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## The Same Old Goodbye For The Famous And The Non-Famous: A Critical Look Into The Social Construction Of Obituaries.

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### INTRODUCTION:

Over the years, Obituaries of laymen has had a way of being bland, formal, uninteresting and factual of a person's birth, surviving family members and his/her notable achievements. People who write these listicles are seen as even worse. They are looked down upon as failed journalists or people who are too old to have the rush of adrenaline for adventures in real world (reporting crime, celebrity interviews, pop culture, politics, etc). They are either put in a cubicle or sent to some faraway quiet small town. But to understand the culture of a specific time period, the last thing we need is to make deaths extremely morbid and boring. An Obituary is not only a reflection of the person's personal life but of the surrounding environment, culture, time-period and the specific challenges the person was engulfed in. It is a study of a history situated around an individual. It is more specific and hence immensely important and significant.

The obituaries editor of The Economist, Ann wroe once shared an interesting take on death. She said: "I don't think of dead as dead, that's the thing and therefore it doesn't trouble me. It is an absence if you like... I think an obituary is a celebration of a life.. I want to get the texture and the sound and even the smell of someone and get right inside the essence of that person". (*Importance of an obituary; 2016; The Hindu*) . This essence of a person that precedes his existence even after he is gone is a result of the time he was living in, the culture he was surrounded by and the ideals and values that was popular and normal. "It is not just a way to understand a person who has departed but the world he/she inhabited and made a difference. It is a sneak preview to history. It is about individual quirks and brilliances." (*Importance of an obituary; 2016; The Hindu*)

It is not just a verdict or a tool to help the bereaved but about the worth of a dead person's contribution in that time period. He can be the greatest political leader of a nation or a well known leader of a liberating movement or a journalist, a writer or an artist yet he still can be a layman surviving the years of a bygone years. His remembrance will carry his contributions that are a reflection to the culture, the ethos and the principle around at that time. Yet it is personal and not so social or formal. The usual structure of an Obituary will hold a pretty defined structures listing a person's achievements, education, assessment of character and significance but rarely some will hold grudges or a criticism because it goes against the general adage, 'don't speak ill of the dead'. It usually does have a chronological narrative - taking the subject from the cradle to the grave, resting on a measured historic assessment of the subject that gives account of a society's collective values in engagement to the past. "Unlike standard representations of death in the news media, modern journalistic practices surrounding obituaries emphasize 'a life lived instead of a death died'" (*Kristen Adams; Rewriting history*)

Obituaries editor of New York Times, Bill McDonald describes the modern role of obituary in journalism: 'We seek only to report deaths and to sum up lives, illuminating why, in our judgement, those lives were significant. It has a resounding cultural voice' (*Kristen Adams; Rewriting history*). When in the late evening of 30 November 2018, former US President George H.W. Bush passed away, within hours the metropolitan news and the national news organizations had published obituaries for the 41st president, often going at great details and length on his legacy and life. This was possible because obituaries of famous, significant and important people are written twenty five to thirty years before their actual demise. Obituaries editors keep editing them from time to time when a health scare related to the concerned person emerges. These files are stored and details are added. And hence it has such efficiency in going out so soon as the unfortunate incident happens. It is also quite possible that the people who wrote the obituary are dead or quite old themselves.

In India such position of an obituary editor doesn't exist. 'Talking about this K.G. Subramanyan, Padma Vibhushan awarded Indian artist had said, "To live constantly in the presence of only one's self should be a petrifying bore. So we choose to come out, bend over the balcony and whistle at the stranger. And I, presume, the stranger is happy to whistle back. We may not get very far, but we will still be all the better for even these imperfect encounters." A well crafted, earnest and insightful obituary is a whistle for meaningful encounters. It is the media's job to keep it audible.' (*Importance of an obituary; 2016, The hindu*)

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study will aim at looking at the diverse collection of journalistic entries that serve obituaries to the significant personalities on their demise and analyse how exactly the narrative is structured and given a proper shape in comparison to the obituary entries published for a layman. It will investigate a hidden deep structure within a surface structure. This study will also look into payment to space occupied ratio in a newspaper page. Finally it will look at certain hilarious, quirky goodbyes some family members had to say to commemorate the demise of a person who had an amazing sense of humour, in contemporary times.

## METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This study will take up certain case studies of journalists' experiences who were involved in drafting obituaries of famous people and newspaper agency who are responsible to mark a small space in their newsletter for a layman's obituary. I look forward to conducting interviews with journalists working for national or local news organization to look at the significance of written obituaries in recent times wherein technology is changing rapidly to a more visual medium and depiction of dramatic storytelling surrounding a death of a person. Finally I will look into certain images, news clippings that convey a more unique way or a style to approach such a poignant norm and culture.

I am looking into taking up Chomsky's Surface Structure vs Deep Structure to analyse the descriptions used in drafting a skillful obituary. If one looks closely, the obituary will always have 'deep structure: while not always visible on the surface, it constantly follows a chronology of a life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Kristen Adams' article titled **"(Re)Writing History: Examining the Cultural Work of the Obituary and Journalists' Construction of a Former President's Legacy"** published in *Journalism*, Vol. 23, No. 5, explores the cultural significance of obituaries and how journalists construct the legacy of a former president. Adams critically examines the role of obituaries as a form of media representation that shapes public memory and perception of historical figures, particularly former presidents.

Adams argues that obituaries are not just factual accounts of a person's life and achievements, but rather complex cultural texts that are shaped by journalistic practices, ideologies, and cultural norms. Through a thorough analysis of obituaries of former presidents, Adams explores how journalists construct narratives of presidential legacies that often reflect their own biases, ideologies, and cultural values. She highlights the power dynamics

at play in the construction of obituaries, as journalists hold the authority to shape public memory and influence historical interpretation.

The article also delves into the ways in which journalists "rewrite" history through obituaries, examining how they selectively highlight certain aspects of a president's life and legacy while downplaying or omitting others. Adams discusses how obituaries can serve as sites of contestation, where journalists negotiate and construct competing narratives about a former president's impact and legacy. She also examines how obituaries can reinforce or challenge dominant cultural narratives about presidential legacies, particularly in the context of political polarization and changing societal norms.

Overall, Adams' article sheds light on the cultural work of obituaries and the role of journalists in shaping public memory and historical interpretation. It highlights the complexities and nuances involved in constructing narratives of presidential legacies and raises important questions about the relationship between media representations, memory, and history.

A.S. Panneerselvan's article titled "**The Importance of an Obituary**" published in The Hindu on November 17, 2021, discusses the significance of obituaries in contemporary society. Panneerselvan emphasizes the role of obituaries as an important form of journalistic writing that serves multiple purposes beyond just announcing the death of an individual.

The article highlights that obituaries are not only meant to provide factual information about the deceased person's life and achievements but also serve as a way to remember and honor their legacy. Panneerselvan argues that obituaries are an important means of paying tribute to individuals who have made significant contributions to society and deserve to be remembered for their accomplishments.

Furthermore, Panneerselvan discusses how obituaries can also serve as a means of social commentary and reflection on the values and norms of a society. Obituaries can shed light on the cultural, social, and political context in which the deceased person lived, and provide insights into their impact on their community and beyond.

Panneerselvan also emphasizes that obituaries can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for readers, as they highlight the achievements and contributions of individuals who can serve as role models. Obituaries can inspire readers to emulate the virtues and values embodied by the deceased person, and promote a sense of collective memory and heritage.

The article further discusses the evolving nature of obituaries in the digital age, where social media and online platforms have become prominent spaces for memorializing and remembering the deceased. Panneerselvan highlights how obituaries have adapted to the digital realm, with online platforms providing opportunities for collective grieving, sharing memories, and preserving the legacies of the deceased.

In conclusion, Panneerselvan's article underscores the importance of obituaries as a form of journalistic writing that goes beyond mere announcements of death. Obituaries serve as a means of remembering, honoring, and reflecting on the lives of individuals who have made significant contributions to society, and they continue to evolve in the digital age as a way to collectively preserve memories and legacies.

"**Obituaries**" published in The China Quarterly, No. 161, was written by multiple authors, including Andrew Watson, Claude Aubert, Paul A. Cohen, Merle Goldman, Roderick MacFarquhar, and David S. G. Goodman. The article is a collection of obituaries paying tribute to individuals who have passed away and made significant contributions in the field of China studies or related areas. The obituaries provide insights into the lives, achievements, and legacies of these individuals namely: Bill Brugger who died battling cancer who was a significant contributor to the study of contemporary China; Jaques Guillermaz who was the founder of French studies on Contemporary China becoming the first hand witness of fifty years of chinese history; Benjamin I. Shwartz, a professor in Harvard government and History department and had become a towering figure in the field of chinese studies through his books and research; Gerry Segal, who was an articulate, provocative, and courageous commentator on a wide range of International politics in Pacific and mainly china. The article sheds light on their scholarly, intellectual, or cultural contributions to the understanding of China or Chinese history, politics, economy, society, or culture. The article offers reflections on the impact of these individuals' work and their contributions to the field of China studies, and also includes personal anecdotes or remembrances of these Academicians by the authors or other scholars. Overall, the article "Obituaries" is a tribute to notable individuals

who have made significant contributions to the study of China and related fields, as written by respected scholars in the field.

**"The Presentation of Dead Selves in Everyday Life: Obituaries and Impression Management"** by Samuel K. Bonsu is an intriguing article published in *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 30, No. 2, that delves into the role of obituaries in constructing and managing impressions of the deceased. Bonsu's work offers a unique and thought-provoking perspective on how obituaries, which are typically considered as commemorative tributes, also serve as tools of impression management in everyday social interactions.

It begins by highlighting the significance of obituaries as a form of symbolic communication. Bonsu explores how obituaries are not only a means of conveying information about the deceased's life and death, but also a way of constructing a specific image or identity of the deceased. The author draws on previous research that has examined the sociological and symbolic interactionist perspectives on obituaries, including the work of Goffman (1959) on impression management and Becker's (1963) concept of "posthumous reputation."

Bonsu also delves into the notion of impression management, which refers to the process of shaping how others perceive and evaluate an individual. The author highlights how obituaries can be seen as a form of impression management, as they allow the surviving family and friends to carefully craft a positive image of the deceased. The review draws on previous research that has explored how obituaries are often written in a way that highlights the achievements, virtues, and positive qualities of the deceased, while downplaying or omitting any negative aspects of their life.

Moreover, Bonsu's article delves into the social construction of identity through obituaries. The author discusses how obituaries are used to construct a particular identity or narrative about the deceased, which may involve highlighting their social connections, roles, and affiliations, as well as their accomplishments and contributions to society. It draws upon previous research that has explored how obituaries can function as a form of social recognition and validation, where the deceased's identity is constructed and reinforced through the language and content of the obituary.

Furthermore, it talks about the social interactions surrounding obituaries. Bonsu discusses how obituaries are not only read and interpreted by the intended audience, but also by a wider social audience. The review explores how obituaries can shape the impressions of the deceased not only for the immediate family and friends, but also for acquaintances, colleagues, and the broader community. The author highlights how obituaries can become a means of managing the social memory and reputation of the deceased, and how the content and tone of obituaries can influence how the deceased is remembered and talked about in social interactions.

Finally, the article discusses the implications of Bonsu's work for understanding the social dynamics of obituaries and impression management in everyday life. The author emphasizes the need for further research to explore how obituaries are constructed, interpreted, and negotiated in different social and cultural contexts, and how they may contribute to the construction of social reality and the shaping of social interactions.

In conclusion, Bonsu's article "The Presentation of Dead Selves in Everyday Life: Obituaries and Impression Management" offers a novel perspective on the role of obituaries as tools of impression management in constructing and managing the impressions of the deceased. This highlights the significance of obituaries as a form of symbolic communication, the social construction of identity through obituaries, and the implications of obituaries for social interactions and the construction of social reality. Bonsu's work opens up new avenues for future research in the field of symbolic interactionism and provides insights into how obituaries contribute to the ongoing.

**"Obituaries"** is an article written by Rayna Rapp and Han F. Vermeulen, published in *Anthropology Today*, Volume 15, Number 3. The article presents a unique anthropological perspective on obituaries, shedding light on their cultural, social, and emotional significance.

The authors argue that obituaries, which are commonly found in newspapers and other media outlets, serve as an important cultural artifact that reflects societal norms, values, and rituals surrounding death and mourning. The article draws on ethnographic research conducted in different cultural contexts to explore how obituaries are constructed and what they reveal about the ways in which societies memorialize the deceased.

One of the key points made by the authors is that obituaries are not simply factual announcements of death, but rather complex narratives that convey stories about the lives of the deceased, their achievements, relationships, and contributions to society. Obituaries often serve as a form of social recognition and validation, as they publicly

acknowledge and commemorate the life of the deceased. The authors highlight how obituaries can be seen as a form of social performance, where individuals and families carefully craft narratives that align with cultural expectations and norms.

The article also discusses how obituaries can reveal social inequalities and power dynamics. Obituaries are not always equally distributed in terms of who gets featured and how they are portrayed. The authors explore how factors such as social class, race, gender, and age can influence the content and tone of obituaries. For example, obituaries of prominent individuals, such as politicians or celebrities, may receive more attention and space in the media compared to those of ordinary individuals from marginalized communities. Obituaries can also reflect gendered roles and expectations, with women's obituaries often focusing on their familial roles as wives and mothers, while men's obituaries may emphasize their professional achievements.

Furthermore, the authors highlight the emotional aspect of obituaries, exploring how they can serve as a medium for grief, mourning, and remembrance. Obituaries can provide an opportunity for loved ones to express their emotions, memories, and sense of loss. They can also become a way for communities to come together to collectively mourn and celebrate the life of the deceased.

The authors also reflect on how the digital age has transformed the landscape of obituaries, with online platforms and social media providing new ways for individuals to memorialize the deceased. They discuss how online obituaries and digital memorials offer new possibilities for storytelling, community-building, and engagement with death and mourning in the contemporary world.

In conclusion, "Obituaries" is a thought-provoking article that sheds light on the cultural, social, and emotional significance of obituaries. Drawing on anthropological research, the authors provide insights into how obituaries are constructed, what they reveal about societies, and how they shape the grieving process. The article offers a unique perspective on this ubiquitous yet understudied cultural phenomenon, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding death, mourning, and memory in different cultural contexts.

**"Organizations and Identity: Obituaries 1856-1972"** is an article written by Gary L. Long and published in *Social Forces*, Volume 65, Number 4. The article explores how obituaries can provide insights into the identities of organizations, shedding light on their history, culture, and social significance.

The author argues that obituaries of organizations, which are typically published in newspapers or other media outlets, can be seen as a form of collective memory and commemoration. Obituaries of organizations are not simply factual announcements of their demise, but rather narratives that reflect the organization's identity and its significance in society. The article draws on a longitudinal analysis of obituaries spanning from 1856 to 1972 to explore how organizations are represented and how their identities are constructed through obituary discourse.

One of the key points made by the author is that obituaries of organizations often contain rich information about their history, culture, and contributions to society. Obituaries may highlight the founding and development of the organization, its achievements, milestones, and notable members. They may also discuss the organization's values, mission, and impact on the community or broader society. The author emphasizes how obituaries can serve as a source of historical data, providing insights into the organizational dynamics, practices, and beliefs that shaped its identity.

The article also discusses how obituaries can reveal the social significance and symbolic value of organizations. Obituaries can shed light on the role of organizations in society, their relationships with other institutions, and their impact on various stakeholders. They can also highlight the meanings and interpretations attached to the organization, both internally by its members and externally by the broader public. The author explores how obituaries can contribute to the construction of organizational identities and legacies, shaping the ways in which organizations are remembered and memorialized.

Furthermore, the author highlights how obituaries of organizations can reflect broader social and cultural trends. Obituaries can reveal changing norms, values, and ideologies in society, as well as shifts in organizational practices and structures over time. The author discusses how obituaries can provide insights into the cultural and historical contexts in which organizations operated, including social, economic, and political factors that influenced their identity and fate.

In conclusion, "Organizations and Identity: Obituaries 1856-1972" is a scholarly article that offers a unique perspective on the role of obituaries in understanding the identities of organizations. Through a longitudinal analysis of obituaries, the author highlights how obituaries can provide valuable insights into the history, culture, and social significance of organizations. The article contributes to the literature on organizational identity,

collective memory, and commemoration, providing readers with a deeper understanding of how organizations are represented and remembered in society.

**"The Portrayal of Librarians in Obituaries at the End of the Twentieth Century"** is an article written by Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb, published in *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, Volume 74, Number 2. The article examines how librarians are portrayed in obituaries, specifically focusing on obituaries published at the end of the twentieth century.

The authors argue that obituaries can be a valuable source for understanding the cultural perception of librarians and the image of the library profession in society. Obituaries are seen as a form of collective memory, reflecting the ways in which librarians are remembered and memorialized after their passing. The article draws on a content analysis of obituaries to explore the portrayal of librarians and the themes that emerge in their obituary discourse. One of the main findings of the article is that obituaries often highlight the contributions and achievements of librarians. Obituaries may mention their professional accomplishments, such as their roles in building library collections, providing information services, and promoting literacy and education in their communities. They may also highlight their involvement in professional organizations, research, and advocacy for intellectual freedom and access to information. The authors emphasize how obituaries can provide insights into the important roles that librarians play in society and the recognition they receive for their work.

The article also discusses how obituaries can reflect the personal qualities and characteristics attributed to librarians. Obituaries may describe librarians as dedicated, knowledgeable, helpful, and passionate about their work. They may also mention their commitment to public service, their role as custodians of knowledge, and their contributions to promoting intellectual and cultural enrichment in their communities. The authors explore how obituaries can shape the image of librarians as professionals who are deeply committed to their profession and to the betterment of society.

Furthermore, the authors highlight how obituaries can reveal the social and cultural contexts in which librarians lived and worked. Obituaries may discuss the challenges and changes that librarians faced during their careers, such as technological advancements, budget constraints, and evolving societal needs. They may also mention the social and cultural changes that influenced the perception of librarianship, such as shifting attitudes towards information, education, and public institutions. The authors discuss how obituaries can provide insights into the broader social and cultural dynamics that shape the portrayal of librarians in society.

In conclusion, "The Portrayal of Librarians in Obituaries at the End of the Twentieth Century" is a scholarly article that offers a unique perspective on the portrayal of librarians in obituaries. Through a content analysis of obituaries, the authors highlight how obituaries can provide insights into the contributions, qualities, and social contexts of librarians. The article contributes to the literature on librarianship, professional identity, and cultural perceptions of the library profession, providing readers with a deeper understanding of how librarians are remembered and memorialized in society.

**"Afterlife: New York Times Obituary Writer MARGALIT FOX Has the Last Word"** is an article written by Jane Maher, published in *Creative Nonfiction*, Issue No. 59. The article provides an in-depth exploration of the work and life of Margalit Fox, an obituary writer for *The New York Times*.

The article delves into Fox's career as an obituary writer, a unique and often overlooked journalistic specialty. Maher discusses Fox's approach to writing obituaries, which goes beyond mere biographical facts and aims to capture the essence of a person's life and legacy. Fox is portrayed as a skilled storyteller who brings depth and nuance to the obituaries she writes, weaving together anecdotes, insights, and historical context to create vivid portraits of the deceased individuals.

The article also delves into Fox's background and personal journey, shedding light on her motivations and perspectives as an obituary writer. Maher discusses how Fox sees obituaries as an opportunity to celebrate the lives of ordinary people who have made meaningful contributions to society, and how she approaches her work with empathy, sensitivity, and attention to detail. Maher also explores Fox's fascination with language and etymology, which she incorporates into her obituary writing, adding depth and richness to her narratives.

Moreover, the article highlights the significance of obituaries in capturing history and preserving collective memory. Maher discusses how obituaries serve as a historical record of notable individuals and events, and how Fox's work contributes to the archive of human history. Maher also touches on the challenges and responsibilities of writing obituaries, such as the need to balance accuracy with sensitivity, and the ethical considerations of writing about individuals who may have controversial legacies.

Additionally, the article discusses Fox's reflections on the evolving nature of obituary writing in the digital age. Maher explores how Fox embraces new technologies and online resources to enhance her research and writing process, while also reflecting on the potential impact of social media and changing media landscapes on the future of obituary writing.

In conclusion, "Afterlife: New York Times Obituary Writer MARGALIT FOX Has the Last Word" is a compelling article that provides an in-depth look into the work and life of Margalit Fox as an obituary writer. Through Maher's writing, readers gain insights into Fox's approach to obituary writing, her personal journey, and the significance of obituaries as a form of storytelling, historical record, and celebration of human life. The article offers a unique perspective on the art and craft of obituary writing and sheds light on the important role that obituaries play in capturing the stories and legacies of individuals who have passed away.

**"Listening Post - Feature: The Art of Obituary Writing"** is a multimedia feature produced by Al Jazeera English that explores the craft and significance of obituary writing in journalism.

The feature delves into the art and craft of obituary writing, examining how obituaries are constructed, the challenges and responsibilities that obituary writers face, and the role of obituaries in capturing the stories and legacies of individuals who have passed away. It discusses the process of researching and writing obituaries, including the need for accuracy, sensitivity, and attention to detail.

The feature also explores the evolving nature of obituary writing in the digital age, including the impact of social media and changing media landscapes on the way obituaries are written, published, and shared. It delves into the use of online resources and technologies in enhancing the research and writing process for obituaries.

Moreover, the feature highlights the significance of obituaries as a form of storytelling and historical record, capturing the lives and achievements of notable individuals and events. It discusses how obituaries contribute to the collective memory and understanding of human history, and the role of obituary writers in preserving these narratives.

The feature includes interviews with obituary writers, journalists, and experts in the field, providing insights into their perspectives, experiences, and approaches to obituary writing. It also showcases examples of well-known obituaries and discusses their impact and importance.

In conclusion, "Listening Post - Feature: The Art of Obituary Writing" by Al Jazeera English is a multimedia feature that explores the art and significance of obituary writing in journalism. Through interviews, examples, and insights from experts in the field, the feature provides a comprehensive overview of the craft and importance of obituary writing, shedding light on the process, challenges, and impact of this unique form of storytelling and historical record.

**"Working the Story: The Art of Obituary Writing"** is an article published by the Chicago Sun-Times that focuses on the craft and process of writing obituaries in journalism.

The article delves into the art of obituary writing, discussing the skills and techniques involved in capturing the essence of a person's life and legacy. It explores how obituary writers research and construct obituaries, drawing on biographical facts, anecdotes, and historical context to create compelling narratives.

The article also highlights the challenges and responsibilities that obituary writers face, including the need for accuracy, sensitivity, and ethical considerations when writing about individuals who have passed away. It discusses how obituary writers navigate potential controversies and complex legacies, striving to provide a balanced and respectful portrayal of the deceased individuals.

Moreover, the article delves into the role of obituaries as a form of storytelling and historical record, capturing the stories and achievements of notable individuals and events. It discusses how obituaries contribute to the collective memory and understanding of human history, and how obituary writers play a crucial role in preserving these narratives for future generations.

The article includes insights from experienced obituary writers, journalists, and experts in the field, providing perspectives on their approaches, experiences, and challenges in obituary writing. It also showcases examples of well-crafted obituaries, discussing their impact and importance in capturing the lives and legacies of the deceased.

In conclusion, "Working the Story: The Art of Obituary Writing" by the Chicago Sun-Times is an informative article that sheds light on the craft and process of obituary writing in journalism. It explores the skills, challenges, and responsibilities of obituary writers, as well as the significance of obituaries as a form of storytelling and historical record. The article provides valuable insights into the art and impact of obituary writing, showcasing

the important role that obituary writers play in capturing the stories and legacies of individuals who have passed away.

## ANALYSIS

The role of Journalists in shaping public memory and perceptions about historical personalities proves to be immense. More so, after they pass away. They decide on what glorious legacies to highlight, and strategize on what particular instances and episodes they need to omit or downplay. In a way, they shape history and obituaries of such kind which end up becoming really important public documents to refer to and research on later. On the other hand, if we see obituaries of a layman in India, they mostly tend to be a simple announcement of death of a person, “in loving memory” of course. But it doesn’t recognize the significant contributions the person might have made towards the society in his/her own small little way. Their accomplishments might not be much bigger or grander than say a legendary political leader or a film actor, but they might be important to a particular community or a cultural sect. For example, when Reshma, a trans woman and a singer in Indian-administered Kashmir died, after a long battle with cancer, her obituary could not have read just factual details and an announcement but the important contributions she made to the region’s marginalised eunuch (or hijra) community. Reshma was a wedding singer by profession and she injected joy, humour and vitality into the lives of thousands of Kashmiris who continuously live under the shadow of violence and conflict. In such instances, it is important to note the history and becoming of such a person. Born in central Srinagar, Reshma’s childhood was troublesome. She was constantly bullied for speaking and dressing in a feminine manner. Things were hard for her at home too where her family would try to discipline her into giving up her ways. Later on in her career, she would continue to speak about them and highlight such traumatic experiences. She was not a mega star or an icon to reckon with as such but her story still holds the truth of a time period, culture, society and its tradition. She had found music to be her saviour after her younger brother died in a road accident and she had to take care of her family. That’s when Reshma decided to start singing at weddings.

Including such informations in an obituary is a necessity as it honours a person’s legacy. It also serves as a commentary and reflections on the values and norm of a society. Such obituaries also carries with it a source of inspiration and motivations for readers to evaluate the virtues and the values of the deceased individuals as all of it can’t be found only in famous over the top popular celebrities every single time. In given time, social media and online spaces are one such prominent platforms for memorializing and remembering the deceased in photographic or videographic formats. It provides an opportunity for collective grieving and sharing memories.

But with the internet era, comes a bias that leans towards obituaries that are of famous deceased personalities. The digital age and time-span (to attract audience) of a post is also very little. A well crafted obit that comes first or atleast least fast can attract a lot of readership or views. That’s also the reason why many news agencies have actually stockpiled their stacks of written obituaries which are termed as “Pre-Writes” or “Advancers”. According to a report, The New York Times has 1850 obituaries (of still living personalities) idling in its computer system; The Washington Post has about 900. With such vast data at hand which is ready to burst through the internet seconds after a legendary known person passes away, it is really difficult for an obituary of an ordinary layman to take shape and come in to attract condolences. More so, there are higher chances that such ordinary obituaries of a layman won’t be read much or shared across, as people read and go through stuff online which only they can identify or relate with. With the publishing of death news of famous individuals, nostalgia has a capability to stoke immense interest leading to a post’s virality. “When Boston Globe’s obituaries editor in 2005, Bryan Marquard saw an overload of subjects in academia, medicine, and business, lobbying for prime death notice, he set out to feature women, people of colour, members of LGBTQ community, even the homeless - including an obituary for a woman who lived on Boston streets for more than 25 years”. *Paul Farhi. How obituaries got a jolt of new life in the Internet era. The Washington Post*

Obituaries also serve as tools of impression management in everyday social interactions. It acts as a process how others perceive and evaluate an individual. With that in mind, it allows the surviving family and friends to carefully craft a positive image of the deceased. Now because a public figure’s life was more or less on display during his/her entire lifetime, an unknown person’s death news is much more pressing in terms of impression



creation. He/she might be revealed to the general public for the first time which marks such an appearance highly important that it carries certain positive accomplishments and factual notes regarding the personality of the person in question. This makes it rather a very difficult task for the reader or the viewer to evaluate the true characteristics of a person as he/she might not have a strong referent or a wall to fall back upon. Hence, there might be a translation problem in expressing out how a person actually was viz a viz how he is being portrayed for the sake of generating grief. It marks an extreme importance in a country like India where a significant portion of a person's life is ruled by what a society thinks and imagines about him/her. Obituaries can shape the impressions of the deceased not only for the immediate family and friends, but also for acquaintances, colleagues, and the broader community. They can become means of managing the social memory and reputation of the deceased, as the content or the tone of obituaries influences how the deceased is remembered and talked about in social interactions.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Obituaries of a layman are not only commemorative tributes but also a set of tools that manages impressions in everyday society. It is a form of symbolic communication, conveying information about the deceased's life and death constructing a specific image or an identity. But we note such kind of a similarity with the death news of famous personalities as well, where in a way, their achievements, virtues and positive qualities are highlighted while downplaying or omitting any negative aspects unless and until it is about a criminal who committed scandalous inhuman crimes. We understand that obituaries are a social constructions and more so in an internet era, it is still gaining flamboyance and importance as people still have an urge to be remembered and talked about even after they have died regardless of their statuses as a famous or a non-famous person. Moreso, Obituaries reserve the function to inspire the living and promote a sense of collective heritage and memory. The evolving digital era has brought such intentions of collective mourning closer than ever before where the typing of RIP generates a million emotions and subjectivities unheard of.

It is also important to note the role of journalists in rewriting history through obituaries reinforcing or challenging dominant cultural narratives about legacies, particularly about famous personalities in context of polarization and changing societal norms. Having said that, we come to conclude that Obituaries are not just factual but also cultural texts that serve as significant historical documents of a society's heritage, past and norms. Obituaries are constantly changing liquid materials that shapes and re-shapes public memory in a dynamic ever changing world atmosphere be it politically, socially, scientifically or otherwise.

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