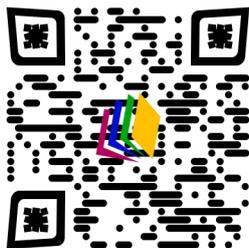


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Museum of Memories: Significance of Cultural Artefacts and Texts in Reconstructing and Narrativizing the Past

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ABSTRACT:

Memory is like a museum. It is our own personal repository and holds the key to our past. To unlock and understand the mysteries of the past, it is important thereby to access those arenas of our mind where the past has been buried. Our memory in this case helps us to preserve and understand the past. Walking down the memory lane, we not only re-live and re-experience the past but it also helps us to re-construct, re-constitute history and identity and shape the future. Narrativity then, plays a significant role for it is only through narrative that a memory or a past history can be re-examined. In this context then, it can be rightly said that memory is narrative and narrative is memory. Cultural artefacts and texts are the tropes through which memory and narrative can be analysed thereby allowing us to investigate history, re-examine it, narrativize it and possibly come up with an alternative history that is different from the naturalised history. This paper intends to examine the role and significance of memory and look into the theorisation of cultural artefacts and texts as repositories of memories both political and cultural in nature. For this purpose, it will examine the role of food, photographs, museums, family heirloom and texts particularly Nandita Haksar's *The Exodus Is Not Over* and *Bhimayana*, the graphic biography of Dr Ambedkar developed by Navayana. The final part of the paper will focus on examining how in acting as repository of memories, the cultural artefacts and texts reconstruct history.

KEY WORDS: Memory, Narrative, Cultural artefacts, History, Identity, Memory Studies, Nostalgia, Caste, Ambedkar.

The past holds many secrets as it is famously said. To unlock and understand the mysteries of the past, it is important thereby to access those arenas of our mind where the past has been buried. Our memory in this case helps us to preserve and understand the past. Memory is about "encoding, storage and retrieval" (Ross and Wang 2010, 401). In this act of retrieval, we not only re-experience the past but it also helps us to re-construct, re-constitute history and identity and shape the future. Narrativity in this context, plays a significant role for it is only through