

# Women's History for the Twenty-first Century

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When visiting India I frequently talk to young women who are impatient with the fact that attitudes towards women are so difficult to change. They cite violence, discrimination, and a declining sex ratio as visible signs of a world that does not value females. Despite having pursued education, they see their opportunities as limited and point to billboards, films, and TV programs that reify stereotypes about women. When I am invited to teach classes, students ask about the impact of four decades of scholarship on women and three decades of women's studies programs. When I reply that we have fallen far short of our goals of transforming the discipline and ultimately changing society, they then ask a different but equally important question: where are they in the history we are writing? These are valid questions. In terms of History, we have to admit that the wealth of the research and publications have not transformed deeply rooted ideas that justify discrimination against women and that the history being written neglects the vast majority of women in India.

In this essay I want to focus on the need to recommit to the dream of the grandmothers to write histories that present women's lives in their own terms. I will begin with the first efforts to write feminist women's history, the problems researchers encountered with the archives, and efforts to find new sources and new methodologies to research women's history. While a great deal has been accomplished, women's history, with some notable exceptions that I will discuss, has focused disproportionately on urban women from the higher castes/ classes. I will conclude with the challenges we face and directions we have to take to write inclusive history and return to the mandate to expose oppression and inequality.

## The Beginning

Although women's history was not new in the 1960s,<sup>1</sup> the feminist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s injected a new immediacy into the retrieval of women's lives. In India, the government's appointment of a committee to study the status of women for International Women's Year resulted in the groundbreaking 1974 report entitled Towards Equality. The report laid bare the extent to which the promises to women -- in the Constitution and post-independence legislation -- had not been kept. Throughout the report, the authors drew upon women's history, discussing traditions that affected women, economic changes that marginalized their work, men and women reformers, educational programs, and the impact of Gandhi's social and political campaigns. At the same time, they were clear that the history of women -- as contributors to Indian culture and social life, and marginalized subjects -- had not been written. The sub-text was clear: without a history, women's interests could be misrepresented and manipulated.<sup>2</sup>

As historians began to write women's history in India, they experienced formidable hurdles. As Neeladri Bhattacharya has pointed out, all historians have had to struggle against "a legacy [of colonialism] embedded in the sources that were collected and stored, the institutions of research that were built up, and the colonial conceptions of history that became part of our commonsense."<sup>3</sup> Historians of women and gender, keen to have their projects legitimized by the archive have faced other problems -- especially a lack of records by or about women. The writing of Indian history has changed significantly in the now almost 70 years since independence and there is a greater interest in women's lives and "an understanding of the gendered nature of historical experiences."<sup>4</sup> However, the project is not complete. "Gender Studies," as the study of women is frequently termed, is repeatedly treated as a joke and many historians write history,

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<sup>1</sup> For a critique of the claim that women's history began with the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s, see Brian Harrison and James McMillan, "Some Feminist Betrayals of Women's History," *The Historical Journal*, 26:2 (June 1983), 375-389.

<sup>2</sup> 'Note of Dissent,' Chapter VII Political Status Note of Dissent, by Lotika Sarkar and Vina Mazumdar, *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1974), 357.

<sup>3</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya, "The Problem," in "Rewriting History: a symposium on ways of representing our shared past," *Seminar*, 52 (February, 2003) <http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/522.htm>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

which ignores women or “treats them as irrelevant or unimportant.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, popular perceptions of women’s essential nature and proper roles have proved difficult to change.

Much of the research conducted in the wake of *Towards Equality* aimed at documenting contemporary women’s lives, especially the nature of their oppression, while historical research aimed at establishing women’s roles in important political events. Vina Mazumdar, Member Secretary to the Status of Women Committee and co-founder of the Centre for Women’s Development Studies, said women like herself – recipients of the independence and constitutional dividend -- “simply didn’t know” the extent of women’s oppression. Determined to make invisible women visible, Mazumdar directed research projects to document the lives of women working for wages and those who labored from dawn to dusk but were not counted in the census as “employed.” At the same time, historical writing was establishing women’s roles in politics: working with the Indian National Congress, among the revolutionaries, and as members of delegations that represented Indian concerns to the British. This effort to restore women to history was largely based on documents, some archived and other retrieved from personal collections.

What this meant was that historians could recover and tell the stories of women like Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kriplani and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay but not of village women who bravely joined the movement. The colonial archives and the archives of the Nationalist Movement had preserved records that informed us about Naidu, Kriplani, and Chattopadhyay but there were few documents detailing the involvement of lower status rural women. For example, the newspapers reported that in January of 1931 the police beat “women of Borsad” unconscious when they participated in demonstrations but did not include the names or identities of these women. In other cases, women activists were characterized, in the documentation that exists, as sexual deviants whose versions of events were fabrications. For example, when a group of women demonstrators from Benares filed charges claiming that they were arrested, stripped, and beaten, the police and judge saw it as a “Congress plot.” In court, Kulda Devi was characterized as an “unattached” woman, a maidservant by trade, and the “kept woman” of a Bengali. Munni, “a widow,” was described by the police as a woman who lived from the proceeds of a brothel, while Charubala, who had left her husband and was living with Umesh Chandra, was a “a woman of loose character.” Dismissing the charges, the Judge declared these were the “flotsam thrown up on the streets, hardly the respectable women of India.”<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, post-independence projects to write provincial histories of the Freedom Movement did not remedy the omission of women from contemporary documents. In many of these books, women are identified only by village, a name such as Uma Devi or Sita Devi, and sometimes by a husband’s or father’s name. Without more detail, it is impossible to learn anything about their motivation, ideas, or perception of the movement. While those familiar with Bengali history, might point to Matangini Hazra (1869-1942), a peasant woman who was shot leading a procession to take over the Tamluk Police Station and whose statue graces the Maidan in Kolkata, historians agree that beyond a few details, we know very little about her life. My point is that the first efforts to restore women to politically significant events told the story of elite women and omitted urban women from the lower castes and classes and most rural women. In urban areas, the exclusion of lower class and caste woman was a deliberate act by women leaders to recruit from the “good classes” and exclude “undesirable women.” Goshiben Captain, one of the Oxford-educated granddaughters of Dadabhai Naoroji and a leader of the Desh Sevika Sangh in Bombay, warned women demonstrators to only perform actions that preserved their dignity and “innate modesty.”<sup>7</sup> Although we read about Gandhi’s meetings with sex workers in various parts of India, their donations to the movement, and Gandhi’s urging them to take up other employment, we know very little about the women themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> Kunkum Roy, “What happened to Confucianism?” *Seminar*, 52 (February, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> “Allegations are that the police in Andra and Madras stripped and flogged women arrestees. Enquires into ill-treatment of women volunteers by the police of Dasaswamedh (sic), Benares,” Home Dept. *Political*, GOI, File No/IV/1932.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix 6, The Constitution of the Desh Sevika Sangh as amended May, 1931, AICC Files G-8/1929; Goshiben Captain, Interview, May 16, 1970, Cambridge University Transcripts, S-22.

## The Archive

This early work in women's history necessarily privileged the archive. I use the word "necessarily" because in the 1970s archival records legitimized historical projects. "What were you able to find in the archives?" was the first question a researcher was asked. Exploring archives, those who first looked for records of women were shocked by the problems they encountered. By the 1980s, historians reading Foucault, who identified the idea of the archive as the key to knowledge production and institutionalization, challenged the proposition that women's history could be located in the archives as they existed. In her classic article "the Rani of Simur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," Gayatri Spivak found that the Rani surfaced only "briefly" and then because the British deposed the Raja and she was the king's wife. When the Rani declared her intention to become *sati*, it provoked a crisis because she was needed as regent for the minor Raja. We do not know what the Rani wanted or why she made the decision to become *sati* (her husband had been banished and was still alive) or even, what happened to her in the end. Instead, we know a great deal about what the British wanted of this woman whose name we do not know. At the same time Spivak was critiquing the imperial archives for their treatment of the Rani, C. S. Lakshmi, working in the Tamilnadu archives, found shelves of women's journals, a treasure trove rather than a trace. Then she learned, as she wrote in her story "Squirrel" –the other witness to the tragedy -- that "all these old unwanted books," would be burned to save the money needed to repair them.<sup>8</sup>

While these authors challenged the promise of the archive and argued for a close reading of documents, looking for silences and erasure, reading from the margins, and the importance of saving what existed, others challenged our positivist reading of archival finds. Working in the field of sexuality studies, another new field that has looked to the archive for legitimacy, Anjali Arondekar questioned the archive's promise. Instead of looking for archival material to fill "gaps," Arondekar urged us to pay attention to the creation of the archive and process of archiving.<sup>9</sup> Others advocated expanding the concept of the archive. In *Dwelling in the Archive*, Antoinette Burton read the memories of home of three Indian women, all of whom paid considerable attention to domestic space, to think about how these women used their memories as archives and in turn, left future historians with an archive. Mining Janaki Majumdar's handwritten "Family History," Cornelia Sorabji's essays on women who observed purdah, and Attia Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Burton sought to broaden the concept of historical sources and interrogate the "apparent dichotomy of 'discourse' versus reality."<sup>10</sup>

Even before Burton described autobiographical writing as an archive, women's writings were seen as an important source for writing women's history. Autobiographies and memoirs by women from Bengal such as those by Rashundari Debi and Binodini Dasi, and Ramabai Ranade and Pandita Ramabai from Maharashtra were used extensively in the early years. The retrieval and presentation of women's writing in books such as Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha's two-volume *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present* (1995) reached wide audiences and contributed, perhaps disproportionately, to our view of what women thought. Having participated in the retrieval of manuscripts, especially the memoirs of Shudha Mazumdar, Manmohini Zutshi Sahgal and Haimabati Sen for publication, I believe this has been an important step but also acknowledge the way in which these voices, in the absence of other records, stand in for women they do not represent. What we must acknowledge is that they present the lives of literate women – a tiny fraction of women at the time they wrote. While attaining literacy was a struggle for them, it also separated them from the masses of women who we have sometimes assumed they spoke for.

While some feminist historians were expanding the concept of the archive, still others worked to create women's archives. In the mid-1970s, it was difficult to find collections of women's records in

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<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lakshmi, *Squirrel, A Purple Sea: Short Stories by Amba*, Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Pvt. Ltd., 1992) 68-77.

<sup>9</sup> Anjali Arondekar, "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14:1/2 (January-April, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing Home, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 5.

libraries or archives. At that time, established institutions such as the Nehru Memorial Library defined “important woman” as women who had played a major role in male-dominated political movements, women who had not engaged in politics deemed unworthy of attention. For example, when Shudha Mazumdar gave me her typed 500-page memoir in 1970, the first question my professors asked was “who was she?” Learning she had neither held political office nor been one of Gandhi’s lieutenants, my interlocutors suggested I work on something more “important.”

### **New archives and new Methodologies**

Since even prominent women were difficult to find in the archives, it was close to impossible to find out about more ordinary women. In other countries, feminist scholars were exploring new methodologies, e.g., oral history, and new sources, e.g., women’s embroidery and quilt making, but employment of these methodologies lagged behind in India. One of the earliest oral history projects to include women was the Nehru Memorial Library’s Oral History Project on recollections of Gandhi and the Freedom Struggle. Begun in 1966, it later expanded to include women and individuals who were not Gandhians but who had fought for freedom from British rule. However, most of the women interviewed for this project were well-known leaders – for example, Lado Rani Zutshi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Renuka Ray, and Sushila Nayar – who belonged to the higher castes and classes. Moreover, they were asked questions about their political involvement, not about their lives as women.

Faced with the dual problems of the disappearance of records that could have been used to write women’s history and institutional indifference to this process, C. S. Lakshmi began to house endangered material in her apartment in Mumbai. In 1988, Lakshmi, Neera Desai and Maitreyi Krishnaraj set up the Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women [SPARROW], to house visual and print materials and generate a new archive of oral and videotaped interviews. SPARROW rejected the notion that only women who played a role in conventional politics should be included and focused on women who participated in a wide variety of movements; writers, musicians, vocalists, artists, sculptors, and actresses who produced culture; and women who pursued careers, strove for independent and self-reliant lives, and faced and overcame great odds. Recognizing the role of archives in legitimizing the subjects of history, topics of investigation, methodologies, and discourse, SPARROW’s objective has been to pry open the discipline and lead researchers to consider new sources, develop methodologies to interrogate these sources, and produce new histories that include the lived lives of women and their struggles.

It was not until the 1980s that historians turned their attention to women’s photographs as historical documents and began developing methodologies to use photographs as documents. While the Nehru Library had collected photographs of the Freedom Struggle, their collection included only a few elite women and some generic photographs of girls and women demonstrating without details about where and who. This was when I first began to study photographs of women and found it necessary to turn to family collections.

In 2001 the first exhibition of photographs of Indian women, using family and archival collections, was organized by Malavika Karlekar. Many of the photos in this exhibition, “Re-presenting Indian Women 1875-1947: A Visual Documentary,” were published in Karlekar’s *Visualizing Indian Women, 1875-1947* and two other books which include photographs of women,<sup>11</sup> and are now housed in the Centre for Women’s Development Studies in Delhi. In the exhibition, Karlekar arranged photographs in socio-historical categories: the family, education, public life, the Freedom Struggle, independence and partition, and the creative arts to constitute a visual archive that can be explored by other scholars. For Karlekar, “Feminist archiving is all about loss and recovery. It is about the celebration of history.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Malavika Karlekar, *Visualizing Indian Women, 1875-1947, Re-visioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal 1875-1915* (2005), and *Visual Histories* (2013).

<sup>12</sup> Kamayanti Bali Mahabal, “Leafing over the past,” *The Hindu* (Jan 22, 2013) accessed on the web <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/leafing-over-the-past/article4330572.ece>

The study of objects used and produced by women is still very new. *Kanthalas*, quilts made by women from eastern India as gifts for weddings and other special occasions, did not receive serious attention -- as women's art ---until the mid-2000s. Now an object of study, researchers are examining them for evidence of what was important to women, their role in gift giving, their rituals and beliefs, and knowledge of things happening at the time. Unlike other quilts in that they were stitched together from used garments and then embroidered, *Kanthalas* may not tell us much about individual artists, but they can contribute to our understanding of women's everyday lives and of their connection to and role in cultural production.

Madhubani painting, wall paintings by upper-caste women originating in the village of Maithili, Bihar, were not discovered until 1934 when a massive earthquake brought this art to the attention of the British. Following a crippling drought in the mid-1960s, the All-India Handicrafts Board encouraged the women to transfer their art to paper to sell in the market. By the 1970s, the women of Mithili had become the subject of books and a documentary, bringing more attention to this particular art and the possibility of tracing changing perceptions from the 1930s to the present. To my knowledge, few historians are researching the objects associated with women's domestic work and household arts to understand the quotidian aspects of women's lives.

We also need more attention to oral history. Most of the projects I am familiar with have focused on major political events: the Gandhian movement, Telangana Rebellion, and Partition, leaving opportunities for projects that focus on women's lives.

### **Re-reading the Archives**

For the remainder of this talk, I want to turn to the question of retrieving the lives of women left out of history. I will begin with three historians who have been successful in recreating at least the outlines of what we call the "subaltern women": David Curley in "Marriage, Honor, Agency, and Trials by Ordeal: Women's Gender Roles in Caññīmañgal," Ranajit Guha in his article "Chandra's Death," and Ashwini Tambe's "Akootai's Death: Subaltern Indian Brothel Workers" in *Codes of Misconduct*.

David Curley has mined the Mangal Kabyas, especially the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Candimangal* by Mukunda for evidence of gender role behavior. His work is especially valuable since he looks at women from different social classes and at questions not discussed until much later in history. Curley's work has led him to the conclusion that for this earlier period, we should think of gender roles as scalar (on a broad scale with "most masculine" on one end and "most feminine" on the other) rather than fixed or binary -- rigidities in gender introduced by colonialism. While this discussion is extremely interesting, I want to turn to his discussion of sexual relations with brides that had not yet reached puberty. In the *Candimangal*, the merchant Dhanapati acquires a 10-year old second wife, Khullana, who is related to his older (quarrelsome and bossy) wife Lahana. With Dhanapati called away by the king before he has completed all the formalities related to this marriage, the young bride is in a vulnerable position. At first the two wives get on well but then Lahana becomes worried that young Khullana will enthrall Dhanapati and she will lose power. She decides to reduce the young bride's allure by removing everything that contributes to her beauty: ornaments, clothing, food, and comfortable living conditions. Stripped of her fine clothes, Lahana is giving a short skirt and staff and sent to the outer forests to herd goats. When Dhanapati comes back and finds what has happened he is very angry but there is still an occasion for Lahana to try to convince him and the bride that the marriage should not be consummated. Especially interesting is Lahana's argument that sexual intercourse would be painful and physically dangerous to her immature co-wife who had not yet menstruated. Her words, however, fall on deaf ears and the couple engages in passionate lovemaking. Among other things, Curley points out that Lahana's condemnation most likely reflects an opposition to sexual relations with pre-pubescent girls within women's culture.<sup>13</sup> Ranajit Guha's article, based on legal

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<sup>13</sup> David Curley, "Marriage, Honor, Agency, and Trials by Ordeal: Women's Gender Roles in Caññīmañgal," *Modern Asian Studies*, 35:2 (May, 2001) 319.

depositions from the mid-nineteenth century, details why and how a poor widow from the Bagdi caste obtained drugs to cause her widowed daughter to abort and die. The mother's intention was to protect Chandra but the drugs killed the fetus, then Chandra, and transformed what was meant to be a benevolent act into a crime. Using other documents, Guha reads Chandra's lover (her brother-in-law) as a patriarchal cad, devoid of any concern beyond saving himself from censure. In the same article, Guha tells us about another sexually transgressive woman, the widow Saki, who, unlike Chandra, survives and triumphs. Saki became the lover of Ramkumar Ghose and with him, was forced to leave the village for violating caste rules. The two of them converted to the Baishnab faith, a faith which does not recognize caste, and returned to the village where they lived together and shared food. While this angered village leaders, they could do nothing to sanction the errant couple.<sup>14</sup> Through the stories of two women, Guha presents us with a world that was unkind and unjust to women but at the same time, offered an escape route for those willing to renounce family, caste and religion and convert to the Baishnab faith.

My third example is from the work of Ashwini Tambe. Using records from a high-court trial regarding the murder of the prostitute Akootai in 1917, Tambe recreates the world in which these women lived and their connection to their natal families as well as the formation of new fictive families in the city. In this case, much of what we discover about Akootai and her work comes from the statements of her co-workers Phooli, Paru and Jijawho explained that Akootai was suffering from painful sores – the result of venereal disease – and began to refuse customers. Beaten for her refusal, Akootai ran away, but was soon caught and returned to the brothel. Beaten with fists and metal rods, branded with matches, and scalded throughout the night, her torturers resumed the beating the next day and continued until Akootai died. Piecing together details from different testimonies, Tambe speculates that Akootai had run away from her husband, was visited by her relatives in the brothel, and had worked there for at least two years. Her colleagues called her “elder sister,” and there is some evidence the brothel owners only meant to seriously wound her. What is extremely interesting about the case is the outspoken testimony from Phooli, Paru and Jija, whose presentations in court were instrumental in the conviction of the brothel owner Mirza and his female employee who were both executed. Although we do not know Akootai's whole story, we know of her extraordinary resistance – turning away customers and then running away – clearly understanding that she had little chance of succeeding. Tambe's researches into other records inform us that Akootai was not unlike many of the women who ended up in Bombay's brothels in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: migrants to Bombay, they were poor, illiterate and from the lower castes.<sup>15</sup> Tambe demonstrates that if we look closely, we may find that the subaltern can and does represent herself in historical documents. At the same time, these records make it impossible to cast Akootai as a helpless victim without a will of her own. Instead, we discover a woman with the cards stacked against her with more spunk and courage than we could have imagined.

### **New subjects need new methodologies**

A review of current books on women in South Asia makes it clear that we are still writing the history of elites with only a sprinkle of subalterns. Attempts to write history from below is not easy as Swapna Banerjee discovered when she set out to locate maidservants in history. Her book, *Men, Women, and Domestic: Articulating Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal*, explores not the lives of maidservants but rather the relationships between servants and their employers, largely obtained from autobiographies and advice manuals.

Writing about the construction of the female criminal in colonial India, Padma Anagol explains how the Infanticide Act of 1870 placed the blame for infanticide on the woman, usually the mother, assuming she acted as an individual devoid of community. Traditional law either left the issue up to caste or village councils who sometimes reacted harshly, in other cases leniently. The majority of women

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<sup>14</sup> Ranajit Guha, “Chandra's Death,” *ASubaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995*, Ed., Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 34-62.

<sup>15</sup> Ashwini Tambe, Chapter 4 “Akootai's Death: Subaltern Indian Brothel Workers,” *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 79-99.

charged with the crime of infanticide, which carried the death penalty, were widows who became pregnant and then killed their infants as they had no way to survive without their families' support. Widows who found employment were more likely to keep and raise their children but the lack of material resources had no impact on the courts. In this period, as Anagol points out, Indian widows were constructed as "depraved and perverted," unwilling to see the obvious consequences of indulging their "lust."<sup>16</sup> In contrast, British widows maintained their dignity and spent their spare time in benevolent work. Indian reformers did their best to distance themselves and Hinduism from these unfortunate widows, focusing instead on their ignorance, misunderstanding of the Shastras, and even temporary insanity. While many of the cases Anagol has recovered from court records were high-caste women, they include the day laborer Rakhunacharged with murdering her illegitimate infant. In her defense, Rakhuna said she had been raped while working in the field and did not attempt to abort the fetus because she had one child who depended on her. She claimed the child of rape had died of malaria. The courts did not consider rape a mitigating factor; women who killed their infants were tried for murder regardless of how they became pregnant. In addition to explaining how the creation of the female criminal served colonial goals, Anagol documents how other women – mothers, grandmothers, aunts, etc. – rallied around the women charged with infanticide. Their protests did not change the outcome but with a careful reading of the evidence advanced we can detect female solidarity and a critique of androcentric morality.

The project of recovery – the first goal of women's history when it emerged in the 1970s – was aimed at finding details about women's lives and work and recreating them as subjects of history. This has been possible with women like Rashsundari Debi, Binodini Dasi, and Haimabati Sen, but there are no memoirs of maidservants or factory workers. To write the history of women from below, we will have to expand our sources, engage in oral history projects, and go back to conventional archives with a new sense of how all documents have to be interrogated. By turning to different sources, asking different questions, and analyzing what we find in new ways, we can explore relationships between different groups, the role of power, the impact of colonial laws and policies, shifting coalitions, and the redefinition of masculinity and femininity.

We can find stories that are "good enough" to disrupt the narrative – of undifferentiated women, victimhood, unmitigated suffering, and totally oppressive patriarchy.<sup>17</sup> However, we have to be willing to tell stories we do not like: of women who did not succeed, of women who oppressed women, of women who lied, cheated, and murdered, and women who perpetuated cruelty. These must be told alongside stories of women who resisted oppression and women who accepted the patriarchal order. Presenting women as simply victims or as agents of their own lives misses the ways in which women, and all people, belong to cultures and societies and act within contexts and confines of power relations. Good history will help us understand some of the endemic problems women face: violence, discrimination, and a declining sex ratio as well as where and when resistance to oppression was successful. This project matters because women's history and gender history have the ability to transform the discipline of history and "infinite potential" to change the lives of future generations.

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<sup>16</sup> Padma Anagol, "the Emergence of the Female Criminal in India: Infanticide and Survival under the Raj," *History Workshop Journal*, 53:1 (202), 73-93.

<sup>17</sup> Gail Hershatter writes about "good enough stories," that is, examples of things women said, did, and remembered that are not complete stories but are "good enough" to throw doubt on some assumptions, challenge what other accounts tell us, and in some cases give us the outlines of biography. Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) 3.