

Autobiography in Hindi

Fall 2013

HIN 330/ HIN 384

MEZ 2.102 TTh 5:00-6:30

Instructor: Rupert Snell — rupertsnell@austin.utexas.edu

Office hours: TTh 1:00–2:30 in Hindi Urdu Flagship, WCH 4.104c

This course features annotated selections from autobiographical writing in Hindi. Our study of these wide-ranging texts will open new windows onto Indian culture, and will show us a cast of characters whose personal accounts of joyful, sad, comical, tragic, noble, edifying, scurrilous and terrifying moments will entertain and educate us in ways that are to be found only through the “real-life” genre of autobiographical writing. We will look closely at the literary effects used by the various authors, and in so doing we will look under the hood of Hindi stylistics and rhetoric; there will also be a strong emphasis on language acquisition. *Weekly preparation of texts to be read in class is essential and will be tested by a 5-minute quiz at the very beginning of each Tuesday class.* Students will also produce an annotated translation of one substantial passage, and will write a section of autobiography of their own in Hindi; these assignments will be presented & discussed in class.

Students are strongly advised to plan their assignments carefully and well in advance, getting advice on drafts in plenty of time before the submission dates.

All students with a good reading knowledge of Hindi are welcome; a background in the study of literature is an advantage but is neither expected nor required. Class discussion will use both Hindi and English. Assignments in HIN 384, the graduate version of the course, will be more demanding than those of HIN 330. Please contact rupertsnell@austin.utexas.edu if you have any questions.

HIN 330

Participation & discussion	20%
Tuesday quizzes on text prep	20%
Annotated translation	20%
Autobiographical writing in Hindi	20%
Essay in English, 2000 words	20%

HIN 384

Participation & discussion	20%
Tuesday quizzes on text prep	20%
Annotated translation	20%
Autobiographical writing in Hindi	20%
Essay in English, 4000 words	20%

Some guidance on how to make a success of this class

Participation and discussion

Preparing the weekly readings in advance is *essential* as a basis for engaged and lively discussion (in Hindi and/or English) in class. 'Preparing' the text involves reading it closely and carefully, using the glossary supplied and a good Hindi dictionary — see Bibliography below; you must take a careful note of anything that you don't understand, or that you think is worthy of comment, and bring it up in class, where everyone will benefit from the discussion. *We will all work together in our study of our texts.* Don't rely on your memory to take you back to difficult parts of the text: you *must* list them, or highlight them in the coursebook; making a good job of this will earn you a good participation grade.

Tuesday quizzes on text preparation

At 5:00 p.m. sharp each Tuesday there will be a 5-minute quiz on the readings for that week. Quiz questions may relate to some English-medium background reading as well as to the Hindi texts themselves. The questions will be easy to answer if you have read the texts carefully, impossible to answer if you have not! It's as simple as that.

Annotated translation

Translating literary texts is an excellent way of getting really close to the original, and it tells us a lot about the original writer's style. Your assignment has two aspects. The first is to make a good, accurate, sympathetic, and fluent English translation of your chosen Hindi passage (800-1000 words for undergrads, 1200-1500 words for graduates); you will have to decide how to negotiate the differences between Hindi and English idiom, and how 'literal' to be. Your aim should be to produce a text that would give the English reader an experience similar to that of the Hindi reader. The second part of the task is to write a brief commentary, either as footnotes or as a separate passage, detailing the basis for your translation decisions. We'll discuss this process in class before you do the assignment.

Autobiographical writing, in Hindi

Here is your chance to get creative! You will write an autobiographical passage in Hindi: 800 words for undergrads, 1200 for graduates. The format is up to you, but you may find it easier to write a 'passage' from your imagined autobiography (for example, somewhere from childhood, or — fictionally — from a part of your life yet to be lived) rather than trying to summarize your life story from birth. In presenting your autobiography to the class you may choose to illustrate it with photos etc.

Essay, in English

Your choice of subject must be determined & agreed by week 10 — three weeks before the due date.

*You are **strongly advised** to discuss your progress on the assignments by coming to office hours! Good time management is of the essence: keep an eye on the schedule ahead, and don't leave writing assignments to the last minute.*

Week 1: August 29

दौलतराम — दौलत दरबार

A foretaste of a text we'll be reading in weeks 6 and 7.

Week 2: 3rd & 5th September

अलाउद्दीन खान — मेरी कथा

Memoirs of a master Hindustani musician as he joins the court of the Maharajah of Maihar.

Week 3: 10th & 12th September

कौसल्या बैसंत्री — दोहरा अभिशाप

A Dalit woman's 'double curse' of gender and caste.

Week 4: 17th & 19th September

क्रिश्न चंद्र — आधे सफ़र की पूरी कहानी

A celebrated Urdu-Hindi novelist and screenplay-writer recalls his childhood.

Week 5: 24th & 26th September

मन्नू भंडारी, एक कहानी यह भी

Growing up and discovering the world of writing; and an anecdote with a happy ending.

Weeks 6 & 7: 1st & 3rd October, 8th & 10th October **ANNOTATED TRANSLATION DUE ON 3rd!**

दौलतराम — दौलत दरबार

A station master describes some surprising incidents from a life working for Indian Railways.

Weeks 8 & 9: 15th & 17th October, 22nd & 24th October

यशपाल — सिंहावलोकन

A plot to blow up the Viceroy of India's train in 1929: will it succeed?

Week 10: 29th & 31st October

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING DUE ON 31st!

प्रकाशवती पाल — लाहौर से लखनऊ तक

Plotting insurrection against the British Raj with her husband Yashpal.

Weeks 11 & 12: 5th & 7th November, 12th & 14th November

विष्णुभट्ट गोडशे वरसईकर — आँखों देखा गदर

An eye-witness account of the 1857 rebellion, translated from the original Marathi.

Week 13: 19th & 21st November

ESSAY DUE ON 21st!

हम लोग (कक्षा के सदस्य) – हमारी अपनी आत्मकथाएँ!

Presentations & discussions of our own autobiographical writing.

Week 14: 26th November

जावेद अख़्तर — तरकश

The Urdu poet and screenplay-writer chronicles his early life.

Week 15: 3rd & 5th December

बनारसीदास – अर्धकथानक

Exploring the 'first autobiography in an Indian language', written in 1641.

Your TRANSLATION PROJECT is to be based on either (a) a further passage from a text included in the syllabus above a text from the list below, or (b) a passage from one of the following texts:

अमृत राय, जिनकी याद हमेशा हरी रहेगी – Recollections of Krishan Chander by Premchand's son & biographer.

राजेन्द्र प्रसाद, आत्मकथा – India's first President describes his village childhood in Bihar.

राधेश्याम कथावाचक, मेरा नाटक-काल – Reminiscences of a Rāmāyaṇ playwright.

पांडेय बेचन शर्मा 'उग्र', अपनी खबर – Scurrilous goings-on in a muhalla of Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.

अमृतलाल वेगड़, सौंदर्य की नदी नर्मदा – A hike-cum-pilgrimage on the banks of the Narmada river.

एम.एफ़. हुसेन, एम.एफ़. हुसेन की कहानी अपनी जुबानी – India's most controversial artist takes up his pen.

मोहनलाल भास्कर, मैं पाकिस्तान में भारत का जासूस था – An Indian spy languishes in a Pakistani jail.

ब्रज मोहन व्यास, मेरा कच्चा चिट्ठा – Confessions of a light-fingered museum director.

गोपालप्रसाद व्यास, कहो व्यास, कैसी कटी ? – Scenes in the newsroom: Gandhiji assassinated!

मोहनदास करमचंद गाँधी, सत्यके प्रयोग – Mahatma Gandhi's memoir, translated from Gujarati.

भीष्म साहनी, आज के अतीत – A young boy explores Rawalpindi in the 1920s.

भारतभूषण अग्रवाल, लीक अलीक – Incidents from a writer's childhood.

अमृतलाल नागर, टुकड़े-टुकड़े दास्तान – A novice cyclist collides with a buffalo.

राधेश्याम कथावाचक, मेरा नाटक-काल – Reminiscences of a Rāmāyaṇ playwright.

जैनेन्द्र कुमार, ये और वे – On first meeting Premchand.

शिवरानी देवी प्रेमचंद, प्रेमचंद घर में – Domestic squabbles between Mr and Mrs Premchand.

रामप्रसाद 'बिस्मिल', आत्मकथा – Thoughts from a death cell in British India.

अज्ञेय, आत्मनेपद – A jailed freedom-fighter catches nightingales by candlelight.

हरिवंश राय बच्चन, 'दशद्वार' से 'सोपान' तक – The writer's son Amitabh Bachchan injured on a film set.

चंद्रशेखर, मेरी जेल डायरी – A future prime minister imprisoned during the Emergency in the 1970s.

कमलेश्वर, अपनी निगाह में – An encounter with fellow-writer Yashpal.

हरिशंकर परसाई, हम इक उम्र के वाकिफ़ हैं – Hindi's leading satirist on his career choice.

फणीश्वरनाथ रेणु, आत्म परिचय – A Hindi novelist evokes three kinds of rebellion in his life.

राजेन्द्र यादव, मुड़-मुड़के देखता हूँ...(लगभग आत्मकथ्य) – Tipu the dog and his colonial heritage.

मैत्रेयी पुष्पा, गुड़िया भीतर गुड़िया – The world as seen from inside the 'Russian dolls' of womanhood.

शिवानी, सोने दे – An elderly writer reflects on death.

अमृता प्रीतम – अक्षरों के साये : एक अंतर्यात्रा A Punjabi poetess, her two soul-mates, and a Russian muse.

मृदुला गर्ग, कुछ अटके, कुछ भटके : यात्रा संस्मरण – Travels in Assam, and a final curtain.

Bibliography

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- Beth, Sarah, 'Hindi Dalit autobiography: an exploration of identity'. Chowdhury, Rohini (trans.), *Modern Asian Studies* 41.3 (2007), pp. 545-574.
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- Hansen, Kathryn, *Stages of life: Indian theatre autobiographies*. Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2011.
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- Howarth, William L., 'Some principles of autobiography', in *New Literary History* Vol 5. No. 2 (Winter 1974), pp. 363-381.
- Lath, Mukund, *Half a tale: a study in the interrelationship between autobiography and history*. [On *Ardhakathānak* of Banārasīdās.] Jaipur, Rajasthan Prakrit Bharati Sansthan, 1981.
- Racine, Josiane, and Jean-Luc Racine, 'Beyond silence: a Dalit life history in South India', in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, ed., *Telling lives in India: biography, autobiography, and life history*. Delhi, Permanent Black. 2005. pp. 252-280.
- Snell, Rupert, 'A Hindi poet from Allahabad: translating Harivansh Rai Bachchan's autobiography', in *Modern Asian Studies* 34.2 (2000), pp. 427-488.
- Snell, Rupert, 'Confessions of a 17th-century Jain merchant: the *Ardhakathānak* of Banārasīdās', in *South Asia Research* 25. No.1 (May 2005), pp. 79-104.

Dictionaries

Introductions to how to use dictionaries will be given at the beginning of the course. The best Hindi-English dictionary is R.S. McGregor, *Hindi-English Dictionary* (OUP). Using this (or any other dictionary) in book format is a much richer experience than using online dictionaries. Having said that, the following may be useful:

<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/platts/>

http://www.cfilt.iitb.ac.in/~hdict/webinterface_user/dict_search_user.php

<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/caturvedi/>

<http://www.shabdkosh.com/>

<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/bahri/>