

The Government of Social Life in Colonial India

From the early days of colonial rule in India, the British established a two-tier system of legal administration. Matters deemed secular were subject to British legal norms, while suits relating to the family were adjudicated according to British understandings of Hindu or Muslim law, known as personal law. This important new study analyzes the system of personal law in colonial India through a reexamination of its emphasis on women's rights. Focusing on Hindu law in western India, it challenges existing scholarship, showing how – far from being a system based on traditional values, or a system that operated in isolation from secular law – Hindu law was developed around ideas of liberalism, and this framework encouraged questions about equality, women's rights, the significance of bodily difference, and more broadly the relationship between state and society. Rich in archival sources, wide-ranging, and theoretically informed, the book illuminates how social life, emblemized by the system of personal law, came to function as an organizing principle of colonial governance and of nationalist political imaginations.

Rachel Sturman is Associate Professor of History and Asian Studies at Bowdoin College. Her writing has appeared in many journals, including *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *Economic & Political Weekly*, and *Gender & History*.

Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 21

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The Government of Social Life in Colonial India

Liberalism, Religious Law, and Women's Rights

RACHEL STURMAN

Bowdoin College, Maine



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
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www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107010376

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First published 2012

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Sturman, Rachel Lara, 1969–

The government of social life in colonial India : liberalism, religious law,
 and women's rights / Rachel Sturman.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Indian history and society)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-01037-6

1. Women's rights – India – History. 2. India – Social conditions. 3. Religious
 law – India – History. 4. Great Britain – Colonies. I. Title.

HQ1742.S7888 2012

954-dc23 2012000798

ISBN 978-1-107-01037-6 Hardback

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*To my parents,
Audrie and Larry Sturman,
Who opened my eyes to a broader world,
lived the values of social justice, and
taught me the power of ideas.*

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Acknowledgments

In writing a book that concerns itself with the metaphors of value and the impossibility of absolute recompense, my own intellectual, personal, and professional debts have remained powerfully before me, as has the inevitably partial nature of any accounting. This book is the product of many acts of kindness as well as kismet over many long years.

This book began as a dissertation under the direction of Barbara Metcalf at the University of California, Davis. The initial research and writing were made possible through an American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Research Fellowship, the Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities, the University of California President's Fellowship, the Mabel McLeod Lewis Fellowship, and a Phi Beta Kappa Award. Further support from the University of Michigan Society of Fellows, the University of Michigan Rackham Faculty Research Grant, and the Bowdoin College Sabbatical Fellowship saw the transformation of the project into the present book.

I am grateful for the research assistance provided by the archive and library staff at the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai and in Pune, at the Mumbai High Court Archives and Advocates' Library and Reading Room, and at the Asian and African Studies Reading Room of the British Library. Special thanks also to Pune District Judge S. R. Khanzode, and to the staff at the District Court, for their generosity with their time and knowledge of the court's functioning and its history. At Bowdoin, critical phases of research were made possible through the indefatigable efforts of the ILL staff, particularly Guy Saldanha, who consistently went above and beyond.

In India, the friendship, warmth, and generosity of many helped make Mumbai an adopted home. Reena Martins provided an endless supply of

witty sarcasm coupled with love and care. Pratibha Mehra was a generous and urbane companion. Rusheed Wadia gave of his time and expertise, showing me many Mumbais, sharing his knowledge of the archives, stepping in to help out in so many ways, and trusting in our friendship. Manju in the Mumbai High Court Advocates' Library helped me navigate the court with her classic finesse, while providing a running critique of each and every dominant "system" with warmth and good humor. The women of Stree Sangam – Bina, Gomathi, Shalini, Chaynaka, Sonu, and others, and especially Geeta Kumana – made me feel welcome. Felicia Dias opened up her home to me for the long duration of my research.

Some of my foremost debts are to my teachers and mentors who launched me on this path and who saw this project to completion. My study of colonialism, of gender, and of South Asia began at the University of Chicago through formative experiences working with Leora Auslander, Barney Cohn, Ron Inden, John Kelly, and Gyan Pandey, among others.

At UC-Davis, Barbara Metcalf's wisdom, intellectual acuity, and deep historical sensibility guided this work in its early stages and beyond, continually pushing me to clarify and strengthen my arguments. To this day, her call to "write for people" remains a goal that I strive toward. Barbara's devotion to the larger aims of the historical profession, her unwavering ethical commitments, her intellectual curiosity, and her abundant warmth and generosity showed me ways of being a historian in the broadest sense.

Tom Metcalf likewise played an important role in this project, probing and questioning its aims, and ever nudging me toward the pragmatic value of completion. I have long benefited from his knowledge and skepticism, and enjoyed his proclivities for pushing the envelope. The intellectual community that Barbara and Tom fostered through the Colonialism and Culture reading group created an invaluable space for exploring arguments and ideas, and for cultivating friendships. Carina Johnson and Lisa Trivedi especially became important friends and interlocutors who have provided valued comradeship and perspective for many years.

Susan Mann offered a model of intellectual and personal engagement, a delight in people and in the world, and a tremendous ability to laugh that long served as touchstones for my own development as a scholar, teacher, and colleague.

At the University of Michigan, I benefited from the remarkable intellectual community forged by a dynamic group of faculty and graduate students. I am grateful to Jim Boyd White for his stewardship of the Society of Fellows, and for his sensitivity to bringing the interpretive methods

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of the humanities to the study of law. Thanks are also due to my fellow Fellows at Michigan for their readings of early chapters and for their companionship. Faculty in the Department of History and in the Anthro-History Program made Michigan a truly exceptional place to begin the process of writing this book, combining brilliance, warmth, and intellectual generosity in equal measure. I am especially grateful for the support I received from Fred Cooper, Geoff Eley, Gillian Feeley-Harnik, Rebecca Scott, Ann Stoler, Tom Trautmann, and the late Fernando Coronil, as well as other members of the Comparative Study of Social Transformations working group and the Marxist Study Group. Also critical to these years were the friendship and intellectual ferocity of Lee Schlesinger. Lee's intellectual rigor, his commitment to Maharashtra and Marathi studies, and the vibrant social sphere he and Lisa created in their home, especially through Kitab Mandal, remain dear to me. Sharad Chari and Christi Merrill were trusted colleagues and friends, who dazzled (and continue to dazzle) me with their creativity, analytical verve, and fabulousness, and who provided effortless camaraderie.

This work – and the span of my life spent working on it – have been vastly enriched through numerous conversations and patient readings by brilliant interlocutors, and through critical support provided at key moments. I am grateful to Dipesh Chakrabarty, Uma Chakravarti, Sharad Chari, Sandra Comstock, Rochona Majumdar, Uday Mehta, Christi Merrill, Radhika Mongia, Gyanendra Pandey, Anupama Rao, Mitra Sharafi, Radhika Singha, Gopika Solanki, Andrea Zemgulys, and the late Sujata Patel. Several people stand out for their exceptional role: David Gilmartin did yeoman's service in reading multiple chapter drafts and providing ever-incisive comments that truly "got" what the book was about even when I wasn't sure. Minnie Sinha read several early incarnations of portions of this work and engaged with it with seriousness, and with sparkling and provocative critique. Her support has made a crucial difference. Raji Sunder Rajan has been remarkable both in her reading and engagement with this work, and in her broader presence and support. For seeing the possible, and also for overlooking the limitations of the actual, I am ever grateful.

A group of extraordinary friends and fellow travelers have sustained me through many years and many vicissitudes. For everything their friendship has meant to me, I am grateful to Cherie Barkey, Durba Ghosh, Marlé Hammond, Larissa Heinrich, Anne Keary, Michelle Mancini, Karin Martin, and Elaine Meckenstock. Anupama Rao has long been an important friend and exceptional interlocutor, demanding of my work

its highest potential and seeing what it was about long before I did. I am grateful for her rigor, commitment, generosity, and loyalty. Andrea Zengulys remains in a category all her own: for years of dear friendship, for her singular humor, and for abiding in the same universe, as she knows.

I have been fortunate to find at Bowdoin College a supportive and generous community that sustained me through the long process of writing this book. Among many wonderful colleagues, several deserve special mention: Connie Chiang, David Gordon, and David Hecht created a helpful early writing group. Allen Wells has been both informal mentor and consummate mensch from the beginning. In Sara Dickey I found both kindred spirit and welcome mentor and interlocutor, whose unpretentious and generous sociability has made all the difference. Belinda Kong, Jayanthi Selinger, Jeff Selinger, and Hilary Thompson provided intellectual and personal camaraderie, brilliant conversation, trusted friendship, and invaluable assistance with the final stages of writing.

Portions of this work were presented to numerous audiences at conferences, workshops, and invited lectures over the years, and I am grateful for the many helpful comments I received in these venues. They have certainly helped me make this a better book. Special thanks are due to Frank Conlon for an early intervention, and to the conveners and participants in “The Concept of the Political” workshop at Columbia University, in the University of Chicago Department of Anthropology Monday Lecture Series, and in the University of Michigan Department of History Faculty Seminar Series.

I wish to thank Marigold Acland, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for her support for this project from the beginning; Joy Mizan for her assistance throughout the process; Alison Auch of PETT Fox, Inc., for her excellent copyediting; Bindu Vinod for expert management; and the production team at Newgen Knowledge Works that worked on this book. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press for their careful and generous reading of my lengthy manuscript and for their helpful suggestions for revision.

An early version of portions of Chapter 3 was previously published as “Property and Attachments: Defining Autonomy and the Claims of Family in Nineteenth-Century Western India” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, 3 (July 2005): 611–637, and is reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press. Portions of an early version of Chapter 4 were previously published as “Marriage and the Morality of Exchange: Defining the Terrain of Law in Late Nineteenth

Acknowledgments

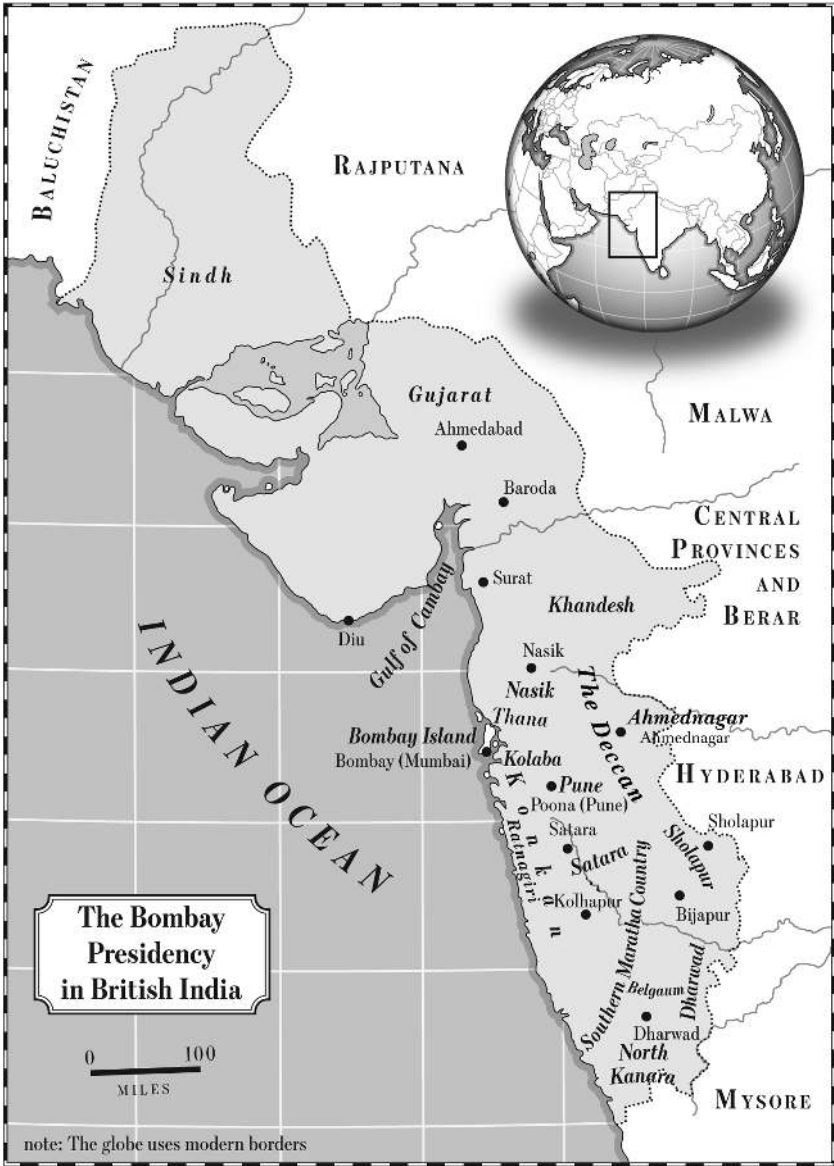
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Century Western India” in *Decentering Empire: Britain, India, and the Transcolonial World*, edited by Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006: 51–75). These selections are reproduced with permission of Orient Blackswan. The frontispiece image is reproduced with kind permission from Noshir Gobhai. My thanks are also due to the late Sharada Dwivedi for her gracious assistance in facilitating this permission.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to be a part of a large and growing family. My parents, Audrie and Larry Sturman, and siblings Serena, Nicole, and David (“Bro”) have proven a tremendous source of support, humor, and goodwill throughout the writing process. The Hoffmans opened up to me with warmth and generosity from the beginning, making me a part of their family. My immediate family has literally lived the writing of this book. To Sylvie, whose birth ushered in utterly unimagined joy, I am grateful for your patience, determination, and exuberance, and for letting me see your world. To Sasha, whose birth hastened this book’s completion, thank you for your uniqueness and for showing me the boundlessness of love all over again. My greatest debts are to Paul Hoffman, my unwavering source of strength and solace, who knew me from the beginning, and who has always understood. For your wysiwyg self, for making me laugh, and for innumerable hours of child care and so much more, I am forever grateful.

Abbreviations

BLR	<i>Bombay Law Reports</i>
GD	General Department
HD	Home Department
ILR	<i>Indian Law Reports</i>
JD	Judicial Department
MIA	<i>Moore's Indian Appeals</i>
MSA	Maharashtra State Archives
OIOR	Oriental and India Office Records, British Library
RD	Revenue Department
RNP	Reports on Native (News)Papers



Map of the Bombay Presidency in British India.