

NARRATING LIVES, NARRATING SELVES

Women's Autobiographies in Hindi



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Poznań–Kraków

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Review: Prof. Przemysław Szczurek, Wrocław University

Proofreading: Maria Skakuj-Puri

Cover design: Surasti Puri

Typesetting: Jacek Swędrowski

Financial support: Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

ISBN 978-83-8138-079-9

<https://www.doi.org/10.12797/9788381380799>

KSIĘGARNIA AKADEMICKA

ul. św. Anny 6, 31-008 Kraków

tel./faks: 12 431-27-43, 12 421-13-87

e-mail: akademicka@akademicka.pl

www.akademicka.pl

For Babcia Józia and Babcia Madzia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of institutions and many people to whom I am indebted for assisting me in this research that lasted several years and concluded with the text in front of you or my academic 'Bildungsroman.'

I am obliged to the Fulbright Foundation for facilitating my stay in the intellectually stimulating environment of the University of Texas at Austin in 2012 and 2013. I am in particular thankful to Prof. Martha Selby, the chair of the Department of Asian Studies, and all my colleagues from the South Asia Institute for making me feel like I belonged.

I am immensely grateful to Prof. Rupert Snell, at that time the director of the Hindi Urdu Flagship at the University of Texas at Austin, a true *rasik* or connoisseur of Hindi literature and a gem of a person, who has been working on a Hindi autobiography reader and with whom I have had many inspiring a discussion.

Judy Morgan, my housemate, made my stay in Austin a memory to cherish forever.

I am indebted to Adam Mickiewicz University, the Faculty of Modern Languages and the Chair of Oriental Studies, for assisting me in various ways during my research. My colleagues from the Section of South Asian Studies, Prof. Krzysztof Stroński and Prof. Sven Sellmer, have been my succour throughout. Kindness and positive attitude of my dear friends, Natalia Świdzińska and Olga Fedorowicz-Strońska, kept buoying me up.

Alessandra Consolaro has been a *Shakti* behind the informal network of South Asian auto/biography research that was made possible with the enthusiasm of Alaka Chudal and with my cooperation. This collaboration has triggered several workshops on auto/biographical and women writings: in Vienna (2015), Poznań (2016), Torino (2017 and 2018) and Uppsala (2018, organised by Heinz Werner Wessler). Alaka has also been a wonderful co-convenor of two panels at conferences of the European Association for South Asian Studies, in Warsaw (2016) and in Paris (2018). I am thankful to Tara Puri and Nora Melnikova—co-organisers of the workshop held in Poznań—for their academic input. My academic colleagues have been and continue to be my inspiration while also being a fun to work with. Research and ideas shared in the papers and the discussions we had during these academic events inspired my work in many different ways. Thank you.

Prof. Shashi Mudiraj, my beloved Hindi guru and a person of similar academic interests, has read the complete manuscript thoroughly and commented on it, continuously encouraging my writing. Balwant Kaur has been an immense help in exploring women's and academic writings in Hindi; she was always ready to talk over my ideas and provide an update on relevant Hindi publications.

Sandeep Bhutoria and the Prabha Khaitan Foundation provided access to Prabha Khaitan's books and shared their knowledge on Prabha Khaitan. Kauntey Sonrexa was kind enough to share information about his mother and her writings. Thank you.

Special thanks to Prof. Danuta Stasik for constructive discussions in the initial stages of the project. I am indebted to my learned colleagues Alessandra Consolaro, Pavel Hons, Krešimir Krnic, and Sven Sellmer, who read chapters of this book and offered insightful, critical comments. I am thankful to you for sharing your academic expertise with me.

Maria Puri, my dear friend, co-translator, and mentor, is my fiercest critic and my strongest supporter. I am immensely grateful to her for the time and energy she put into reading my work thoroughly, for her astute remarks and for correcting my English. But most of all, I am thankful for her belief in my work and in me. (And for constantly pushing me to participate in conferences.) She has been there for me, always.

Maria and Tejinder Singh Puri have always welcomed me in their Delhi home, making me feel like a part of their family. Bravely, Tejinder has never complained if and why there was a pile of books that had to be carried between India and Poland. My library (and the bibliography) would not be the same without your immeasurable help.

Artur Popławski, my partner, was always there, in moments of elation and of doubt. Without your encouragement and your faith in me this book would have never been completed for you have constantly nourished *the little thing with feathers/ that perches in the soul*.

To all the Authors whose life stories in forms of autobiographies or in other forms have inspired my research and my life; thank You for sharing them; they have touched me and enriched me in many ways.

NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTION, TITLE ANNOTATION, AND QUOTATIONS

In this book words from Hindi, and some other Indian languages (Sanskrit, Marathi etc.), are transliterated with diacritical marks in accordance with the rules followed in South Asian studies (there are some disputed subjects, like nasalisation, but I hope that the system applied here is clear to the reader). Hindi texts are transliterated as printed in the original versions, where 'qa', 'xa' and 'ġa' are commonly substituted with 'ka', 'kha' and 'ga.' Names of places in general and names of people from the 19th c. onwards are written in popular anglicised form. Some Indian words that are common in English are written in the anglicised form, too.

There are some inconsistencies for in the body of text and in the quoted passages the reader may encounter different spellings as adopted by other authors e.g. 'Ṛgveda' and 'Rig Veda.' The word 'Dalit' is spelled by me with the capital letter but in some quoted passages one can also find 'dalit.'

The quotations in transliterated Hindi, if short (a few words or a sentence or two), are cited within the text in italics, otherwise in the footnotes without italics, as they appear more readable in this form.

All translations from the original Hindi texts, but for Sheoraj Singh Bechain's autobiography, are mine. If a piece of writing is available in English translation the title is written in italics, e.g. the autobiography of Pandey Bechan Sharma 'Ugra' or *Apnī khabar* is translated into English by Ruth Vanita as *About Me*. If I give my own translation of the title of an original Hindi work, I mark it with inverted comas, like Kausalya Baisantri's *Dohrā Abhiśāp* or "Double Curse." If a title is a name of a person or place, translation is not provided.

In the second half of the 1990s more than a dozen women published their autobiographies in Hindi. It was a new development as far as Hindi was concerned and the sizable growth in the number of published autobiographies seems to have been quite sudden.

The research, presented in this book, examines possible reasons for the emergence of these auto narratives in Hindi. It looks also at some theoretical debates on the autobiographical modes of expression in relation to identity, subjectivity and agency as concepts significant for both the feminist and the postcolonial discourses. Finally, it presents close reading of four autobiographies written by women in Hindi (Kausalya Baisantri, Maitreyi Pushpa, Prabha Khaitan and Chandrakiran Sonrexa).

Monika Browarczyk - Associate Professor in South Asian Studies (Hindi literature) at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland since 1999. Taught at the Delhi University, India (2008-2005). At present, conducts research on Hindi writings by women and life writings in Hindi. With Maria Puri co-translated Adam Zagajewski (2011) and Andrzej Stasiuk (2014) into Hindi.



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ISBN 978-83-8138-079-9



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