



# **Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves. Research on Women's Life Writings from South Asia**



**Prof. Monika Browarczyk**  
**Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland**

Friday, 1 April 2022, 3.00-5.00 pm  
Sala Riunioni 1, Edificio Marco Polo (3rd floor) – Circonv. Tiburtina 4

Zoom ID: 880 1748 9730 – Passcode: 721062



Monika Browarczyk is an Associate Professor of South Asian Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań), Poland. After obtaining an MA in Hindi literature from the University of Warsaw in 1996 and an MA in sociology from the Central European University in Warsaw in 1997, she received her PhD from the University of Warsaw in 2005.

Subsequently, she carried out post-doctoral research work on women's writing in Hindi, namely the autobiographies written by women in Hindi. Between 2005 and 2008, Dr. Browarczyk worked at the University of Delhi, India and from 2011 to 2013 at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. Her research interests include Hindi literature, women's writings, autobiography studies and translation studies. She co-authored with Maria Puri two translations from Polish into Hindi (Adam Zagajewski's *Parayi sundarta me* in 2011 and Andrzej Stasiuk's *Galicja ki kathae* in 2014) and edited and co-translated from Hindi into Polish a volume of selected poems by Harivansh Rai Bacchan (Bachchanalay, 2013). She co-edited with Lidia Sudyka a volume of an academic journal, *Cracow Indological Studies* dedicated to women's writing in South Asia (2018). She published a book, *Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves. Women's Autobiographies in Hindi* (2019) and various research articles in internationally acclaimed journals. Email: [monikabr@amu.edu.pl](mailto:monikabr@amu.edu.pl)

**Abstract** -- 'Life writings', a more comprehensive term, was introduced within the field of autobiography studies over time to accommodate heterogeneity of self-referential practices (Smith and Watson, 2001). The term encompasses numerous types of narratives of the self, including for instance genres long established in Western literary traditions as autobiographical (autobiography, memoir, diary, letter, travelogue), but also other forms of literary expression not obviously so (hymn, religious treatise, etc.), as well as the newly appropriated forms such as recipe books and notes from scrapbooks, besides the most recently added write-ups on social media (blogs, tweets, etc.). Life writings, and in particular autobiographies commonly perceived as truthful tales of lives, pose questions about identity and complicate our understanding of the rigid dichotomies of the intimate and the public, the personal and the political, the oral and the written, the male and the female, the factual and the fictional, the true and the false, etc. In my lecture today, I would like to investigate 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. Further, I would like to illustrate these conceptual frameworks with examples of life writings by women from South Asia.