



Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia

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Many consider the autobiography to be a Western genre that represents the self as fully autonomous. The contributors to *Speaking of the Self* challenge this presumption by examining a wide range of women's autobiographical writing from South Asia. Expanding the definition of what kinds of writing can be considered autobiographical, the contributors analyze everything from poetry, songs, mystical experiences, and diaries to prose, fiction, architecture, and religious treatises. The authors they study are just as diverse: a Mughal princess, an eighteenth-century courtesan from Hyderabad, a nineteenth-century Muslim prostitute in Punjab, a housewife in colonial Bengal, a Muslim Gandhian devotee of Krishna, several female Indian and Pakistani novelists, and two male actors who worked as female impersonators. The contributors find that in these autobiographies the authors construct their gendered selves in relational terms. Throughout, they show how autobiographical writing—in whatever form it takes—provides the means toward more fully understanding the historical, social, and cultural milieu in which the author performs herself and creates her subjectivity.

Contributors: Asiya Alam, Afshan Bokhari, Uma Chakravarti, Kathryn Hansen, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, Anshu Malhotra, Ritu Menon, Shubhra Ray, Shweta Sachdeva Jha, Sylvia Vatak

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