Sex and the Family in Colonial India

In the early years of the British empire, cohabitation between Indian women and British men was commonplace and to some degree tolerated. However, as Durba Ghosh argues in a challenge to the existing historiography, anxieties about social status, appropriate sexuality, and the question of who could be counted as “British” or “Indian” were constant concerns of the colonial government even at this time. By following the stories of a number of mixed-race families, at all levels of the social scale, from high-ranking officials and noblewomen to rank-and-file soldiers and camp followers, and also the activities of indigenous female concubines, mistresses, and wives, the author offers a fascinating account of how gender, class, and race affected the cultural, social, and even political mores of the period. The book makes an original and signal contribution to scholarship on colonialism, gender, and sexuality.

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Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society publishes monographs on the history and anthropology of modern India. In addition to its primary scholarly focus, the series also includes work of an interdisciplinary nature which contributes to contemporary social and cultural debates about Indian history and society. In this way, the series furthers the general development of historical and anthropological knowledge to attract a wider readership than that concerned with India alone.

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