

Women in Colonial India

Lecture Course 2018 Monsoon: 4 Credit MA ; 2 Credits MPhil

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This course is based on the assumption that as a social category 'woman' has been and is being constituted in time and space. Through a survey of over a hundred years of British rule, this course looks how 'modernity' was engendered in a society with already well woven matrix of caste hierarchies and religious distinctions. The 19th century debates on social reform shaped the trajectory of the women's question in India. While this offered possibilities of social change; by the early 20th century the nationalist question either 'incorporated' or 'diverted' fragments of the women's question. However, in the past four decades, changes in the nature of women's struggle the world over have transformed the way in which nation itself has been perceived. Scholars have increasingly become interested in women as 'citizens'. Questions of inheritance, property and civil rights have acquired precedence. Recently the scholars of history have been looking at the changing forms of patriarchy by uncovering its structural and functional aspects which rendered Indian women as 'unequal' citizens. Recent scholarship also takes into account- women's autobiographies and writings. A section has been added on methods of reading autobiographies and memoirs of women to primarily foreground the 'personal' as 'political'.

Theme 1

Historiographical Review

This section looks at the diversity of academic writing on Indian women since the early twentieth century. It will look at how the Status of Women Report since the 1970s, ushered in a new phase in scholarship on women's history. The 1990s witnessed a keen interest in reconstituting the archives for women's history. Scholars have sought to uncover the ambiguities of land rights, property and inheritance for women. New forms of writing on labour history; *dalit* women and eco-feminism appeared by the end of the last century. The theme will also cover the debate on Women's History versus Gender History.

Historiographical Review

Gedge, C Evelyn and Choksi, Mithan, *Women in Modern India*, Bombay, 1929.

Altekar, A.S, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Benaras Hindu University, Benaras, 1938.

Desai, Neera, *Women in Modern India 1857-1947*, Vora and Co, Bombay, 1957.

Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, New Delhi, 1975.

Forbes, Geraldine, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

Sangari, Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak' in Nelson, Cary and Grossberg, Lawrence (ed) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1988.

Roy, Kumkum (ed), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, Manohar, Delhi, 1999.

Ramusack, Barbara and Sievers, Sharon, *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1999.

Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920*, Ashgate, London, 2006

Sarkar, Sumit and Sarkar, Tanika, (ed), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader* Permanent Black, Ranikhet Cantt., 2007, 2 Vols.

Chaudhuri, Maitreyi, (ed), *Feminism in India*, Kali for Women, Delhi, 2004.

Aggarwal, Bina, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, CUP, Cambridge, 1994.

Atwal, Jyoti. 2016. *Real and Imagined Widows: Gender relations in North India*, Delhi : Primus.

Methodology and Research on Women's History :

Millett, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, New York: Doubleday, 1970

Kelly, Joan, *Women, Theory and History: The Essays of Joan Kelly*, University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Davis, Nira Yuval, *The politics of belonging: intersectional contestations*, London, Sage, 2011, 264pp., ISBN 978-14-12921-30-5

Cosslett Tess, Cela Lury, and Penny Summerfield (eds), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories and Methods*, Routledge, 2000.

Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, Edinburgh university Press, 1999.

Stanton, Domna (ed) *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.

Benstock, Shari(ed) *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Theme 2 The Colonial State; the Public Sphere and the Women's Question**a) Formulation of the 'women's question' through law making:**

This theme is an introduction to historical scholarship on 19th century legislation on Hindu women, particularly the Anti Sati Act of 1829; Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the Age of Consent Act of 1891. It discusses the various ways in which the Hindu male intelligentsia articulated reforms for the Hindu women and why this project acquired primacy. As a force for 'modernizing' tradition, these legislative debates within the elite Hindu arena made possible the regeneration of textual *shastric* position on women. For the colonial administration, this 'women's question' translated into a cautious cultural interface and intervention. The Acts once passed, were left to be made workable only by those who proposed them. More than the Acts, these debates on women's 'duties', sexuality and marriage were in themselves, crucial in defining gender relation within the family and of family with the Nation. By the end of the 19th century, these debates infused a new sensibility and direction to women's concerns.

Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London, 1993. (Read only two chapters on Sati)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak' in Nelson, Cary and Grossberg, Lawrence (ed) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1988.

Janet price and Margrit Shildrick, 'Mapping the Colonial Body: Sexual Economies and the State in Colonial India', Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (eds), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, Edinburgh university Press, pp388-398.

Clare Midgley, 'Female emancipation in an imperial frame: English women and the campaign Against Sati (widow-burning) in India, 1813-30', *Women's History Review*, 9: 1, 2000, pp95-121.

Jyoti Atwal, 'Foul unhallow'd fires': Officiating Sati and the Colonial Hindu Widow in the United Provinces', *Studies in History*, 29.2 (2013): 229-272.

Theme 3 Women, Household and idea of the 'Domestic'

This theme looks at the remaking of the household and shifts in power relations within it. It also reviews how the idea of 'private' and 'public' emerges in the colonial context and in the subsequent debates on it. This section also examines the debates on the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act of 1937 and the Marriage and Succession Acts of 1956.

Educational Reforms

This theme reviews the emergence of new 19th century educational structures for women modeled either on Western or the indigenous system. Women's

Education was aimed at producing a modern 'companion' for the 'modern' Indian, yet some women were able to conceptualize their own curriculum. Pandita Ramabai Saraswati; D K Karve; Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain; Rashsundari Debi; Sister Subbalaksmi ; Arya Samajist Kanya Mahavidyalayas will be discussed.

Chandra, Sudhir, *Enslaved Daughters: Colonialism, Law and Women's Rights*, Delhi, OUP, 1999.

Sarkar, Tanika, *Words to Win: The Making of Amar Jiban: A Modern Autobiography*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1999.

Minuallt, Gail, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, OUP, Delhi, 1999.

Forbes, Geraldine *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine and Historiography*, Chronicle Books, Delhi, 2005 (Chapters on 'Education to Earn' and 'Medicine for Women')

Kishwar, Madhu 'Arya Samaj and Women's Education: Kanya Mahavidyalaya,' *EPW*, Aug 16, 1986.

Sinha, Mrinalini, *Colonial Masculinity: the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali, in the late nineteenth century*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995.

Walsh, Judith E, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice*, Rowman and Little Field, Lanham, 2004.

Devika, J(ed), *Her-Self: Gender and Early Writings of Malayalee Women 1898-1938*, Stree, Kolkata, 2005.

Banerjee, Himani, *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2001.

Kosambi, Meera, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet Cantt., 2007.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind *A Comparison between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1994.

Saraswati, Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, Philadelphia, 1888.

Binodini Dasi: My Story and My Life As An Actress, edited and translated by Rimli Bhattacharya, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998.

Haraway, Donna, A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, New York, 1991.

Atwal, Jyoti. 'Donna Haraway and Feminist Philosophy : The Cyborgic moment in Indian Feminist history', *Homosapiens: A Travancore Journal of Philosophy*, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, Vol 1, Issue 1, January 2018, pp43-56.

Theme 4 Gender, Empire and India (September-October)

a) Empire's Prostitutes

Stephen Legg, *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities, and Interwar India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), xi + 280 pp.

Levine, Phillipa, 'Venereal Disease, Prostitution and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol 4, no 4, 1994.

Nair, Janaki, 'Uncovering the *Zenana*: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940', in Catherine Hall (ed) *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000.

Chaudhuri, Nupur, 'Memsahibs and their Servants in Nineteenth century India', *Women's History Review*, Vol 3, no 4, 1994.

Ballhatchet, Kenneth, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980.

Julie B. Miller, 'Eroticized Violence in Medieval Women's Mystical Literature: A Call for a Feminist Critique', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 15, No 2 (Fall, 1999), pp25-49.

b) Empire, War and Widowhood

Eyerman. Ron.2004. Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity, in: Jeffrey C. Alexander , Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser ,Piotr Sztompka (eds): *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, pp60-111, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lomas.Janis.1994. "'So I Married Again': Letters from British Widows of the First and Second World Wars." *History Workshop*, no. 38 : 218-27

Kuhlman.Erica.2012. *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation after the Great War*. New York: New York University Press.

Seltzer, Mark. 1997. Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere, *October* 80, pp 3-26.

Atwal, Jyoti, 'Cultural Trauma and Welfare for the War Widows in India' *Politička Misao (Croatian Political Science Review)* in a special issue titled *Faces of Cultural Trauma*, No. 1 (2017), 54. (available free online)

Theme 5 Politics of Participation in the National Movement (September-October)

This theme explores how patriotism for the Indian women was filtered through colonial consciousness and multiple layers of cultural defence. Participation in the Gandhian method for political liberation, created a unique space for the Indian women to realign gender relations. This tension between the subjected 'self' and the 'nation' persisted throughout the National Movement. This section surveys this 'struggle' through primary evidence in the form of autobiographies and memoirs of the participants. This section includes the debate in the National Social Conference and Ranade's position on women.

Atwal, Jyoti, 'Women in Indian National Movement' (Special segment on Independence day), *Yojana*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, September 2016, pp31-34.

Mayo, Katherine, *Mother India*, New York, 1927.

Heimsath, Charles, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964 (Chapters on Ranade and National Social Conference and Social Reform versus Political Reform).

Chatterjee, Partha, 'The Nationalist Resolution of Women's Question', *Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989.

Bjorkert, Suruchi Thapar, *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices 1930-42*, Sage, Delhi, 2006.

Forbes, Geraldine *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine and Historiography*, Chronicle Books, Delhi, 2005 (chapters on 'Caged Tigers' and 'Politics of Respectability').

Atwal, Jyoti, 'Revisiting Premchand: Shivrani Devi on Companionship, Reformism and Nation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 5, 2007.

Chattopadhyaya, Kamladevi, *Inner Recesses Outer Spaces: Memoir*, Niyogi Books, 2014 (first published 1986).

Indian Women's Battle for Freedom, Abhinav Publications, 1983.

Sengupta, Padmini, *Sarojini Naidu: A Biography*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966.

Cousins, James and Margaret, *We Two Together*, Ganesh, Madras, 1950 (chapter on Jail experience)

Sehgal, Manmohini Zutshi: *An Indian Freedom Fighter Recalls her life*, edited by Geraldine Forbes, New York, 1994.

Thakurta, Tapati Guha, 'Women as 'Calendar Art' Icons: Emergence of Pictorial Stereotype in Colonial India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 26, 1991

Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, *Bharat Mata : India's Freedom Movement in Popular Art*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2008

Theme 6 Caste Oppression and Women (November)

Krishnamurthy, J, (ed) *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, OUP, Delhi, 1989.

Meenakshi Moon and Urmil Pawar, 'We made history too: Women in the early Untouchable Liberation Movement', in Anupama Rao (ed), *Gender and Caste: Contemporary Issues in Indian Feminism*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2003.

Rege, Sharmila, *Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios*, Zubaan, Delhi, 2013.

I, Phoolan Devi: The Autobiography of India's Bandit Queen, with Marie-Threse Cuny and Paul Rambali, London : Little, Brown and Co., 1996

Reading material from Black Atlantic Studies
