

Gender, medicine, and society in colonial India: women's health care in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bengal

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Abstrak

This book analyses the interface between medicine and colonial society through the lens of gender. Based on hitherto unused primary sources the work traces how since almost the beginning of the nineteenth century the growth of hospital medicine in Bengal created a space, albeit small, for providing Western health care to female patients. It observes that, unlike in the colonial setup, before the advent of hospital medicine women were treated mostly by female practitioners of indigenous therapies who had commendable skill as practitioners. The book also explores the linkages of growth of medical education for women and the role of the Indian reformers as well as British administrators in this process. The manuscript tackles several crucial questions including those of racial discrimination, reproductive health practices, sexual health, famines and mortality, and the role of womens agencies and other organizations in popularizing Western medicine and health care. Thus this work, explores the different processes which contributed towards the shaping of the discursive domain of medicine with a bearing on womens health as well as highlights different dimensions of empirical developments. In the process it enriches our understanding of colonialism, gender, and politics of medicine in the nineteenth and twentieth century in a novel way.