



Debates on Domesticity and the Position of Women in Late Colonial India

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Abstract

Tracing the genealogy of domesticity from India's precolonial past, this essay problematizes the recent emphasis on the link between women and domesticity in late colonial India. Based on a review of the growing literature in the field, it considers the newly evolved notions of colonial domesticity as a moment of [re]consideration rather than a break with the past. The discursive formation of the new ideas of domesticity under colonial regime transcended the private-public and often national boundaries, indicating an overlap where the most intimate details of the 'private', personal life were not only discussed and debated for public consumption but were also articulated in response to imperial and international concerns. This paper argues that domesticity as a new cultural logic became the motor of change for both the British and the colonized subjects and it particularly empowered women by giving them agency in the late colonial period. In conclusion, this paper signals the importance of children, childhood, fatherhood, and masculinity as critical components of domesticity, which are yet to be broached by South Asian historians.

Recent literature on gender historiography suggests that neither women nor domesticity are uniform and universalizing categories bound by an interminable and unchanging relationship.¹ Problematizing the often-emphasized link between women and domesticity in colonial India, this essay proposes to dismantle the supposedly direct and stable connection between the two. Tracing the genealogy of domesticity from India's precolonial past, it explores the relationship between women and domesticity and signals the need to expand the field to include men and children. Women, men, and children as historical subjects constitute and are constituted by emerging and hierarchical notions of domesticity that was particularly manifest in the nineteenth and twentieth-century India under British colonial rule. Domesticity as a new cultural construct was not an originary moment created by India's encounter with the West, but has a long genealogy continuing from the precolonial past.² Based on a review of the growing literature in the field, this paper considers the newly evolved notions of colonial domesticity as a moment of [re]consideration rather than a break with the past. As recent scholarship suggests the discursive formation of the new ideas of domesticity under colonial regime transcended private-public and often national boundaries, indicating an overlap where the most intimate details of 'private', personal life were not only discussed and debated for public consumption via the rapid proliferation of the print media but were also articulated in response to imperial and international concerns. This paper argues that domesticity as a new cultural logic became the motor of change for both the British and the colonized subjects and it particularly empowered women by giving them agency in the late colonial period. While bulk of our sources will be drawn from colonial Bengal, significant examples from other states will be presented to render a complicated pan-Indian picture.

A Genealogy of Domesticity in India

The etymological meaning of ‘domesticity’ in Sanskrit is ‘*garhasthya jivan*’. *Garhasthya*, according to ancient Indian (Hindu) texts, depicts the second phase of an individual’s life—that of the married householder, *grihastha*—preceded by the first phase *brahmacharya* (the celibate ascetic life of a student), followed by *banaprastha* (retirement from worldly life into a forest), and *sannyas*, renunciation of worldly affairs. Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar explains that according to Hindu worldview, it is in this stage that man’s material, sensual, and sexual gratification are attained through ‘intimacy’ based on shared work as well as on sensuality and procreation.³ The Hindu view of *garhasthya* or domesticity upholds that ‘[H]e only is a perfect man who consists of three persons united, his wife, himself, and his offspring’.⁴ Thus while the relationship between women and the domestic has most of the time been naturalized and taken for granted, the ancient Indian texts reveal that men and children (irrespective of sex) are also constitutive elements of the domestic. Sociologist T. N. Madan, in response to Louis Dumont’s characterization of Indian society as being based on ideals of renunciation, has persuasively argued that Hindu scriptures, particularly the Upanishads, display an overwhelming tendency to glorify the status of the householder. Madan shows that some of the prominent writers of the *dharmashastras* (texts on codes of conduct) or scriptures considered the stage of the householder as the most important and valid stage in human life.⁵ Besides its ontological basis, recent researches further point out that domesticity as a cultural form and practice was intimately connected to the emergence of political institutions. It was in the context of the political-economic situation that domesticity became closely tied with gender, caste, and class in ancient India.

The transition from pastoral nomadism to settled agriculture and increasing urbanization from eighth century B.C.E. strengthened class and caste division and witnessed attempts by Indian men to control women’s sexuality, which was deemed responsible for social reproduction and ensuring patrilineal succession to property. Examining the ancient Brahmanical texts, scholars point out that in order to maintain the ritual purity associated with caste hierarchy Indian men increasingly controlled the sexuality of women, thereby showing the connection between caste, class, and gender relations.⁶ The ideology of wifely fidelity or *stridharma* enunciated by the early texts ensured through laws and customs familial control of women that also included corporal punishment. Uma Chakravarti argues that the upper class women complied with the ideology through a system of both consent and coercion and that they played an active role in the perpetuation of caste divisions that subordinated them while also rewarding them spiritually and materially.⁷

Kumkum Roy, in her study of ancient India argues that it was ‘the privileging’ of the home (*griha*) as a form of household organization that aided the emergence of the monarchy from seventh century BCE onward. The household organization ‘was characterized by patriarchal control, exercised on the procreative powers of the wife, and over productive resources, which were ideally transferred from the father to the son(s)’.⁸ As Ramusack explains, ‘The *raja*, or ruler, supported the *griha* since it was easier to negotiate with single heads of households than corporate groups. In turn the head of household seeking dominance was strengthened by the external support of the *raja*. The ascendance of patriarchal hierarchy in public and private spheres legitimized the increasing subordination of women and controlling of their sexuality and procreative powers in religious rituals’.⁹

Women’s connection to the home or *griha* was clearly established as early as the first century C.E. in *Bhagavat Gita*, the foremost religious text expounding the Hindu view of life, which upholds the idea that women were responsible for maintaining order within

the family and thus within society as a whole.¹⁰ Domesticity in practice and ideology was quite well developed in Indian society from antiquity and it involved both men and women, unfolding a hierarchical power relationship between the two and a gradual subordination of women under a patriarchal system.

The significance of domesticity was equally pronounced in the lives of Muslim rulers in India. The Mughal rulers, including Akbar, frequently alluded to the state in familial metaphors. As Ruby Lal aptly suggests in the context of the early Mughal period, 'domestic life is not an endless journey between bedroom and kitchen, with the primary function of raising children and catering for husbands'.¹¹ Lal demonstrates the importance of Mughal women, both as queens as well as mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts, in the lives of Babur, Humayun, Akbar and Jahangir. Dispelling the notion of the domestic as a domain segregated from the 'public', and drawing attention to the broader meaning of *haram*, Lal's work throws light on Mughal women's 'involvement in matters of succession, arrangement of marriages, brokering of peace' thereby revealing how invested women were in the monarchical process.¹² Likewise, Ramya Sreenivasan's analysis of the seventeenth-century bardic narratives surrounding the Rajput queen Padmini and the appropriation of those legends by different elite groups, including the colonial state and the nationalists for shaping their distinctive versions of the past, elucidate the power of gender norms in constructing heroic memories out of the repositories of precolonial 'traditions'.¹³ Whether it is in the context of ancient India or in the medieval or early modern period our knowledge of domesticity is mainly confined to the ruling or the upper class and the elites. As Uma Chakravarti has argued in the context of ancient India, there is very little evidence that chronicled the experiences of lower social groups. In the early Mughal period, Lal does draw our attention to women who did not directly wield political power, but those women nonetheless belonged to the powerful ruling class. So did the women in Sreenivasan's work on precolonial Rajput elites.

A glimpse of domesticity among common people can be gleaned from the popular literature prevailing in medieval and early modern India. However, the tenor of this early Indo-Aryan literature is predominantly religious in nature. From the tenth through the nineteenth centuries Indian literature was inextricably connected to various religious movements that stirred the lives of common people. Prior to the nineteenth century Indo-Aryan literature could hardly stand on its own without the support of religion. Unlike the Western idea of History as a fixed and stable discipline with a pronounced methodology that emerged in fifteenth-century Europe, history in early Modern South Asia had a much more fluid, literary form that was narrated in the 'dominant genre of a particular community, located in space, at a given moment in time'.¹⁴ Interestingly, some of the lesser known or 'obscure religious cults' in Bengal are significant for understanding the philosophy and practices of everyday life.¹⁵

One of the most important genres of pre-modern literature, particularly in Bengal are the *Mangal Kavyas*, ranging from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, which act as a seminal source of vivid documentation of domesticity among common people.¹⁶ The *Mangal Kavyas* celebrate the worship of local deities, both male and female, like Chandi, Shitala, Manasha, Dharma, and others, telling the stories of how these deities established their glory and power on earth. The human heroes and heroines of the *Mangal Kavyas*, such as Lausen of *Dharma Mangal*, Kalketu and Fullora of *Chandimangal*, or Chand Sadagar of *Manashamangal*, are portrayed as mere toys in the hands of local gods and goddesses and their travails and exploits were delineated to invoke, celebrate, and propagate the divine glory of the different deities. Emerging out of several century-long verbal traditions, the poems constituting the *Mangal Kavyas* were sung by local singers in

festivals celebrating these gods and goddesses. The texts of the *Mangal Kavyas* thus varied widely as the singers incorporated their own favorite themes and observations around them. They also reflected the changing political and economic processes and their bearings on the ideas and structures of familial and extra-familial networks that girded intimate human relationships.¹⁷

Mangal Kavyas represent a reformist, and a propagandist trend in the annals of Bengali literature. The *Kavyas* (poems) narrate an intricate play of human, animal, and divine forces. Men–women relationships mediated by a chain of complex interconnected events constituted the staple of the stories and the vast corpus of literature represented the ‘purity of the domestic life of the Hindus’. One of the major poets of this genre, Kabikankan Mukundaram Chakrabarty (1547–?), the author *Chandimangal* (The Paeans of Goddess Chandi) is known not only for his realistic portrayals of human and animal characters but also for his meticulous attention to domestic details in the lives of common working people.¹⁸ His women protagonists, such as Lahana, Khullona, and Fullora are much stronger and well-developed characters than his male heroes. While Mukundaram’s male heroes were not strong worldly characters, the female protagonists of his stories are ideal homemakers (*sugrihini*) and paragons of sacrifice, tolerance, fortitude, and courage. According to the eminent literary critic Dineshchandra Sen (1866–1939), who was a pioneer in salvaging precolonial Bengali literature, even the Western heroines like Miranda, Cordelia, or Desdemona failed to match up with the ideal housewives like Fullora and Khullona, who were created by the medieval Bengali poets. Sen proclaimed, ‘We cannot conceive of any literature in which the chastity of women and the purity of their lives have formed the subject of such animated panegyric as is found in our literature’.¹⁹ The heroines or most of the women characters of the *Mangal Kavyas*, such as Behula of *Manashamangal*, Khullana and Fullora of *Chandimangal*, Bimala of *Dharmamangal* or Malua, Kamala, Madina, Chandravati, Sakhina, and Sunai of the *Mymensingh Ballads*, are all epitomes of ‘womanly virtues’ displaying self-sacrifice, truthfulness, and undaunted moral courage. Writing in 1925 Sen further remarked that ‘[I]t is strange to observe, that in the lowest stratum of society, moral qualities of high order were abundantly in evidence, showing on what a solid basis of humane virtues the whole fabric of the Hindu community stood’.²⁰ Although Sen acknowledges the influence of Muslim rule in many aspects of Hindu life, his accounts are possibly liable to hyperbole and displays a distinct slant towards the Hindus to the exclusion of the Muslims, who constituted both the ruling class and a considerable bulk of the lower social groups in Bengal at that period in time. The tales of the *Mangal Kavyas* represented the imaginations of the ‘rustic bards’ and they vividly captured the ideology of the ‘pure woman’ that prevailed in precolonial rural Bengali society. It is against this prevailing climate of an indigenous domesticity that already upheld the virtues of an ideal wife and an exalted mother that we need to read the nineteenth-century British rhetoric of ‘civilization’ that harped on the degenerate conditions of Indian women and the lack of concern and effeminacy of Indian, nay Bengali men.

The Colonial Scene

With a new emphasis on the conceived role of men, women, and family, the colonial period witnessed a shift from the cosmological universe controlled by divine forces to the more human-oriented physical world, based on changing notions of marriage, family, conjugality, rights, duties, and responsibilities that constituted a new domestic cult. The critique of British officials triggered among the educated Indians, both orthodox and

liberal, a critical rethinking of their positions and dealings with women, domesticity, and domestic ideologies and values. The heroes and heroines of the emerging discourse on domesticity were neither inspired nor constituted by the human or super-human protagonists of the Mangal Kavyas. Unlike precolonial literary genres that captured the interpenetrating, situational, and relational contexts of the protagonists' personal crusades for a higher moral order and public good, the nineteenth-century debates on various aspects of domesticity unfolded in the context of a civil society that colonial rule had instituted in India.²¹ But civil society, as a modern political structure and a constitutive element of the modern nation state, is based on a distinction between the 'public' and the 'private'. Nation states embody the rights of private citizens; but British rule failed to grant citizenship to the colonized subject. Hence the articulation of issues related to domesticity by colonized Indians resonated with their nationalist sentiments that promised the rights of citizens and a nation-state.²² More importantly, the new domestic ideals that were being produced by the new social formation of the colonial era, displayed a distinct hierarchical class bias that drove a wedge between the emerging urban middle class and the popular masses.

The colonial scene in urban India emphasized the relationship among man, woman, and child as a unit and stressed the role of the family as a haven from the oppression of an outside world dominated by foreign rule.²³ Instead of delineating a battle between the good and the evil, the discourse on home, family, women, and children was now directed as a response to colonial rule.²⁴ The model home as the sanctum of peace and quiet and the refined and reformed relationship between men, women, and children idealized a more restrained atmosphere along puritanical lines. An unabashed celebration of sexuality and sexual pleasure, which popular and high Hindu religion often openly acknowledged, was now dourly denied and condemned by Western educated Indian men internalizing the critique of the British Raj.²⁵ The new domestic ideals that these reformers enunciated were undoubtedly informed by their sensibilities of the indigenous past, but they also borrowed selectively from the 'liberal' western philosophies and Victorian ideology that these men had learned to appreciate as colonized subjects. To understand how new ideas of domesticity gained currency, it will be instructive to take a close look at colonial Bengal with Calcutta (now Kolkata) as the imperial capital until 1911. Calcutta was not only the hotbed of colonial politics, it was also here that the 'woman question' first emerged in nineteenth century India.²⁶ However, a process that started in Bengal soon spread out to the rest of the subcontinent—the changing condition of women and the attendant ideas and practices of domesticity was an all-India phenomenon in terms of caste, class, and religious identities. The educated elite Muslim community in India, both in Bengal and outside, underwent a similar social formation and followed the same social and cultural ideals with regard to its women.²⁷

In the course of the nineteenth century, the newly set up colonial institutions in Calcutta with their educational and employment opportunities attracted Bengalis from the countryside and fostered a heterogeneous, upwardly mobile, cultural community of English educated professionals, bureaucrats, and civil servants, broadly termed as *bhadralok* (respectable gentlemen) or middle class, who worked as intermediaries between the British rulers and the native population and was vital for the maintenance of the British rule. These urban professional Bengalis, who actually represented a 'landed literati', first raised questions regarding women's role and status and reflected on ideas of domesticity and family life in colonial India.²⁸

Throughout India educated men's involvement with women's questions and domesticity emerged from a deep crisis that they felt from many quarters. Restricted prospects in employment in a racially structured administrative system, growing alienation from a

section of society, along with the caste and communal tensions which erupted over competition for salaried jobs in the later half of the nineteenth century set the pace for growing political discontent among the new intelligentsia. The ecological and climatic factors that continuously subjected agrarian Bengal to frequent droughts, famines, and epidemics of cholera, fevers, malaria, and small-pox from the late seventeenth century onward, and the introduction of railways, telegraphs, and improved means of communication made educated Bengali males anxious about a modernity ushered in by the colonial rule. The vagaries of a subjugated political-economy and maltreatment by the colonial administration eroded the morale of the educated Indians. Their reaction spilled out in a convoluted way – instead of ascribing themselves a leadership role in society and politics, the Bengali middle class engaged in an auto-critique and negative characterization of itself.²⁹ Furthermore, from the beginning of the nineteenth century the Liberal, Utilitarian, and Evangelical ideologies started denouncing Indian customs and practices vehemently attacking the degraded condition of Indian women, the victims of *sati* (self-immolation) and polygamy, and proclaimed the superiority of the British way of life. The criticisms of Utilitarians and missionaries also compelled the Bengali middle class to rethink their attitude towards women. In their effort to regain viability and respect in the face of British criticism the new intelligentsia, composed of both modern and traditional elements, became actively engaged in reconstructing the past and reconstituting the position of women. They saw themselves as interpreters of tradition in changing times.³⁰ With the initiative of the colonial administrators and Indian advocates such as Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar in Bengal and M.G. Ranade and Behramji Malabari in Maharashtra, a series of reform efforts were initiated throughout the nineteenth century—widow-burning was abolished (1829), widow remarriage legalized (1856), and intercourse with wives below twelve years of age prohibited (1891). The woman question thus became the most pressing issue in nineteenth-century India. It asked not what women wanted but how they could be modernized.³¹

In the changing socio-cultural milieu of the ‘new colonial metropolis’ of Calcutta, the position of women became a yardstick for determining the social status of Indian men. The crises that the colonial critique generated in the minds of literate Bengalis translated into worries not only about the position of their women but also about their moral behavior that came to encompass their ideas about the family and the new nation.³² As Borthwick argues, by the end of the nineteenth century as the new role and image of women proliferated among the educated Bengali middle-class there emerged an articulate group of women known as *bhadramahila*, the female counterpart of *bhadralok*—envisioned to embody the virtues of both the ideal Hindu woman and the Victorian image of the ‘perfect lady’ who could contribute to the furtherance of their husbands’ career and educate their children in ‘enlightened’ ways. The new model of the *bhadramahila* forged by the minority elite patriarchy to suit their own purposes under colonial rule soon gained wide currency in the later half of the century through a growing number of journals and instruction manuals for and by women.³³

This preponderance of women’s issues in the nineteenth-century gradually dissipated at the beginning of the twentieth and has become a subject of controversy among recent scholars. While Sumit Sarkar and Ghulam Murshid analyzed the situation by explaining the retrogressive relationship between Indian nationalism and the women’s question, Partha Chatterjee argued that in the absence of an autonomous women’s movement, Indian nationalists and reformers had actually resolved the women’s question by the turn of the nineteenth century by relegating it to an inner domain of sovereignty in the domestic realm, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state.

By transposing the 'intimate' and the 'personal' in the private realm, the nationalists actually became more deeply engaged in a process of cultural construction that subjected women to a new kind of patriarchy.³⁴ Chatterjee's proposition of the nationalist 'resolution of women's question' based on a schematic distinction between the private and the public has been widely challenged by later scholarship.³⁵ Experiences of women outside of Bengal, particularly in Maharashtra, and their struggle for amelioration of their condition in the closing years of the nineteenth century attest to a very different reality that render Chatterjee's argument problematic. An alternate reading suggests that until the years following 1857 there was a collusion between Indian politicians and the colonial state in keeping family and domestic matters outside the purview of the state unless state intervention in community and religious matters were absolutely called for. The lack of colonial state's initiative to 'modernize' and 'transform' India actually became a point of frustration for many politically minded individuals including women like Tarabai Shinde who expected a radical intervention by the government in family affairs.³⁶

Indian nationalism was not simply a political struggle for power; the question of political independence was related to every aspect of the material and spiritual life of the people. Sibnath Sastri (1847–1919), a Brahmo reformer and one of the early architects of the idea of a new family, urged that it was for women that the home and the human society (*Janapada*) were created and that she occupied the highest position in them.³⁷ He insisted that a family should not isolate itself and feel separate from the nation and that women should also be made aware of the current state of affairs of the country. To both nationalists and social reformers the Hindu home substituted the world outside which lay beyond their immediate power and control. With the strategic placement of the home the Indian intelligentsia emphasized the new ideas of a reformed domesticity. It engaged in enunciating guidelines on managing household relations and actively provided training and guidelines to its women. The intention was 'to establish a claim to a share of power in the world, a political role that the Hindu is entitled to, through successful governance of the household'.³⁸ Through this process household relations were turned into political ones.

According to Tanika Sarkar, it was conjugality that best corresponded the hierarchical relationship between the British colonial state and the colonized Indian subjects. 'Based on the apparent absolutism of one partner and the total subordination of the other', conjugality best replicated colonial arrangements. 'By showing the supposedly real and radical difference between the two sets of relationships despite their apparently similar basis and by establishing where the moral superiority of the one lay over the other', conjugality provided a matrix for defying and contesting colonial interventions like the Brahmo Marriage Act of 1873, the proposal to introduce divorce in the 1880s, and the Age of Consent Act of 1891.³⁹ Sarkar further points out that in the last decade of the nineteenth century the locus of conjugal relationship shifted from the apparently love-less husband-wife relationship to the loving relationship of the mother and the son, with the mother signifying the Motherland and the son, the patriotic offspring, committed to salvage his Mother from foreign domination and control.

Contesting the prevalent literature that privileges the politics of colonialism and the subsequent nationalist response translating to Indian males' anxiety over British intervention in homely, private matters that included women, Padma Anagol argues that the male anxiety emerged from the 'increasing recourse of Indian women to colonial structures, principally the law, as a means of renegotiating conjugal relations'.⁴⁰ In the late years of the nineteenth century conjugality became a particularly contentious issue in Maharashtra when a young educated Hindu woman called Rukmabai refused to obey the court order to join her husband when he brought a suit for restitution of conjugal rights after eleven

years of living apart from one another.⁴¹ Women's assertions of own agency, including restitution of conjugal rights, by relying on the colonial law courts galvanized Indian men, on the one hand, to call for marital reforms; on the other, it evinced women's activism fighting for justice in the public sphere. Revealing an awareness of their subordination as a specific group, *stri jati*, prominent women such as Kashibai Kantikar, Tarabai Shinde, Yashodabai Joshi developed the concept of sisterhood or *bhaginivarg* based on a critique that 'Hindu men had created new forms of subordination that could be attributed to different causes'. Hindu women's consciousness of their subordination and their claim for equality led to the subsequent development of women's organizations in Maharashtra 'that possessed a distinct identity within the nationalist movement'.⁴² Interestingly however, women's movement assimilated with the dominant patriarchal paradigm assuaging the opposing critics that they were not acting as a threat to domestic life. Reformist women showed allegiance to household duties that included loyalty and obedience to male members. Women's negotiation and reconciliation with traditional and conservative elements can be best described through the ideology of 'social feminism', as pointed out by Geraldine Forbes, by which they combined their assertion of rights with traditional familial expectations and obligation.⁴³

Domesticity as the New Cultural Logic

My reading of the historical literature suggests that domesticity became the new cultural logic of late colonial India in which notions of modernity, progress, and new nation were embedded. The argument for a reformed domesticity as a motor of change was manifested through various nineteenth-century legislations and gave the colonial state its claim to legitimacy as India's benefactor. The Indian intelligentsia, on the other hand, used the cultural logic of domesticity and its newly envisioned role for women and children to carve out its autonomous and hegemonic subjecthood. One of the major indices for gauging the ideas of new domesticity formulated by Indian males were the normative texts or domestic manuals that appeared from the second half of the nineteenth and continued into the first quarter of the twentieth century. Fashioned largely after British and American domestic-economy texts, a large number of tracts in Bengali were authored by mostly male writers, ranging from aristocratic elites, ardent nationalists, ideologues, social reformers, to the aspiring lower middle-class. Written in various formats and prescriptive in tone, the texts were addressed to the 'new' woman, the good housewife (*sugrihini*) and the ideal mother (*adarsha janani*), as the title of the two archetypal works Anandachandra Sengupta's *Grihinir Kartavya (Responsibilities of the Housewife)*, no date) and Ishan Chandra Basu's *Jananir Kartavya (Responsibilities of the Mother)*, 1920) suggest. They charted a new vision of the domestic ideal and prescribed a specific code of conduct for middle-class women thereby carefully distancing them from other social classes.⁴⁴ These 'new women' embodied the refined virtues of the chaste, self-sacrificing traditional Hindu woman combined with the helpmate role of the Victorian lady. They were increasingly distanced from working women of lower social groups. who as Partha Chatterjee noted, were represented as loud, vulgar, unrefined, querulous, and sexually promiscuous.⁴⁵ The Indian ideologues' constructions of a moral universe centered on the home and the family reinforced caste, class, and gender boundaries through hierarchical, dependent power relationships in colonial households. The ideological drive to prescribe a code of behavior for the *sugrihini* or the 'good house-wife' reflected not only the middle class attempt to define its own cultural identity but also its engagement in an ideological struggle to come to grips with the twin pressures of colonialism and nationalism. The prescriptive discourse

betrayed a tension that was deeply implicated in contested notions of tradition, modernity, and the nation.

The domestic manuals as vehicles for women's education presupposed an absence of certain notions of conduct and behavior among the new generation of Indian women and they called for a remedy and improvement of the situation by defining new domestic ideals and values. The ideologues tried to shun the missionary and Western influence by invoking indigenous symbols, such as that of the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi, the embodiment of virtues, loyalty, devotion, and fidelity, as the ideal for Indian women; they also displayed strong allegiance to Victorian ideology and puritan work ethic.⁴⁶ Privileging cooking and child-rearing as the two most important components of women's domestic responsibilities on which the efficiency and orderliness of the home rested, the texts emphasized that the ideal housewife should be a 'devoted servant' to her family and should display as many domestic skills as would be necessary if she had to perform all of the domestic chores herself.⁴⁷

Similar tendencies outlining specific gender roles for various groups of women were also noticeable in Marathi literature from the 1860s. A new genre of literature of racy novels, domestic tales, plays, and short stories juxtaposed the idealized role of *pativrata* (devoted wife), apparently under siege, and the scandalizing and threatening images of the 'independent', loose women and whores.⁴⁸ The full English title of a major work *Stricharitra* (with several subsequent renditions) originally published by Ramjee Gunnojee, a retired hospital assistant, makes the intent of these works very clear: 'Streechuritra or Female Narration, comprising their course of life, BEHAVIOUR, and undertaking in four parts with Moral reprimands checking Obscenity to secure Chastity'.⁴⁹ The new genre in Maharashtra depicted the same combination of Victorian and upper caste (Brahmanic) and class values that helped shape the ideal of the *bhadramahila* or 'respectable lady' stereotype in Bengal and elsewhere.

Judith Walsh, examining Bengali domestic manuals published in the last half of the nineteenth century (1860–1900), observed that this new reformulation of Bengali/Indian domestic culture concerned with women's education, hygiene, household management, cooking and child rearing, was part of a global domesticity that was 'created out of the reflexive interactions of both colony and metropole. It was transnational both in origins and impact'.⁵⁰ Walsh points out a shift in the configuration of power in familial relationships—the younger generation of Indian men, inspired by colonial modernity, made the younger brides to whom the texts were addressed not only the center of their discussion but also the supreme commander of their households. Undercutting the power and authority of elderly relatives, the new companionate and romantic relationship between man and woman was conceived not exactly in a nuclear family set up as Walsh suggests, but in a changing environment of a reformed home where the husband-wife relationship was based on love and consent, while simultaneously securing the absolute authority of the husband.⁵¹ Walsh argues that the young women acceded to this hierarchical, subordinate system without defiance because they had found a distinct advantage in this newly conceived romantic, dyadic husband-wife relationship as formulated by their reform minded husbands. Walsh's answer to her self-posed question—'what women learnt when men gave them advice?' was that women learned to read and it was through reading and writing that women embarked on a path of exploration of their agency and self-identity.⁵² The new education and reformed home enlightened and empowered a group of women, mostly middle-class, to assert themselves and call for changes in their lives by the beginning of the twentieth century. The careers and activism of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde and others

who all championed women's education, equality, and general improvement of status are important cases in point from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵³ Their examples also indicate that women from all different religions and ethnic backgrounds were affected by the aforementioned changes.

In spite of Walsh's insistence on the transnational and hybrid origin and impact of the new domesticity, we do not see any documentation of Indian ideas and customs impinging on British households in the metropole. She reads three British and American domestic manuals against two Indian texts, and gives no contrary evidence that proves Indian influence on the West. Had Walsh focused on the more prominent reformers and writers such as Sibnath Sastri or perhaps Dineshchandra Sen, who were known for their intellectual leadership and had a steady clientele, she could have documented that the colonial elites were not typically borrowing from the West but were also informed of their precolonial legacies of romantic love and domestic responsibilities as depicted through the popular literature of the past eras. Dineshchandra Sen's extensive research on ballads of East Bengal documenting *parakiya prem* (illicit love) in *sahajiya* Vaishnav cult, which predated Victorian notions of the companionate marriage and his simultaneous writing of the manual *Grihasree* (1925) for Indian women are instructive cases in point.⁵⁴

Antoinette Burton, Barbara Ramusack, and Mrinalini Sinha have amply demonstrated the global connections and the international ties that underlined the emerging notions of a newly defined domesticity in colonial India.⁵⁵ The discourses and activism of European missionaries, philanthropists, feminists, and activists who were engaged with Indian women's education and upliftment displayed an abiding commitment to ideas of domesticity that celebrated virtues of an ideal wife and a mother. In the inter-war period not only was the 'imperial public sphere' suffused with women's question, domestic space came to occupy a central position in the 'rhetoric, ideologies, and practices of Indian feminism in all its diversity...'⁵⁶ Closely reading several women's writings in an imperial context, Burton argues that the Indian feminists in the twentieth century had linked the question of the house and home with the new domesticity that they pushed in their own reform agendas. From the later decades of the nineteenth century women themselves seized issues related to domesticity as a motor of change, as a new cultural logic so that they could become progenitors of future citizen subjects of an independent nation state.

How the Indian feminists consolidated the ideas of the 'traditional' and reconfigured domesticity in the public political discourse is evident in Mary Hancock's study of the emergence of Home Science as a discipline in Madras Presidency in late colonial India. One must qualify in this context that feminism in India was not based on an assertion of sexual difference in the political claims of women's equality with men. Rather, the 'first wave feminists', as they were retrospectively called, claimed their representation in public life on the complementarity of biological, psychological, and spiritual difference with men.⁵⁷ Hancock examines the role played by the colonial state, Indian social reformers, and Indian women's organizations, which despite their differences, concurred on the idea of the home as a site and symbol of nationalist modernity and championed the establishment of Home Science as a discipline in Madras Presidency in the 1930s.⁵⁸ Combining Gandhian principles of nationalism and international feminism, female leaders of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC), the two leading women's organizations, used the rhetoric of domesticity to press their agenda to establish Home Science as a discipline in women's educational curriculum. Fostered in a cross-cultural climate of international travels and influenced by ideas and activism of international feminism in Western Europe and particularly North America, Home Science as a discipline with its avowed mission of training women to be 'wives, mothers,

and useful members of society', was readily endorsed by feminist nationalist women in India.⁵⁹ As a scientific discipline Home Science promised to deliver 'the power of science in homes', while at the same time preserving the best in Indian tradition. The emphasis on motherhood and mothercraft in this new science of family life enabled Indian feminist nationalists to assert their authority and power in the domestic realm while also allowing themselves to distinguish from the West. Indian feminists in the 1930s–1940s challenged the western notion that motherhood restricted women's autonomy.⁶⁰ The articulation of the domestic and new domesticity in the public realm in late colonial India thus empowered women to establish their agency and membership as citizens in an emergent body politic.⁶¹

The polemic on domesticity in the public, political realm attained its height with the American journalist Katherine Mayo's publication of *Mother India* in 1927. In her defense of continuing British imperialism in India, Mayo reinvented the old rhetoric of the degenerate condition of Indian women as victims of child marriage and premature maternity. She further added that the sexually obsessive behavior of Hindu males, as manifested in their rampant masturbation and homosexuality, rendered them unfit for self-government.⁶² The controversy that this popular book generated attracted worldwide attention from international politicians, legislators, journalists, social reformers, doctors, and activists and also from ordinary men and women in India who protested against the content of the book. As Mrinalini Sinha argues, as a transformative historical event stretching over three continents the controversy over *Mother India*, from its publication in 1927 through the passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act (also known as Sarada Act after its protagonist Harbilas Sarada) in India in 1929, unleashed unforeseen consequences of critical importance.⁶³ Mayo's works generated an unexpected backlash as her critics in India, which included a sizeable section of prominent women, appropriated *Mother India*'s condemnation of Indian society to pressurize a reluctant colonial government to pass the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1929.⁶⁴ In the campaign for the passage of the bill, Mayo's critics urged that the 'social' backwardness of India was a reflection of the 'political' condition of colonial rule.⁶⁵ Instead of looking at the colonial state as a vehicle of change and progress as Mayo suggested, the collective women's agency exposed the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the colonial regime in social matters and questioned its legitimacy. If the abolition of *sati* or widow-burning in 1829 had marked the legitimacy of the colonial state with its progressive mission, the overwhelming nationalist support for the passage of the Sarada Act a century later indicated the potential for the modernizing national state in India. Although the Act had more of an ideological and rhetorical significance than any practical import in 1929, it was 'the first and, since then, also the only law dealing directly with marriage that was universally applicable across different religious communities each with their own 'personal laws' governing marriage and family life'. Furthermore, as different segments of the Indian population, including different women's groups rallied around the passage of the Act, the Act enabled the construction of women's collective agency and established them as a constituency in their own rights. In the closing years of the colonial era debates on child marriage, a major domestic issue that belonged to the private and personal, brought women to the vortex of Indian politics both as the subject and object of reform and mobilized their collective identity in the public realm.⁶⁶

In the late 1930s, the collective agency of women was evident in the major women's organizations like the Women's India Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC) that broached issues traversing class, caste, ethnic, and religious divides. They were also the organizations in which feminist nationalists publicly championed the

role of mothers as harbingers of change in women's status. In the last decade of colonial rule women themselves took upon themselves the task of changing their own lives. Aware of the restricted nature of the feminist crusade and its limited appeal, women leaders admitted that the movement hardly addressed the problems of majority women in India who worked in fields and factories.⁶⁷

Conclusion: The Missing Links

Striking in this protracted discussion of the history of domesticity in India is a serious imbalance and the elision that I mentioned at the outset of the paper. While men-women relationships and the formulation of patriarchy and women's agency have been subjects of much scholarly debate and deliberation, we are yet to fathom the mediation of children that underscored the dialectics of motherhood and women in the colonial era. The existing literature on children and childhood in India focuses mainly on the postcolonial period, largely revolving around issues of poverty, exploitation, abuse of child labor, and state policies on these issues.⁶⁸ Studies by literary critics, psychoanalysts, and others address the question of the rearing and socialization of children and trace the connection between colonialism and children's literature.⁶⁹ But these works do not offer a social or cultural history of domesticity and family life with childhood as its primary focus. Satadru Sen's investigation of colonial institutions such as prisons and reformatories made an important contribution to the field by demonstrating childhood as an important component in the making of empire, race, and nationhood in the context of South Asia.⁷⁰ Apart from the colonial institutions such as schools, jails, orphanages, and reformatories that Sen points out, the critical presence of children in the making of an incipient nation, race, and empire was also evident in the earlier moves of colonization under the Company Raj, namely in trying to shape the natives' mind through new text books and pedagogic literature and the concomitant response of the indigenous reformers to cope with that pressure.⁷¹

The history of domesticity in India offers us a long genealogy going back to its precolonial past that urges us to look into the history of masculinity and childhood while recuperating the subjecthood and agency of women. If the ancient Indian religious texts emphasized the triangular bonding of the man, woman, and the child as a sign of happiness, the colonial discourse on the family also exalted the newly conceived role of the mother and the perfect wife. But in our search for the male hegemonic subjects and their cultural production of motherhood and domesticity we tended to gloss over the history of children and their fathers. Widow remarriage, child marriage, infanticide, and the age of consent admittedly concerned women but they were also veritably children's issues as the female members involved in those struggles were mostly below the age of adults. The centrality of children (as on par with women) in the discourse of both colonial officials and the indigenous literati and the new ideas of childhood and the perceived role of children were critical to the articulation of cultural and national identity in India. A closer examination of children and childhood as historical actors will provide rare glimpses of domesticity and provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the nexus between colonial policies and domestic practices thereby bridging the dichotomy between the private and the public, the peripheral colony and the metropolitan colonial state.

The existing literature amply demonstrates how different patriarchal practices subordinated women and lower social groups but the construction of patriarchy as a conceptual tool, in and of itself, remains unproblematized. We need to complicate the notion of

patriarchy beyond men-women divide and identify some of the core areas in and through which patriarchy operated. I posit that one of the cornerstones of colonial Indian patriarchy was the idea and practice of fatherhood that was inextricably entwined with the question of masculinity. The implication of masculinity in the unfolding of British colonial policies and their ramifications in the lives of the Indian population, particularly among the Bengalis, who interacted with the British most heavily as officials in the imperial administration has already been clearly demonstrated.⁷² Mrinalini Sinha has indicated the enormous potential for developing adequately contextualized histories of masculinity.⁷³ Of late, the issue of masculinity has been studied in the context of the recent surge of fundamentalist Hindu nationalism which is built around the notion of Hindu manhood.⁷⁴ Tracing the cultural construction of a Hindu nationalist masculinity within nineteenth century Bengal, Shubho Basu and Sikata Banerjee have successfully illuminated how the indigenous masculinity of 'warrior monk' and 'Hindu soldier' was derived from and in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of the British imperialists with their claim to a superior moral status and hence their legitimacy to rule.⁷⁵

Conspicuous by its absence in this growing body of literature on masculinity in South Asia is the role of the father.⁷⁶ It is striking that even in a leading seminar titled 'Exploring Masculinities: A South Asian Travelling Seminar' organized in February 2007 at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi, where national and international gender theorists and scholars deliberated on various aspects of masculinities, there was not a single paper that addressed the question of the father or fatherhood as a constituting element of masculinity. Masculinity, like patriarchy, is defined in the conference program only in opposition to femininity and is thus conceived from the position that the study of masculinities is important in that it is 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the affects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture'.⁷⁷ My question is: how can we elide the role of fatherhood and parenting, 'its affects and practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture' in a meaningful and holistic discussion of masculinity? If '[M]asculinity acquires its meanings only in specific practices' as Sinha has claimed, we definitely need to explore the dynamics of father-children relationship in Indian households as a constitutive element of domesticity that provided both the father and the child an autonomous site for parallel assertions of authority and personhood of the colonial subject.⁷⁸

As a new cultural logic domesticity in late colonial India acted as a motor of change and became an enabling force to mobilize and empower different segments of Indian population, particularly women. But domesticity in the Indian context or elsewhere is not just a domain appropriated by the rich and the famous, the elite and the reformers, but also by the lower social groups. The lives of less privileged groups were also shaped and determined by their cultural logic of domesticity and domestic space in colonial India, and we have hardly scratched the surface of their stories. Towards the end of the British colonial regime women, men, children (as well as other members in the household), the constitutive blocks of domesticity, became more enmeshed in the process of global social formations and cultural wars with a demand for their rights for private citizens in a freed nation-state. Caste, class, gender, race, and ethnicity were all implicated in the process of constituting colonial domesticity. With the home and the domestic as a site of nationalist struggle and colonial modernity, domesticity as an ideology and practice evolved as a more variegated and complex phenomenon with strong bearings in the present. With Indian women availing their bodies to an international clientele for surrogate wombs or hiring themselves as domestic workers in countries across the world, any

definition of domesticity today goes beyond cultural ordering and has wider transnational and global implications involving the question of space, labor, gender, and migration.

Short Biography

Swapna M. Banerjee teaches South Asian History at Brooklyn College of City University of New York. Her research, focusing on the intersection of gender, domesticity, family history, and class relations in colonial India, examines the identity formation of a colonial elite vis-à-vis other subaltern groups such as servants and children. She is the author of the book *Men, Women, and Domesticity: Articulating Middle Class Identity in Colonial Bengal* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Further extending her research on family history she is currently working on children and childhood in colonial India. Swapna M. Banerjee received her Ph.D. from Temple University, Philadelphia in 1998 and her B.A. and M.A. from Presidency College and the University of Calcutta, India.

Notes

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¹ A more situated analysis of women and a critique of Western feminism that treat women from the Third World as a monolithic group is found in C. T. Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', in C. Mohanty (ed.), *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 17–42. Indrani Chatterjee's 'Introduction' to her edited volume, *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asian History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), provides a nuanced analysis of South Asian women and family.

² In the African context Karen Tranberg Hansen has argued that domesticity became a new fixture in African society of Northern Rhodesia after its encounter with British colonial rule. For African domesticity see K. T. Hansen, *Distant Companion: Servants and Employers in Zambia, 1900–1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Jean and John L. Comaroff, 'Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa' in K. T. Hansen (ed.), *African Encounters with Domesticity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

³ For an explication of these ideas and their resonance to Western psychoanalytic theories see S. Kakar, 'The Human Life Cycle: The Traditional Hindu View and the Psychology of Erik Erikson', *Philosophy East and West*, 18/2 (July 1968): 127–136. Sudhir Kakar's explanation is based on a reading of Buhler's translation of *The Laws of Manu*. *The Laws of Manu*, in Sanskrit *Manusmriti* or *Manavadharmasāstra*, is an encyclopedic compendium of 2685 verses detailing the Hindu thought of every aspect of human life, of how it is and how it should be lived. Composed around the beginning of the Common Era or a little earlier, this text embodies the quintessential ideas of dominant Hinduism and reflects on Hindu family life, psychology, concepts of the body, sex, relationships between humans and animals, caste purification, pollution, material possession, politics, and any other conceivable aspect of human life. See W. Doniger and B. Smith (trans. & introduced), *The Law of Manu* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991).

⁴ S. Kakar, 'Setting the Stage: The Traditional Hindu View and the Psychology of Erik H. Erikson', in S. Kakar (ed.), *Identity and Adulthood* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3–12.

⁵ T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶ S. Bhattacharji, 'Economic Rights of Ancient Indian Women', in *Women and Society in Ancient India* (Calcutta: Basumati Corporation Ltd., 1994), 42–61.

⁷ U. Chakravarti, 'Conceptualizing Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class, and State', *Economic and Political Weekly* 28 (April 3, 1993): 579–85. For an overview see Barbara Ramusack, *Women in South Asia*, 23.

⁸ K. Roy, *The Emergence of Monarchy in North India: Eighth to Fourth Centuries B.C.* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 300.

⁹ B. Ramusack, *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 23–24.

¹⁰ M. Bose (ed.), *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4–5. See 'Introduction' in B. Stoler-Miller (tr.), *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 3.

The sloka reads as follows:

.....when duty is lost,
chaos overwhelms the family.
In overwhelming chaos, Krsna,
women of the family are corrupted;

and when women are corrupted, disorder is born in society.”

Bhagavad-Gita. 1.40–41

¹¹ R. Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ R. Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India, c. 1500–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2007).

¹⁴ V. N. Rao, D. Shulman, and S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 4. Also cited in I. Chatterjee (ed.), *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 6.

¹⁵ For the various religious cults and their connection to literature see S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 2nd edn. (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1962).

¹⁶ There are exceptions to this religious genre in Hindi literature that celebrate the worship of heroes, such as Rasau, and poets like Chand Bardai, Bhusan, and Lal displayed an independent spirit.

¹⁷ The only branch of Bengali literature free from this overtly religious influence are the ballads of eastern Bengal that captured the multifaceted lives of rural people and centered on their episodes of love and romance. S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, xxxii.

¹⁸ Mukundaram Chakrabarty's *Chandimangal* could be possibly dated between 1594 and 1606.

¹⁹ D. C. Sen, *Glimpses of Bengal Life: Stray Notes on Some Bengali Ballads: Lectures delivered to the Calcutta University in 1915 (with a Supplement)* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1925), 9.

²⁰ D. C. Sen, *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, 13.

²¹ For the interpenetration of 'interior' and 'exterior' realms in precolonial sources see A. K. Ramanujan (selected, edited and translated), 'Afterword', *Poems of Love and War* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 231–236.

²² See D. Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British India', *History Workshop*, 36 (Autumn 1993): 1–34.

²³ P. K. Bose, 'Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family' in P. Chatterjee (eds.), *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 118–144.

²⁴ Family in the context of Indian/South Asian history is a highly contested notion. Who constituted a family or who its 'legal' members were, what were the abiding principles for being considered a relative or a non-relative in extended, multi-generational households in colonial India were not only fluid and unstable ideas but they were also widely debated in court cases and family chronicles centering around questions of legitimacy, inheritance, property rights, and family honor. See S. Vatuk, "'Family" as a Contested Concept in Early-nineteenth-century Madras', in I. Chatterjee (ed.), *Unfamiliar Relations*, 161–191.

²⁵ T. Raychaudhuri, 'Love in a Colonial Climate: Marriage, Sex and Romance in Nineteenth-century Bengal', *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities: Essays on India's Colonial and Post-Colonial Experiences* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 65–95. Martha Nussbaum points out the openness of Hinduism in sexual matters, contrary to any other major religion in the world, where sexuality is mostly a taboo field. M. Nussbaum, 'Fantasies of Purity and Domination', in *The Clash Within* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 186–210.

²⁶ Some of the major works on 'woman question' in nineteenth century Bengal are: M. Borthwick, *Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); D. Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity', *History Workshop*, 36 (Autumn 1993): 1–34; P. Chatterjee, 'The Nation and Its Women', in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 116–134; I. Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); D. Engels, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal 1890–1939* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); G. Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). G. Murshid, *Reluctante Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849–1905* (Rajshahi: Rajshahi University Press, 1983); S. Sarkar, 'The Women's Question in Nineteenth Century Bengal', in *A Critique on Colonial India* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985); T. Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

²⁷ See S. N. Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876–1939* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996); C. Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); G. Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). For similar processes in Punjab and United Provinces see A. Malhotra, *Gender, Caste, and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); S. Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁸ R. K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875–1927* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984).

²⁹ T. Sarkar, 'The Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal', in *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 23–52.

³⁰ M. Borthwick, *Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 30–31.

- ³¹ G. Forbes, *Women in Modern India (The New Cambridge History of Modern India, IV.2)* (Cambridge, UK: 1996), 12.
- ³² For middle-class women's behavior and interaction with lower social classes see S. Banerjee, *Men, Women and Domesticity: Articulating Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal* (Delhi/NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- ³³ M. Borthwick, *Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 5–59.
- ³⁴ P. Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in K. Sangari and S. Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women Essays in Indian Colonial History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 233–53.
- ³⁵ The sharpest critique came from T. Sarkar, 'The Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal', in *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 23–52.
- ³⁶ R. O'Hanlon, *A comparison between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 51–53.
- ³⁷ S. Sastri, *Grihadharma (Duties of the Household)* (Calcutta: Sadharon Brahma Samaj, 1881), 44–5.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- ⁴⁰ P. Anagol, 'Women as Agents: Contesting Discourses on Marriage and Marital Rights', in *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850–1920* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2005), 182.
- ⁴¹ For Rukma Bai's case see S. Chandra, *Enslaved Daughters* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); A. Burton, 'From Child Bride to "Hindoo Lady": Rukhmabai and the Debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain', *American Historical Review*, October (1998): 1119–46.
- ⁴² P. Anagol, 'Beyond Kitchen and Kid: Hindu Women's Discourse and Work', in *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850–1920* (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2005), 57–104.
- ⁴³ G. Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, 7.
- ⁴⁴ For more on domestic manuals and how they were engaged in making caste-class and gender distinctions and particularly middle-class women's relationship with servants, see S. Banerjee, 'Reconstituting The Household: Defining Middle-Class Domesticity in Colonial Bengal', in *Men, Women, and Domesticity* 2004, 96–124.
- ⁴⁵ P. Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in K. Sangari and S. Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women*, 233–53.
- ⁴⁶ D. Chakrabarty, 'Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity', *History Workshop*, 36 (Autumn 1993): 1–34.
- ⁴⁷ For the contradictory and ambiguous pulls in the manuals and the influence of West and Indian women's education, see S. Banerjee, *Men, Women, and Domesticity*, 112–116.
- ⁴⁸ *Muktamala* (1861), *Manjughosha* (1868), *Manorama* (1877), *Stricharitra* (1850s on) are some leading examples that ran into several editions through late 1870s- and 1880s- Maharashtra.
- ⁴⁹ R. O'Hanlon, *A Comparison Between Women and Men* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38–40.
- ⁵⁰ J. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- ⁵¹ For intimacy of conjugal relationships in colonial Bengal see T. Raychaudhuri, 'Love in a Colonial Climate: Marriage, Sex and Romance in Nineteenth-Century Bengal', in *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 49–64.
- ⁵² This is a conclusion that has been reached by most scholars working on women in colonial India. See the works of Geraldine Forbes and Tanika Sarkar cited above.
- ⁵³ See S. N. Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876–1939* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996); R. S. Hossain, H. Papanek, and R. Jahan (eds.), *Sultana's Dreams and Selections from the Secluded Ones* (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1993); B. Ray, *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); A. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); P. Ramabai, R. E. Frykenberg, K. Gomes, and P. C. Engblom (edited & translated), *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States* (UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003); U. Chakravarti, *Rewriting History: the Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998).
- ⁵⁴ The *parakiya prem* or illicit love that is depicted between Radha and Krishna in Vaishnav literature is an allegory for the mystical union between the mortal soul (jivatma) and the divine (paramatma).
- ⁵⁵ See B. Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865–1945', A. M. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and "the Indian Woman," 1865–1915', and M. Sinha, "'Chatham's, Pitts, and Gladstones in Petticoats: The Politics of Gender and Race in the Ilbert Bill Controversy, 1883–1884', in N. Chaudhuri and M. Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
- ⁵⁶ A. M. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8–11.
- ⁵⁷ G. Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, 242–243.

- ⁵⁸ M Hancock, 'Home Science and the Nationalization of Domesticity in Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 35/4 (2001): 871–903.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 895. For more on motherhood and mothercraft among women in colonial India, see S. Sen, 'Motherhood and Mothercraft: Gender and Nationalism in Bengal', *Gender and History*, 5/2 (1993): 231–243.
- ⁶⁰ Mary Hancock, *Ibid.*, 896.
- ⁶¹ See A. Roy, 'The Domestic, Domesticity, and Women Citizens in Late Colonial India', in *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2005), 78–120.
- ⁶² K. Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927; London: Jonathan Cape, 1927).
- ⁶³ For an incisive reading of the multifaceted implications of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, see M. Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
- ⁶⁴ The Sarda Act (1929) aimed to prevent marriages of girls below fourteen and boys below sixteen and only came to be reinforced after the passage of an amending legislation in 1938.
- ⁶⁵ M. Sinha, 'Refashioning Mother India: The Sarda Act and Women's Collective Agency', in *Specters of Mother India*, 152–196.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 152–154.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 247.
- ⁶⁸ N. Burra, *Born to Work: Child Labor in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); M. Weiner, *The Child and the State in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). B. Weiner, and A. Bajpai (eds.), *Born Unfree: Child Labour, Education, and the State in India: An Omnibus: The Child and the State in India, Born to Work, and Child Rights in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
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- ⁷⁵ S. Basu and S. Banerjee, 'The Quest for Manhood: Masculine Hinduism and Nation in Bengal', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East* 26/3 (2006): 476–490.
- ⁷⁶ For a cross-cultural reference on fatherhood, see V. Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
- ⁷⁷ Conference Program, *Exploring Masculinities: A South Asian Travelling Seminar* (February 13–14, 2007), Department of Sociology, University of Delhi (North Campus).
- ⁷⁸ For a more nuanced understanding of masculinity see P. Jackson, 'The Cultural Politics of Masculinity: Towards a Social Geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1991): 199–213.

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