

## Women in India [2 volumes]: A Social and Cultural History

*By Sita Anantha Raman*

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**Women in India [2 volumes]: A Social and Cultural History** By Sita Anantha Raman

Are Indian women powerful mother goddesses, or domestic handmaidens trailing behind men in literacy, wages, opportunities, and rights? Have they been agents of their own destinies, or voiceless victims of patriarchy? Behind these colorful over-simplifications lies the reality of many feminine personas belonging to various classes, ethnicities, religions, and castes. This two-volume set looks at Indian history from ancient to modern times, revealing precisely why ideas of gender rights were not static across eras or regions. Raman's work is a reflection on the various ways in which women in a non-Western culture have developed and expressed their own feminist agenda.

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Individual chapters highlight the enduring legacies of many important male and female figures, illustrating how each played a key role in modifying the substance of women's lives. Political movements are examined as well, such as the nationalist reform movement of 1947 in which the ideal of Indian womanhood became central to the nation and the push for independence. Also included is a survey of women in contemporary India and the role they played in the resurgence of militant Hindu nationalism. Aside from being an engaging and readable narrative of Indian history, this set integrates women's issues, roles, and achievements into the general study of the times, providing a clear presentation of the social, cultural, religious, political, and economic realities that have helped shape the identity of Indian women.

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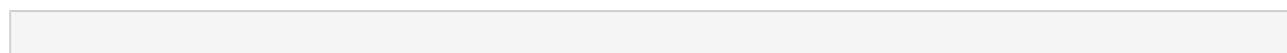
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#### Review

"...Women in India is a collection of scholarly essays that roughly follows a chronological order. As such, it makes for a good starting point for academic research and is highly recommended for college and university libraries." - **Library Journal**

"In this two-volume set, Raman (history, Santa Clara U. and U. of Georgia, Athens) discusses the role of women in the social and cultural history of India, with a focus on gender and female sexuality in terms of representations in male texts of the premodern era; their later use by men and women for contemporary social and political purposes; women's narratives in their social contexts; and the issues of female agency and objectification. She addresses women's subordinate nature in India, but also their active resistance, avenues for self-expression, negotiations with patriarchy, and support of oppressive traditions. Included in chapters is discussion of goddesses, queens and courtesans, nuns, women saints, motherhood, representations in art, education, castes, feudal norms of sati and domesticity, Western influences, laws, marriage and divorce, Indian feminism and suffrage, and individuals such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. She organizes the text by two chronological sections: the premodern era from antiquity to the early medieval Hindu kingdoms and the later era under Turko- Afghan and Mughal dynasties, colonial rule, and the independent state after 1947." - **Reference & Research Book News**

". . . this is a top pick for any women's issues or cultural collection." - **Midwest Book Review**

"... a timely addition to the growing number of scholarly works on the historical status and development of women in India. ... *Women in India* definitely fills a gap in the reference literature. Other works on this topic are more narrowly focused or cover the issues on a more intermediate level; none has the range, depth, or level of scholarship of this set. This is a must for academic libraries with programs in Indian history, and it will be a valuable addition for general reference collections in many academic and public libraries." - **Feminist Collections**

#### About the Author

**SITA ANANTHA RAMAN** is Associate Professor Emerita, History, Santa Clara University, California; Member of the Board of Directors, Pacific Coast Immigration Museum; and History Adjunct, University of Georgia, Athens. She is the author of *Getting Girls to School: Social Reform in the Tamil Districts, 1870-1930* (1996) and *A. Madhaviah: A Biography and a Novella* (2004).

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