and life narrative:

Victims of abuse around the world have testified to their experience in an outpouring of oral and written narratives.... [These narratives] begin to voice, recognize, and bear witness to a diversity of values, experiences,

and ways of imagining a just social world and of responding to injustice, inequality, and human suffering. Indeed, over the last twenty years, life narratives have become one of the most potent vehicles for advancing human rights claims.

Through life writing, a web of relatability and identification is woven around shared suffering as illness narratives or accounts by the survivors of violence exemplify. The knowledge of human minds and societies one gains from perusing life writing paves the way for expanding the discipline of law and helps scholars develop a sensitive and nuanced understanding of social phenomena. Life writing about ailments, disability, and chronic pain in the form of memoirs and autobiographical accounts is a strategy for demanding justice from an indifferent and callous system. These narratives address the experiential concerns and direct their dissent against social prejudices and apathy surrounding illness, disability, and physical or emotional pain. As the memoirs of their cancer experience by Audre Lorde, Susan Sontag, Eve Ensler, and Susan Gubar affirm, writing is powerful activism as it keeps ideas and a seething rage about systemic injustice in the air. Audre Lorde notes in her *Cancer Journals* how illness amounts to activism aspiring for change: "What would happen if an army of one-breasted women descended upon Congress"? She further argues how the experience of cancer generates solidarity amongst the sufferers and survivors, bringing them together in a struggle for justice. Noting down the experiences of illness helps people express their concerns about the indifference of governments, the inefficiency of the medical establishment, and the prevalent stigma around ailments that are considered to be life-threatening. Eve Ensler draws parallels between cancer that destroys her body and humans that destroy the environment in her *In the Body of the World*.

Individuals who have faced oppression and documented their experiences often use writing as a mode of protest and incorporate life writing as an integral part of their quest for justice. Considering the prevalent social divisions, and the resulting discrimination and exploitation, the influence of memoirs and autobiographical accounts in making people aware of the problems of an unequal distribution of power is significant.

Life writing by women, transgenders, and homosexuals challenges a predominantly patriarchal and heterosexual perspective about societies and unsettles the power structures. Autobiography and memoirs have reinforced the struggles against racial, class, and caste discrimination. The stories of the victims of discrimination and the inspiring and poignant

narratives of their struggle can be read alongside historical accounts to make sense of important moments of human aspiration and emancipation. A heartening tendency as far as memoirs and autobiographies by women and Dalits facing oppression are concerned is that their narrative expressions lead to establishing deeper connections and solidarity, paving the way to collective dissent and resistance.

Women's life writing spreads across the genres of private journals, letters, diaries, and autobiographies. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, along with her poetry has inspired and given courage to women from different parts of the world in their striving for justice. As a gendered and racial subject, Angelou projects a radical and emancipatory approach in her writings which transmits a reassuring message to those who are involved in similar struggles against oppression and discrimination.

Life writing gives a reader access to dimensions of life and experience that are not found in conventional historical accounts. I encourage the students to explore Life writing by numerous Dalit writers which capture social injustice, exploitation, and discrimination through a narration of observations and experiences. Some of the texts that were used in class discussions and student projects for making sense of injustice, humiliation, and violence faced by the Dalits are Daya Pawar's *Baluta, The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* by Urmila Pawar, and *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* by Omprakash Valmiki. Bama's *Karukku* documents the Christian Dalit experience and discusses the interfaces of caste, religion, and gender that generate conditions for discriminatory tendencies leading to social injustice. Through candid testimonials and anecdotes by the family members of its writer,

Sujatha Gidla's *Ants among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* gives a sense of a personal account of caste founded on the bitter experiences of the downtrodden. The text is also a critique of caste hierarchy, which unpacks the paradoxes of Indian modernity. With its raw energy and iconoclastic approach, the autobiography *I Want to Destroy Myself: A Memoir* by Malika Amar Shaikh, carves identities to the author other than the partner of Namdeo Dhasal (a famous Marathi writer). This text gives a poignant account of a woman trying to find a place of her own in the world of eminent men. The reading list is ever-expanding, incorporating the voices of Dalits, tribals, transgenders, and several other oppressed humans who have stories of victimization and survival to share with the world as a form of conscientization and subversion. Many of these texts were originally written in the regional languages of India and

eventually translated into English. *Framed as a Terrorist: My Fourteen Year Struggle to Prove My Innocence* by Mohammad Aamir Khan, with Nandita Haskar, and *13 Years: A Naxalite's Prison Diary* by Ramachandra Singh are valuable additions to the vision of justice education through life writing as these texts are about the irony of an unjust legal system wronging the citizens and depriving them of basic human rights.

For the writers of life writing, it is often an act of daring as the genre exposes the narrators and their circumstances to public knowledge and scrutiny. Life writing has an innate capacity for speaking truth to power and hence it can become the locus for epistemic resistance. Epistemic resistance is made possible through knowledge and awareness as the source of dissent. Epistemic resistance is also about how knowledge creates a culture of daring to challenge the established narratives that get validated as truth. In other words, keeping the ideas in the air, developing critical thinking that makes people question the official versions of the truth, and speaking truth to power, with the subversive authority of knowledge, are all part of epistemic resistance. Epistemic resistance may also refer to the tangible process of criticizing unjust practices, suggesting alternative practices, and being instrumental in social change. Epistemic resistance and justice education overlap and inform one another as fields of knowledge.

Conclusion

Life writing enriches the epistemic inquiries of scholars interested in an interdisciplinary approach through its thematic scope and analytical framework, which yokes together the methodologies of social sciences and humanities. Socio-legal scholars use life writing for conceptual enhancements across such areas as legal pluralism, rights, identity, sexuality, and the role and rule of law in everyday lives and social contexts. Life writing is both an inward and outward journey in search of selves and subjects. Nothing can be extrinsic to the scope of life writing as we come across experiences and emotions, cultures, political systems, individual and collective histories, and endeavours resulting in reconstituting the social order in memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies.

Exposure to life writing becomes an opportunity to be schooled by life and shocked out of complacency. Engaging with life writing is comparable to a voyage for knowledge and adventure, as it lets us out into a spatial-temporal universe of minds, selves, and lives. While examining life writing from the readers' points of view, several pedagogical possibil-

ities emerge, which can make justice education possible and meaningful. Life writing builds perceptions around our histories, environments, and contemporary contexts and humanizes its readers. Students of law may gather lessons for life and insights relevant to legal scholarship and practice from such accounts.

Notes

1. See Butler. *Giving an Account of Oneself*, ch.1, pp.3-39
2. Crimes against humanity is a term that is rather loosely defined, and historically it referred to many unjust acts and practices including 'slavery' and 'genocide' which affected communities for a considerable period of time in an inhuman and brutal manner. The United Nations have specific directives about what constitutes crimes against humanity, which can be read from <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/crimes-against-humanity.shtml> (accessed in September 2023). In the paper, I identify the Holocaust and Communal Violence during the Partition as 'crimes against humanity' to illustrate how life writing about these incidents initiates debates about politico-legal concepts and can hence be integrated into 'justice education'.
3. *The Law and the Lawyers* is a compilation of Gandhi's experiences as a law student and legal professional, culled from several sources by S.B. Kher.
4. See *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*, 1.
5. Lorde, *Cancer Journals*, 15.

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