SPLITTING THE STEREOTROPE:
READING WOMEN IN COLONIAL TEXTS

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**ABSTRACT**

*Splitting the Stereotrope: Reading Women in Colonial Texts* explores gendered communication through a process of discourse analysis. A historical reconstruction of the life of Maharani Baiza Bai (1784-1863) allows for investigating concepts of voice, agency, and hegemony of the colonial subject. Through use of a variety of textual materials, including travel narratives and government records, we are able to challenge certain assumptions surrounding the nature of colonial interaction on levels of gender, class, and race. The organizing doctrine of public and private spheres, the Self/Other schism central to theorizing Orientalism, and the colonizer/colonized framework for imperialist rhetoric are the specific themes that will be examined during the course of this thesis.

Thus, the goals of this thesis are threefold. Firstly, to construct a history of the Maharani Baiza Bai that uses available texts from the period. Placing the Bai in time by providing brackets of fact and record will help to answer some of the following questions. Who was she? What did she do? What are the organizing tropes against which she is read? Does the historical record provide the opportunity to argue convincingly for evidence of her voice and agency?

Secondly, this thesis will identify and theorize the female colonial narrators who record their meetings with Baiza Bai – specifically, Fanny Parks, Emily Eden and Fanny Eden. By directing the gaze back at the narrators we are able to interrogate our *colonizing women*, placing them within a postcolonial framework where the facts of empirical history and the theories of colonial discourse meet. This encompasses delving behind the screen of *purdah* and exploring life in the *zenana*, particularly as recorded by the female colonial.

Thirdly, this analysis will reexamine and evaluate the nature of imperialism and Orientalism from a gendered perspective. Questions surrounding the female figure as an icon of imperialism and as a sexualized metaphor central to Orientalism should be addressed. Does Orientalism differ

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when viewed from the female perspective? What theoretical extensions can be developed from this re-evaluation?

The use of enduring binary categories to read and interpret historical texts as a series of dualities: Self/Other, Colonizer/Colonized, Brown/White, Ruler/Subaltern, Man/Woman, Public/Private, has imposed an artificially structured paradigm on an ambiguous series of subject positions. For the purpose of this thesis, the word “stereotrope” has been utilized in reference to these dualities. Stereotrope means a trope or allegory of understanding that has been overused to the point where it has become part of a fixed conceptual framework. Stereotrope extends beyond the notion of a stereotype by challenging not only the content of the metaphor but its inherent binary structure. Reading colonial era texts against themselves holds potential for splitting the stereotrope and provides fertile ground for a reinvigorated and inclusive post-colonial narrative.
# Table of Contents

**Abstract**  

**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgements**

1. **Splitting the Stereotrope**  
   1.1 *The Fate of Women and Melons*  
   1.2 Stereotropes  
   1.3 Private vs. Public Spheres

2. **Life and Times of Baiza Bai**
   2.1 Overview  
   2.2 Princely States and the Raj  
   2.3 Gwalior  
   2.4 The Scindia Dynasty  
   2.5 Baiza Bai  
   2.6 Power

3. **I Am Told You Dress a Camel Beautifully**
   3.1 Introduction  
   3.2 The Role of Colonial Women  
   3.3 The Narrators  
   3.4 In the Zenana  
   3.5 The Body Politic: A Fine Figure

4. **The Gendered Imperative**
   4.1 Introduction  
   4.2 Gendering Orientalism: It Came From Within  
   4.3 Conclusion

**Bibliography**
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1. SPLITTING THE STEREOTROPE

1.1 THE FATE OF WOMEN AND MELONS

Early in the second volume of her memoirs, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, intrepid traveler Fanny Parks relates a conversation she has with her good friend, the former Maharani of Gwalior, Baiza Bai.

The fate of women and of melons is alike. "Whether the melon falls on the knife or the knife on the melon, the melon is the sufferer."

We spoke of the severity of the laws of England with respect to married women, how completely by law they are the slaves of their husbands, and how little hope there is of redress.

You might as well "Twist a rope of sand," or "Beg a husband of a widow," as urge the men to emancipate the white slaves of England.

"Who made the laws?" said her Highness. I looked at her with surprise, knowing she could not be ignorant on the subject.

"The men," said I; "Why did the Maharaj ask the question?"

"I doubted it," said the Bai, with an arch smile, "since they only allow themselves one wife."

"England is so small," I replied, "in comparison with your Highness’s Gwalior; if every man were allowed four wives and obliged to keep them separate, the little island could never contain them; they would be obliged to keep the women in vessels off the shore."\(^1\)

This journal entry, recorded 6 April 1835 in Fathighar, weaves together strands of Orientalism and imperialism to create an intriguingly ambiguous scene in the colonial narrative in readings of gender, race, and class. The binary tropes that are so frequently used to explain and understand colonial-era texts, which place them in a properly referential historical framework, exist within this conversation, yet in a curiously skewed manner.

The organizing doctrines of the public and private spheres, the Self/Other schism central to theorizing Orientalism, and the colonizer/colonized framework for imperialist rhetoric are the

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themes that will be examined during the course of this thesis. These themes have become so pervasively embedded in current readings of history that I have utilized the word "stereotrope" in reference to them. Stereotrope means a trope or allegory of understanding that has been overused to the point where it has become part of a fixed conceptual framework, applied in analysis by many without due consideration. Stereotrope extends beyond the notion of a stereotype by challenging not only the content of the metaphor but its inherent binary structure. While there is certainly much of value to be derived from utilizing these explanatory themes when deconstructing texts, academia has ceased to question the value of these concepts at the root — i.e., as contrasted against primary materials. Instead, the trend has been towards building ever more convoluted arguments concerning secondary and tertiary points of theory that ignore the very subject material under examination.

This thesis is an attempt to return to the foundation of theory, i.e., to primary materials, and by challenging these binary stereotropical pairs — what I have referred to as "splitting the stereotrope" — add some further insight to the current reading of Orientalism and imperialism from a feminist, post-colonial perspective.

The Narrator

The full title of Mrs. Parks' publishing effort, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim, in search of the Picturesque, during four-and-twenty years in the East; with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, neatly sums up her Orientalist agenda. Fanny Parks, the wife of a customs collector, sailed for India in 1826. She did so with the understanding that she would spend the next twenty-two years of her life in voluntary exile from England for the sake of her husband's career and financial well-being. Twenty-two years was the required period of service before being pensioned off to England.

In contrast to so many historical and fictional accounts of the sickly memsahib, Fanny Parks blossomed in India. Parks challenged traditionally feminine limitations of social conditioning, physical frailty, mental weakness, and dogmatic faith to enjoy and create her own experience of India. She traveled up and down the country, by horseback, camel and boat, in search of adventure.
She became a competent linguist in several Indic languages, and made the acquaintance of a wide variety of colonial and indigenous society figures while recording in both word and sketched images the people and places she encountered along the way. Her exuberance and zest for living are evident throughout her memoirs, and provide a wonderfully different pair of eyes through which to observe the working of Empire.

The woman she converses with in this opening quotation is the Baiza Bai (1784-1863), deposed Queen of Gwalior. This influential figure lived a long and eventful life. She first gained access to power through her arranged marriage in 1798 to Daulat Rao Scindia (1780-1827), the ruler of Gwalior. She consolidated this power with her status as his favourite wife. While initially admired for her beauty, the Bai came to be respected for her cunning and leadership abilities. Following the death of her husband, Baiza Bai became Regent over the adopted heir, controlling the princely state for the next seven years. From most accounts, her reign was just and efficient, constituting a vast improvement in the conduct of state affairs over the shambles left in Daulat Rao's wake. Political turmoil within Gwalior eventually led to intervention by the British, resulting in a Raj-supported coup that toppled her from power in favour of the more-easily controlled Maharajah Jankoji Rao Scindia (1816-1843). He in turn was followed by Jayaji Rao Scindia (1835-1886). However, Baiza Bai remained a thorn in the side of the colonizing power. She maintained an armed camp of followers, demanded (and received) reparation from the British government, and continued to rankle for the next 30 years, culminating in suspicions of conspiracy during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-1858.

Analysis of Passage:

In the passage quoted earlier, the deposed Queen of Gwalior and a colonial woman discuss the oppression of women by marriage. This conversation takes place within the privacy of the zenana. The nature of the conversation is political; the location of the dialogue personal, thus begging for yet another application of that oft-used feminist phrase, 'the personal is political'. The
ramifications of political affairs reach into the heart of the zenana to influence not only the nature of this conversation but the very fact that the conversation took place at all between two women of different cultures, social status, and race. The world of women – as constructed, experienced, recorded, and voiced by them - is the guideline for this historical inquiry. The world of government, matters of state, and a colonialist agenda are all political factors that were experienced in a very personal manner by Fanny Parks and Baiza Bai. The artificial dichotomy imposed by use of the public/private sphere paradigm of understanding has already been compromised. We will further explore the ramifications of splitting this stereotrope later in the chapter.

Discourse analysis of the excerpt can take place on many levels of understanding. Let us begin with the fate of women and melons: “Whether the melon falls on the knife or the knife on the melon, the melon is the sufferer”. Fanny Parks does not often rely on subtlety in her memoirs, and this quote is no exception. She and the Bai are discussing the oppression of women by men in both England and India. Women suffer regardless of whether they are active or passive participants in the process. The laws of society as written by men, are designed to subjugate women. These two women recognize the oppressive state of marriage for women as designated by law and hold little hope for emancipation.

In addition to the wholesale condemnation of legal strictures in India and England, Parks supports the general English perception of the poor fate of the Hindu widow. She reports on the deprivations endured by the Baiza Bai – as a widow she wears no jewelry, and sleeps on the floor on a hard mat in spite of arthritic pains. These deprivations are a result of socio-religious dictates that designate a widow as impure and, therefore, unworthy of greater consideration.

The status of women, particularly Indian widows, came to serve as a rallying cry for the civilizing force of British colonial power. As Gayatri Spivak and other theorists have written, the “body of brown woman” became the ideological battlefield used to define an imperialist discourse
that moved the role of the Raj from an economic to a sociological force.\(^2\) The cost of political interference was justified in Britain along the following lines. Improved status of women was equated with a more refined society. Sensational newspaper reports of *sati* (widow-burning), *pardah*, and polygamy, equated to an unjust and therefore uncivilized society. It was therefore incumbent upon the more advanced society – in this case, the British – to assume the burden of civilization and work to ameliorate the “oppression of Hindoo women” by attempting to exert political as well as economic control of India. Spivak sums it up neatly when she comments that the project of colonialism was justified as “White men are saving brown women from brown men”\(^3\).

However, this exchange extends far beyond the standard rhetorical use of “downtrodden Indian women” to prove a point. Parks and the Bai reach an agreement on the equally oppressive nature of their respective societies. Parks’ comments are as condemnatory of English men and the lifestyle of white women as they are of Indian men and the restrictions placed on Indian women. She clearly speaks from a liberal feminist viewpoint that is highly critical of the society that has produced her. In fact, with the substitution of “India” for “England”, this sentence provides a lovely summary of the standard Imperialist line regarding the women of India:

...the severity of the laws of England with respect to married women, how completely by law they are the slaves of their husbands, and how little hope there is of redress.\(^4\)

Parks and the Baiza Bai communicate across the brown/white divide on the level of their gender. Empathy is established between two women through agreement on a single topic: women suffer because men make the laws. They are discussing a public sphere issue, the laws that govern society. That this consensus has been reached between two such different women makes it all the

\(^2\) Specifically, Spivak’s work in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and “The Rani of Sirmur”. Other theorists who have explored this idea include Lata Mani with her work on *sati*, Malek Alloula’s *The Colonial Harem*, Jenny Sharpe’s *Allegories of Empire*, and Anne McClintock in general.


\(^4\) Parks II, 8.
more interesting. Indeed, these two women have managed to circumvent much of the effect of these “severe” laws to suit themselves. Parks through her travel and lifestyle has chosen to escape some of the limitations of colonial society; the Bai through her utilization of political power has carved a niche for herself far beyond the restrictive role of royal widow.

Deciphering the power dynamic in this exchange becomes more complicated. The nominal figure of power is Parks as a member of the white colonizing force. At the time of this narrative, the colonial enslavement of India by England was well established. In fact, the very reason for Parks’ presence in India was as an accessory to the project of Empire – the civil service of the East India Company employed her husband as a customs collector. However, Parks refers to “the white slaves of England” - British women kept in the domestic sphere at the mercy of their male relatives - a group of which she was a member. Her very presence in India was dictated by the actions of her husband in joining the Company ranks.5

Furthermore, Parks is a white visitor to the zenana where she is on the home territory of the brown Queen. This places her at a class disadvantage; the Queen as royalty outranks her socially. Or rather, the ex-Queen – Baiza Bai has been robbed of her official power by the British and yet retains a form of it. Through use of masculine symbols of power, the Bai adds to her stature. She is referred to by a male title Maharaj, which means King. This, in spite of the fact that there is currently a reigning King of Gwalior – Jankoji, the adopted son of her husband, who displaced her from power with the help of the British. She retains the sword of Scindia, a potent visual masculine symbol of power in the public sphere of war, which is kept near her at all times. Parks comments, “It is remarkable, that the ladies in this family take the title of Raja, to which Sahib is generally affixed.”6 Thus public sphere attributes of power, class, and social standing have a substantive effect

5 What Fanny Parks chose to do with her time once in India was a result of her own initiative. Her memoirs portray a long-suffering spouse who went slightly mad during monsoon season, while she escaped to cooler climes and more interesting company.

6 Parks II, 2.
on the *zenana* dynamic. The hegemonic reach of colonial influence does not quite extend into this arena.

The passage also combats another ideological construct, that of the Orientalist fantasy of the harem inhabitant. The beautiful harem girl of legend, the empty receptacle waiting to receive a man's pleasure, has been creatively imagined in a number of ways. The fantasy of the harem is rewritten with Parks' *Revelations of Life in the Zenana*. Who knew that women who lived in purdah their entire lives spent time contrasting their fates with those of English women? While we cannot assume that this was the rule, it is refreshing to read an alternative viewpoint. Parks, in her quest for the inner secrets of the *zenana*, provides access to some of the more mundane realities of the harem in India. Women of Baiza Bai's vintage generally controlled the *zenana*. The oldest and most powerful women wielded considerable influence in direct relation to their male connections through power over husband, father, and son.7

This raises an interesting question: who or what was Baiza Bai's continuing source of power? She essentially kept *purdashin* for her own reasons. Her husband and father were both long dead. She did not have any surviving male offspring or close relations who wielded influence on her behalf. And yet, she funded her own activities, essentially ruling a community of women in the *zenana* while maintaining an armed camp of soldiers. Her influence extended far beyond the people she interacted with on a face-to-face basis. In fact, the limited visual presence of the Bai was more frequently used to her benefit when negotiating with the British for position.8 This utilization of the *zenana* as a political tool by the Bai is a fascinating contrast to her social construct as the oppressed widow and as the imagined sensual harem inhabitant.

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On another level, Parks, while disputing the Orientalist fantasy of the harem, immerses herself in traditional Orientalist pastimes. She avidly collects Indic languages, customs, and traditions in her quest to provide her readers with an “authentic” experience of India. Her love of things Oriental is evidenced by the asides she makes as she records her conversation with the Bai in her travel journal. She litter her anecdotes with references to “Oriental Proverbs” in order to reinforce her point. “The fate of women and melons”, “twist a rope of sand” and “beg a husband of a widow” are all used to underscore her particular knowledge and insight into the Asian mind.

Thus, her opening lines;

The fate of women and of melons is alike. “Whether the melon falls on the knife or the knife on the melon, the melon is the sufferer.”...You might as well “Twist a rope of sand,” or “Beg a husband of a widow,” as urge the men to emancipate the white slaves of England.

may be paraphrased as;

The fate of women is to suffer, regardless of their actions...You might as well perform the impossible or ask the impossible as urge the men to emancipate the white slaves of England.

However, the traditional Self/Other dichotomy of Orientalism – the inscrutable East as read by the Western observer – is subverted in this dialogue. The liminal social positions held by both women (Parks travels the country as she wishes, while Baiza Bai wields considerable power in her own name), in combination with the similarity of their gendered views seem to bridge the gap between East and West.

The rhythm of their dialogue – point and counterpoint – with the set-up to a sly punch line, reads as two women well cognizant of holding a similar viewpoint. Parks willingly plays the straight man in response to the Bai’s question, “Who made the laws?", because she knows that this

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8 I.e., Baiza Bai maintained the strictures of purdah, ensuring female-only access to her unveiled presence. Men, including representatives of the Raj, were forced to conduct negotiations with her through a screen or similar apparatus. The Bai and her entourage could clearly view their male counterparts while the male gaze was effectively obscured. This lent an air of uncertainty to the proceedings that she could use to her advantage – the British were unsure as to whom precisely they were dealing with. Was she receiving political directives from another shadowy figure? Were her demands
deliberately naïve question is leading somewhere. In return, Parks extends the Bai’s arch response (expressing doubt that British men determined the law because they only allowed themselves one wife each) into a further witticism. She explains this oversight by alluding to England’s small size: there wouldn’t be room for extra wives. This ability to share humour is a form of communication that goes far beyond the mechanics of communicating linguistically. The two women are in accord and amusing themselves at the expense of the white colonial male. Jointly, they overtly challenge the hegemonic nature of white colonial male power. At the same time, the Bai covertly questions their masculinity. Are they not man enough to handle more than one woman at a time? This is in contrast to the implied portrait of a more masculine brown male, who frequently manages a harem of wives. Interestingly, this construction of a virile Indian male in contrast to his less potent British equivalent is directly contrary to the popular Raj tactic of portraying the Indian male as effeminate and weak.9

Parks’ narrative provides for a number of potential challenges to postcolonial theorists of Orientalism and imperialism, while supplying some ripe material for illustrating how discursive reading strategies can be applied to textual material. This combination of narrative analysis, historical reconstruction and textual deconstruction will serve as the methodology behind this thesis. The process will be extended and enriched through examining the perceptions of Baiza Bai from different sources, including Government correspondence, travel narratives by both men and women, and histories written during the period.

9 While being mindful of exceptional racial traits accorded to different groups (e.g., Sikhs as a martial race), the Indian male was frequently portrayed as lacking in masculine characteristics. One interesting exploration of this trend is Mrinalini Sinha’s Colonial Masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the late nineteenth century, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).
1.2 **STEREOTROPES**

The previous section began the attempt to deconstruct the *women and melons* passage excerpted from Fanny Parks, and, in the process, challenge some of the stereotropes that have become prevalent in post-colonial studies. What is meant by use of the term *stereotrope*? How is it split and why would one want to? Let us begin with the definition of trope: “A trope is a rhetorical figure in which words are used in a way different from their standard or literal usage.” Post-structuralist theory assumes that the slippery nature of meaning necessitates deconstructing a text by reading it against itself through its tropological structures. These metaphorical configurations are frequently formulated as a series of binary oppositions, and used to identify subject positions within the text.

The argument of this thesis is fairly straightforward. The use of enduring binary categories to read and interpret historical texts as a series of dualities: Self/Other, Colonizer/Colonized, Brown/White, Ruler/Subaltern, Man/Woman, Public/Private, has been the imposition of an artificially structured paradigm on an ambiguously shifting series of subject positions. While useful in the deconstructive process, overuse of these devices has led in some instances to an overly limited and exclusionary view of history. In other words, these tropes or allegories of meaning, have become “stereotropes” – used to the point of insignificance. There is value in their ideological formation, but it has been blurred through repetitive and careless overuse. Much like the cliche that has become meaningless, the stereotrope paints a broad and exaggerated picture.

Using a discursive strategy of analysis, can the themes of Orientalism and imperialism be reworked to reflect a more satisfyingly holistic approach that incorporates race, gender and class analysis in the deconstruction and reading of the historical record? In other words, to “split” or break apart these binary pairs the structural framework of analysis must reflect a more complex...
understanding of the use of tropes. With an emphasis on a feminist and gendered understanding of
the texts involved, can the subject positions of female historical agents be identified?

Work in the areas of postcolonial and cultural studies during the past two decades has
moved towards a more interdisciplinary approach when constructing theoretical approaches to
questions of retrieving historical voice, agency, and subjectivity. The specific questions I wish to
address include:

Can the voice and agency of a historical subject be retrieved from colonial texts?
Can we find evidence to challenge a hegemonic reading of imperial power?
How does consideration of a gendered form of communication affect our theoretical
understanding of Orientalism and imperialism?

The end, therefore, is to pose a renewed challenge to current theoretical examinations of
historical texts by testing a form of feminist discursive analysis on a particular historical subject - the
Maharani Baiza Bai. Records of this influential woman exist through her contact with several British
women during the 1830s, as well as “official” Raj correspondence concerning her actions and
motives throughout most of her life. In spite of her political and personal power, she rarely
commands even a footnote in histories of Gwalior. Typically, entries refer to her as consort or
favoured wife, and in certain instances neglect entirely to refer to her by name.

The contrast between her presence in primary colonial materials from the period and her
invisibility in secondary materials and subsequent analyses, is, I believe, only symptomatic of a
greater malaise. One, she is a woman; therefore, in traditional histories of the period, she falls into
the private sphere and does not merit mention as an individual in the historical record. Two, as an
individual, she is not easily classified within existing historical paradigms. The difficulty in placing
her – she exists both betwixt and between sets of binary oppositions – contributes to her absence.
She is neither archetype nor Everywoman. The Bai does not sacrifice herself to the nationalist cause
in the manner of the Rani of Jhansi, nor does she suffer silently as the downtrodden widow through self-immolation on her husband's funeral pyre.

Thus, the goals of this thesis are threefold. Firstly, to construct a history of the Maharani Baiza Bai that uses available texts from the period. Placing the Bai in time by providing brackets of fact and record will help to answer some of the following questions. Who was she? What did she do? What are the organizing tropes against which she is read? Does this provide the opportunity to argue convincingly for evidence of her voice and agency?

Secondly, this thesis will identify and theorize the female colonial narrators who record their meetings with Baiza Bai – specifically, Fanny Parks, Emily Eden and Fanny Eden. By directing the gaze back at the narrators we are able to interrogate our colonizing women\(^\text{11}\), placing them within a postcolonial framework where the facts of empirical history and the theories of colonial discourse meet. This encompasses delving behind the screen of purdah and exploring life in the zenana, particularly as recorded by the female colonial.

Thirdly, this analysis will reexamine and evaluate the nature of imperialism and Orientalism from a gendered perspective. Questions surrounding the female figure as an icon of imperialism and as a sexualized metaphor central to Orientalism should be addressed. Does Orientalism differ when viewed from the female perspective? What theoretical extensions can be developed from this re-evaluation?

Through reading such feminist historians as Joan W. Scott, Sara Suleri, and Anne McClintock, we can trace how far feminist history and gender studies have come and the direction in which they are moving. One of the current crises in this field is the reconciliation of theory with empirical material. The attempt here will be to address some aspects of the current state of postcolonial studies as it pertains to the story of Baiza Bai.

Superficially, the organizing metatropes behind this structure will be that of the Public and Private Spheres. White men publicly conduct the political world of imperialism in concert with brown men, while brown women privately inhabit the mysterious Oriental world of the zenana, accessible to only a few white women. By utilizing this common binary sphere pair, I hope to effectively demonstrate the reductionist tendencies inherent to this stereotrope.

The methodology used for this effort will generally follow the techniques of discourse analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, discourse analysis is conducted on the written colonial record, examining what is said (description), how it is said (form of knowledge), and where it fits in a socio-cultural frame of reference (relations of power). In a colonial context,

Colonial discourses refer to the knowledges that developed alongside, mediated, and helped secure European conquest and domination, and to the rhetorical strategies that predominated in the representations of colonized peoples, societies, and cultures.12

The intriguing aspect specific to colonial discourse analysis is, of course, the simultaneous construction of an imperial Self-identity through description of the colonized Other. Thus Lata Mani’s expansion of Edward Said’s Orientalist theme is pertinent here:

Part of what was at stake in the production of the colonized Other was the simultaneous construction of the Western Self, to whom the Other was variously an alter ego, underground self, and repository of irreducible cultural and/or racial difference...Appearing in sharp relief is the importance of the Other to the Western sense of self, history and culture: among other things the colony has served as a theater of social experimentation, an imaginary terrain in which to remap European social relations, and the place from which to mount a critique of metropolitan culture.13

This critical reading strategy has great potential for challenging the historically hegemonic representation of women on both sides of the colonial divide. Women experienced imperialism in manner different to that of men. When combined with an awareness of stereotropial pitfalls, this analytic approach puts us on the path towards formulating a renewed interpretation of historical

13 Mani, 3.
female subjects. The constantly shifting relations of power as actively negotiated through gender, class, colonial, and socio-economic relations are textually transmitted.

1.3 **PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC SPHERES**

The stereotrope of public and private spheres has traditionally been used to differentiate between the public world of politics, nationalism, and economics – the domain of men – and the private world of domesticity, family, and sexuality – the domain of women. The status of women posed a philosophical dilemma.

If women, like slaves and children, were to be denied the rights to liberty and property ownership, ideological work had to be done. The solution lay in the distinction between the private and the public. Classical liberal theorists constructed as a political right the right to contract within the public sphere, but defined conjugal relations as belonging within the sphere of nature and thus beyond contract. The domestic sovereignty of the husband over the wife and thus the exclusion of women from possessive individualism, was justified as deriving from natural, not political, law.\(^\text{14}\)

This gender-based allocation of rights into public and private spheres, while useful, does not entirely capture its use as an analytical tool.\(^\text{15}\) Reference to the public/private sphere paradigm has also been historically constituted as a commonly used rhetorical device that embodies certain aspects of two nationalist discourses; that of India and England. More specifically, this theory has been inscribed on the bodies of women – both English and Indian – as a potent signifier of political, economic, social, and religious control over the colonial domain:


For feminist individualism in that age of imperialism, the stake was the making of human beings. That meant the constitution and interpellation of the subject, not only as individual, but as "individualist." It was represented on two registers: child-bearing (female/private) and soul-making (male/public). The first was domestic-society-through-sexual-reproduction cathected or fixed in desire as "companionate love." The second was the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission.

Women, both ideologically and physically, were central to the negotiated ideological terrain between Self/Other and East/West. This has resulted in at least three common applications of the private/public sphere paradigm to interpret history that are relevant to the arguments herein: British, Indian and Imperial readings.

The British perspective

The rise of a bourgeois cult of domesticity in Victorian England in conjunction with the Industrial Revolution gave rise to a private/public sphere distinction that restricted middle-class women to the private sphere, while enshrining the ideal of companionate love. The mindset of our English narrators — Fanny Parks, Emily and Fanny Eden — was formed during a time of substantive political, industrial, and societal change. Examining how these women were raised, the expectations incumbent upon them, and the transmission and interpretation of Imperial/colonial ideologies by them is very relevant when attempting to decipher meaning in their texts.

British women were subject to social restrictions that acted to confine feminine influence to the home and family. The idealized vision of domestic bliss was realized by the appearance of a lady of leisure whose main responsibility was to visibly embody the success of her mate through conspicuous consumption of time and resources, utilizing her body as the showcase for display. Her activities were to consist of producing children, receiving appropriate visitors, and directing household staff in the care and maintenance of the household. This appearance of leisure was facilitated by the invisible paid labour of factory workers and female servants. As Anne McClintock

points out, the wife’s unpaid labour was necessary in the majority of middle class homes to maintain the façade of respectability and to bridge the gap of economic necessity. The hidden labour that was required to effect the appearance of leisure was yet another contributing factor to the private sphere limitations on female influence.

The desire to make explicit the control of feminine body and sexuality through confinement to the private domestic sphere arose from underlying fears of female intrusion into the public sphere. Female participation in the labour force, the expression of female sexuality and feminist agitation all threatened the gender-determined nature of public sphere participation. Suppression was manifested as fashion – multiple layers of cage-like underclothes topped by unwieldy and restrictive garments acted as disguise and containment between nature (the naked body) and civilization (the clothed exterior). The private sphere of domesticity was a socially constructed space designed to reflect the “natural” order of things. The hierarchical nature of domestic relations – woman subordinate to man and child to parent – served as a self-referential microcosm of society at large.

*The Indian perspective*

The public/private sphere divide has also been used by historians in constructing a socio-cultural discourse on South Asian society during the colonial era. This helps us to understand something of Baiza Bai, the Maharani of Gwalior and the expectations, limitations, and perceptions of her role as an elite Hindu woman in a position of *purdah* power.

Similar to the British formulation, the public sphere of government, politics and business belonged to men, while the private sphere of home and family was considered to be the domain of women. “Thus, the private family role forced on most women formed part of the basis for making

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18 McClintock, 161.
them 'ineligible' for political roles." This societal division had roots in the Hindu-derived concepts of purity and pollution. During colonial times, women were considered to be guardians of spiritual purity, and thus responsible for maintaining the sanctity and religiosity of family through the performance of daily pujas (religious rituals), preparation of food in accordance to dietary laws, and the early education of children.

The maintenance of spiritual purity also came to mean adherence to certain standards of personal conduct and behaviour (stridharma) for women. In its most extreme form, this translated to the practice of purdah. "Parda [Purdah], literally meaning curtain, refers to the practice of female seclusion... segregating men and women and separating the tasks which each performs in society as well as preventing the participation of women in the extra-domestic sphere." While the practice predated the British, the risk of spiritual contamination by the colonial (male) presence was eliminated by the isolation of women in the zenana. Purdah also had social implications as it was generally maintained by women of wealthy, high caste families. In other words, the family not only maintained the spiritual purity of their high caste standing, they also demonstrated command of wealth by being able to afford to seclude their women. The practice of purdah and by extension, the behaviour of its female inhabitants became intrinsically linked to the family's social status: "In stake so much as the family honour that might be compromised by their leading less restricted lives."

This was especially true of royal women in the (relatively) autonomous princely states during the period of colonialism. As discussed in the next chapter, women's bodies became contested terrain in the conflict between indigenous practice and custom (as embodied by the princely states) and the encroachment of Western imperialism.

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21 Richter, 526.
Finally, the attempt of Empire to reconcile economically motivated military imperatives with the socio-cultural perspective of a civilizing mission formed a twofold application of the public/private sphere stereotrope. The public sphere imperative essentially to invade and occupy for economic gain became ostensibly a paternalistic mission to alleviate the lot of the uncivilized, disadvantaged natives as symbolized by the downtrodden Hindu widow. The Raj positioned itself as the white adult, leading the native child into the civilized sphere of rational thought and action. Similarly, common readings of the Orient as feminized, sexually unknowable space - the domain of the private sphere - fueled the application of public sphere rationality to penetrating and demystifying this mysterious domain in order to effect control over it. Recognizing these dual applications of the private/public sphere paradigm assists with reading imperial accounts of Baiza Bai, including government records such as the Poona Residency Correspondence and personal recollections and travel narratives by men such as those of William Henry Sleeman and Thomas Broughton.

The Raj as civilizing mission embodied the practical application of being a “White Man”.

In the institutional forms it took (colonial governments, consular corps, commercial establishments) it was an agency for the expression, diffusion, and implementation of policy towards the world, and within this agency, although a certain personal latitude was allowed, the impersonal communal idea of being a White Man ruled.22

This difference, as prescribed by skin colour meant that the British representative of Empire always had “the certain knowledge that he belonged to, and could draw upon the empirical and spiritual reserves of, a long tradition of executive responsibility towards the colored races.”23 This responsibility was rooted in the public sphere directive to spread rational thought and governance through the conduct of a great humanizing effort. The onus on the “White Man” in India was to

23 Said, 226.
take care of the weaker-willed effeminate Indian, and to in turn assume the role of caregiver to their dependents – women - with accompanying themes of educational, religious, and legal “corrections” to their heathen state.

Similarly, the imperial desire to effect control over the undisciplined opacity of the feminized Indian character – portrayed as weak, passive, dreamy, sensual – can be read as an alternate application of the public sphere directive to expose and thus to constrain the unknowable. In contrast to the paternalistic approach, this reading of the imperial perspective writes colonization as a sexually dominating mission governed by natural law. Just as it was the right of the husband to dictate to his wife, so was it the right of the conqueror to dictate to the conquered. Interestingly, this desire to control translated into two very different directives when applied to the bodies of British and Indian women. In Britain, the control of white women meant disguising the female form through use of restrictive clothing in the shape of stays and corsets. In India, control meant revealing the forms of Indian women by taking them out of purdah, from within the burqua to expose them to the naked (colonial) eye.

In summary, the preceding expository analysis has left us situated where discourses merge. While the broad outlines of public and private spheres of interest and influence can be drawn, the key to challenging the binarism of this stereotrope lies in examining the connections, the overlaps, and the interactions between areas. More specifically, how did the stereotropical Orientalist vision of the harem with its accompanying themes of voracious sexuality, indolence, and depravity, influence male dealings with female political powers enshrined in the zenana? How were these Orientalist themes belied and/or confirmed by the British women who ventured into this private space? Once there, what sort of power negotiations of class and race existed? Did this inner access influence the colonial woman’s understanding of imperialism? Did the existence of circumstantial similarities

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24 Anne McClintock effectively explores the themes of colonialism as an “erotics of ravishment” (porno-tropics), as sexual domination, and as gender violence in her book *Imperial Leather*. 
between British women in India and elite Indian women with access to power result in the creation of new avenues of gendered communication?

Finally, the question of whether or not the power and agency of the colonized high-caste Hindu woman can be evidenced through use of British/colonial papers available must be examined. Through reading a variety of sources, from male and female narrators utilizing both official and informal forms of communication, it becomes apparent that the existence of subjectivity for the “colonized” woman is inextricably linked to the theoretical fate of the “colonial” woman.
2. **LIFE AND TIMES OF BAIZA BAI**

2.1 **Overview**

The intent of this chapter is to construct a history of the Maharani Baiza Bai, using available texts from the period. Providing a framework of fact and record will help to place the Bai in time and answer some of the following questions. Who was she? Where did she come from? What combination of events and circumstance led to her prominence as a leader? What are the organizing tropes against which she is read? Does this provide opportunity to argue convincingly for evidence of her voice and agency?

Baiza Bai lived from 1784 to 1863. This seventy-nine-year period encompassed a major evolution in imperial policy, spanning the development of British influence in India from a commercial proposition as the British East India Company to a political entity featured as the one of the shining stars of the British Empire. Other important historical influences included the movement from Orientalism to Anglicism as a governing imperative, the factors leading up to the 1857-1858 Mutiny, and the contrast between pre-Mutiny and post-Mutiny attitudes (both indigenous and colonial).

Investigation of the negotiated interaction between the princely states and the Raj also sheds some interesting light on the particular circumstances surrounding Baiza Bai. Tension between these two powers arose because the British attempted to rule without being assimilated. Various methodologies were implemented: ruling from a distance, ruling through control of the indigenous elite, ruling through monetary motivation and ruling through fear of punitive action. Additionally, the British employed the tried and true method of ruling by dividing and conquering through fostering competition and disaffection between princely states. To these factors was added the particular combination of tensions that were peculiar to the princely state of Gwalior. The political realities of civil unrest, succession disputes inherent to the Scindia dynasty, incompetent rulers, and
an unruly citizenry were factors that besieged the day-to-day life of the Baiza Bai on her route to power.

Finally, some attempt must be made to read the actions of the Bai. What official records of her actions are available? What do these records tell us? What are some of the limitations and inherent biases to these documents? Can any of Baiza Bai’s voice and/or agency be retrieved through a process of challenging the public sphere distinctions with her private sphere indiscretions? What models for resistance existed for elite Indian women in this era?

2.2 PRINCELY STATES AND THE RAJ

THE COMPANY

The British established a toehold on the Indian subcontinent in the 16th century, exploring the possibility of a northern passage to India with the intention of founding a new trade route. The driving factor behind these efforts was the potential wealth to be realized from the trade of spices. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a royal charter to “The Governor and Company of Merchants of London”, “promising them monopoly privileges on all trade with the Indies”. This establishment of the English East India Company marked an era of rapid trade expansion in the areas of spice, Gujarati calico, indigo, saltpeter, and opium. The Company developed from a mercantile power to an administrative one under the guise of ensuring the stability of revenues garnered from trade. The faltering Moghul Empire, combined with ongoing civil warfare, fractious local chieftains, and the waning influence of French and Dutch colonial efforts, made the conquest achievable, although it proceeded in fits and starts over the next two centuries.

With the passage of Pitt’s India Act of 1784 (the year of Baiza Bai’s birth), administrative control of Bengal passed from the Company’s Court of Directors to “the crown’s new Board of Control, which consisted of not less than three nor more than six members of the British cabinet.”

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2 Wolpert, 194.
The Act was essentially a half-measure — a step on the road towards 1858, when full parliamentary control would be asserted over India. The Charter Act of 1813 renewed the East India Company’s charter for conducting trade in India, producing “two major changes in Britain’s role with respect to its India subjects: one was the assumption of a new responsibility toward native education, and the other was a relaxation of controls over missionary work in India.”

Interestingly, Gauri Viswanathan posits that these changes were proposed due to multiple reports of depraved and indecent behaviour on the part of Company employees.

The extravagant and demoralized lifestyles of the East India Company’s servants, combined with their ruthless exploitation of native material resources, had begun to raise serious and alarming questions in England about the morality of British presence in India.

Disturbed by the virtual sovereignty of the Company on the Indian subcontinent, the British parliament began to intercede in Indian political affairs under the guise of ameliorating the social well being of the native population.

Orientalism vs. Anglicism as governing imperatives

Company administrators in the late 1700s and early 1800s generally supported a laissez-faire approach to administrating the Company’s territories in India. Warren Hastings, Governor-General from 1774-1785 and an avid Orientalist, was most fervent in his belief that the British ruling class should accommodate themselves to native customs and culture in order to rule effectively. His successor, Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793) struck out in a new direction towards Anglicism in his attempts to impose imported English forms of government on Company territories, eliminating local participation by removing natives from administrative positions and centralizing the administrative bureaucracy under his control. However, this trend did not continue unchecked. His successors, such as Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) and Wellesley’s protégés, including Mountstuart


4 Viswanathan, 114.
Elphinstone (Governor of Bombay from 1819-1827), followed the Romantic tradition of supporting Orientalist aims and moving away from the centralized governing apparatus advocated by Cornwallis. Under Orientalist rule, India was to be governed not directly by British officials through the use of force, but rather through a series of paternalistic hierarchical relationships between the British and Indians. At the level of the masses, ruling edicts were to appear as though the indigenous elite issued them.

In order to draw the Indians into this hegemonic structure, it was imperative for the British administration to maintain an alliance with those who formed the traditional ruling class. This was essential partly to conciliate the indigenous elite for their displaced status but also partly to secure a buffer zone for absorbing the effects of foreign rule, which, if experienced directly by the masses, might have an entirely disastrous impact. 

Anglicism gained sway in 1830s. This shift inevitably led to trouble with the native princes of India who had been utilized by the British as an intermediary ruling force. The self-imposed distance between the British and their “subjects” prevented any natural evolution of an integrated ruling structure that blended indigenous and imported forms of government. In contrast to the Mughal Empire,

the British sought to maintain a distinct and separate identity, whereas the Mughals attempted to integrate themselves with the hierarchies of those over whom they ruled. In the case of the British, their own religious and social more precluded them from any form of partnership with the indigenous community. Moreover, in seeking to maintain their aloofness, they balked at the idea of partnership because of the attendant risks. Suspicion and distrust became the order of the day as the British adopted a policy of keeping the princes at arm’s length from the government and isolated from each other.

Lords Auckland (1836-1842) and Dalhousie (1848-1856) continued this trend. In fact, the outbreak of Mutiny in 1857 is often attributed in part to Dalhousie’s policy of annexation of Princely States.

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5 Viswanathan, 117.
PRINCELY STATES

The single most important political buttress of the raj, looking at the subcontinent as a whole, were those Indian princes who were permitted to retain their territories as subsidiary allies of the British. In the early nineteenth century they accounted for over one-third of India (and one-third even in the final decades of the raj)…their size and strategic position made them both valuable and potentially disturbing to British security.7

Military and diplomatic alliance with the Princely States of India provided the British with a relatively inexpensive method of indirect rule over a substantial amount of territory. The Indian princes maintained nominal sovereignty, gained a reserve of military strength and achieved status in the newly constructed hierarchy of the British Raj. In turn, the British were rewarded with an indigenous set of allies, and spared “the expense of direct administration or the problems of gaining the acquiescence of alien subjects.”8

The British also forced the acceptance of a British political officer, the “Resident”, at each princely court. The role of the Resident or Political Agent to the Princely State was to advise the prince in regards to the stability of his administration, provide a conduit of information between the Indian States and the British Raj, and embody a visible reminder of the British presence. The political influence and interventionist actions of the British Residents steadily grew during this period of imperialism.

The extension of British imperial power in India necessarily involved the displacement and negation of Mughal authority over the Indian kingdoms. By the end of 1825, British authority had become “paramount in effect” over most of these kingdoms (approximately 550 in number).9 Various known as “protected”, “internal”, or “Indian” states, these kingdoms were newly classified in a British understanding of “Princely India” that consisted of First Division, Second Division and hereditary land-owning states.

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8 Brown, 65.
First Division or Salute States, comprised of approximately 115 States were ranked by “the firing on all formal occasions of gun salutes which descended by odd number from 21 down to 0 – as compared with the Viceroy’s 31-gun and the King-Emperor’s 101-gun salutes.” Of these states, only five received the 21-gun salute – including the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior. The title of Maharaja or “Great King” was bestowed on the recipients of 13 guns or more, while the lesser 9 and 11-gun salute states were ruled by a Raja, “King”.

Second Division or Non-Salute States were led by “Chiefs” who maintained limited jurisdiction within their boundaries. The final official category of Princely India consisted of hereditary landowners - 327 Talukdars, Thanedars, Thakurs, and Jagirdars who ruled non-jurisdictional ‘Estates’, with “powers of criminal and civil jurisdiction being exercised on their behalf by Political Agents of the Government of India”. \(^\text{10}\) Also very important in terms of wealth and power, were the land-owning zamindars, who were not “officially” recognized but who often in fact eclipsed the authority of the officially ranked indigenous rulers.

**Doctrine of Lapse**

The view of Princely India as an efficient and (relatively) trouble-free method of indirect administration began to change with the advent of such men as Lords Auckland and Dalhousie, who viewed the Indian prince as an ancient and despotic relic, and considered it imperative to acquire direct control over as much territory as possible in India. The British East India Company began to annex states through application of the “Doctrine of Lapse”, which required a direct male heir for dynastic succession, in contrast to Hindu custom which allowed for succession through adopted male heirs. This doctrine was applied with varying degrees of consistency amongst the Princely States, generally at the whim of the current Governor-General. The birth of a male heir in the Indian States required British acknowledgement of the heir as legitimate in order for sanctioned succession to the throne. This was usually done through a telegram of notification to the King, and

subsequent response, as well as the approval of the British Resident or Agent to the Governor-General at the local Political Agency.

**Mutiny**

There were numerous reasons for the outbreak of Mutiny in 1857. Variously characterized as the first war for Independence by Indian nationalists, and the barbaric expression of Indian savagery by the British, the extent and cause of the uprising varied across the sub-continent. In general, the sepoys allegedly rebelled because of rumours surrounding the use of pig and cow fat in the new Enfield rifles. Other factors may have included missionary activity, the desired resurgence of the Maratha Confederacy, and a general resentment of British rule. In some cases, specific actions incited response. For example, Dalhousie’s application of the *Doctrine of Lapse* in Jhansi directly contributed to the battlefield participation of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi. What is clear is that the Mutiny became symbolic of a sharply demarcated division between colonizer and colonized, between collaborators and rebels, between Company administration and empirical rule. Lines of allegiance were starkly drawn between the so-called rebels and the Indians who played a key role in supporting the military efforts of the British. In Gwalior, the ruling prince, Jayaji Scindia, had gained his throne with the help of British intervention. He returned the favour by supplying troops and maintaining supply lines for the British military effort. In contrast, a number of soldiers deserted from Scindia’s own army to join the rebels as they battled nearby, led by the indomitable Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Tope.

Prior to the Mutiny, the colonial attitude towards Indian subjects rested on a racial construct of the white man as generous benefactor to the loyal brown servant. The uprising shattered the theoretical foundations justifying the British presence in India.
The racial typing of the ‘mild Hindoo’ explained the long history of India as a conquered nation even as it permitted the new conquerors to cast themselves as mere players in a prewritten script. According to this script, the European colonizers were saving the natives from eastern despotism by teaching them the laws of self-government.\textsuperscript{11}

Post-Mutiny, the British were forced to construct alternative forms of reading their colonizing actions. Strategies for doing so now rested on the construction of rape narratives, civilizing imperative, and racial constructs that attributed the majority of the violence committed to Indian Muslims rather than Hindus.

2.3 \textit{Gwalior}

Gwalior is the name of both the capital city and the Princely State. Located in Central India, the Gwalior region historically is considered to be bounded by the river Chambal (north and northwest), the river Sindh (east and southeast) and the rivers Jver Parvati and Kunwari (southwest). This strategic area, particularly the fort of Gwalior (believed to be first established in 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD), was a source of contention from early times. The Fort, reputedly unassailable, was held at different times by Rajputs, Afghans, Mughals, Marathas, and British. A Maratha faction first invaded Gwalior in 1728 on behalf of the Peshwa, successfully wresting it from the grasp of the Mughals by 1731. However, the fort continued to be held by Mughals until the early 1750s, at which point it passed into the hands of the Marathas. The Scindia family established Gwalior as the state capital in 1810. Their tenure was occasionally disrupted during a series of skirmishes with the British, but generally continued unabated until the state was incorporated into the Indian union in 1947.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Jenny Sharpe. \textit{Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text.} (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 58.

The original family Shinde came from peasant stock, the Marathas of Western India. “It was the British who took to calling these rulers with whom they came into conflict ‘the Scindias’ and over the century and a half of British rule this came to distinguish the Gwalior rulers’ family from the other Shindes.”\(^{13}\) A village headman, Dattaji, founded the Scindia dynasty while in the service of Shivaji. Shivaji (1627-1680) was a great military strategist who rose from his origins as a minor chieftain to create the Maratha State, and establish Maratha political independence from the Mughal Empire. By the late eighteenth century, a family of Chitpavan Brahmins who served Shivaji’s line in the hereditary position of peshwa or Chief Minister seized power in Poona, creating what came to be known as the Maratha Confederacy. This consisted of a loose association of five states — Poona, Baroda, Nagpur, Indore, and Gwalior — which were nominally subject to the authority of the Peshwa. In actual fact, the balance of power and extent of each territory varied considerably until the British defeated the Confederacy in 1818. Governor-General Lord Hastings retired the Peshwa and annexed his territories, while settling treaties of peace and alliance on the remaining states.

The Scindia line first came to prominence in 1724, “when Baji Rao assigned the jagir of Malwa to Ranoji Scindia (r. 1726-1745) and to Malhar Rao Holkar together.”\(^{14}\) Ranoji’s battlefield success on behalf of the peshwa was followed by similar campaigns under Jayappa\(^ {15}\) (r. 1745-1759), Jakoji (r. 1759-1761) and Mahadji (r. 1761-1794). Mahadji is generally held to be the greatest of the Scindia leaders. He successfully extended the reach of the Maratha confederacy as far north as Delhi, and expanded his own domain to include the fort of Gwalior and extensive holdings in Central India and Hindustan. His armies were renowned for their battlefield discipline and effectiveness, and his well-trained troops were instrumental in effecting his military conquests.

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\(^{15}\) Son of Ranoji, Jayappa was assassinated at Jodhpur in 1759.
Inevitably, this drive for domination led to a series of conflicts with the British who, at the time, were intent on extending their reach within Central India. However, these skirmishes eventually played out in treaties that resulted in little loss of territory in Scindia’s holdings. For his military exploits and political acumen, Mahadji was rewarded with the title and power of Vakil-I-Mutlak or Vice-Regent by the Emperor Shah Alam in 1784. Mahadji Rao was also the first Scindia to gain control over the Gwalior territory (1766), thus beginning “the historic association of Gwalior with the house of Scindia.”

The Scindia problem of succession began with Mahadji (1729-1794). He was the first Scindia to lack a surviving male heir, which led him to adopt his great-nephew, Daulat Rao Scindia (1780-1827). This trend continued throughout the next century until the birth of Madhav Rao Scindia in 1875. The British did not apply the Doctrine of Lapse in Gwalior for several reasons. During the reign of Mahadji, his enormous military and political power precluded the option. The following three Scindias – Daulat Rao (1780-1827), Jankoji (1816-1843), and Jayaji (1834-1886) - were generally perceived to be loyal to the Raj, and thus more valuable as allies rather than annexed states. This loyalty was perhaps necessary due to uneasy relations with the subjects of Gwalior. A number of thakurs existed, descendants of the rulers prior to the advent of the Scindia dynasty. Additionally, “the Scindias were Marathas surrounded by subjects who were Bundelas, Rajputs, and Jats.”

Alliance with the British held the attraction of additional military strength to call on if needed. In return for this resource, the state “forfeited the right to conduct an independent foreign policy” and additionally had to finance the presence of Company troops at the command of the British Resident. The Scindia durbar, similar to that of other Indian states, was a place of gross intrigue. The family continued to rule over the state of Gwalior until 1947, when the state was absorbed into the newly independent India.

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16 Misra, 52.
2.5 **BAIZA BAI**

Having explored the backdrop against which Baiza Bai lived out her life, we can now turn to biographical details in constructing a portrait of her experiences. Baiza Bai was born in 1784, the daughter of Sunderabai and Sakharam Ghatge (1750-1809).\(^\text{19}\) The Kagulkar Ghatge family was recognized as being of high social standing. Through marriage, they were related to the Raja of Kolhapur, a descendant of the famed warrior Shivaji.

*Sakharam Ghatge*

Baiza Bai’s father, Sakharam Ghatge left Kagul to join the army of Parashuram Bhau Patwardhan. During the 1778 Poona rebellion of Moroba Phadnis, Patwardhan lent Nana Phadnis\(^\text{20}\) a bodyguard of 500 men that included Ghatge. Nana grew to trust Ghatge, and in 1796, “he allowed Sharzarao [e.g., Sakharam Ghatge] to enter Daulatrao’s service, probably as his own spy.”\(^\text{21}\) In the employ of Gwalior’s Maharajah Daulat Rao Scindia, Ghatge, “obtained a singular command. He was of active, bold, intriguing disposition.”\(^\text{22}\) Ghatge’s political ambitions knew no bounds. There is ample speculation that Ghatge gave his daughter Baiza Bai in marriage to Daulat Rao (r. 1794-1827) in order to gain added influence over the Maharaj.\(^\text{23}\) Scindia had his own motives for the marriage. Not only was Baiza Bai renowned for her comeliness, the Ghatge family were known for their high-ranking status, and it is probable that Daulat Rao sought to elevate his own social position through an advantageous marriage.

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\(^{18}\) Ashton, 7.

\(^{19}\) Also known as Tuljoji, or Sarjee Rao/Shirzee Rao/Sharzarao (hereditary title).

\(^{20}\) At this time, Nana Phadnis conducted the administration of the Maratha State during the minority of Peshwa Madhav Rao II.


\(^{23}\) Several historians have also speculated that Ghatge encouraged Daulat Rao towards a “wine and opium” addiction to further this end.
He [Ghatge] was also at this time much courted by Sindia, by reason of the reputed beauty of his daughter, whom Sindia wished to espouse; and Sukharm, who regarded his own aggrandizement more than the dignity of his house, which would be tarnished by his giving a genuine daughter of the Kagulkur Ghatgay to the spurious offspring of the Patells of Kunneir-kheir, was pleased with the prospect.24

Baiza Bai and Daulat Rao Scindia were married amidst pomp and circumstance at Poona in February 1798.

The marriage indeed proved advantageous for Baiza Bai’s father Sakharam Ghatge, who was made Dewan or Prime Minister of Gwalior by Scindia. However, political relations between Daulat Rao and his father-in-law were not without problems. Ghatge reputedly expressed strong anti-British sentiments during his early tenure as Dewan and suffered accordingly. The settlement of 1805 that arose from the Second Anglo-Maratha War specified that he be excluded from participating in state governance.

As Serjee Rao Ghaultka has acted in a manner calculated to disturb the friendship between the two States, the Maharajah agrees never to admit that Chief to share in his councils, or to hold any public employment under his Government.25

Nonetheless, Ghatge proved adept at influencing Daulat Rao in the circumvention of official restrictions. He rejoined the Scindia camp at Gwalior in 1809 and assumed some measure of power prior to his untimely end.26 Subsequently, the marital connection to the Scindias also proved rewarding for the brother of Baiza Bai, Hindu Rao Ghatge. In 1813, Daulat Rao offered him the vacated post of Dewan and attempted to lure him from Poona to Gwalior with the promise of large jagirs.27 Another family member who benefited was her uncle, Babaji Patankar, who succeeded Gokul Parikh in the office of Dewan in 1816.

24 Duff, 138-139.
26 Ghatge was assassinated under suspicious circumstances that are discussed in more detail later in this Chapter.
27 Jagir: hereditary assignment of land granted by government of ruler.
LIFE AND TIMES OF BAIZA BAI

Daulat Rao Scindia

The general consensus among colonial records of the time was that Daulat Rao Scindia, though pleasant, was ill-suited to the governance of state. Weak-willed and prone to debauchery, Daulat Rao is described thus by Thomas Broughton, who followed the Scindia camp in 1809:

He is turned of thirty; about five feet five inches in height; and inclined to be fat, but not largely made. His complexion is rather dark, and his features agreeable: but his whole appearance strongly indicates a debauchee; and in so doing, does not most certainly belie him...he is universally allowed to be naturally a mild and good-natured man.  

Broughton also reports on Daulat Rao’s orgies and licentious misdeeds with morbid fascination:

Woman and low company have been his bane; and appear to have quite corrupted a heart and mind originally meant for better things. Virgin charms have been diligently sought for, and almost daily sacrificed upon the altar of his lusts: and in the conclave of his wretched minions, scenes are said to be enacted for his amusement, so gross, and at the same time so ridiculous, as would stagger belief, and call a blush into the cheeks of the most depraved European.

Scindia’s career as Maharaja of Gwalior was notable only for his establishment of the court at Gwalior, and for his string of military defeats. In 1803, he was defeated by Colonel Arthur Wellesley at Assaye, losing two-thirds of the territory his illustrious predecessor had captured, as well as a treasury of one-quarter of a million pounds. In 1817, Daulat Rao was compelled to sign a treaty of “mutual friendship” by Lord Hastings, which further reduced his holdings and political power. Some of these losses, including possession of the fort of Gwalior, were partially mitigated over time.

Despite his profligate behaviour, Daulat Rao’s attachment to and affection for Baiza Bai were well known and commented upon in British correspondence. For example, a letter from Resident Strachey to Lt. General Hewett in 1811 comments that, “Dowlat Rao Sindhia has confined himself

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28 Thomas Duer Broughton. Letters Written in a Mahratta Camp during the year 1809. (London: John Murray, 1813), 38.
29 Broughton, 124.
much to his _Zenana_, in consequence of the dangerous illness of his favourite wife Baiza Bye.\(^{30}\) She bore him several children, including a son who unfortunately did not survive. When urged by the British Resident J. Stewart to adopt a male heir to ensure continuation of the Scindia line, he reportedly trusted the ruling ability of his junior Maharani, Baiza Bai, and refused.\(^{31}\) Umila Walia hypothesizes that Daulat Rao's infatuation with Baiza Bai created the desire for her to succeed him as ruler. He attempted to equip her for this task by giving “her training in administrative matters. She had been his close confidant in administration and wielded power of government with his consent.”\(^{32}\)

2.6 POWER

This introduction of Baiza Bai to the Scindia family creates the premise for application of the typical sexual, marital and familial routes to female agency; in other words, all “women close to power must be exerting undue and inappropriate influence”\(^{33}\) in their roles as daughter, sister, wife and mother. This theory has particular relevance to the patri-lineal, patri-local family system common to South Asia, in which women are generally defined, both socially and religiously, in terms of their relationship to men.

The formulation of Baiza Bai in accordance with generally accepted female roles began with nomenclature. She was commonly identified through use of the title of _Bai_, a respectful form of address utilized for mothers and sisters. Broughton claims that this appellation;

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\(^{30}\) Jadunath Sarkar, ed. _English Records of Maratha History: Poona Residency Correspondence, Volume 14: Daulat Rao Sindhia and North Indian Affairs (1810-1818)._ (Bombay: Modern India Press, 1951), 95.

\(^{31}\) The rationale being that if he adopted, the Senior Maharani, Rukma Bai, would act as Regent, thus displacing Baiza Bai from direct control.


Has been adopted by the Mahrattas, amongst whom the ladies of the prince's family are always persons of much political weight and consequence, as one by which they might be frequently mentioned by the multitude without the slightest impropriety: for they conceive that no man could possibly even think of a woman, whom he called mother or sister, but with the utmost purity and respect: no bad elucidation, by the by, of the principles of Asiatic delicacy with regard to women.

The Bai's role as wife of Daulat Rao entailed direct access to the seat of power through marriage. Based on her close relationship with her husband, her personal influence over him could and did allow her the opportunity to exert overt political authority. The opportunity to do so may have been assisted through the presence of her father at the royal court. It was certainly unusual for a Hindu bride to have a male family member accompany her in joining her new family. Her father wielded a fair amount of political influence in his own right through his early connection to Nana Phadnis, and then in his later position of Dewan to Daulat Rao. The marriage of Baiza Bai smoothed the path of his political ambitions, and she attempted to do the same for other relatives. However, this generalization relies on the sexual objectification of this woman – her body was exchanged for political and social status on behalf of her family, and was loaned to her husband in return for her own power. Her motivation for these actions was relegated to the domain of family loyalty. She remained an empty vessel defined in relation to a male: wife, daughter, and sister.

In reading the early years of her marriage, Baiza Bai occupies an ambiguous position on the feminist continuum. Her actions can be interpreted both for and against arguments of voice and agency. It is clear that Baiza Bai vigorously defended her marital position of strength as Daulat Rao's favourite among his three wives. She was also clearly cognizant of her own value. When a low-caste political appointee sought to curry favour with Daulat Rao through a proposed marriage to his daughter, the Bai discovered the plan and "she fiercely upbraided her husband for his..."
meanness, and proudly asked, if it was only to plunge himself deeper in, that she had raised him from the mud, by an alliance with herself.”

With the treaty of 1805, Baiza Bai was granted a jagir worth 2 lakhs of rupees annually. However, Broughton reports that Daulat Rao confiscated these funds, as well as those intended for some of the chiefs of the Durbar, “because, in fact, the Muha Raj appropriates the whole sum to his own use. To this is now added seventy-five thousand rupees, in lieu of the Jagheer settled upon Bueza Baee, Seendhiya's favourite wife, at the peace of 1805; the Muha Raj preferring the receipt of this sum in cash to the possession of the estate itself”. While she is worthy of recognition in the treaty, she is essentially reduced to a conduit for the funds when her husband confiscates them.

Route to Power

Events following the murder of Sakharam Ghatge in 1809 demonstrably indicate that Baiza Bai had begun to extend the reach of her personal power beyond the private sphere concerns of securing and improving the situation of her natal family. In his quest to effect political change, Ghatge overstepped the protective boundaries of family indulgence. He had the temerity to attempt to forcibly restrain Daulat Rao in the effort to have his pleas heard. Scindia ordered his person seized. This resulted in a violent brawl with a multiple body count that included that of Ghatge, who “fell dead in the public street, pierced with a dozen wounds inflicted by his pitiless enemies”. His loss was not greatly mourned, with the exception of his daughter.

The Bace is in the deepest affliction at the sudden and shocking fate of her father. Seendhiya sat up with her the whole of last night, endeavouring to console and comfort her; and with his own hands wiping away the tears which she shed in abundance. Her situation indeed demands his utmost tenderness; being nearly six months gone with child.

35 Broughton, 334.
36 Aitchison, 401.
37 Broughton, 43.
38 Broughton, 224.
39 Broughton, 226.
Prior to Ghatge’s death, the Subahdar of Gwalior, Deoba Gauli, had been active in promoting the unpopular minister’s removal from office. Baiza Bai suspected him of instigating her father’s assassination, and took steps to effect her revenge. Resident Close remarked,

Baiza Bai has uniformly exercised a considerable control over Sindhia, and the affliction which followed the death of her father has been attended by the utmost indignation against those persons whom she knows or suspects to have been instrumental in it. She has appeared willing to sacrifice to the destruction of Deoba Gaullia her resentment towards all others, and he and his friends seem to be aware of the danger of their situation.40

Her influence over Daulat Rao gradually worked a transformation in his attitude towards the formerly popular Gauli. He fell from favour, and was murdered in February 1812. The then current Gwalior Resident Strachey believed he had been poisoned on either Scindia or Baiza Bai’s orders, although no charges were brought to bear.

Following the death of Daulat Rao in 1827, Baiza Bai emerged as a political power with which to contend. The combined force of the Durbar and the Resident decided that an eleven-year-old relative, Mangat Rao would be adopted as heir, and renamed “Alijah Jankoji Rao Sindhia”.41 Sanctioned by the British, Baiza Bai was appointed Regent “for an indefinite period under a general assurance of protection.”42 There is ample reason to believe that she had no intention of stepping down to make way for Jankoji. She ignored him regarding official matters, refused to allow him appearances at the Durbar and withheld from him the signing authority of office through continued use of Daulat Rao’s official seal (except in letters to the Governor-General). Historians have speculated that her disdain for Jankoji also stemmed from unexecuted plans to either place her (unborn) grandson on the throne, or to control him through marriage to her granddaughter.43 A later Gwalior Resident Fielding complained of Baiza Bai’s “harsh treatment” of Jankoji and suggested a number of improvements to her behaviour. She agreed to comply with his suggestions,

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40 Letter from R. Close, Gwalior Resident to N.B. Edmonstone, Chief Secretary; 29 August 1809. Sarkar: English Records of Maratha History: Poona Residency Correspondence, Volume 1, 6.
41 Subsequently referred to as Jankoji.
42 Wahia, 43.
provided she was constituted "sovereign regent" for life. The British Government would not sanction this, and demanded that she use Jankoji's seal on all official documentation as a symbol of his rule. (The seal was publicly unveiled on 27 June 1830.) As Jankoji approached the age of majority, a bitter power struggle ensued that threatened the political stability of the state. Both participants attempted to sway the influence of the British to their side. Following one bitter argument, Jankoji fled for protection to the Resident.

Matters came to a head with the visit of Governor-General Lord Bentinck in 1832. Baiza Bai expressed her desire "to act as Regent not only during the minority of the Maharaja but throughout her lifetime"\(^{44}\), while Jankoji was eager to claim royal authority. In a letter to J.G. Ravensahaw on 11 December 1832, Bentinck discussed his perception of the political situation in Gwalior.

I have found things here in a very unsettled state. The raja (17 years old) had become impatient of his minority and dissatisfied with his treatment, not without cause, by the regent, and as you well know, took refuge in the residency, and has called upon me to seat him on the masnad as being our adoption, an unlucky interference on our part. He is a very clever lad but violent and very little fit to be trusted with the reins of government. He has also behaved very ill to the regent. A storm seemed to threaten. Indeed he told the resident he would take his right by force of arms if necessary.\(^{45}\)

Bentinck left Gwalior without having made a decision in favour of either party. Sir Charles Metcalfe advised Bentinck to institute Jankoji as ruler, when he came of age, thus circumventing the immediate crisis and paying lip service to the policy of non-interference. Metcalfe made a strong case for Jankoji on the basis of his British-sanctioned adoption, leaving the impression that the young man would make a more amenable (i.e., easily controlled) ruler than Baiza Bai. On 10 July 1833, a coup took place and Baiza Bai "was forced to drop the reins of the government and to retire

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\(^{43}\) The two were married as children, but the granddaughter died shortly thereafter.


from Gwalior."  

A gap of three years ensued before Jankoji was invested with ruling authority. His administration was fraught with turmoil. Troops went unpaid, the royal court was an unrelenting source of intrigue, and the general citizenry regularly expressed their discontent. Colonel Sleeman visited the district during this time and recorded his unrelentingly negative impressions of the state: "It is lamentable to think how much of evil this court and camp inflict upon the people who are subject to them."

In contrast, Baiza Bai's reign was generally considered capable, efficient, and just. Administrative matters were dealt with promptly, troops were paid regularly, and the state prospered under her guidance. She undertook acts of social reform in Gwalior, including the prohibition of female infanticide. In cooperation with the British Government, she worked to improve the stability of law and order within the state, particularly in the suppression of Thuggee. The primary sources examined in this chapter reveal that the colonial male gaze positioned Baiza Bai as a figure worthy of respect. The British government's actions to replace her rule with that of Jankoji implicitly demonstrates the inability to manipulate her effectively. Ironically, this intended negation of her sanctioned political status corroborates the existence of her political agency.

Opportunities to breach the restrictions of the private sphere generally arose in situations of crisis. The most well known example of this condoned transgression in colonial times was Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi, who led military forces against the British during the Mutiny of 1857-1858. The dictates of stridharma were overridden by the more pressing need to defend her state against British absorption. Her military prowess, valourous conduct, and subsequent death in battle

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46 Walia, 46.
48 The excuse for which was provided by the death of her husband and the lack of a direct male heir, otherwise known as the "Doctrine of Lapse". Further information on the Rani of Jhansi and her actions during the Mutiny can be found in Joyce Lebra-Chapman's excellent book, The Rani of Jhansi.
tapped into both Western and Indian mythological constructs of female power\textsuperscript{49} and ensured her later martyrdom.

Generally, attempts to explain the phenomenon of influential and proactive royal women in India rely on the assumption that female power in the public sphere was indistinguishable from female power in the private sphere; i.e., that all was derived from familial, marital, or sexual connections. Arguably, the majority of these women gained access to political and/or personal agency through relations to men. However, this view is complicated by the demonstrated continuation and evolution of this agency beyond the limitations of the initial parameters, e.g., the extent to which assumption of the position of Regent led to the direct command of power.

Once officially deposed from power, Baiza Bai remained a political force with which to be reckoned. She commanded a large camp of military followers, maintained control over the treasure that had accompanied her removal from Gwalior, pestered the British to grant her sovereign rule over a new territory, and remained a thorn in the side of Jankoji until his death in 1843. His hapless successor, Jayaji, also had to contend with her. His obligations included assuming repayment of her debt to the British, “one lakh, on account of advances made to Her Highness Baiza Bai”\textsuperscript{50}.

Her activities were the subject of volumes of British correspondence, notably suspicions (never conclusively confirmed) that she participated in a series of conspiracies to unseat the hold of British power over the formerly independent Maratha States. The Bai settled at Nasik in 1841 on a comfortable annual pension of 4 lakhs of Rupees provided by the British government. During the course of the next two years, she became a chief source of anxiety for British agents in the area. Evidence of a planned uprising in Purandhar (taluka of Poona District) came to light. Baiza Bai’s name was mentioned in various letters and depositions that were uncovered in the course of the British investigation. Her role in the plot was alternately alleged to be that of directing the agents of the uprising, funding military expenses, and providing a suitable cover for travel of messengers and

\textsuperscript{49} For example, Joan of Arc and the warrior goddess, Durga.
missives around the Deccan. Local British Agents were charged with tracking her movements, and expressed ever-increasing alarm about the scope of her military operations. W. W. Bell, the Acting Sub-Collector at Nasik reported to J.P. Willoughby, Chief Secretary to Government, Bombay that her troops "have considerably increased and I have reason to believe that she is not only adding to her troops but that they are undergoing constant drilling." Bell's concerns were amplified by the lack of garrisoned troops at Nasik in the event of a military event.

I have also much reason to be dissatisfied with my present means of preserving the peace and exacting obedience to my authority among Her Highness's followers. Her Highness has at present at Nassick about 1200 troops of different arms, well supplied with arms and ammunition and Guns...while the detachment of the Nuggur [i.e. Ahmadnagar] Police Corps amounts to 100 Rank and File (of whom there are generally off duty on guards and escorts; about 25) and 1 Naik and 5 Horsemen of the Poona Auxilliary Horse, in the whole Sub-collectorate.

His estimate of the Bai's troops was later revised upwards to 1810, when she submitted a return with the disingenuous remark that her troops had diminished since she arrived at Nasik, when in fact, the opposite was true. Bell was charged with tracking her movements. He was frustrated in this by his lack of access to the Bai both socially and culturally.

My establishment at Nasik, besides being already overburthened with necessary duty is not composed of persons who can gain admission to the society of Her Highness and her Sirdars...intrigue to any extent, short of open hostility, might be carried on without my being made aware of it.

While the Bai was variously characterized by different agents as "notoriously given to intrigue", the apparent threat she posed was not sufficient for the government in Bombay to grant Bell's requests of supplemental troops and precautionary measures. Instead, Governor-General Lord Auckland sent her a prettily worded warning letter that stated, "how desirable it will be for your Highness to discard from your councils, and remove from your presence all persons on whom

50 Aitchison, 418.
52 Khobrekar, 52.
53 Khobrekar, 51-52
suspicion may rest, and...to maintain only such establishments as shall be essential to state and comfort".54 Baiza Bai replied to this missive with her own flowery language, claiming,

The number of servants with me is only such as is necessary for my service and for taking care of my property. My means being insufficient for my necessary expenses, how can I engage useless persons in my services...Is it possible that I who have no other engagement than the worship of God, shall now in my old age engage myself in intrigues?55

She proved adept at simultaneously flattering the Raj (she mentions both the Government’s and the Governor-General’s ‘good will’ numerous times), downplaying herself as a perceived threat (devoting herself to worship of God and gaining the favour of Government), and making her income (as provided by said Government) appear inadequate. At long last, we have direct evidence of the Bai’s voice in official Raj correspondence of the period: she has been de-silenced. The concerns over the potential uprising gradually abate, with the source of the plot never conclusively identified.

Misgivings about the espoused loyalty of the Bai continued into the 1850s. Gwalior played a pivotal role during the Mutiny of 1857-1858. Historians have speculated that the entire outcome of the insurrection would have been altered if the ruling faction at Gwalior had risen up against the British in conjunction with the mutineers, thus inciting other princely states to follow their lead. In this event, the sheer numbers of indigenous troops would have overwhelmed the more disciplined British army. Instead, Jayaji worked to support the British efforts, while seeking shelter at Agra. The majority of his army deserted, joined the rebels, or refused to fight. Baiza Bai led the Scindia Ranis in seeking shelter at Narwar.56

S.C. Macpherson, Political Agent, reported on the current state of affairs of Gwalior in 1858 in an account rife with rumour and speculation. He records that at a council of the revolutionaries, Tantia Tope stated that the Gwalior army would rise to join their cause, and “When that Army shall

51 Khobrekar, 54.
55 Khobrekar, 66.
56 Krishnan, 37.
come over, the Maharaja and the Baiza Baee will join us, and all the Princes of Hindostan will rise.”

He also remarked that Tope carried on a correspondence with Baiza Bai regarding the rebellion, and attempted to persuade her to take charge of affairs in Gwalior, imploring, “Do come and take charge of your seat of Government”. Baiza Bai passed on two of these letters to Sir Robert Hamilton.

Her motivation for doing so is uncertain. It is clear that the rebel leaders held her in high regard. In addition to the letters, an eyewitness account reports that the Rani of Jhansi ensured that the Bai’s residence at the Palace in Gwalior remained undisturbed during her occupation. Similarly, the British monitored the Bai’s actions closely during the course of the Mutiny. It is possible that she chose to align herself with the (seemingly) victorious side. It is also possible that her “aboveboard” behaviour was meant to act as a smokescreen, concealing her activities on behalf of the rebels. In any case, her shrewd behaviour managed to tread a fine line between alienating her peers (the rebel elite), her family (Jayaji and the Rani) and her benefactor (the British).

Thus, the official discussion concerning the political affairs of Gwalior provides ample evidence of Baiza Bai’s personal and political power. It is both surprising and dismaying that she has been relegated to the occasional mention or footnote (usually in context of her role as wife of Daulat Rao), in histories of the period. I believe that this stems from the traditionally male-oriented elitist gaze of historians. Daulat Rao, as the male occupant of the position of Maharaja, and (assumedly) in control of power has been examined in the context of his military and political actions. The history of Gwalior is incomplete, however, without due consideration of a woman who covertly wielded power through her influence over Daulat Rao, and overtly, for seven years, as Regent and the many years following.

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58 Rizvi and Bhargava, 457.

59 Rizvi and Bhargava, 467.
3. I AM TOLD YOU DRESS A CAMEL BEAUTIFULLY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

"I am told you dress a camel beautifully," said the young Princess [Guja Raja]; "and I was anxious to see you this morning, to ask you to instruct my people how to attire a sawari camel." This was flattering me on a very weak point: there is but one thing in the world that I perfectly understand, and that is, how to dress a camel.

"I hope you do not eat him when you have dressed him!" said an English gentleman.¹

Fanny Parks records this lovely expression of Orientalism in a conversation with the granddaughter of Baiza Bai in September 1835. The nature of this exchange elucidates a number of elements that will be covered in this chapter. Primarily, the female colonial in India experienced imperialism in a manner much different to commonly held perceptions of both the colonial experience and the role of the memsahib. Parks, as the avid Orientalist, lays claim to expert knowledge of an indigenous practice - to the point where locals seek her advice on the matter. Her retelling of the event portrays her expertise in a very flattering light; she is not aggrandizing herself, she is merely recording an occurrence that happens to reflect well on her. This "distancing" was a common practice in the memoirs of women from the period. On a class level, she is complimented by the reverse classism demonstrated; royalty has sought her out to request a favour.² Finally, the conversation takes place on a gendered level of understanding; Fanny and the Princess understand each other perfectly, while the English gentleman’s frivolous remark ends up making him look foolish. While witty, his joke relies on an “us versus them” mentality: a reliance on mocking the barbarism of the East; as though the Indians would eat a camel after dressing it, much in the same way that the English would consume a turkey. Furthermore, he is kept anonymous; in a reversal of


² Which, in fact, Fanny goes on to perform, describing in avid detail the trappings assembled, “Five hundred small brass bells of melodious sound; two hundred larger ditto, in harmony, like hounds well matched, each under each; and one large bell, to crown the whole...” etc., etc. (page 37). Her efforts were well received.
typical histories of the period, both women have presence in the memoir as identified individuals, while this male remains nameless. His comment merely symbolizes the (mis)understanding of his race and gender as he is represented as the unknowing white man. His participation in the conversation also calls into question some of the assumed separation of public and private spheres. How can his (conversational) presence be explained in the private sphere to which elite Indian women are restricted? If he, in fact, was not present, what is Fanny Parks’ vested interest in juxtaposing his comment with the recorded conversation?

The role of colonial women in India is one of great relevance to the central proposition of splitting the stereotrope of public and private spheres. Both Fanny Parks and Emily Eden met and interacted with Baiza Bai; Parks in particular did so at great length. These meetings were recorded in letters and memoirs that provide nonconformist readings of the Bai’s role in society, her personal power and actions, and her relationships with the people around her. Similarly, examination of these alternative sources of historical events provides some challenging material with which to theorize the allocation of power in colonial society, the hegemony of imperialism across gender lines, and the interpretation of Orientalism from a female perspective. Thus, by examining colonial women – looking at traditional perceptions of the memsahib in contrast with recorded experience, the personal histories of our narrators, and theoretical strategies for reading these women through the picturesque and the body politic – I hope to add insightful complexity to the reading of colonial-era women in India.

3.2 THE ROLE OF COLONIAL WOMEN

British women performed a number of functions in the establishment and maintenance of the colonial empire. Primarily, involvement in the imperialist project centered around gendered roles – the dutiful wife, daughter or sister who accompanied a male family member to India. The image of the white woman in colonial India was invested with moral overtones of civilization, domesticity, and purity. In England, “domestic woman was shaped to her destiny as sweet preserver
and comforter, the vessel and safeguard of tradition." The memsahibs were perceived to play an important role in providing a stabilizing and regulatory influence over their menfolk within the private sphere of the home. They provided a semblance of normal family life, propagated Christian values, supported the careers of their husbands through participation in a regimented social order, and generally reduced the degenerate possibilities of British men "going native" by eliminating officially sanctioned interracial sexual interaction.

They also maintained the continuity of a racially pure line of legitimate children, negating the troublesome boundary blurring potential of interracial marriages and half-caste children. The presence of British women in India indicated the formation and regulation of a self-contained expatriate community. The existence of this community perpetuated the familiar, restricted contact with native life, and ensured a clear demarcation between colonizing and colonized races. Beverly Gatrell neatly summarizes these ideals.

British wives were custodians of the health and psychological welfare of the officials, representatives of the external moral order of the distant home civilization, sanctions against politically harmful sexual liaisons, facilitators of tension-reducing informal socializing, unpaid innkeepers, instruments for social reproduction of the system through socialization of the new cohorts who would in time replace them.

The East India Company and the British Government actively promoted the presence of British women in India. In addition to colonial wives, boatloads of unmarried women traveled from England to India seeking marriage. "Once colonial rule was firmly established the presence of British wives was encouraged in the belief that the services they provided...were expected to reduce turnover and increase officers' efficiency." The high ratio of single men to women made India an

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4 With the exception of brothels maintained by the military. Kenneth Ballhatchet's *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980) remains the definitive work in this area.

5 Gatrell, 168.
attractive prospect for women from poor families. In 1838, Emily Eden described two newly arrived sisters: “They are the only young ladies at the station, so I suppose will have their choice of three regiments; but it is a bad business when all is done. They arrived just in time for this gay week, which will give the poor girls a false impression of the usual tenor of their lives.”7 The notion of colonial life as a social merry-go-round, eased by wealth, and hordes of native servants, created a picture of India as the exotic fulfillment of the new bourgeois ideal of middle-class life in England.

Other women traveled to India as missionaries and governesses, attracted by the possibilities of converting the heathen, uplifting the downtrodden and educating the unenlightened. The general perception of Indian women as victims of a vicious socio-religious hierarchy that advocated child marriage, purdah, and sati, simultaneously provided a cause and improved the lot of British women by comparison. “It was widely believed in early nineteenth-century England that Western women owed their superior position to Christianity; it was Christianity which had raised society from its superstitions and freed women from the degradations associated in the English mind with heathenism.”8 This led to the creation of an entire class of Englishwomen who acted as representatives of a morally correct European consciousness and exerted their influence on the lives of the colonized. One manifestation of this phenomenon arose from the popularity with Indian princes of English governesses as both status symbols and teachers. Their position in the hierarchy of the royal household gave them the opportunity to exert a great deal of influence over the growth and development of their young charges.

Female missionaries came to be viewed as essential to the work of the Church in India. “It was proper, argued the protagonists of a special missionary sphere for women, that the daughters of Eve, first in transgression, should be the first in restoration...”9 Their gender provided entry to the

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9 Hall, 251.
domain of many women who would otherwise have been made inaccessible to missionary influence by socio-religious restrictions. "So important was the zenana to Westerners' conception of the female missionary's role that in the course of the century, the term 'zenana missionary' came to be virtually synonymous with that of woman missionary."  

Ideally, the zenana missionaries "were doing more than providing needed social services. They were also functioning as agents of social change for Indian girls and women." However, inhabitants of the zenana generally declined to passively accept these contributions and this interaction between cultures became actively negotiated terrain.

Jean Sinclair, for instance, was indignant when in 1905 she was invited by the companion of the Maharani of Indore to call on her on a regular basis in order to help her improve her English and learn to play tennis, the harmonium, and billiards. "I had to disclaim any knowledge of the last-mentioned accomplishment," Sinclair wrote, "and discouraged her desire to acquaint herself with it. This woman — a native — gets almost as much salary as I do and she wanted to strengthen her position by acquiring these accomplishments from me."

THE MEMSAHIB IN INDIA

Analyses of imperialism have generally failed to adequately identify and examine the influential role of the memsahib within the cultural and social context of colonialism. Until recent work by feminist historians, portrayals of colonial wives relied on trivializing stereotypes of women as accessories to the raiment of Empire. In order to draw a more textured picture of history, it is useful to look at the lived experience of women, what was expected of them and how they coped. As a starting point, Jenny Sharpe provides a cogent analysis of Adela from A Passage to India, which is particularly apt when placing the memsahib in history. "Her divided mind reveals a tension between the Anglo-Indian woman's double positioning in colonial discourse – as the inferior sex but

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10 Ruth Compton Brouwer. New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Mission, 1876-1914. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 97.
11 Brouwer, 170.
12 Brouwer, 99.
superior race." The abilities of white women were directed to the domestic, their actions were proscribed by property and marital laws, and their status relegated to a subordinate position in British society, and yet, by virtue of skin colour and citizenship, they were considered exceptional to both colonized women and colonized men.

European women in these colonies experienced the cleavages of racial dominance and internal social distinctions very differently than men precisely because of their ambiguous positions, as both subordinates in colonial hierarchies and as active agents of imperial culture in their own right.

The novelistic memsahib—a weak, neurotic creature languishing in a catatonic state of ennui—was a character type found more frequently in books than in colonial communities. However, there is some evidence to support the idea of the memsahib as a sickly being, ill suited to the rigours of foreign climates. Emily Eden commented on three women at the station of Baulyah: "one lady has bad spirits (small blame to her), and she has never been seen; another has weak eyes, and wears a large shade about the size of a common verandah; and the other had bad health, and has had her head shaved." Tropical diseases wreaked havoc on the health of women equipped with only mustard plasters and smelling salts for remedies. However, many obstacles were unnecessarily created by the female struggle to maintain properly British standards of decorum in dress and habits totally unsuitable for the lifestyle and climate in which they found themselves. Advice and admonitions offered by books of the period attempted to provide a reality check to high-flown expectations of life in the colonies. Hunt and Kenny put forth the following recommendations in the 1883 publication, Tropical Trials.

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15 E. Eden, 7.
Many and varied are the difficulties which beset a woman, when she first exchanges her European home and its surroundings for the vicissitudes of life in the tropics. Few can realize the sacrifices they will be called upon to make. Many home comforts, and the host of nameless social fascinations, so dear to a woman's heart, have to be given up, while the attractions offered by the irresistible 'day's shopping', the box at the opera, a few of our summer recreations, and nearly all of our winter amusements, must be temporarily relegated to the list of past pleasures. If, from the outset, she will endeavour to realise what is before her and, bearing in mind the good old adages 'Forewarned is forearmed', and 'A stitch in time saves nine', she will exercise her calm judgement in meeting difficulties as they arise, there is no reason why she should not come off victorious in her struggle with tropical trials.  

Notwithstanding this sage encouragement, the efforts of women to adapt to life in India were hampered by what Anne McClintock has dubbed "a social semiotics of visibility". The bodies, dress, and actions of women served as reflections of "male prosperity and class status". In the colonial climate, the bodies of elite white women were also used to demarcate socio-cultural boundaries between ruler and ruled. Skin colour, or the maintenance of "whiteness" through the use of sunbonnets and parasols preserved racial signifiers; exaggerated shapes created by corsets and bustles were indicative of the move from a heathen state of bodily freedom to a more civilized restraint; fashionable clothing demonstrated the knowledge and the means to stay current while away from England; and a conspicuous life of leisure led in well-maintained homes and social gatherings evidenced wealth and embodied an upper-class lifestyle. The iconic importance of this gendered behaviour placed severe constraints on the process of adjustment. Compounding the matter was the fallacy of recreating Victorian life in a colonial setting. Heavy, long-sleeved, high-necked wool dresses supported by petticoats and stays were totally inappropriate for the climate. Efforts to stay abreast of fashion trends were sabotaged by the informational time lag between England and India, and the labours of native dressmakers, who were unable to reproduce dresses to the satisfaction of the memsahibs. Housekeeping was waged as a constant war against white ants,

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17 McClintock, 98.
mold and intractable servants who refused to act beyond the bounds of their caste-defined occupations. Ironically, many of these restrictions were enforced and perpetuated by the women themselves. In spite of the inevitable adaptations to climate in matters of décor and heat management, colonial women tended to persist in a mimicry of English life.  

The lack of official recognition for the female role in propping up Empire led to hotly contested rivalries for petty social honours, such as being escorted into dinner by the Governor-General or the ranking officer present. The weight placed on this symbolic compensation through social ritual and ceremony arose because it was the sole means by which the majority of women received some acknowledgement of their contribution to the process of maintaining and perpetuating the imperialist project. Beverley Gatrell discusses the role of women who are linked to colonialism through enterprises such as the East India Company and the India Civil Service:

In all these organizations wives are personal dependents of their husbands, and are ranked solely in terms of the status held by their husbands in the organization. Their own personal attributes or prior achievements are irrelevant in determining this derived status...These organizations also pose a common paradox: the wives of employees have no formal ties to the organization, yet the organization's senior members are not only seen as holding some power over them, but often claim authority to control or at least guide them. Their behaviour may be regarded, formally or informally, as relevant to superiors' decisions on husbands' careers.

The memsahib also faced a dilemma when her children reached school age. The preferred course of action was enrollment in an English school, but this was costly, took place at a great distance from the rest of the family unit, and necessitated a decision of where the greater onus lay—one’s husband or children? It was not uncommon for a colonial wife to accompany her children back to England and remain there, while her husband finished out his tour of duty. This also created problems for children born and raised through early childhood in India. The care of children was traditionally delegated to ayahs (native nannies) and the domestic household staff.

18 Adequate overviews of the colonial woman's experience of India can be found in Pat Barr's *The Memsahibs* and Margaret MacMillan's *Women of the Raj*.

19 Gatrell, 166-167.
Strong bonds of attachment that centered around the maternal image of the native woman and contributed to the child's self-formation were abruptly negated by the physical removal to England. Anne McClintock’s comments on African nannies are relevant here:

Part of the white child’s earliest identity is structured around the strength and authority, however restricted, of the black mother figure. Coming to adolescence, however, white children are obliged, by colonial decree, to detach themselves from identification with the African women with whom they have been so intimate and thus also from significant aspects of their own identity. Black women come to form the abjected, inner limit of the white child’s identity: rejected but constitutive.”

Women and children who returned to England suffered an abrupt reversal in the poles of their self-location. While in India, they constituted the “Us” of the superior colonizing race against the “Other” of the colonized. Upon their arrival in England, they often found (much to their dismay), that the experience of India had transformed them to the point of occupying the position of “Other” back in England.

Life in the colonies did provide opportunities for women to experience new personal freedom through travel, and to record these adventures for private and/or public consumption. Certain women “revolted against the strict social rigours of the Raj, however more strict, it seemed, than at home: they broke the confines, talked to the natives and travelled.” Over time, it became more acceptable for women to travel to and within India. In 1900, Isabel Savory commented in her book *A Sportswoman in India*:

To rove about in gipsy fashion, meeting with trifling adventures from time to time, is a complete change for an ordinary English girl; and it is very easy to find every scope for developing self-control and energy in many a "tight corner" if such occasions are sought for. Englishmen are supposed to possess an insatiable desire for *slaying* something; a healthily minded woman has invariably a craving to *do* something. She is fortunate if she satisfies it.

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20 McClintock, 270.
21 Robinson, 238.
22 Robinson, 262.
THE PICTURESQUE

Colonial women commonly reformulated their foreign experience in India as a series of picturesque compositions. These depictions encapsulated the harsh reality and unwieldiness of the Indian terrain and population into a neatly superficial slice of life — a colonial postcard bordered on all sides that safely “distanced” the subject material from the viewer. This snapshot approach to the colonial experience was ably conveyed by the talents of any well-born lady, trained in turning her hand to sketching or portraiture. The most conventional expression of the feminine picturesque reads India as nature. Much like the hunter who goes on safari and bags his catch for home display of his prowess, the colonial woman collected her trophies as a series of paintings, with subject matter ranging from the exotic (portraits of rajahs) to the merely pleasant (landscapes).

Concentrating on the picturesque allowed them to ignore the human community in India — far too difficult to relate to — and concentrate on the drape of a turban, the folds of a shawl. Natives became objects in the landscape, nothing more. If classical art made one think, and romantic art made one feel, picturesque art, conveniently enough, merely made one see.23

Not all women chose to use the paintbrush as their method of depicting life in India. Others wielded the pen in the attempt to capture India through categorizing their experience.

From the extensive body of journals, memoirs, letters, and fiction written by Anglo-Indian women, it becomes evident that outside the confines of domesticity, one of the few socially responsible positions available to them was the role of female as amateur ethnographer.24

Sara Suleri incorporates the picturesque into her analysis of Fanny Parks’ writing. She states, “Parks’ narrative exemplifies the picturesque impulse to transmute colonialism into a literary document, conflating British romanticism with a ready colonial hybridity.”25 In contrast with Parks’ father’s blunt critique of the Company in his memoirs26, Suleri claims that Parks’ gendered perspective limits her commentary to the pursuit of the picturesque on a quasi-religious pilgrimage

25 Suleri, 82.
shaped by the pre-Mutiny climate. Suleri goes on to read female representations of the picturesque as implicit criticisms of the heterosexual colonial narrative of rape. She suggests that “the woman writer seems to be at a better vantage point to assess how much the colonial encounter depends upon a disembodied homoeroticism rather than on the traditional metaphor of ravishment and possession.” Further examination of specific details in Parks’ narrative later in this chapter will address this point.

**FEMALE IMPERIALISM**

The *memsahib* experience of imperialism was much different than that of her male counterpart. As has been discussed in earlier sections, the colonial woman was subject to a number of different expectations and limitations on her behaviour while in India. In contrast to the social strictures of England, India afforded exposure to new horizons and thought paradigms, while simultaneously imposing a more restrictive lifestyle and behavioural code:

Their [autobiographical] narratives show that their lives were perhaps more constrained than those of British women in England because gender roles were more directly subordinated to the imperializing policies of the Raj... On the other hand, their experiences of colonial life permitted them to recognize analogies between themselves and colonized Indian women that exposed larger social, economic, and political forces that subordinated them both.

The female re-location in a new environment led to the inevitable comparison of her lifestyle options with those of the Hindu woman. These evaluations took on a number of distinct forms. The typical view of the Hindu woman reflected the paternalistic concern of the Raj in the form of pity for the deprived widow. This was generally expressed as a version of the following: “In all and every circumstance of life the woman is without protection or redress; if she be lucky she may earn

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26 Suleri discusses Fanny Parks’ father’s book: *Wanderings of a Colonel in the Mountains of Nepal* as opposite to Fanny’s in impression and intent.

27 Suleri, 77.

However, there also existed a more complex reading of the realities of zenana life. The author of the previous remark, Yvonne Fitzroy, goes on to comment on the Hindu woman "as mother-in-law and ruler of the zenana she exerts considerable influence both over the men and the women of her household." The zenana is not demonized as an instrument of universal repression, nor is it enshrined as a place of licentious fantasy. Rather, Fitzroy sums up her thoughts with:

This is not to deny the great influence of the zenana, nor the honour in which the secluded woman is held and the rare charm of family life in India. Great women have lived behind the veil, and have rather grown in stature than been hampered by its restrictions.

Observations such as these provide alternative readings of the zenana from the standard (male-oriented) imperialist view. However, the influence of official dictates of Empire is not to be understated. The majority of women who journeyed to India did so as companions to their male counterparts. As such, their exposure to India was undoubtedly shaped by the opinions of their male partners, which in turn reflected educational and sociological indoctrination into the official Raj party line. Similarly, female social interaction with peers and natives was predetermined by existing social structures that had been built to reflect and reinforce the official hierarchy of Empire. Perception of the inequities of the Hindu system - particularly as it pertained to the cause of Indian women - was a learned understanding that was transmitted from one colonial to another in a systemic interpretation, as opposed to an innate or essential characteristic of the white colonial. For example, Vere Ogilvie as a 17-year-old went to join her father, the Resident at Udaipur in 1926. While there,

30 Fitroy, 98.
31 Fitroy, 98.
she and her mother did get to visit the wives of courtiers and lesser nobles, who turned out to be ‘delightfully humorous women, all with a chuckling sense of humour and immensely curious about myself and the sort of clothes I wore — but of course at seventeen I was not aware that they were virtually prisoners and the sadness of it all.\textsuperscript{52} [emphasis added]

Ogilvie’s youthful lack of criticism arises from her first-person experience with the harem inhabitants. In this case, her gender enabled interaction with other women results in a positive impression. Her learned colonial perception of these women as oppressed and depressing comes at a later date as she becomes further informed in the rhetoric of imperialism.

More in-depth development of a gendered perspective that served to challenge colonial male interpretations of female oppression (or lack thereof) crystallized around that flash point of British sensationalism: sati, the widow sacrifice on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. In the following example sati is read, not as a manifestation of the oppression of Hindu women by some devious Eastern nefariousness, but rather as a symbol of the universal oppression of women. The young wife of an advocate working at the Calcutta Supreme Court in 1779, Eliza Fay (1756-1817) summarizes sati thus:

\begin{quote}
I cannot avoid smiling when I hear gentle men bring forward the conduct of the Hindoo women, as a test of superior character, since I am well aware that so much are we the slaves of habit everywhere that were it necessary for a woman's reputation to burn herself in England, many a one who has accepted a husband merely for the sake of an establishment, who has lived with him without affection; perhaps thwarted his views, dissipated his fortune and rendered his life uncomfortable to its close, would yet mount the funeral pile with all imaginable decency and die with heroic fortitude.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

These examples serve to support the argument that the female interpretation of imperialism was not hegemonic in nature. Rather, women as narrators related their experiences and views from a range of subject positions which alternately reinforced and challenged the standard public sphere rhetoric. A gendered position further served to provide the opportunity to challenge the

\textsuperscript{52} Allen and Dwivedi, 254.

public/private sphere stereotype by providing entry to that most rarified of locations, the zenana interior. Some similarity in circumstance between women in purdah and British women in India — societal seclusion, ideologically-ordained preoccupation with manners of home and hearth, restricted movement, exclusion from official recognition in the public sphere — contributed to a common identity formation as women. These factors will play an important role when reading the role of our female narrators.

3.3 THE NARRATORS

Reading female eyewitness accounts from the colonial period requires identifying the position of the narrators, in this case, Fanny Parks, Fanny Eden (1801-1849) and Emily Eden (1797-1869), within the existing socio-cultural context of colonial India; examining the nature of their texts; and finally, attempting to analyze the underlying meaning to their accounts of Baiza Bai. Parks and the Edens encountered the Bai during the period of her newly engendered “subaltern” status, as both a Hindu widow and a native denied access to (official) sources of power. This provides the opportunity to pursue a more complex construction of her role in history. Consideration of the implications of a gender-based form of communication, as well as the feminine understanding of imperialism, contribute to the effort to identify the subjectivity of these colonial women.

The majority of publications arose from private sphere communication in the form of letters, journals, and travel narratives. British women in India struggled to communicate the nature of their experiences to the audience at home, and these narratives reflect the overt emphasis on the expectations and restrictions placed on their forms and behaviour. The foreign setting provided the forms (letters, etc.) and the justification for pursuit of the picturesque as recorded and spoken in a female voice.34 The underlying focus on the female body inherent to imperialist dogma had a resounding impact on the type and content of narratives written by women during this time period.

34 A substantial number of available manuscripts written by women during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consist of private correspondence that was collected by relatives or scholars and then published posthumously.
In contrast to “official” primary sources of Government Correspondence, the personal figure/body of the female narrator, in the form of “I”, plays a central role in the action, directly expresses opinions and belief, and provides insight to the author’s subjectivity.

Assumption of an omniscient voice or presence in the manner of male colonial eyewitness accounts rarely occurs, and the direct account (she said, I said) facilitates efforts to establish the voices of British and Indian women. The extent of self-editing is difficult to determine, compounded by uncertainty regarding the writer’s awareness of potential publication. However, the author consistently reveals her own cultural bias and awareness through her narrative choices. In spite, or perhaps because, of the limited opportunity for female participation in the public sphere of the Raj, British women do not appear to have absorbed or believed the monolithic interpretation of an imperialist view generally found in official sources and the private narratives of male travelers. Their cross-cultural links to other women provided the opportunity to challenge received wisdom on the role and rights of the British in colonial situations, which led to the formulation of a nuanced (and by no means commonly held) view of imperialism in India.

Fanny Parks

Fanny Parks, the wife of a customs collector, sailed for Bengal in 1826. She did so with the full knowledge that her husband’s sojourn in India would have to last twenty-two years to meet company pension requirements. Upon arrival, she enthusiastically began to learn about India. She provides a far from typical account of a British woman traveling through India in her memoirs, Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque. Mrs. Parks found that, “traveling about the country is very amusing; but during the heat of the rains, shut up in the house, one’s mind and body feel

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35 I am thinking particularly of male narratives of sati, in which entire conversations and events are presented as fact from an all-knowing, all-seeing perspective (e.g., the Rev. William Ward). In light of language difficulties, memory deficiencies, cultural barriers, and the sheer physical impossibility of being all places at all times, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between social history and creative writing in these accounts. This complicates any effort to retrieve the subjectivity of the historical female figure from the text. Both Gayatri Spivak and Lata Mani provide some interesting insight into this debate.
equally enervated." Thus, at the first opportunity (post-monsoon) she would pack and head in search of adventure.

This wandering life is very delightful; I shall never again be content "to sit in a parlour sewing a seam," which the old song gives forth as the height of feminine felicity! Much sooner would I grope through a dark alley idol hunting... 

Mrs. Parks exhibited strong tendencies towards both Orientalism and feminism in her conduct and writing. She was fluent in "Hindustani", wrote extensively on Indian social and religious customs, and counted royal members of the Princely States among her close friends. She utilized her gender to gain access to a number of zenanas and recounted these experiences for the titillation of her readers. One such zenana was that of the Baiza Bai. During the period 1835-1838, Fanny became close friends with the Bai, kept up an intermittent correspondence, and returned to visit her in December of 1844.

Emily and Frances Eden

Emily and Frances Eden accompanied their brother, Lord George Auckland (1784-1849) to India when he was appointed Governor-General in 1835, and remained until he was sent back to England in 1842. The two spinster ladies were devoted to their brother. "They were the only unmarried sisters of a family of fourteen, and had lived with their eldest brother for several years; that they should not join him on his most prestigious posting was never even contemplated." Both sisters evinced a wry and critical eye in descriptions of their surroundings and acquaintances, and had little patience for the pomp and circumstance inherent to official durbars and dinner parties that they were required to attend. Emily commented:

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36 Parks, 57.
37 Parks, 452.
I am not very fond of Englishmen out of their own country. And Englishwomen did not look pretty at the ball in the evening, and it did not tell well for the beauty of Delhi that the painted ladies of one regiment who are generally called ‘the little corpses’ (and very hard it is too upon most corpses) were much the prettiest people there, and were besieged with partners.30

During their six-year stay, the Eden contingent set out on an arduous eighteen-month diplomatic journey through India. Fanny and Emily recorded these experiences in letters home that were later collected into published volumes, of which Emily’s Up the Country (first published in 1866 while Emily was still living) is probably the most well-known. Emily Eden generally acted as hostess and confidante in her role as surrogate wife to Lord Auckland; she “enhanced his diplomatic capabilities because she was able to pay formal visits to the secluded wives of Indian rulers, a courtesy males could not perform.”40 Subsequently, Fanny and Emily paid an official visit to Baiza Bai in 1838 during the “Up the Country” tour.

Emily Eden’s memoirs demonstrate a strong sense of self-worth, as occasioned by her age41, her substantial wealth, and her position atop the social sphere of colonial India. In contrast to Mrs. Parks, Emily Eden undertook her travels through India out of loyalty to her brother rather than a personal love of exploring the country. Her narrative contains an interesting mixture of travel discourse (we went, we saw, we did) and facetious character sketches. In contrast, Fanny Eden’s memoirs, notably Tigers, Durbars and Kings: Fanny Eden’s India Journals 1837-1838, were transcribed and published well after her death42 and reflect a more playful and exuberant approach to life in India. Less politically inclined than her sister, Fanny sought out new activities and excitement such as tiger hunts and elephant rides while marching about the country.

30 E. Eden, 98.
30 Paxton, 393.
40 At the time of writing, she was a solid spinster of 38 years old, and thus far beyond the obligations and constraints of maintaining “marriageable” status through personal decorum. Similarly, she was free of the legal and potential emotional subjugation of married status. She pursued a number of interests that included the publication of two popular novels in England.
Interaction of Narrators

The understanding of these narrators is complicated by their personal interaction. Mrs. Parks joined the "Up the Country" tour at several points, including the 1838 visit to Allahabad, the temporary residence of Baiza Bai. Although their accounts of the event differ, Mrs. Parks acted as interpreter for the Eden sisters during their visit with Baiza Bai. In spite of this favour, neither of the Eden sisters spoke glowingly of Mrs. Parks. Fanny Eden wrote:

We are rather oppressed just now by a lady, Mrs. Parkes, who insists upon belonging to the camp...She has a husband who always goes mad in the cold season, so she says it is her duty to herself to leave him and travel about. She has been a beauty and has remains of it, and is abundantly fat and lively. At Benares, where we fell in with her, she informed us that she was an independent woman...she has entirely succeeded in proving that the Governor-General's power is but a name...The magistrate of one station always travels on with us to the next. To each of these magistrates she has severally attached herself, every successive one declaring they will have nothing to do with her. Upon which G. [George] observes with much complacency, "Now we have got rid of our Mrs. P." – and the next morning there she is, on the march, her fresh victim driving her in a tilbury and her tent pitched close to his.43

Fanny Parks demonstrated somewhat more restraint in her writing (or was entirely oblivious to Eden's animosity) although she is critical of the cost and magnitude of "his Lordship's marching about the country."44 Governor-General Auckland's little journey included 11,000 camp members, and cost approximately 70,000 Rs./month. It is interesting to speculate whether Parks' comment stemmed from a dislike of imperialistic excess, or merely pique at the stiff reprimand she received for pitching her tent inside of gubernatorial sentry-lines, following which she left the camp.45

43 Fanny Eden. Tigers, Durbars and Kings: Fanny Eden’s Indian Journals 1837-1838. Transcribed and Edited by Janet Dunbar. (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 1988), 106. In all fairness, I feel I must include a quote equally critical of the Eden sisters. The memoirs of Isabella Fane include the comment, “The next day we ladies were appointed to go in our evening drive to call upon the Misses Eden, but in consequent of a misunderstanding about the hour we did not see them. You may suppose how grieved we were at this. However, we had to go again the following morning, and then we were more fortunate. We go on famously. They are both great talkers, both old, both ugly, and both s---k like polecats! Sir H. Chamberlain informed some of our young gentlemen that on board ship they were so dreadful in this respect that those who were so lucky as to sit next to them at dinner had their appetites much interfered with.” Isabella Fane, Miss Fane in India. John Pemble, ed. (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1985). Quoted in Jane Robinson (1994): 249-250.

44 Parks, 183.

45 Both the comment on the Governor-General and the reprimand are contained in the same journal entry.
However, her disappearance was only temporary. She resurfaced in Meerut later in 1838, as Fanny notes:

> How she got there nobody knows and nobody will ever know. The day after we got here they got up a morning review for us — blew up mines and took a fort, and not only a fort but Mrs. Parkes, for as the smoke blew off she was discovered riding. If she were not so fat I should say she was something supernatural. My spirit is broke about her. I dare say we shall find her settled in our home at Simla and shall not have strength to turn her out.46

### 3.4 IN THE ZENANA

#### Meeting the Bai

Both Fanny Parks and the Eden sisters encountered Baiza Bai during the period 1835-1838 (the years immediately following the coup in Gwalior), and their descriptions of the Maharani combine both domestic and political perspectives. As women, they had the opportunity to breach the seclusion of the zenana, and thus were able to recount Baiza Bai’s physical appearance and manner from first-hand experience. Fanny Parks describes her first impression of the Bai on 12 April 1835.

> The Baiza Bai is rather an old woman, with grey hair, and en bon point; she must have been pretty in her youth; her smile is remarkably sweet, and her manner particularly pleasing; her hands and feet are very small and beautifully formed...there is a freedom and independence in her air that I greatly admire, so unlike that of the sleeping, languid, opium-eating Musalmanis.47

Similarly, Emily Eden found Baiza Bai to be “a clever-looking little old woman, with remains of beauty.”48 However, neither woman chose to ignore the political situation surrounding the Bai, and it was apparently common knowledge that she had attempted to usurp the indigenous royal authority of Jivaji, and continued to provide a constant source of irritation for the Government. For example, in Allahabad, on 4 December 1837, Emily Eden recounts:

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46 F. Eden, 133.
47 Parks, 2.
48 E. Eden, 46.
Here there is a sort of Dowager Queen of the Gwalior country; her style and title being “the Baiza Baee.”... She cannot endure being only a Dowager Baiza Baee; and being immensely rich, she has been suspected of carrying intrigues amongst her former subjects.49

Originally, Lord Auckland was to have made an official state visit to the Bai, but his advisors vetoed this plan in light of her politically marginal status. Despite her lack of official recognition, it was decided that the Eden sisters would visit the Bai, “but not politically” as Fanny Eden puts it. Fanny Parks was engaged as interpreter for the duration of the visit, given her linguistic abilities and pre-existing relationship with Baiza Bai. Interestingly, the narrators’ accounts differ in identifying the impetus for this action. Emily Eden positions the request as originating from the Maharani, “Mrs. --- [Parks] came to say that the Baiza Baee had asked her to come and interpret for us”50, while Fanny Parks reverses the request: “I made my salam to Miss Eden at her tents; she told me she was going to visit her Highness the Baiza Bai with the Governor-General, asked me to accompany her, and to act as interpreter, to which I consented with pleasure.”51 Was this just a simple error of memory on the part of one of the narrators, or was a specific representation chosen for a reason?

For example, in her account, Emily Eden positions herself as the passive recipient of the Maharani’s stated wish – she is merely acceding to the other’s request. On the other hand, Parks portrays Eden as the active agent who requests a favour, (implicitly) recognizing Parks’ abilities and social relations with a high-ranking native.

The visit proceeded as planned. Fanny Eden records:

By way of doing us honour the Begum’s [Baiza Bai’s] granddaughter was sent to fetch us in her gold and scarlet-covered litter. We went in great state, and her state was an excellent parody of ours – the women running by the side of her litter with chowries, and two of them sitting astride as aide-de-camps, her state elephant painted all manner of colours and her wild looking spearmen galloping about and entirely destroying the equanimity of our bodyguard.52

49 E. Eden, 40.
50 E. Eden, 44.
51 Parks, 137.
52 F. Eden, 93.
While the women held their semi-official visit with the Bai within the private sphere of the zenana, male representatives of Empire were entertained by a nautch in the camp. Again, the account of Fanny Parks differs from the Edens' at this point – Fanny Parks claims that the Misses Eden were accompanied by Lord Auckland on their visit to the Bai. “They arrived with Lord Auckland in all due form: his Lordship and Appa Sahib sat in the outer room, and conversed with her Highness through the parda.” However, both Fanny and Emily Eden indicate that George did not accompany them on this visit. Emily states prior to the visit that George would not attend for political reasons, while Fanny makes no mention of him when she describes the visit – the only men mentioned as attending are William (the Edens’ nephew), Macnaghten (Government Secretary to Lord Auckland) and the aide-de-camps. In this instance, Fanny Parks is quite specific about the Governor-General’s presence. She claims that he was presented with twenty-two trays containing cloth, jewels, and shawls, while the Misses Eden received fifteen trays apiece. Was the Eden sisters’ omission of George’s presence an oversight on their part, or a desire to make him seem less fallible in changing his mind? Were there political reasons for not mentioning his attendance at the visit? Or was Parks exaggerating the scope of the visit in an attempt to make Baiza Bai (and through extension, her relationship with the Bai) more momentous in the eyes of her readers?

Life in the Zenana

Through the on-going evolution of her relationship with Baiza Bai, Parks spends a substantial amount of her time in the zenana which she records for the entertainment of her readers. Her observations range from specific comments on the structural functioning of purdah to more general musings on her understanding of the cultural philosophy that informs the zenana mentality. Some insight is gained through a closer examination of the experiences shared and related by Fanny.

53 *Nautch:* entertainment provided by dancing girls.
54 Parks, 137-138.
55 F. Eden, 93-94.
The power dynamic is given shadings of influence, and some gendered interpretations of a seemingly hegemonic imperialistic rhetoric are revealed.

Fanny Parks describes the Maratha version of *purdah* thus:

In the centre of a long room a large curtain is dropped, not unlike the curtain at a theatre, the space behind which is sacred to the women; and there the gaddi of the Bai was placed, close to the parda; a piece of silver, about six inches square, in which a number of small holes are pierced, is let into the parda; and this is covered on the inside with white muslin. When the Bai wished to see the gentlemen, her guests, she raised the bit of white muslin, and could then see very thing in the next room through the holes in the silver plate — herself unseen. The gentlemen were in the outer room, the ladies in the inner. Appa Sahib sat close to the parda; the Bai conversed with him, and through him, with some of the gentlemen present, whom she could see perfectly well.56

This female perspective on the interaction of inner/female and outer/male spheres blurs some of the stereotypical assumptions about the nature of the split. In this case, the women are indeed cloistered from the prying male gaze, but they remain central to the gathering at hand. The nature of the division is transient in nature. Rather than an edifice constructed to keep women isolated, a curtain is temporarily lowered to denote their space. The sacred mystery of the zenana’s inner compartments thus moves from one of geography/location (i.e., the interior of a guarded room unseen by all but the most privileged male gaze) to one of presence/location (i.e., the space temporarily occupied by women unseen). The centre of the room that has become a focal point by its very absence and concealment, was previously available to the gaze of all. Additionally, the power of the panoptical gaze is wielded by the Bai; she determines who is watched at what time. Her gaze crosses gendered boundaries. It can be turned within to observe the ladies both Indian and English who share her *purdah* space, or outward to observe the men at their *nautch*. The English ladies, by virtue of their gender, are able to benefit in some small part from the leverage their inner location confers. At the very least, they have the advantage over men on the outside in that they are aware of exactly when they are being observed. Finally, we must remember that the wily Maharani is
in charge of orchestrating the entire event, including the demarcations of space between public and private.

In Fanny’s inimitable anthropological style, she relates her experience of digesting some opium at the Maharani’s urging. Suffering from rheumatic pain in her face, she digests a small lump of opium and gravely records the results of her experiment: “as it dissolved the pain vanished; I became very happy, interpreted for the ladies, felt no fatigue, and talked incessantly.” However, lest her readers think less of her actions, she records the consequences, “the next morning I was obliged to call in medical advice, on account of the severe pain in my head, from the effect of the opium.”

Similarly, she records her horseback-riding experiments, conducted at the urging of the Baiza Bai. Again, the specific interpretations of purdah in the Maratha style are noted, “The Mahratta ladies live in parda, but not in such strict seclusion as the Musalmani ladies; they are allowed to ride on horseback veiled…” and then the application of this principle is explored. A discussion on horses, a subject which both Parks and the Bai seem quite fascinated leads to an offer from Parks to demonstrate riding sidesaddle for the entertainment of the zenana ladies. Following her demonstration, she tries the Maratha style of riding astride, and loves it, declaring, “I thought of Queen Elizabeth, and her stupidity in changing the style of riding for women.” The subject of horses subsequently arises in a later visit.

The Bai’s riding horses were brought out; she was a great equestrian in her youthful days, and, although she has now given up the exercise, delights in horses. The ladies relate, with great pride, that, in one battle, her Highness rode at the head of her troops, with a lance in her hand, and her infant in her arms!

56 Parks, 45.
57 Parks, 45.
58 Parks, 45.
59 Parks, 6.
60 Parks, 6.
61 Parks, 37.
Other incidents perpetuate the notion that Baiza Bai is of exceptional character and ability, regardless of her age. She is literate – a rarity among women of her social status – and curious about the workings of the world. On one occasion, she requests that a steam-vessel be brought up the river so that she may visit it to inspect the machinery. She is consistently portrayed as interested and engaged with the world around her.

While Fanny conducts anthropological research on behalf of her readers, she willingly participates in all manner of activities at the behest of the Maharani. As a result, her worldview is inevitably altered. Witness her criticism of Queen Elizabeth and other facets of English life in comparison to the Maratha style of doing things. It would be inappropriate to overstate the nature of the Bai’s influence on Parks, but a definite pattern can be determined in Parks’ recounting of the political dealings of Empire with the deposed Maharani. Perhaps she identifies with the Bai as a fellow maverick challenging the laws of the imperial society that attempts to govern them both.

**Politics**

Early in their acquaintance, Baiza Bai bestows the honorary title of “the great-aunt of my grand-daughter” on Fanny Parks. This measure of her regard for Parks translates to a passionate recounting by Parks of the wrongs committed by the British government and the court of Gwalior against the Bai, for the benefit of her readers. The course of events that has led to the Bai’s current location in Fathighar are recounted with the summary, “The Bai, although nominally free, is in fact a prisoner; she is extremely anxious to return to Gwalior, but is prevented by the refusal of the Government to allow her to do so; this renders her very unhappy.” The Bai’s trials and tribulations are recounted over the course of the next five years – essentially, on-going negotiations rest on where the Bai will eventually live and how much money the government will give her on an annual basis. Parks continually identifies with the cause of the “spirited old lady” over that of her own government, and implicitly conveys the justification for her stance to her readers, inviting them
to share in her indignation: "She who once reigned in Gwalior has now no roof to shelter her: the
rains have set in; she is forced to live in tents, and is kept here against her will, - a state prisoner, in
fact."\(^{63}\) Parks ignores some of the troubling implications of the situation: that the ex-Maharani
maintains an armed camp of followers causing the British Government considerable concern, her
political maneuverings to return to power in Gwalior, and her demands for additional money and
land as part of a settlement for being deposed from power, albeit with the assistance of said
Government.

3.5 **THE BODY POLITIC: A FINE FIGURE**

The gaze directed at the female body is a recurring theme of female colonial accounts. This
generally takes shape in the form of cross-cultural communication/comparison of acts done to the
body. One example of this may be found in Fanny Parks' ethnographic treatment of the widowed
Baiza Bai. She states that the former Maharani,

> Always slept on the ground, according to the custom of a widow, until she
> became very ill from rheumatic pains; after which she allowed herself a hard
> mattress which was placed on the ground...Her Highness mentioned that all
> luxurious food was denied them, as well as a bed; and their situation was
> rendered as painful as possible.\(^{64}\)

This narrative directs the gaze of the reader towards several points. Firstly, Hinduism and
Indian custom is implicitly criticized for treatment of widows. Through no fault of their own, they
must suffer pain, degradation, and deprivation. This also has the effect of objectifying the Hindu
widow. The acts done to her anonymous body are beyond her control, and rob her of both voice
and agency. Fanny Parks has directed her writing towards an imagined English colonial audience,
explaining "the custom" of a foreign country, and perhaps causing the reader to reflect upon the
status of widows in England.

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\(^{62}\) Parks, 2.
\(^{63}\) Parks, 32.
\(^{64}\) Parks, 7-8.
However, this account is different from similar descriptions of Hindu widows (written by men) because the widow has been endowed with personality and voice. Baiza Bai is a recurring character in Parks’ memoirs, and the reader establishes a layered understanding of her life and personality. Thus, the name recognition stimulates reader empathy with subject, rather than sympathy for object in this portrayal of the widow. The understanding of custom as hegemonic and imposed is challenged in two ways: that there are variations of behaviour (i.e., when the Bai became sick with rheumatism she used a mattress); and more importantly, that the implementation of custom is to a certain degree regulated by the widow (i.e., “she allowed herself a hard mattress”).

The narrative of Emily Eden provides a number of episodes that feature her own body as the symbolic ground for diplomacy between Indian rulers and the Governor-General. Ritualistic exchanges of jewelry, clothing and other gifts, took place with great ceremony at native durbars, and played an integral role in the political recognition and status of native royalty. After an initial refusal, Baiza Bai went to great lengths to ensure a visit from Lord Auckland and the Misses Eden, sending “ambassadors and letters and presents without end, and assert[ing] that she would be disgraced forever if she were so slighted.” The Edens met Baiza Bai on 8 December 1837.

She covered us with jewels, chiefly pearls and emeralds, and there were fifteen trays apiece, for F. [Fanny Eden] and me, filled with beautiful shawls, gauzes, etcetera – you never saw such treasures.

The dynamics of this event were more complex than simply presentation and acceptance. Company law prohibited the acceptance of personal gifts. The goods received during this type of ceremony were rendered to the Company treasury. If a woman (or man) wished to retain a certain object, she was required to pay its estimated value to the treasury. Thus, the treasures bestowed on Fanny and Emily Eden were part of the ritualistic exchange of goods that established/reaffirmed the Bai’s respected position as royalty. Eden’s account demonstrates that Baiza Bai understood and manipulated the proceedings accordingly.
However, the astutious old lady was fully aware that they all went to the Company, and after we came away was persuaded by Mr. B. to retain them; but she told us confidentially and iniquitously that the jewels had been specially prepared for us, and inferior articles of the same kind would be sent with the list that is always given to Mr. B., so that he could make no claim on these. We laughed and assured her that was not the usual English custom, and she took them all back again very willingly, except two little rings, which we kept in exchange for ours. Mine was made of pearls in the shape of a mitre...

This demonstrates several levels of power negotiation. Baiza Bai managed to flatter the Eden sisters on a personal level with the (implied) special preparation of gifts designed for them. Her proposed deception of substituting inferior articles for the treasury created the subversive possibility of a gender-based alliance that undermined the Us/Them partitions of imperialism. In all likelihood, Baiza Bai did so with the full knowledge the gifts were unlikely to be accepted in contravention of the rules, given that she was dealing with surrogates for the Governor-General in an official capacity.

Furthermore, the ironic presentation of "goodwill" gifts from ruled to ruler at the point of the female colonial body reversed the power position between women. At this point, Baiza Bai was the actor/agent (ad)dressing the white body, while the bodies of the Eden sisters functioned as passive objects that received and yielded their bounty according to the dictates of custom. In this particular exchange, the communication between women took place on a gendered level – within the refuge of the zenana – but the Eden sisters did in fact, take refuge in the dictates of imperialism, claiming that the deception "was not the usual English custom." Regardless, the Bai established diplomatic goodwill at no great expense to herself – after the ceremony proceeded pro forma, she was "persuaded" to retain the gifts.

This chapter has seen the colonial woman in India located at the intersection of multiple lines of power in colonial society. Racially, she is by virtue of skin colour the symbolic reminder of home and hearth; her whiteness simultaneously symbolizes the sanctity of race and the purity of

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63 E. Eden, 40.
66 E. Eden, 45-46. Mr. B. refers to Major Byrne, a personal assistant of Lord George Auckland who was in charge of recording and submitting gifts received to the Company.
English blood in contrast with the dusky inhabitants of a veiled Oriental interior. As a reflection of social class, she maintained a rigid adherence to hierarchy and ritual that contributed to maintaining a governing institution in a foreign land. By virtue of gender, she simultaneously acted as a barrier to colonial male access to the Indian woman (i.e., making it unacceptable for English men to take Indian women as their wives), while granting her access to the zenana interior. At the same time, this barrier produces the possibilities of reading gendered levels of understanding between women.
4. **THE GENDERED IMPERATIVE**

4.1 **INTRODUCTION**

Reading female colonial eyewitness accounts of personal relationships with elite Hindu women challenges hegemonic readings of Orientalism, provides nuanced readings of imperialism, and contributes to the recovery of both British and Indian women's historical subjectivity. Through an exploration of gendered forms of communication and interpretation, the stereotropial nature of the binary public/private sphere paradigm may reveal a more complex and inclusive colonial history.

Baiza Bai contested imperial policy and its implementation throughout her public life. Her success in doing so, as documented by government records and personal narratives, indicates that colonial control held varying degrees of influence over its subjects. This is most clearly evidenced by the contrast between Baiza Bai's subaltern status and her personal agency. While Company records provide ample evidence of her skills in negotiation, financial acumen, and diplomatic relations, it is memoirs written by women that detail the intimate setting of the private sphere and demonstrate her ability to reverse power positions. For example, although Emily Eden occupied one of the highest ranks available to women within the imperialist hierarchy, Baiza Bai effectively manipulated her actions and emotions during the ritualistic exchange of the durbar. The interplay between women also played an important role in the memoirs of Fanny Parks, who in turn, heard and recounted the voice of Baiza Bai, thus providing the necessary testimony to challenge her subaltern status.

The consideration of female colonial accounts has important ramifications for gendering Orientalism. "**Gendering**, in a broad sense, means extending the woman's identity beyond her biological and sexual configurations to her cultural and historical specificity."¹ In other words,

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¹ Gita Rajan. "Subversive-Subaltern Identity: Indira Gandhi as the Speaking Subject" in *De/Colonizing the Subject; The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 197.
‘Gender’ as a substitute for ‘women’ is also used to suggest that information about women is necessarily information about men, that one implies the study of the other. This usage insists that the world of women is part of the world of men, created in and by it. This usage rejects the interpretive utility of the idea of separate spheres, maintaining that to study women in isolation perpetuates the fiction that one sphere, the experience of one sex, has little or nothing to do with the other.

The theory of Orientalism as formulated by Edward Said in the 1970s came with its own set of biases and assumptions. Colonial women who had access to the private sphere of the elite Hindu woman contradict and/or complicate “the narrative strategies that effect the subordination of the cultural Other belong[ing] to what Edward Said terms the discourse of ‘Orientalism’. The most significant of these strategies are the eroticization of the exotic, the feminization of the figure of the Other, and the representation of the Orient as an ontological and unchanging essence.”

The writing of both Fanny Parks and the Eden sisters, informed by access to the zenana, challenge these narrative strategies, chiefly, the (male) view of the rajah’s harem filled with pampered, indolent women who exist merely to please him. As discovered in previous chapters, Baiza Bai maintained an enclave of women who were proactive in politics, maintained purdah on horseback, and seemed to spend as much time discussing politics and steam engines, as they did childbearing and clothing. The zenana’s interest in current events and mechanical developments contradicts the ‘unchanging essence’ of the secluded Other. The examination and inclusion of female narratives is a necessary factor in correcting the current gender imbalance in relational histories of colonial India. It is to be hoped that the previous discussion of these eyewitness accounts of Baiza Bai demonstrated some of the potential for recovering the subjectivity of the subaltern woman, in addition to highlighting the voice and agency possessed by certain British colonial women. Did the establishment of gender-based links provide the basis for an intriguing

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source of cross-cultural communication? Did Fanny Parks and the Eden sisters establish their own voice/agency by positioning themselves against the Oriental “Other” of Baiza Bai? If so, does their appropriation of the power position lent by colonialism silence the subaltern speaking subject once again, thus negating the possibility of retrieving Baiza Bai’s own voice/agency?

Finally, the implications of gendered readings for splitting the stereotrope must ultimately be considered. How is the binary opposition of private vs. public spheres challenged? As the Other becomes known, do the walls of the private sphere begin to crumble into dust, or is it a realm still delineated by the female presence? In summing up the Otherness of it all, how does the reciprocal relationship between women of different cultures impact on their own sense of Self-hood? By gendering Orientalism, do we open the door to giving the inscrutable Oriental Other access to a subject position?

IMPERIALISM AND ORIENTALISM

The imperial mission in India grew from one of economic objectives (land and trade) to one of social imperatives (rescuing the heathens from themselves). Iconic representations of these aims generally relied on the dynamics of gender, and encompassed metaphors of sexual desire, rape, and paternal wisdom. The quest for territory and power is most commonly expressed as a metaphor of sexual conquest. In Orientalism, Edward Said reads Flaubert’s possession of an Egyptian courtesan as, “It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.” This quest by the West extends from being on top (i.e., dominating) to penetrating within (i.e., unveiling). The hidden mystery of the harem/zenana became an object of fascination for the Western observer. Limited by social and cultural factors to a place outside, colonial preoccupation with the inner sanctum translated to an imperialist reading of power

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3 Suzanne Chester. “Writing the Subject: Exoticism/Eroticism in Marguerite Duras’s The Lover and The Sea Wall” De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 446. Admittedly, Chester refers to Marguerite Duras’ The Lover, but I found her comments to be very helpful.
as one of revelation — gaining the knowledge to reveal the East with all her warts — thus removing the temptation of her unknowable Otherness. However, we must be careful to distinguish between sex as a trope for reading imperial conquest and sex as the desire for pillaging native subjects. “This analytic slippage between the sexual symbols of power and the politics of sex runs throughout the colonial record and contemporary commentaries upon it.”

Another reading of the imperialist mission relies on the civilizing imperative — the need to alleviate the lot of the downtrodden widow forced to self-immolation by a cruel and despotic society. Gayatri Spivak neatly sums up this aspect of the colonialist agenda when she states, “The abolition of the [sati] rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of ‘White men saving brown women from brown men.’” This quasi-liberation doctrine, in conjunction with the paternalistic urge to enable some limited female autonomy, is “in practice and at base, a politics of ownership and control”. In either event, the gender dynamics inherent to these situations rely on a study of contrasts. The imperial Western power is defined against the subjugate Eastern Other. As explored in the previous chapter’s discussion of female imperialism, consideration of the colonizing woman’s experience and understanding of the imperial project complicates these brown woman/white man heterosexual metaphors of sexuality and control, and contributes to a gendered

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2 One interesting variation on this theme reads homoeroticism into the relationship between the feminized Indian bapu and the manly English sahib. Colonial masculinity; the ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the late nineteenth century by Mrinalini Sinha, explores this theme in detail.
6 For example, sexual violence committed by native men against white women became an organizing tenet of imperialist thought after the Indian Mutiny of 1857-1858. This was a result of both the lived experience of colonial women during the Mutiny and a reflection of the increasingly tenuous control of the British over their native subjects. Jenny Sharpe’s Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text sheds some interesting light on this theory, as well as the temporal nature of imperialist narratives.
reading of imperialism. Thus, these aspects of imperial rhetoric become an essential construct of the meta-narrative of a gendered Orientalism – an Orientalism that may serve as the nexus for points of imperialism, race, gender and ideology.

4.2 GENDERING ORIENTALISM: IT CAME FROM WITHIN

During the repast, two dishes were sent over from the Begam, in compliment to her guests, which I was particularly desired to taste, as the Timoorian ladies pride themselves on their cookery, and on particular occasions will superintend the making of the dishes themselves; these dishes were so very unlike, and so superior to any food I had ever tasted, that I never failed afterwards to partake of any dish when it was brought to me, with the mysterious whisper, 'It came from within.' It would be incorrect to say, 'The Begam has sent it;' 'It came from within,' being perfectly understood by the initiated.10

Fanny Parks never fails to provide stimulating snippets of narrative for discussion. In this instance, she partakes of a feast provided by the Begum, niece of the reigning emperor Akbar Shah and wife of Mr. James Gardner, in February 1835. Her cogent description of the meal's source illuminates several key points of Orientalist discourse. The meal is the site for interaction between East and West. Receiving these specially prepared foods implies a special regard by the Begum – she sends the gift of food as a compliment to her guests. The menu is lent added cachet by the royal standing of the source; the Begum has lowered herself to toil on behalf of the English commoners in attendance. Similarly, the dishes made by this high-ranking woman echo her class standing in that they are "so superior to any food...ever tasted." The feat of skill is one of particular note by the Timurian ladies who "pride themselves on their cookery." Fanny Parks will always partake in the dishes offered given their provenance. Providing food and nourishment belongs typically to the domain of women. In fact, it is also the realm of servants and cooks who labour unseen to make a household run smoothly. In this particular case, the food and its origin – the hands of royalty – are showcased, while the domestic staff's labour effort is made invisible. Although of course, the

10 Parks I, 382.
hostess is one step removed in that she will “superintend the making of the dishes themselves” rather than dirty her own hands with the hard work involved. Most importantly, the special dishes prepared by the Begum come from the inner sanctum inhabited by the mysterious Oriental female figure. Finally, the code words that indicate acceptance and induction into this inner realm of wonders are couched in a mysterious whisper, “It came from within”. Within is made synonymous with the Begum’s realm – the mysterious inner world of the zenana. The food is divorced from labour or intent. It is not “sent” or “prepared for” or “presented”, rather it is issued. Similar to the womb birthing a child, the mysterious inner female space creates sight unseen and produces a wondrous item for the public’s consumption.

This narrative reinforces the key Oriental concepts of a wondrous private sphere inhabited by women that holds exotic secrets and treasures. This feminized space is positioned as hostage to the needs and demands of the Western visitor, while simultaneously remaining unseen, and therefore unknown. The East is made subject to West by virtue of race, irregardless of class. However, Fanny’s perspective extends beyond that of a typical Orientalist. She dines with the royal consort, Mr. Gardner in the outer house, before venturing into the zenana apartments to visit with the Begum. Her symbolic crossing of physical boundaries between public and private spheres echoes the liminal space that she inhabits. Fanny transgresses these borders, existing both without and within the margins of gendered space by virtue of racial privilege. As a curious female, she gains access to the Begum’s inner apartments and finds, somewhat to her surprise that all is not as advertised. She contrasts the disappointment of the Begum’s languid, informal appearance on an afternoon visit to the zenana apartments with the dazzling and vivacious beauty who appears in the evening. Opium consumption habits are discussed, with the Begum taking a large lump for herself and placing a smaller amount, “the size of half a pea” in the mouths of her young children, as is the

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11 Parks 1, 380.
custom. Parks speculates that her “ill and languid” appearance is a result of her drug intake and describes the etiquette of opium consumption:

If a native lady wish [sic] to keep up her reputation for beauty, she should not allow herself to be seen under the effect of opium by daylight.\textsuperscript{12}

However, Fanny speaks admiringly of the Begum and makes a concerted effort to portray her favourably, assuring readers that the Begum’s children only receive opium that is “remarkably fine and pure”, grown in the Begum’s garden and collected daily.\textsuperscript{13} Fanny continues apace with her anthropological observations, discussing the Begum’s apartments, manners, clothing, and adornments. She is determined to adequately record her first official visit to a zenana, and views herself as a pioneer in doing so: “I know of no European lady but myself, with the exception of one, who has ever had an opportunity of becoming intimate with native ladies of rank.”\textsuperscript{14} Given that Fanny has conquered untrod territory and experienced the inner sanctum in person, her experiences differ from those of a similar male Orientalist. Do these differing experiences provide the basis for challenging some of the theoretical assumptions of Said’s Orientalism? If so, what formulations may we posit for developing a more inclusive gendered version of Orientalism?

\textbf{ORIENTALISM}

Edward Said’s seminal work \textit{Orientalism} defines Orientalism as composed of several aspects. These include: “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient...is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism,”\textsuperscript{15}; “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’”,\textsuperscript{16}, and “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the

\textsuperscript{12} Parks I, 381.
\textsuperscript{13} Parks I, 388.
\textsuperscript{14} Parks I, 379.
\textsuperscript{15} Said, 2.
\textsuperscript{16} Said, 2.
Orient.”

The third definition relies on Foucault’s notion of discourse to examine the systemic manner in which Europe exhaustively defined the Orient, to the point that, as Said declares, “because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.”

He posits that during the nineteenth century, a series of essentialist ideas about the Orient, “its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness,” coalesced into a distinct referential unit that went unchallenged. The limitations of this notion of Orientalist discourse would appear to preclude the possibility of discovering a contradictory voice and/or agency of the native subject, in this case, the royal Baiza Bai.

The literary efforts of Fanny Parks fall well within the scope of Said’s definition of the intentional Orientalist. She exemplifies the writer who intends to provide “professional Orientalism with scientific material” while declining “to sacrifice the eccentricity and style of individual consciousness.”

Her objectives are to unmask the secrets of the zenana, observe and record native rites and ceremonies, and participate in as many feasts, gatherings and social events as possible for the edification of her readers. However, Said’s monolithic masculinist definition of an Orientalist does not adequately encompass the gender-related quirks of Fanny’s enthusiastic narrative. In Said’s words,

Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.

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17 Said, 3.
18 Said, 3.
19 Said, 205.
20 Said, 157-158.
21 Said, 207.
Given Said's conviction that, in contrast to Foucault, "I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers," and his use of textual readings to support his theoretical arguments, the possibility exists for a gender-based challenge to his formulation of Orientalism using a single source. Based on her personal experiences with native women, particularly her interaction with Baiza Bai, Fanny Parks provides some interesting material with which to mount this challenge.

**THE FEMALE ORIENTALIST**

But if woman is Other, how does one begin to talk (as a woman) of different power relations between women, not to mention those between socially empowered women, the Self/Other dichotomy begins to totter and relations with the Other become relations with others.\(^{23}\)

The female Orientalist, as embodied by Fanny Parks, provides some compelling evidence that Said's arguments fail to adequately historicize aspects of Orientalism and neglect to incorporate a gendered point of view. Such theoretical oversights deny the subaltern woman any historical voice or agency. The reality of the creatively imagined zenana, as testified to by Parks and the Eden sisters demonstrates that purdah life was experienced by its practitioners in a variety of ways. Life within was shaped by diversities of geography (where in India), culture (Maratha, Rajput, etc.), religion (Hindu, Moslem), and history (influence of Mughals locally). Additionally, the specific dynamics of family relations, in combination with the personal influence and leverage of each zenana inhabitant, had strong effects on the regulatory structure and operation of the zenana. The standard representation of sensual dancing girls is shattered with glimpses behind the curtain.

The specific example of Baiza Bai demonstrates that the inhabitants of the harem were involved in varied activities and discussions that ranged from horseback riding to investigating steamship engines. Additionally, the structure of purdah was utilized by the Bai to her advantage—taboos against pollution allowed her to create a liminal political space on the boundaries of the

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\(^{22}\) Said, 23.

private and public spheres in which to wield the reins of power. Her political actions, as evidenced by supporting documents from both official Raj records and less formal female narratives, demonstrate her power over others and the ensuing manipulation and negotiation strategies utilized to achieve her personal goals of power and financial security.

To reiterate material explored in previous chapters, Baiza Bai stepped in to rule Gwalior as Regent after the death of her husband. Her efforts to secure this position on a permanent basis were thwarted by the British government who assisted the designated heir, Jivaji, in gaining the throne. Their reasons for doing so seem to have been strongly rooted in the belief that he would be easier to control as a puppet sovereign. Despite this unfortunate turn of events, Baiza Bai continued to make her presence felt. She set up her own camp, comprised of more than 1,000 armed followers and a zenana full of women and then proceeded to negotiate with the British for on-going support in the form of funds, land, and power. Her influence did not cease with the end of an officially recognized colonial role – the British continued to suspect her of conspiracy. These suspicions culminated with rumours during the 1857-1858 Mutiny that Baiza Bai had conspired with anti-colonial rebels to unseat the British. Indeed, it is a mark of the respect with which she was held that Tantia Tope implored her to join their cause. However, the wily Bai defused the volatile situation by passing these letters onto the colonial leadership and disallowing any mutinous involvement.

Contrary to the Orientalist ideal of the harem inhabited by sensual, willing, and stupid female bodies, Baiza Bai was a strong and central personality in her own right. While her husband, Daulat Rao Scindia, was alive, she was loved – and therefore treasured – as an individual, the favourite of his wives. By the time of her political battles with the colonial government, she was old and therefore unbeautiful and infertile. As Fanny portrays her, she is a harem inhabitant without the accompanying king to keep her, and she is keeping herself. Additionally, she is not concerned with replacing or serving a man as the center of her existence; rather, she is focused on establishing her own legacy of leadership in the nation-state of Gwalior, and maintaining a powerful position within
that political structure. Perhaps the theory of Orientalism should be reformulated to suggest that
the harem is the perfect training ground for politics. As Fanny Parks observes:

A *zenana* is a place of intrigue, and those who live within four walls cannot
pursue a straight path: how can it be otherwise, where so many conflicting
passions are called forth?24

The female Orientalist occupies a different locale in relation to the discourse of colonialism.
This in turn reflects on her absorption, understanding, and reiteration of imperialist rhetoric. Sexual
difference, therefore, becomes foundational in the subject position formation of both Fanny Parks
and Baiza Bai. In contrast to Said’s ranking of race over class and gender25, “a more sexualized
reading of Orientalism reveals that representations of sexual difference cannot be treated as its sub-
domain; it is of fundamental importance in the formation of a colonial subject position.”26 In light
of the shifting Self-identities of both Fanny Parks and Baiza Bai during the course of their
friendship, Said’s assumptions “of colonial discourse as unified and unidirectional” must yield to a
more relevant approach. Thus, for example, Homi Bhabha
discerns a *productive ambivalence* at the very center of colonial discourse. Such
an understanding avoids the pitfalls of assuming both the colonizer and the
colonized as fixed once and for all, and the colonial discourse as being based
on a final closure and ultimate coherence. On the contrary, it designates the
conflictual economy upon which colonial discourse is based.27

Similarly, the subject positions designated by normative identity categories (e.g., East/West,
colonizer/colonized) do not allow for the incoherent and chaotic nature of lived experience.
Without challenging these binary categories, colonial discourse analysis merely reinforces the tenets
of colonial discourse. A constructive criticism of Said’s work suggests, “because he does not reflect
on the significance of hegemony as process, he ignores in both Western scholarly and creative

24 Parks I, 391.
27 Yeğenoğlu, 27.
writing all manifestations of counter-hegemonic thought.” These considerations more fully
develop the theories of Orientalism, making them relevant to the gendered study of colonialism.

**SUBJECT MATTER: GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provides some important analytical tools with which to challenge the hegemonic nature of Said’s Orientalism. Her post-structuralist approach gives rise to the most intriguing questions. “In an interview, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has replaced an old question about female identity...namely ‘What is woman?’ — with another question; ‘What is man that the itinerary of his desire creates such a text?’” This approach of turning the question back on the questioner leads to some remarkable insights. Similarly, her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” forges new ground in examining the possibilities of voice and agency for the subaltern woman, long silenced in colonial histories. In reading colonial-era texts drawn from official and private sources of company correspondence, Spivak has played a fundamental role in questioning the self-perpetuating hegemonic representation of colonialist ideology as a source of historical “truth”. Rather, she reads these materials as indicative of colonial wish representation. In her analysis of the Rani of Sirmur, she utilizes Freud’s notion of “over-determination” (“the principle of fabrication of the images in the dream-text”) as a monitory model. Her focus on determinate representations over “deliberate or deliberate(d) cause”, that includes gender, class and race narratives, introduces the examination of “displacement as grounding in the emergence of significance.” This emphasis on displacement has been influential in the work of postcolonial theorists such as Sara Suleri and Jenny Sharpe, who have turned a critical eye towards examining areas of discongruence and disjunction. Spivak also points out that,

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Subject position is something that we in fact cannot ourselves declare. It is something that should keep us careful because a subject position is assigned, and the word there is "sign"; it is that which makes itself visible through our textual productions in language and action. It is therefore given over to readers. There isn't a subject position.\textsuperscript{31}

This approach necessitates the reminder that,

there is no single duality that encompasses colonial oppression. Subjectivity can perhaps be better understood as constructed by a series of technologies that operate with greater or lesser effectiveness in particular times and places.\textsuperscript{32}

Let us challenge Spivak's declaration that "the subaltern cannot speak" with a close examination of the Rani of Sirmur essay. Her aim is to "inspect soberly the absence of a text that can 'answer one back' after the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project."\textsuperscript{33} Despite Spivak's admirable goals, she herself contributes to obscuring and objectifying her subaltern subjects through her claims that the Rani is denied any access to agency as read through her deconstruction of archival material.

To retrieve her as information will be no disciplinary triumph. Caught in the cracks between the production of the archives and indigenous patriarchy, today distanced by the waves of hegemonic 'feminism', there is no 'real Rani' to be found.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1815, the Rani of Sirmur was made Regent, after the British deposed her syphilitic husband for his dissipated barbarism. As guardian of her young son, the Rani ruled in his place. Spivak theorizes that the British took this action to secure its trade routes and the Nepal frontier through the eventual annexation of the kingdom.


\textsuperscript{32}  Paxton, 406.

\textsuperscript{33}  Spivak (1984), 131.

\textsuperscript{34}  Spivak (1984), 147.
It is my conviction, although I cannot demonstrate it yet, that it was necessary to hold Sirmur under a child guarded by a woman, because the 'dismemberment of Sirmoor' (as spelled out in a secret communication) was in the cards.\textsuperscript{35}

After being granted executive authority, the Rani decisively acts, returning two of her husband's wives to her household and reinstating a pension for an estranged great-aunt. Both of her actions run contrary to her exiled husband's wishes — the wives had been removed for fear of conspiracy, and the aunt had quarreled with her nephew. The Rani exhibits intelligence and forethought in her dealings with the aunt: "she allocates Rs. 900, but promises Rs. 700 at first because she knows that the Auntie will ask for more."\textsuperscript{36} These events are recorded in East India Company archives. The Rani must negotiate with the British representative Birch to secure some of her wishes. "'t has been necessary for Captain Birch,' Ochterlony writes, 'occasionally to interfere with her authoritatively to counteract the facility of the Ranee's dispoion.'\textsuperscript{37} Trouble arises when, during a conversation with Birch, the Rani declares "her life and the Rajah's are one" which he interprets "to allude to her intention of burning herself at his death."\textsuperscript{38} Birch subsequently requests, and is granted permission to prevent the Rani from committing sati. Government actions appear to be limited to enforcing the separation between husband and wife, and emphasizing the importance of her maternal duties in her role as Regent.

Spivak reads this colonial interference as merely symptomatic of the British urge to secure a desired territory in the smoothest way possible. Her Rani cannot be heard over the conflicting ideological campaigns of "sanctioned self-immolation within Hindu patriarchal discourse" and the sati victim-object formation in need of saving by imperial rhetoric. She refuses to recognize the archival records of the Rani's agency and casts a jaded eye at the efforts of imperial historians.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{35} Spivak (1984), 142.  \\
\textsuperscript{36} Spivak (1984), 143.  \\
\textsuperscript{37} Spivak (1984), 143.  \\
\textsuperscript{38} Spivak (1984), 144.
\end{flushleft}
These shortcomings give rise to some weaknesses in her argument; by simplifying her protagonists through selective omission, she constructs false paradigms of knowledge.

One example of this is Spivak’s criticism of the historian Edward Thompson as “this perfect specimen of the justification of imperialism as a civilizing mission.” Thompson’s 1928 book, entitled *Suttee: A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* possesses a noticeable bias in favour of British intervention in Indian society. Spivak quotes what she deems an example of his colonial arrogance in the chapter entitled ‘The Psychology of Sati’, where Thompson pronounces, “I had intended to try to examine this; but the truth is, it has ceased to seem a puzzle to me.” If we challenge Spivak’s scholarship, it is to discover that she has neglected to include the intent of this statement, thus obscuring the extent of Thompson’s cross-cultural empathy as indicated by his next two sentences.

Obviously the mental state of the women who were sacrificed varied infinitely, as that of martyrs for religion or patriotism. The Rajput lady who died when a foe girdled in her city and her whole sex was swept away, or who ascended the pyre with her lord newly slain in battle, was in a mood that had no contact or resemblance with the mood of the cowed and unwilling slave-girl.

Thompson deserves credit instead of scorn for his insights into human behaviour, recognising the multiplicity of voices and reasons for committing/attempts *sati*. Spivak’s birth in India and her coming-of-age as an academic influenced by subaltern studies shape her opinions on how history can and should be interpreted. She makes this issue relevant by showcasing her background in the body of numerous essays. Spivak’s selective editing is open to interpretation, but could be claimed to be motivated by the agenda of an Indian female academic concerned with and

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41 Thompson, 138.
42 We might even consider the possibility that my own selection has an agenda behind it, and that if one read the entire book written by Thompson, a quite different impression regarding his view of colonialist intervention in the practice of *sati* would emerge.
claiming authenticity for her own interpretation of source material. By contrasting herself against
the bogeyman of imperial history embodied by Thompson, her contempt for preceding histories is
thrown into sharp relief. While acknowledging that each observer and interpreter of past events is
subject to a number of personal constraints, any attempt to explore the potential subjectivity of the
historical actor must filter and account for the inherent bias, not only of the narrator but also of the
academic analyst.

Continuing in this vein, Spivak is also guilty at times of ignoring the written contributions of
women, indigenous sources, and colonial records that would complicate or contradict her
arguments. Here, Benita Parry’s criticism is particularly apt in the case of the Rani of Sirmur,
“Spivak’s deliberate deafness to the native voice where it is to be heard, is at variance with her acute
hearing of the unsaid in modes of Western feminist criticism.”43 Ania Loomba adds,

In her article on the Rani of Sirmur, Spivak shows the imperial construction
of the archives, pointing to the difficulty of reconstructing the life (let alone
the subjectivity) of any nineteenth-century Indian woman... “there is no ‘real
Rani’ to be found.” This is fair enough. But the author informed me after
an earlier presentation of this paper that she found out from the Pandas at
Haridwar what she could not from the archives at London or Delhi – that
her Rani did not commit sati. Obviously, in this case, indigenous archives
survived the epistemic violence of colonialism. I do not want to suggest,
much less celebrate, such survival on a wide scale. But it seems necessary to
interrupt equally easy conclusions where researches are still in their infancy.44

4.3 CONCLUSION

The concept of gendered communication is rooted in the assumption that the potential
existed for a specifically female discourse between British and Indian women during the colonial
period. In order to establish this type of interaction, a sufficient number of comparable experiences
and/or beliefs would have to exist in order to supersede the stratification imposed by imperialism.

43 Benita Parry. “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse” The Post-colonial Studies Reader. Bill Ashcroft,

Baiza Bai and Emily Eden shared an elite socio-economic status within their respective societies that permitted them to meet as equals; Baiza Bai and Fanny Parks shared common interests and views that led to friendship; all three women were located in a similarly ambivalent position to the men in their lives that transgressed the boundaries of the private sphere. Fanny Parks, through her ardent enthusiasm for most aspects of Indian society, was able to establish gendered links with Baiza Bai (based on shared experience) that directly acted to challenge imperialistic/paternalistic hierarchies of subordination.

It is far from unusual that Baiza Bai, Emily Eden, and Fanny Parks were all provided with their societal "positions" in India through their relations to men – widow/sister/wife. The most interesting aspect of their history is that all three women transcended the limitations of their original roles to carve out individual domains of power and influence that featured them in the starring role. For example, Baiza Bai originally exerted political agency through her influence over her husband. After his death, she moved into the position of Regent (another male connection) and finally into the position as sole commander of armed followers that numbered in the thousands. Emily Eden and Fanny Parks both discovered a unique sense of self-identity through their writing and experiences in India. Fanny Parks, in particular, shed the normalized self-identification for women as wife and mother (although she was both) to focus on the construction of a new personality as stalwart adventurer-explorer. In contrast, Emily Eden defies an easy categorization when one contrasts the strong sense of self-worth she evidenced in *Up the Country* (and her other publications), to her social ‘failure’ as a Victorian woman. She was neither sexual nor maternal.

The communication between Fanny Parks and Baiza Bai is somewhat more complex and operates at several levels. Once again, the obvious aspect of female colonial access to the private Hindu sphere is the determining paradigm of gendered communication. Fanny ‘bagged’ *gynanas* with the enthusiasm of a seasoned hunter. The interaction between Parks and the Bai was very dynamic because it took place outside of the ritualized conventions attendant on the visit of the Eden sisters.
Incidents of shared female experience and opinion repeatedly crop up in Parks’ narrative, and demonstrably strengthened the bond between narrator and subject. The gendered communication between the Bai and Parks also provides an alternative source of historical information, in contrast to other colonial sources. For example, suspicions that communications emitting from *purdah* were really the product of a man speaking through a female figure are seemingly allayed in the case of Baiza Bai. According to Parks, Appa Sahib (the son-in-law of Baiza Bai) sat close to the partition to act as a conduit of information between the Bai and other gentlemen in the room; she makes no mention of Appa Sahib including his own views in the discussion. Given Parks’ fluency in English, Hindustani, and several other Indian languages, it would seem reasonable to assume that she would be an accurate reporter on whether or not the information was altered in transit.

Reconstructing the life of Baiza Bai from a mix of government correspondence and travel narratives, with both male and female perspectives on her public and private life, provides the material to pose substantial challenges to assumptions of imperialism and Orientalism, and provides the opportunity to split the stereotrope of private and public spheres. Further avenues for exploration may incorporate some of the insights regarding the importance of challenging binary stereotropes into analyzing class, race, and gender aspects of colonial studies. Directions for additional study should continue to examine interracial relations between women from both colonial and indigenous sources (literary and historical), as well as racial and class variations on woman-man and man-man relations. Similarly, the homoerotic aspect of gay and lesbian gazes holds potential for shedding new light on colonial studies. A truly inclusive gendered view would also re-examine Orientalism from a male perspective. Reading women in colonial texts through a process of discourse analysis provides fertile ground for a reinvigorated and inclusive post-colonial narrative.


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