GYANENDRA PANDEY

Men at Home

Imagining Liberation in Colonial and Postcolonial India

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Duke University Press
Durham and London
2025

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Project Editor: Liz Smith
Cover design by Dave Rainey
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Pandey, Gyanendra, [date] author.
Title: Men at home : imagining liberation in colonial and postcolonial India / Gyanendra Pandey.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2025. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024017459 (print)
LCCN 2024017460 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478031383 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478028154 (hardback)
ISBN 9781478060376 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Men—India—Attitudes. | Masculinity—Social aspects—India. | Home—India. | Families—India. | Postcolonialism—South Asia. | India—Social life and customs. | India—Civilization—1947– | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE / Ethnic Studies / Asian Studies | POLITICAL SCIENCE / Colonialism & Post-Colonialism
Classification: LCC HQ1090.7.I4 P36 2025 (print) | LCC HQ1090.7.I4 (ebook) | DDC 305.610954—dc23/eng/20240922
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024017459
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024017460

Cover art: Gathering of family members on wedding of Hameeda Omar, December 25, 1935. Family photograph generously provided by family of Begum Hameeda Husain Raipuri (née Omar). Jamshed Omar brought the original photo from "Neeli chatri," Aligarh, India, while leaving for Pakistan in 1948.

Sitting on chairs L to R: Said Omar, Munawwar (Begum Said Omar), Begum Mohammad Abdullah, Mohammad Abdullah (father of Zafar, Muzaffar, and Aftab Omar), Zafar Omar, Begum Zafar Omar, Hamida Omar. *Standing first row L to R:* Hameed Omar, Ayesha Omar, Bi (Begum Aftab Omar), Khadija Omar, Shoukat Omar, Jamila (Begum Shoukat Omar), Akhtar Hussain Raipuri. *Standing second row L to R:* Zahid Omar, Mahmoud Omar (with Jamshed Omar in her arms), Rashida Omar. *Sitting on ground L to R:* Aziz Omar, Ahsan Omar, Khalil Omar, Zakia Omar, Khurshid Omar, Anis Omar, Amna Omar (Munna, sister of Ayesha and Ahsan Omar).

To—

The savants of "World History,"
men and women,
who articulated dreams of
a more egalitarian society,
And the toilers of the "everyday,"
women and men,
who struggled to make it.

Contents

Dramatis Personae

Readers will note that I include men's and women's autobiographies as almost independent actors in the following listing of dramatis personae. I explain the reasoning in chapter 1.

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AMBEDKAR, BHIM RAO (1891–1956): *Babasaheb* to his legions of followers, distinguished scholar and political leader, founding father of the Dalit movement, first law minister of the government of independent India, and chief draftsman of the Indian constitution of 1950. His voluminous writings on economics, politics, religion, and law include a few autobiographical fragments and extensive commentary on the life and conditions of the poorest castes and classes in the Indian subcontinent. His life, he said, was an open book, documented in the abundance of writing about him by colleagues, followers, and biographers.

His second wife, SAVITA AMBEDKAR (1909–2003), a doctor whom he married in 1948 and who was his companion and primary caretaker throughout the last years of his life, wrote a detailed autobiography of their years together, which provides fascinating information on his life and activities in the home.

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BACHCHAN, HARIVANSH RAI (1907–2003): renowned Hindi poet, educator, and translator, special officer in the central government of independent India, and nominated member of the upper house of Parliament, 1966–1972. Wrote a four-volume autobiography on his personal life, published over two decades from 1969 to 1991.

His second wife, TEJI BACHCHAN (1914–2007), also appears as an important figure in the following analysis. She gave up her teaching position at a Lahore college to marry and support him in his career, and looked after their home and children, though she continued some work in theater, other artistic ventures, and social work.

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BAISANTRI, KAUSALYA (1926–2011): Dalit student activist in high school, forced into the role of middle-class housewife and mother after her marriage in 1947. Her autobiography published in 1999 details the life and struggles of her working-class parents and grandparents in and around Nagpur, the industrial city where she and her siblings grew up.

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GANDHI, MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND ("Mahatma") (1869–1948): acknowledged leader of the last phase of the Indian national movement, *Bapu* (father) to his millions of followers. Discusses his personal life, including his relationship with his wife and children, in remarkable detail in his autobiography, originally published between 1927 and 1929, as well as in other writings and speeches.

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JADHAV, NARENDRA (1950–): well-known economist and public intellectual, rose to become chief adviser to the governor of the Reserve Bank of India, vice-chancellor of a leading university, and member of the National Planning Commission and upper house of India's parliament. His family memoir, broadcast over the radio and published in several recensions through the 1990s and 2000s, documents the life of three generations, focusing especially on his parents, Damodar and Sonubai Jadhav, as they moved from hard labor and poverty in the fields of Nasik district to the railways and slums of Bombay, where their children entered into middle-class status and professions after the 1960s.

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KAMBLE, BABY (1929–2012): *Baby tai* (Aunt Baby) in her later years; distinguished Dalit writer, activist, and overworked housewife. Her autobiography, among the earliest by a Dalit woman, written in hiding over twenty years and published in the 1980s, describes the lives and homes of the laboring poor in the small towns and villages of western India from the 1930s and 1940s onward.

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MIRZA, AKBAR (1909–1971): member of the British colonial police service who transferred to the Pakistan police in 1947.

His wife, KHURSHID MIRZA (1918–1989), wrote a lively and detailed account of their life together in an autobiography published in the 1980s. An actor, singer, and dancer in Bombay films in her early twenties, she gave up her career for her husband and children; she became a leading radio and television artiste later in Pakistan, gaining considerable prominence in the years after Akbar's death in 1971.

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MOON, VASANT (1932–2002): civil servant and distinguished editor of the multivolume collected works of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, commissioned by the government of Maharashtra. He grew up in a working-class neighborhood in the industrial city of Nagpur. His 1990s autobiography is a celebration of Dalit life and struggles in the neighborhood where he was born, and of his working-class mother, Purnabai, who raised him as a single parent.

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PRASAD, RAJENDRA (1884–1963): devoted Gandhian, prominent leader of the Indian National Congress, lawyer, legislator, and first president of the republic of independent India. Voluminous autobiography published in 1947, with brief but important comments on his marriage and domestic life.

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PREMCHAND (1880–1936): Dhanpat Rai, known by his pen name Premchand, "storyteller of the Independence movement," probably the most important Hindi-Urdu writer of the early twentieth century, devoted Gandhian and socialist. There is little by way of direct autobiographical statement in Premchand's extraordinary oeuvre of short stories, novels, and essays, which document the lives of the upper as well as the middle and lower classes in the villages and towns of northern India.

His second wife, SHIVRANI DEVI PREMCHAND (1888–1976), provides a wonderfully evocative account of their life together in a memoir written a few years after his death.

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RAIPURI, AKHTAR HUSAIN (1912–1992): radical leftist intellectual and writer, prominent national and international educationist after his move to Pakistan in 1947. Wrote a detailed autobiography centered on his intellectual and political commitments.

His wife, HAMEEDA AKHTAR HUSAIN RAIPURI (1920–2009), became a well-loved writer after his death, largely on account of her colorful autobiography, which focuses more on their life in the home.

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RAM, JAGJIVAN (1908–1986): among the most prominent Dalit leaders of the twentieth century, Congress leader, minister in provincial and central governments of India for several decades from the 1930s, and deputy prime minister of the country in 1977–1978.

His second wife, INDRANI JAGJIVAN RAM (1911–2002), a schoolteacher who gave up her job after their marriage, published a three-volume memoir in the 1990s celebrating her husband's career and her life with him.

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SANKRITYAYAN, RAHUL (1893–1963): Kedarnath Pandey, renamed Rahul Sankrityayan when he became a Buddhist priest; outstanding scholar and writer known as *Mahapandit* (great scholar), religious reformer and political activist, Congress worker, communist, organizer of peasant movements, and advocate for Hindi language and literature. His enormous body of work includes numerous autobiographical writings in the form of fiction and history, and a six-volume autobiography—over two thousand pages in its latest published form. The first four volumes of the autobiography are dated 1944, 1950, 1951, and 1967 (the last published posthumously).

His third wife, KAMALA SANKRITYAYAN (1920–2009), compiled and edited the fifth and sixth volumes of his autobiography after his death. She added other details of their life together in several of her own writings, memoirs, and reminiscences, as she established herself as a prominent educationist and writer in Hindi and Nepali.

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SINGH, AMAR (1878–1942): *Thakur* (lord or estate-holder) of Kanota, in Rajasthan, western India, and officer in the Jaipur and then the British Indian Army. Wrote a daily diary in English for forty-four years from 1898 to 1942, preserved in eighty-nine bound volumes, about eight hundred pages each, in the Kanota archive. A condensed version of part of this trove, with considerable detail on domestic life and arrangements, was published in 2000.

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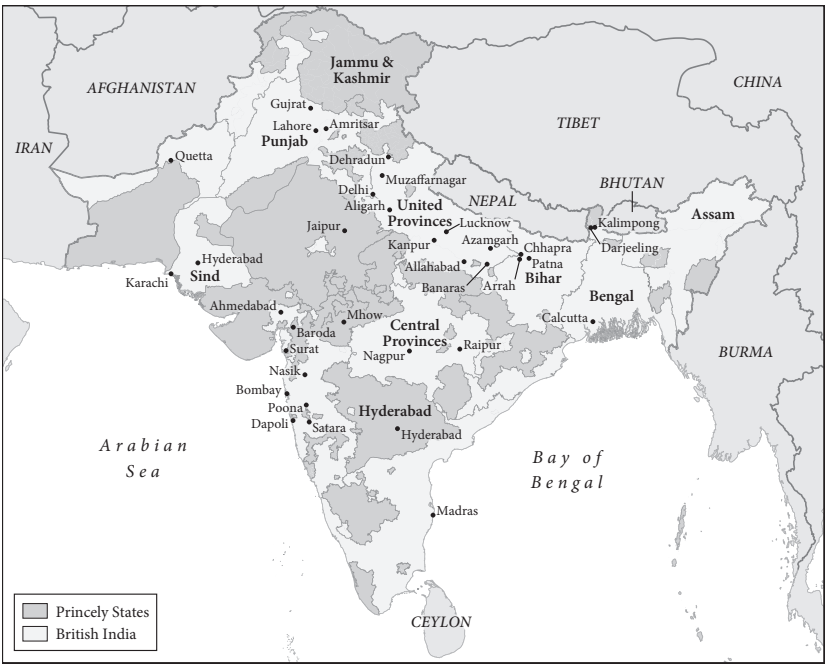
VALMIKI, OMPRAKASH (1950–2013): prominent Hindi writer and midlevel officer in the Indian government's federal bureaucracy, from a poor Dalit background in rural north India. Published an acclaimed autobiography in 1997, as well as other autobiographical statements in his short stories, plays, poems, and historical writings.



MAP 1 Indian subcontinent before Partition and Independence in 1947

MAP 2 Indian subcontinent after Partition and Independence in 1947: Administrative divisions, circa 1960

Prelude

FRAGMENTS OF FAMILY

This book is an essay on men's existence in the South Asian domestic world, and on their self-contradictory articulation in that world of ideas of freedom, or liberation, for themselves and their loved ones: women, children, family, community, nation, and more.

The work begins by situating men firmly in the domestic arena—a domain they, and others, often treat as incidental to their lives and being. Nevertheless, men spend a good deal of their time in this secluded familial space and are plainly dependent on it. The study proceeds through an exploration of the discourses surrounding the mysterious absence/presence of men in—and from—a large part of their own existence, and the expectations and behavior that flow from the resulting rhetoric.

The title of this prelude underscores the conundrum. "Fragment," as I use the term, is not simply the dictionary's "piece, broken off." Rather, it is an interruption, a disruption, an unexpected departure in a conversation or line of thinking: an answer to a question that has not been posed in the conversation, or in the received reflections or inherited common sense of a specific question.[1] Men in the home are a fragment in both senses of the term: a *part* of, and an *interruption* in, a widely received understanding of family life.

Startling changes occur in ideas of the home and the family in South Asia, and in ideals of the good modern man and woman, between the later nineteenth century and the middle decades of the twentieth—the anti-colonial moment in India's colonial and postcolonial history. Parallel shifts take place over much of the world in the industrial and postindustrial age. Yet, the context and the fallout have their quite distinct, colonial and postcolonial, inflections in the Indian subcontinent.[a]

[a] I use India and South Asia interchangeably in these pages, since much of the investigation deals with areas in the northern, central, and western regions of the undivided subcontinent, before and after its partition and the establishment of the independent nations of India and Pakistan in 1947 (and the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971).

Consider the advent of notions or ideals of (and aspirations to), among other things, "industrial time" and the small, consanguine, loving family—greatly modified as these are in the urban as well as rural Indian context. Industrial time—factory or clock time—is an emphatic feature of this new age, even as it coexists with the more fluid time of light and dark, agricultural seasons, and the ritual calendar. It is especially marked in urban areas, where the clock tower, the factory siren, and other accessories of modern states and entrepreneurship shape timetables for much of the population. However, it extends forcefully into the countryside, to apparently noncapitalist sectors of the society, through the interventions of police, bureaucracy, modern law, and medical institutions; the influence of schools and colleges; and even social service and civic reform.

Similar "deviations" characterize the second symbol of South Asian modernity I have mentioned: understandings of the fundamental unit of domestic life. While the nuclear family—the small, intimate unit of a loving husband, wife, and children—emerges as an ideal, this smaller modern family often includes older generations (grandparents and sometimes great-grandparents), as well as cognate units like "nuclear" families of male siblings, living under the same roof or in adjacent dwellings.

Other radical departures may be noted in the domestic order. Fatherhood emerges in transformed guise. It is attached now to an individual male, the biological father, who in theory has primary responsibility for the maintenance of his immediate family and the training of sons. Fathers become educators. Education is equated with school certificates and college degrees, as cleanliness is with tailored clothes, shoes, soap, and hair oil: objectified and separated from a rather different sense of learning in a wide variety of ways in the community and environment of one's birth (kith and kin, human and nonhuman neighbors, physical surroundings).[2]

The notion of "inner" and "outer" worlds, the "private" retreat inside domestic space and "public" activities in the world outside, comes to be more sharply etched. This is accompanied by a thickening and concretization—one might say, externalization and objectification—of the inner and outer, the home and the world. The wider community, collective gatherings, and storytelling sessions recede as places where inheritance, tradition, and knowledge are passed on in the course of other social engagements. Notions of fostering, nurturing, and training the young are redefined, as is the understanding of men's and women's role in history.

Given the heft of these developments, the following chapters underline the importance attached to formal schooling, to cleanliness in dress and appearance, and to the roles of men and women in child- and homecare—all seen as signs of

the modern and the future. I focus on conjugal relations, central to new ideas of family and home, and detail the daily attrition and constant negotiation that accompany the reentrenchment of domestic hierarchies. One of my aims is to draw attention to the physical, psychological, and emotional costs incurred by men and women, the axiomatically privileged and the routinely disenfranchised alike.

There has been considerable writing and commentary on the question of the modern South Asian domestic order and its enduring hierarchies and discrimination. Why, then, another investigation of the theme? I offer a few reasons. First, whether they are well-recognized, statistically documented, targeted, critiqued, and repeatedly condemned, or not, the discriminatory structures and the violence attendant on gendered hierarchies, male privilege, and women's subordination are still in place—doggedly persistent and deeply damaging. They are compounded by every man-made and natural disaster, from the climate crisis, to COVID-19, to war and displacement and famine. At the same time, they are regularly brushed under the carpet in the name of "sacred" inheritances that families, communities, and nations tout as needing protection from alien assaults. Or, alternatively, by the logic that such commonplace discrimination and violence is not a crisis of nation or state, not an event in World History, but a matter of secondary importance.[3] Such issues, regrettable as they might be, can only be tackled over time, it is said: best of all, through quick economic growth and expanding opportunities and education around the globe.

I believe the present work is necessary also because, for all the commentary on familial hierarchies and oppressions, there has been little investigation of the real-life, flesh-and-blood meaning of being embedded in structures of discrimination and denial in privatized, domestic spaces. This is true not only for women, servants, poorer relatives, and hangers-on, the drudges of the inner world, reflective not only of the humiliation, physical distancing, indignity, and invisibility that they suffer daily: it is true also for those in power in this domain, the upholders of family and national "honor" fulfilling their "duty" through open acts of violence if necessary.

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This is a "personal" book in terms of the questions it asks about family, community, culture, and history in contemporary South Asia. I have in some ways lived with the inquiry all my adult life, though it has taken concentrated research over the last decade to bring it to fruition. The exploration flows from observations and questions I had from childhood onward, growing up in a home with a present/absent father and exposed to many homes that were structurally not very different from ours, however diverse they were in terms of the strictness, ebullience,

forcefulness, or timidity of the men who were supposedly heads of these modern households, centered on the "nuclear"—yet often three-generational—family.[b]

My father had little time for hands-on care of children or other domestic duties. He appeared as a distant authority figure, a spectral presence with "more important things to do": absent even when physically present, a haunting shadow even when absent. A hush fell on the rest of us when he walked into a room, though we waited eagerly to see what gifts he had brought when he returned from an official tour or other engagement out of town. Often, they were fruits and sweets he himself was fond of, from places especially known for them. The shadow of authority surrounding him was accompanied, as well, by his boisterous laughter and storytelling (he was a fiction writer as well as a bureaucrat), as he held court in an outer drawing room where a homosocial company of friends, acquaintances, and sundry male relatives, close and not so close, assembled frequently.

As schoolboys, my older brother and I were often invited to meet these visitors, and then invited to go away and play or do something else. My mother and younger sisters were free to wander in the garden, and to go out for specific ends—to school, to shops, and to friends' houses. There were also invitations for lunches and dinners or other outings with family friends in which all of us participated. But for much of their time at home, my mother and sisters kept to the inner rooms and courtyard, adjoining the front rooms—for these weren't great mansions. The "women" met important visitors infrequently, my mother ate last, and my mother and sisters were expected to be withdrawn, the seclusion and watchful eyes of the elders growing keener once my sisters reached the age of puberty.

Questions that arose in my mind in childhood and adolescence multiplied in my years as a college student and university teacher. Extended research, as well as conversations with colleagues, students, and interlocutors from diverse castes, classes, communities, and countries, led to the conviction that closer investigation of the history of domestic interactions was necessary for a more realistic understanding of modernity, democracy, and dreams of the future in colonial and postcolonial India, and of the social conservatism that survives in the subcontinent even in what appear at first sight as politically and intellectually enlightened circles.

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[b] One might even call it the "extended nuclear family." The photograph that appears on the cover, marking the wedding of two protagonists whom I center in chapter 4, Hameeda and Akhtar Husain Raipuri, points nicely to the paradoxical character of this modern South Asian family. For a further comment on the cover photograph, and its contents and framing, see footnote a in chapter 4.

Another word on "beginnings"—moments that are always indistinct and uncertain. A decade or so ago, I re-read Shivrani Devi's memoir of her life with her husband, Premchand, perhaps the biggest name among the founders of modern Urdu/Hindi literature and hailed as "the storyteller of India's Independence movement." That renewed encounter with Shivrani Devi's *Premchand Ghar Mein* (Premchand in the home)[4] convinced me more than ever of the need for a study of *Hindustani Aadmi Ghar Mein* (Indian men in the home)—a theme I had been mulling over for some time.

Premchand's second wife's reconstruction of the thirty years she spent with him differs startlingly from the single summary comment Premchand left on their life together. Hers is an uplifting account of two sensitive and committed human beings discovering each other—warts, foibles, exceptional qualities, strengths, weaknesses, all: drawing close together, sharing interests and activities, doing everything they could for one another and for others in their domestic circle. His is a brief and unexpectedly dry statement in a letter written in English in 1935, the year before he died. Following the death of his first wife, he says, "I married a *'Bal Vidhwa'* [child widow] and am fairly happy with her. She has picked up some literary taste and sometimes writes stories. She is a fearless, bold, uncompromising, sincere lady, amenable to a fault and awfully impulsive. She joined [Gandhi's] N[on] Co-op[eration] movement and went to jail. I am happy with her, not claiming what she cannot give."[5]

I have much more to say about Shivrani Devi and Premchand in the chapters that follow. For the moment, I mention Shivrani Devi's memoir on their marriage as one intimation of a beginning.

Another beginning occurred when I was nearing the end of a first draft of the book. As I worked on what I hoped would be a close-to-finished version of one of the concluding chapters, I stopped short on encountering a term I had read—and passed by—several times before in my engagement with the distinguished Dalit writer Baby Kamble's 1986 autobiography in Marathi, *Jina Amucha*, and its English translation, *The Prisons We Broke*.[6] The term, *navrapana* (husbandness, from *navra*, husband), condenses multiple dimensions of the history of male privilege, and the expected but not always welcome assertion of manly behavior and male priority, in a single edgy concept. Kamble used it to explain why she had kept her autobiographical writings secret from family members for twenty years. She had to do this, she said to the scholar who translated her memoir into English, because of her husband: "He was a good man, but like all the men of his time and generation, he considered a woman an inferior being." Her comment on this common mindset and behavior was sharp: "Husbandness [is] the same in every man. . . . Their male ego [gives men] some sense of identity."[7]

I had not come across anything like Kamble's conceptualization in Hindi, Urdu, or other Indian languages I know—or, for that matter, in English. There is common talk in north India of *mardangi* and *aadmi bano* for manliness and being-a-man. Haughty male behavior is characterized as *zamindarana adab*, the bearing and behavior of a ruler or aristocrat, and sometimes as *sahabi-pan*, behaving like a Sahib or overlord, like the British rulers of India. Notably outspoken, brash, or "independent" men might also be described as suffused with devil-may-care life: full of *dillagi* (fun-loving, jocular), *rangeela* (colorful), *aazad-khayal* (freethinking). Rarely are they encapsulated in terms of their readily observable attitudes toward and interactions with a constant presence in their lives, their wives: that is, in terms of an everyday relationship that has come to occupy a central place in most discourses on family life in India.

Contrary to the experience of women, it is unusual to have man, and man's behavior, reduced to one aspect of his being: in this instance, "husbandness." Women are regularly defined through a relationship, usually one in a confined domestic world, as wife, mother, or daughter who will soon be a wife and mother. Wifehood itself is subsumed in motherhood, for the maternal instinct is taken to be the "essential" quality of woman. The world is different for the other half of humanity, represented as being complete in themselves, almost from birth: the male of the species growing into himself. There is extensive talk of boyhood, manhood, fatherhood, alongside other "essential" attributes, which can encompass head of household, property owner, breadwinner, professional, laborer. Certainly not qualities that can be condensed into something as reductive—primal and "primitive"—as husbandhood.

The status and authority of woman in an Indian home derived commonly from motherhood, from becoming a mother, or better still, in much of the world, the mother of sons. In the case of men in modern South Asia, that authority comes earlier, but it is not given from birth. It is captured perhaps in the relationship of husband and wife—"a man" in charge of his "little community," even if that is a community of two, or a few (a wife/wives and in time children). Yet, we must remember that in traditional multigenerational families, age and other factors often trumped "gender" (reckoned as man/woman).[8] The biological father did not even have primary authority over his children; that privilege was reserved for the grandfather and granduncle, or, if that generation had retired, the father's older brothers and cousins, along with family elders more generally.[9] Consider the implications of Baby Kamble's *navrapana* (husbandness, husbandly authority and behavior) in that context.

Navra, in Marathi, refers to a bridegroom or husband. The dictionary suggests it derives from the root *nav*, new, suggesting a "new man," reborn as in

many societies on the attainment of maturity, on becoming adult and independent, a stage signaled in India by marriage. *Navri*, "new woman," is also used for a bride, wife, or girl of marriageable age, but usually for a short while, no more than a few months following marriage, after which the common term for wife or woman of the home, *bai-ko* (*patni, gharwali* in Hindi), supervenes.[10] For the modern South Asian man, this moment in the passage from adolescence to adulthood marks the onset of new responsibilities and authority in his bit of the domestic world—and perhaps beyond. The male, now recognized as a grown-up, gains manly status in husbandhood. Conceptually, a shift occurs in the location of this individual from the realm of nature and nurture to that of politics, responsibility, and authority. And many men claim the latter as their primary, if not sole, arena of work.

It takes the doughty, down-to-earth, insurrectionist language of a Marathi Dalit woman, freshly energized and assertive in the era of the anti-Brahmanical movement inspired by Ambedkar, to deploy an idea so "ordinary," arresting, and rich in its ability to capture the banality of men's claims to God-given privilege and power. A banality daily on display in men's comportment and behavior in the mundane, unremarked, everyday domain of the domestic—the supposedly sequestered and invisible space of family and home.

The concept *navrapana* (husbandness or husbandly authority), with its implicit critique of male arrogance in the assertion of men's rights as men, opens up the question of male comportment, claims to manliness, and men's vulnerability—central themes of my study—in unexpected ways. Throughout this book, I use men's physical and psychological being in the home as an entry point for investigation of their privileged place in the domestic world and of their simultaneous denial of any serious responsibility in that space. Baby Kamble sees husbandness as emblematic of this privilege. I will argue that across castes, classes, and communities in modern South Asia, male authority has been signaled in what she calls husbandness. The privilege of boyhood mutates into the authority of man with the onset of marriage, the stage of householdership (the *grihastha ashram*) and the responsibilities that stage implies.

A central thread of the present study emerges more sharply from my belated recognition of the implications of Kamble's insight.

* * *

This book is not a history of nation, state, and institutional politics—the well-established subjects of World History—viewed from an unusual vantage point. It is better seen as a history of *ordinary life* among *ordinary people* (with both phrases appearing under the sign of a question mark), told from the location

of the home—or what I shall for convenience, in the interest of flexibility and in recognition of its uncertain boundaries, simply call *domestic space* in modern South Asia. If the changed perspective and object of inquiry say something about the limits of World History, or of what a richer world history might be—a history of how people lived, and what it felt like to live in their times and conditions—that is a welcome bonus.

I have framed the inquiry under the mundane rubric of men in the home, since that bland formulation engages questions of male entitlement, authority, and hierarchy in a relatively accessible and open-ended way. Perhaps it will also invite in readers who are daunted by the theoretical language that is often key to close analysis of issues of gender, patriarchy, and masculinity. That said, let me turn to a more substantive discussion of historical and historiographical legacies, and the ascribed, claimed, or asserted place of men in the history of domestic life in modern South Asia.

Notes

PRELUDE

1 Louis Althusser uses the phrase "an answer to a question that is nowhere posed"; Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 29. For an explication of my usage of "fragment," see Pandey, *Routine Violence*, chap. 2, "In Defense of the Fragment." A slightly different articulation appeared in the original version published with the same title in *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992).

2 I refer to important scholarly writings on several of these themes in the section titled "Historiography" in chapter 1.

3 Cf. Guha, *History at the Limit of World History*.

4 Shivrani Premchand, *Premchand Ghar Mein*.

5 Madan, *Premchand*, 20.

6 Baby Kamble, *Jina Amucha*; English translation by Maya Pandit, *The Prisons We Broke*. *Dalit* is the name that Dalit activists give to the depressed castes and classes formerly known as Untouchables.

7 Kamble, *Prisons We Broke*, 147, 155, 156.

8 One scholar makes the point about the crisscrossing axes that determine gender power in South Asian homes as follows: a woman's place depends on "the status of her husband, her possession of sons, her fertility, looks, health and capacity for domestic labour. The middle-aged mother of grown-up sons could be a powerful matriarch and elderly mothers-in-law could command and oppress young [daughters-in-law]." T. Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*, 21.

9 It is worth noting that this applied to Baby Kamble's husband: an unemployed young man in a house full of elders, whose enterprising wife (Baby Kamble) comes up with an idea that allows him to contribute to the family's income, he is still someone from whom she has to hide her writing for twenty years.

10 Another term that may well come from the same root (route?) is *nivri* in Kutchi, which refers to girls or young women sitting around idling, as a young bride might be allowed to do briefly! I am grateful to Sabrina Datoo for drawing my attention to this term and its meaning.