

GENERIC ELECTIVE (GE): Life Narrative and History

Credit distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course

Course title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-requisite of the course (if any)
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/Practice		
Life Narrative and History	4	3	1	0		

Learning Objectives

This course explores life narratives, including autobiography, biography, memoir and life writing as a form of history. While covering the ancient and the medieval period, it particularly focuses on modern India, when life writing emerged as a systematic genre. It discusses important personalities, regional histories, and histories of gender and caste through life narratives.

Learning outcomes

After the completion of the course the students would be able to:

- Understand how and why life narratives are critical to history as a discipline.
- Discuss life writing, biographies and autobiographies as a systematic genre.
- Analyse autobiographies and life writings of some leading personalities of India.
- Contemplate on the relationship between regional histories, gender and caste on the one hand and life narratives on the other.

Syllabus

Unit I: Life Histories in India: An Introduction

Unit II: Life Narratives and Leading Political Figures: Harsha, Dara Shukoh, M K Gandhi, J L Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel

Unit III: Regional Histories and Life Narratives: Rajasthan, Kerala, West Bengal, Kashmir, North East (do any three)

Unit IV: Autobiographies and Biographies: Women, Caste and Theatre

Practical Component (if any): NIL

Essential / Recommended Readings

Unit I: In this unit the students will be introduced to the writings of leading scholars on Life Narratives. They will also be introduced to the importance of life narratives for studying histories of India.

- Arnold, David and Stuart Blackburn. (2004). 'Introduction: Life Histories in India', in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History*, Delhi: Permanent Black, pp. 1-28.

- Ramaswamy, Vijaya. (2008). ‘Introduction’, in Vijaya Ramaswamy and Yogesh Sharma (eds), *Biography as History: Indian Perspectives*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, pp. 1-15.
- Zaman, Taymiya R. (2011). ‘Instructive Memory: An Analysis of Auto/Biographical Writing in Early Mughal India’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 54, pp. 677-700.

Unit II: In this unit the students will study the life narratives of some leading political figures from ancient, medieval and modern India.

- Gandhi, Supriya. (2020). *The emperor who never was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India*
- Gandhi, Rajmohan. (2011). *Patel: A Life*, Delhi: Navjivan Trust.
- Harshacarita of Banabhatta. (1968). Translated by E.W. Cowell and F.W. Thomas. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass (Reprint). Introduction.
- Majeed, Javed. (2007). *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal*, New York: Palgrave.

Unit III: This unit will teach students life narratives from regional perspectives. Here, life writings, autobiographies and biographies that have emanated from any three regions will be taught.

- Busch, Allison Busch. (2012). ‘Portrait of a Raja in a Badshah's World: Amrit Rai's Biography of Man Singh (1585)’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, pp. 287-328.
- Kaviraj, Sudipto. (2015). *The Invention of Private Life: Literature and Ideas*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kumar, Udaya. (2016). *Writing the First Person: Literature, History, and Autobiography in Modern Kerala*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black.
- Roy, Kumkum. (2008). ‘The Artful Biographer (Sandhyakar Nandi on Rampalacharita)’, in Vijaya Ramaswamy and Yogesh Sharma (eds), *Biography as History: Indian Perspectives*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Zutshi, Chitralekha. (2023). *Sheikh Abdullah: The Caged Lion of Kashmir*, India: Fourth Estate India

Unit IV: In this unit students will be taught different ways to examine contours of biography and autobiography in relation to women, caste and theatre.

- Dasi, Binodini. (1998). *My Story and My Life as an Actress*. Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Hansen, Kathryn. (2011). *Stages of Life: Indian Theatre Autobiographies*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black
- Koppedrayer, K. I. (1991). ‘The Varnasramacandrika and the Sudra's Right to Preceptorhood: The social background of a philosophical debate in late medieval south India’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 19, pp. 297-314.
- Kumar, Raj (2010). *Dalit Personal Narratives: Reading Caste, Nation and Identity*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
- Malhotra, Anshu and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (eds). (2015). *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Rege, Sharmila. (2006). Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonies. Delhi: Zubaan.
- Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar. (1993). 'A Book of Her Own, A Life of Her Own: autobiography of a nineteenth century woman', History Workshop, vol. 36, pp. 35-65.
- Shah, Shalini. (2008). 'Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7th-13th Centuries CE', Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Vol.15 (1), Jan-Apr: 1-27.
- Shankar, S. and Charu Gupta, eds. (2017). Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly: Special Issue on Caste and Life Narratives, 40, 1, Winter.

Note: Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, from time to time.