

Disease, Desire, and Shame : How Tawaifs Became the Bad Girls of the British Raj

Word count: 24,796

SHRIYA RAI

Student number: 02118143

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Koenraad Bogaert

Academic Dissertation

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Global Studies

Academic year: 2022-2023

ABSTRACT

When the Tawaif of Lucknow, an icon of Mughal rule, envisioned as a beautiful, sensual, and cultural actor, rose in rebellion against the British Raj in the mutiny of 1857, it shook the core of colonial control from the native colony to the Westminster Parliament. This research engages with the politics of sexualized colonial politics by examining how the Tawaif became a signifier of decadence for the Empire, upon whose body the story of interracial contest, violence, and encounter was inscribed. The transformation of the British as colonial masters after the mutiny led to the refashioning of their rule and role in the subcontinent, making the control of the native population, especially the native women, the central concern of the British colonial future. As a figure of 'unsettledness' and deviance, the Tawaif became the cause for imperial anxiety, and the relationship between the Tawaif and the British Raj offers a window to deconstruct the sexualized colonial order in the colony. In foregrounding the Tawaif as a deviant, resistant actor, a case is made to challenge the signification of deviant subjects as marginal within the colonial processes. Instead, the research offers an alternative framework to position them as not just being 'constituted by' but also 'constitutive of' the frameworks of control and regulation that produce them.

Tawaifs as public women and artists became signifiers of sexualization and overindulgence of the native women, offering an opportunity for the colonial state to regulate, define, and codify them. This research will examine how the disciplining process of regulating the deviant Tawaifs was undertaken in the process of making her body a site of colonial control of forensics, setting her up as a subject of shame through morality campaigns, and finally tainting her memory by ensuring that her remembrance, history, and legacy remain tied to immoral/decadent/sexualized representations of her art. While this research is concerned with retribution, it also engages with the agency and resistance of the subjects. The Tawaifs are foregrounded as a deviant, resistant subject sustaining themselves within a changing milieu through their embodied resistance, creative/deviant ways of using their arts, but beyond all as an agent who constantly flouted the 'normal' to unsettle patriarchal/bourgeois/defeating systems both nationalist and colonial. Thus, in engagement with this research, three conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the Tawaif, a shifting category constituted by meanings in flux and invoked through aesthetic, legal, and ethical tropes, provides a crucial window into the contestations between colonialist and nationalist tropes in regulating the sexuality and deviance of female bodies. Secondly, while researching disciplinary schemes, it becomes clear that health/morality/sexuality did not exist as disparaged zones of control but crucially intersected for maintaining the colonial order. Thirdly, through the engagement with deviance as a productive analytical tool, the afterlife of colonial rule is brought to the fore, a reality constructed by surveillance, criminality, morality, and dissent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
CHAPTER 1: 'WHEN A TAWAIF REBELS'	4
1.1 'AND SUDDENLY, THEY REVOLTED'- WHY DID THE MUTINY OF 1857 MATTER?	6
1.2 'THE REVOLT OF THE NAUTCHNIS'- TAWAIFS, MUTINY, AND RETRIBUTION	8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 CULTURED COURTESAN: REMINISCING ARTISTIC PASTS	13
2.2 IMMORAL REBEL: CONSTITUTING THE TAWAIF AS A SUBJECT OF SHAME	17
2.3 GENDER AND EMPIRE	20
2.4 CONSTITUTING THE SUBJECT WITHIN SUBALTERN /MICRO-HISTORIES	23
2.5 RESEARCH IMPACT	26
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY- ENGAGING WITH DEVIANCE	30
3.1 NON-NORMATIVE BODIES AND DEVIANCE	31
3.2 DEVIANCE AND THE TAWAIF	33
3.3 STUDYING THE DEVIANT SUBJECT	34
3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	36
3.5 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH	37
CHAPTER 4: TAWAIF AS A SUBJECT OF SHAME: ENGAGING WITH THE IMMORAL SUBJECT	39
4.1 CONSTITUTING THE PROSTITUTE AS A 'SIGNIFIER OF DIFFERENCE'	41
4.2 'THEY DON'T BELONG WITH US'- IMAGINING A NEW NATION AND EXCISION OF TAWAIFS	44
4.3 MULTITUDE OF MORALITIES AND THE TAWAIF: CONCLUSION	47
CHAPTER 5: DISEASE AND DESIRE: MEDICINAL PRECEPTS TO REGULATE TAWAIFS	49
5.1 INSTITUTIONALIZING MILITARY PROSTITUTION	51
5.2 REGULATING DISEASED SUBJECTS	53
5.3 MANAGING DISEASE AND DEMAND: CONCLUSION	56
CHAPTER 6: REMEMBERING THE TAWAIF: THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION	58
6.1 CODIFICATION OF PROSTITUTION	59
6.2 ERASURE IN ARCHIVES	61
6.3 MEMSAHIBS AND TAWAIFS- THE CHASTE V/S THE OTHER?	64
6.4 ON PERFORMANCE, REPRESENTATION, AND CULTURE	66
6.5 REPRESENTATION IN CINEMA: VISUALIZING THE TAWAIF	69
6.6 'IMAGINING TAWAIFS' - CONCLUSION:	70
IN CONCLUSION:	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73

CHAPTER 1: 'WHEN A TAWAIF REBELS'

'Sexual relationships soldered together the invisible bonds of the Victorian Empire' (Hyam, 1990)

The stage was set for a mutiny against the British military officers by the native Indian sepoy in 1857. The military barracks turned into grounds for rebellion and dissent against foreign rule, distaste for Victorian morality, and nostalgia for a Mughal past (Blunt, 2000). While the mutiny is visibilised as situated within the cantonments and orchestrated between British and native sepoy, my concern is with the 'invisible resistance' that shaped the aftermath of the revolt. This research engages with the resistance shaped in the *bazaar* by the Tawaif that revealed the inconsistency and fragility of the British Raj, effectively rendering the omnipotence and homogenization of its constitution meaningless.

The subjects of my study were renowned performers and courtesans and were invoked as signifiers of the 'sophistication and splendor' of Lucknow's culture (Singh, 2014). They were trained in the artistic graces of singing and dancing, poetry, and elevated conversation and were authority figures of the Urdu and Persian languages (Sengupta, 2011). In their engagement with the Nawabs and nobility of Awadh, they received patronage, financial opportunities, political sway, and possibilities of unhindered social interaction- both aesthetic and sexual (Burman, 2021). Within Muslim courts, the Tawaifs were signifiers of syncretism- integrating Shia symbolism¹, revering Hindu rituals, and navigating through frontiers set by language, religion, and gender codes (Oldenburg, 1990).

The context of this research is based on the city of Lucknow and other nearby cities of the Awadh² province that functioned as the seat of Tawaif prominence. Lucknow was the 'haute couture of Indo-Persian culture' and a city that propelled aesthetics, diversity, integration, and finesse (Kaushik, 2019). The Tawaifs organized mehfiles or 'soirees'³ where their performances shaped the

¹Incorporation of Shia symbolism was both a need for the Mughal context they were operating in leading to the strategic inclusion of practices as a means for advancement and responding to the cultural necessity of their time.

² In the Awadh province, contestation between the British and native sepoy went on for over ten months. The capture of Lucknow by the Raj led to the fall of the last powerful Mughal seats of power (Oldenburg, 1990)

³ Soirees or mehfiles, formalized the Tawaif's identity as performers and also became the avenue to manage their art through profit and money collected through mehfiles (Qureshi, 2006, p. 312)

grand evenings of Lucknow, attracting viewers engrossed in the Tawaif's performance, charmed by her mannerisms, art, movement, and grandeur, thereby using their arts strategically for political and social gains (Burckhardt Qureshi, 2001). Their interaction and position within their milieu established them as '*bais and jaans*⁴' elite, refined, cultured women, leading to the production of the native 'cultural commons' effectively shaped by the context and spaces they occupied (Chanda et al., 2021).

British officials invited to the mehfil of the Tawaifs struggled to understand the lyrics, poetry, movement, gesture, or positionality of the Tawaif and effectively penned her as the '*nautch girl*⁵' - exotic, sexual, and public. European imagination and colonial accounts thereby were shaped by descriptions of the 'Oriental dancing girl,' which became an unwavering representation of the Tawaif and, by extension, a label for the East as a place of unhindered sexuality, decadence, immorality, and savagery (Neville, 1996). The conflation of the themes of natives being unhindered, deviant, and immoral with the proof of non-domesticated, sexual, free, and public native women became the moral basis of justifying the need for imperial measures to regulate, educate, and civilize the native populations (Levine, 2007). The struggle to comprehend the Tawaif was also formed by the fear of the 'unknown'; the possibility of deviance that their performance, persona, and publicness carried was met with fascination but also repulsion. To the British viewer, all the Tawaif offered was her titillating presence and sexuality, leading to their signification as 'public women,' hence prostitutes (Burman, 2021).

In the context of the presence of the British within this Mughal city space, it becomes crucial to identify their changing identities and responsibilities in the colony and how that transformed the relationship between the Tawaif and the Raj. In the 18th century, the British in the colony of the East India Company were mostly concerned with financial prowess, trade, and establishing a network of markets. Their presence was organized around two central aspirations - 'a lass and a lakh a day' (Ballhatchet, 1980, p. 2). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the East India Company started venturing into the 'political,' gaining leverage over Hindu and Muslim rulers and establishing 'puppet rulers' who would aid the profits of the Company (Pati, 2007). The

⁴ Self-assumed titles or given by patrons but significant to Tawaif identities.

⁵ Anglicized distortions of the Urdu/Hindi word *nach*, meaning to dance - hence literally 'the dancer' (Singh, 2014)

mutiny led to a shift of power from the Company to the proclamation of the Queen as the 'ruler of India', completing the transition from British as merchants to British as colonial masters, and the Company was solidified as the British Raj⁶ (Cohn, 1987, p. 645).

But when did the Tawaif become a signifier of dissent for the Empire, upon whose body the story of cross-cultural contest, violence, and encounter was inscribed (Burman, 2021)? By the mid-nineteenth century, the relationship between the British and natives was shaped by a dense nexus of gendered negotiations that managed the intimate relationships between servants, military associates, or sexual partners, molding the imperial fabric and setting the stage for a conflict that emerged with the mutiny of 1857 (Stoler, 1989). While British life in the colony was shaped by Orientalist, Victorian, and imperialist notions, the native populace struggled with alien discourses on legality, religion, education, morality, and gender. However, specifically in the context of the mutiny, the native sepoys were forgiven, and their resistance found an explanation, albeit flawed. On the other hand, the resistance of the Tawaif- the deviant, unhindered woman against the Empire was unacceptable and was framed under retribution.

The conflation of 'Tawaif as a prostitute' underlies the core concern of this research as it brings to the fore the politics of a sexualized colonial order in response to a militarized city space and the struggle to place public women characterized by confrontation, trouble, and freedom within the colonial design. The 1857 mutiny made Tawaif a central and visible figure in British India (Hubel, 2012). However, what was distinctly colonial in the control of the Tawaif, and how did it expose the broader politics of a sexualized Empire (Tambe, 2009)?

1.1 'And suddenly, they revolted'- Why did the mutiny of 1857 Matter?

The mutiny of 1857 began in Sepoy cantonments in Meerut and quickly spread across native sepoys deployed in various parts of British India. The sepoy's role as the 'cannon fodder of imperialism' against his own countrymen and his servile position within the army led to resentment against the colonial master (Habib, 1998). The mutiny was also a way to reminisce the old Mughal pasts, which is perhaps why when troops in Meerut took over their Cantonment, they

⁶ Literally means realm, rule, kingdom. The use of 'Raj', however signals British colonialism in the subcontinent.

marched straight to Delhi and declared the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar as the leader of the uprising (Bender, 2016). The resistance spread quickly across different walks of life, including peasants, artisans, laborers, landowners, etc., and across caste, class, and religious lines, leading to many historians qualifying it as the 'first war of independence against the British in India' (Pati, 2007).

Multiple reasons were attributed to the beginnings of the mutiny; the most quoted was the introduction of new greased cartridges within the army (Mukherjee, 1990). The greased cartridge was believed to be layered with beef/pork fat, and the soldiers were supposed to bite one end of the cartridge before loading it on the barrel. The complexity was that Hindu soldiers could not bite into the beef due to fears of pollution and disregarding the sanctity of their beliefs. Similarly, for the Muslim soldiers, contact with pork was forbidden (Pati, 2007, p. 1687).

Interestingly, the issue became a rallying call for unity between soldiers who saw imperialism as driving a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims and in pre-colonial India at large (Habib, 1998). However, it would be a misplaced assumption to centralize the mutiny on the question of the cartridge. While this issue ended up being the death knell in the subservience of military control, other factors were at play. There was strong disaffection against the British on account of missionary activities, the spread of churches across the length and breadth of the country, the destruction of the local Indian industries, and the takeover of native lands by the British through unfair practices of revenue generation, the fear of the disappearance of local customs/rulers/familiarity, and most of all of the racialized organization of the society that placed the natives in a state of constant subservience to the Raj (Mukherjee, 1990, p. 93).

The British, though, initially shocked at the turn of events and unable to meet the violence of the rebels initially, quickly gained control over the situation. The mutiny significantly formalized, ritualized, and spectacularised colonial authority in India as the quelling of the mutiny became a 'heroic myth' exemplified by the values of the Empire and secured through the triumph over native disloyalty (Cohn, 1987, p. 647). Moreover, it changed the dynamic between the Raj and the populace in a significant manner. Firstly, the mutiny itself revealed that the sepoys were not all 'faithful and true' and had dissented the subservience due to the undignified treatment of the Raj

and that the dissatisfaction could potentially destroy the European expansionism dream (Habib, 1998). Secondly, the spread of the mutiny beyond the cantonments into the native life, including the involvement of *Adivasis*⁷, low castes, and outcastes, made it significantly clear that the British were unaware of the constitution of the society and had undermined the sense of identity and brotherhood within the populace (Habib, 1998). Thirdly, the mutiny transformed the relationship of the colonial army in charge with the imperial crown and developed the recognition of the need for greater political control, surveillance, and institutionalization of rule through punitive institutions that came to be the policy of the Raj (Ballhatchet, 1980). Thus, the mutiny was not merely a military standoff between the sepoys and the colonial superiors but instead riddled with political, sexual, and gendered dynamics (De Groot, 2017).

The transformation of the British as colonial masters led to the refashioning of their rule and role in the subcontinent, making the control of the native population, especially the native women, the central concern of the British colonial future. While the public was put under militarised control, the British became concerned with the private lives of the natives, making the private 'politically charged' and open for contestation (Philips, 2007b). Under the organization of colonialism, civilization, commodity, consumption, and Christianity became moral and material goods marketed to order the colonial state and civilize the native population (Meiu, 2015). The question of 'female sexual honor' became a crucial trope for the colonial state, and thereby, it becomes imperative to understand how the Tawaifs threw a wedge into that colonial dream (Blunt, 2000)

1.2 'The revolt of the nautchnis'- Tawaifs, mutiny, and retribution

Within the historiography of 1857, there is a strong shift to grapple with subaltern histories and recover figures who participated in the rebellion but remained invisible from records (Singh, 2007). Tawaifs turned into conspirators against the British with the mutiny. They funded the revolt, their '*kothas*'⁸ were used as a hideout for the rebels, and they even went out in the field fighting British troops, attacking British civilians and other associated structures of power of

⁷ Invoked as people of tribes in the subcontinent, today it comes to define the indigenous people in India.

⁸ Establishments and places of residence of Tawaifs and sites of the cultural production of music owned by the Tawaifs who determined how the entertainment sessions would proceed (Qureshi, 2006)

colonial rule. Even though their combat against the British forces is not developed much in history writing, it becomes imperative to recognize that their 'pecuniary assistance' to the rebels and instigation of the revolt came to be used as offenses to punish them (Oldenburg, 1990).

With the quelling of the mutiny, the British focused on destroying all symbols associated with the unity of the mutineers. The Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, patron of the Tawaifs in Lucknow, was arrested and disposed of (Singh, 2007). A similar method of usurpation of the ruler, taking over wealth/properties, and destroying all associated motifs was undertaken across the sites of revolt. Similarly, the colonial state took over the properties of the Tawaifs and, in some cases, burned down the 'kothas,' took over their material wealth, and engaged in a campaign to destroy the Tawaif and her institution (Oldenburg, 1990). Not only did the British launch a moral campaign against the Tawaif, but also crucially pushed them out of 'art' into 'sex' (Chatterjee, 2016). With the loss of patrons, property, and resources to fend for themselves, Tawaifs and the colonial state entered a new relationship, that of patron/client. The cultural function of the '*kothas*,' as a place of art, was equated with a brothel; the earlier mode of patronage was recognized as 'feudal,' and their cultural pre-eminence became ways to entertain and satisfy the masculine virility of the Empire. Colonial corporeality, thereby, was a self-fulfilling prophecy; the subjects were ruled by violence, and violated bodies, by definition, became colonial (Rao & Pierce, 2001).

Tawaifs became signifiers of sexualization and overindulgence of the native women, hence the defiant, deviant 'other.' Moral panics and colonial anxiety were self-reproducing units, making it essential to punish the immoral subject (Gupta, 2011). Therefore, they came to be relocated from their private quarters into military cantonments (Legg, 2012a). When their cultural function was done away with, their body came to be used as a means to serve the British Soldiers (Ballhatchet, 1980). The campaigns to regulate her sexuality were extended to limiting her spatially, sexually, and morally by shifting her into the discursive formation of 'prostitute' (Mitra, 2020b). Moreover, focusing on the relationship between the Tawaif and Raj reveals how the colonial gaze dehumanized their profession and stripped them of their agency in the process (Oldenburg, 1990).

The production of the 'other body' of the Tawaif was a moral enterprise but also taxonomic, ethnographic, and disciplinary, executed as tactics of control by the colonial state (O'Hanlon,

1988). With its many mouthpieces- scientists, missionaries, doctors, and administrators the colonial state could transform its belief and conjecture about subjects from markers and metaphors into law by setting clear demarcations on gender/race/sexuality (Stoler, 1989). The analysis of transgressive bodies and acts by focusing on the Tawaifs and their relationship to the Empire highlights how deviance shook the colonial moral order. Furthermore, in engaging with the contours of the control of the Tawaif, it becomes apparent that the colonized were not a homogenized/stable/coherent group, and instead, their dynamic within the colonial design was constantly defined/maintained, tolerated/utilized, made visible/invisibilized.

The transformation of the Tawaif of the Mughal court to the '*nautchni*' of the British imagination and eventually prostitute of the colonial state teases out the material, political context of colonial control post-1857, a reality constructed by surveillance, criminality, morality, and dissent. The central question, thereby, is, what does looking at the deviant subjects of the Empire reveal about the colonial design? History did not end with the qualification of the Tawaif as a prostitute and deviant instead. At the same time, their signification remained obscure; attempts to suppress, conceal, and police them left tracks of the colonial relationship, guiding us to read this history against the grain and against the mediated colonial knowledge production (Jackson & Manktelow, 2015). Moreover, in identifying the crucial moment of 1857, this research will engage with the politics of the 'refashioning of the British body and whiteness' in the colony that made it distinct and crucial to the mission life and thereby produced the native others through discourses on morality, law, and medicine (Levine, 2007).

This research will examine how the disciplining process of regulating the deviant Tawaifs was undertaken in the process of making her body a site of colonial control of medicine, setting her up as being constituted by shame through morality campaigns, and finally tainting her memory by ensuring that her remembrance, history, and legacy remain tied to immoral/decadent representations of her art. The Tawaif is foregrounded in this research as a deviant, resistant subject sustaining themselves within a changing milieu and as a window to visibilise the anxieties of the Raj, the moral basis of early Hindu nationalism, and the co-production of discourses of control through the metropole/colony, native/colonial influences aimed at disciplining her

sexuality. The engagement with Tawaifs, who oscillated between a *nawabi*⁹ culture, trade-driven *nabobi*¹⁰, militarised colonial control, and emergent Hinduised nationalism, is not to qualify any characterization as being 'freer' and instead is aimed at highlighting how changes were embodied, accommodated, and resisted (Burman, 2021)

This thesis will highlight how the relationship between the Tawaif and the Raj was fraught with inconsistencies, contestation over control, and violence. Also, how utilizing the Tawaif as a 'public good' became colonial policy for the maintenance of the racialized, masculine, and moral design of the colonial Empire (Sengupta, 2011). The Tawaif, as a figure of 'unsettledness' and deviance, became the cause for imperial anxiety, and the relationship between the Tawaif and Raj thereby offers a window to deconstruct the sexualized colonial order in the colony (Singh, 2007).

To engage with the broad contours of the discussion I have laid out above, this research engages with one anchoring question followed by additional sub-questions to aid the research namely, **How did the Tawaif become the symbol of moral and political disorder for the colonial state, and why was controlling her 'deviant sexuality' crucial for the colonial order?**

- How was the Tawaif punished for her role in the mutiny of 1857 as a conspirator against the colonial state?
- How did the colonial state's relationship with the Tawaif as a 'client' impact her institution, and what does the dynamic reveal about the sexualized imperial order?
- How did the emergent middle class respond to the transformation of the Tawaifs into a prostitute and include them within the new nationalist community- both real and imagined?
- How can we read agency and dissent through the Tawaif's embodied resistance and sustenance beyond colonial India, and how does that disturb the victim/voiceless/vanquished trope in which they are invoked?

This research is limited to the 19th-century Mughal power centers of Awadh, Lucknow, Kanpur, and Banaras within the time period of 1857-1900, within what is understood to be the first half of

⁹ Culture of Nawabs in Mughal India

¹⁰ Early British missionaries and merchants were called 'nabobs'

the national struggle against the British in India (Pati, 2007). The organization of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 deconstructs the role of Tawaif through historiography in the literature review and positions them within debates of sexual politics and imperial control by engaging with the two tropes of their representation, *'Tawaif as a cultural agent v/s immoral other.'* In the third chapter, I engage with deviance as an analytic and grounding theoretical perspective for this research to understand the production of morality/norms/politics that engaged the Tawaif as a 'prostitute' and how using deviance as an analytic can help understand their embodied resistance. Finally, this research in the subsequent chapters (4, 5, 6) engages with a framework to understand the disciplining of the Tawaif by the colonial state and the emergent middle class through the co-production of discourses on Morality, Medicine, and Memory.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"The census and other such mechanisms did not describe so much as they fashioned, producing the very categories by which 'difference' could be hierarchically explained. Thus, colonial rule was justified, the Empire upheld, and sexuality/gender/race operating at the center of it all" (Levine, 2003, p. 200).

This literature review is organized into four parts. The first two parts discuss the historiography related to Tawaifs under the theme of 'cultured courtesan' and 'immoral rebel' with a section incorporating limitations of the scholarship produced through these representational canons. The third part of this literature review engages with the impact of the gendered intervention on the understanding of the Empire and the production of sexualities through an interaction between the metropolis and the colony. Finally, the fourth part of this literature review delves into the question of representation and history writing while engaging with micro-histories and subalternity approaches. This section is concluded with remarks on the impact of this research within the questions it aims to engage with but also, by extension, in the field of global studies.

2.1 Cultured Courtesan: Reminiscing Artistic Pasts

Veena Talwar Oldenburg's (1990) writing on Tawaifs is an excellent example of reminiscent histories that position the Tawaif and her arts as a cultural institution in pre-colonial India. Oldenburg argues that Tawaifs formed an essential and elite group of women known for their pre-eminence in culture, literature, poetry, music, and dance. Her research is based on fieldwork in Lucknow, one of the most renowned power centers of Tawaifs in India. She found Tawaifs codified in the civic tax ledgers of 1857-88 as 'singing and dancing girls.' Remarkably, they held considerable material wealth and, according to Oldenburg, were placed in the highest tax brackets in the city. The second crucial thread in her scholarship is establishing the relationship between the Tawaif and the British Raj after the mutiny of 1857. Tawaifs were seen as collaborators of the mutineers and were believed to have offered 'pecuniary assistance to the rebels.' Thus, when the British army usurped the throne of the Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, under whose patronage most of the Tawaifs resided, they became a victim of British retribution as well. Oldenburg illustrates the

seizing of spoils from the Tawaif '*kothas*'- an incredible list of 'gold ornaments, cashmere, jade, silver, etc. that the colonial state took over as war booty. The third important thread Oldenburg draws on is the shift between power between the pre-colonial Mughal state and the postcolonial British state and, with that, the end of royal patronage for Tawaifs where the state acted as a patron and benefactor and the development of a new relationship with the colonial state as patron and client. She recognizes that the dissent of Tawaifs was punished through a range of regulations by the colonial state, which ranged from heavy fines/penalties, taking over their material wealth, regulating their sexuality through the Contagious Diseases acts, and tainting their identity by identifying their arts with sexual indulgence, decadence, and deviance. Toward the end of her research, Oldenburg hints at how the dissent of the Tawaif did not lead the state to abolish the institution; instead, they found a utility for her body and set her up for the sexual satisfaction of the Empire, revealing the contradictory moral politics of the colonial state.

Drawing on Oldenburg's scholarship, Bano (2009) argues that the uniqueness of the institution of Tawaif and her arts was the intermixing of more traditional forms of artistic forms with pleasure. She argues, however, that engagement with pleasure and their sexual freedom or relationships could not be confused with ordinary prostitutes. The Tawaif's distinctiveness was in the patronship she had accessibility to, the cultural refinement she was engaged with, and the agency she possessed in choosing her patrons, managing her wealth, and accessing the public and private alike. Bano also makes an excellent point about the reverence of Tawaifs within and beyond the courts. She argues that they were present in the cultural celebrations of the elite folk but also in places of worship, marketplaces, etc., and had constant interaction with the 'common folk' and their women. Associating with the courtesans was seen as a matter of dignity. Bano points to how colonial rule ruptured the understanding of the Tawaif and her art. The British recognized the performances as an act of depravity and identified her as the '*nautch girl*,' making her function and being 'detestable, amorous and vulgar.' Furthermore, with the recognition of her unhindered sexuality and body utility, she was invoked as the prostitute- a category that came to include a range of women identified with deviance, leading to her being signified from dignity to shame.

Dang (1993) argues that the push into the realm of shame resulted from the shift from court patronage, which led to the downfall of women due to the lack of protection from their earlier

patrons. With the loss of lavish apartments and *kothas* they were used to, Tawaifs shifted into the 'bazaars' that resulted in them being forced into 'publicness.' Dang works out the different hierarchies between the courtesans in Lucknow- the Tawaif was the highest within the hierarchy and hence was in control of her sexuality, visibility, and patronage, followed by the more public woman known as the 'common prostitute' or '*randi*.' She points out how the colonial presence altered the frameworks of conceptualizing Tawaifs through legislation as prostitutes deliberately overlooking the hierarchies, distinctiveness, and lineage of their identity. Thus, the Tawaif, now introduced into the realm of prostitution, came to be recognized for her sexual labor-oriented service.

Rekha Pande (2018), while recognizing the cultural role and lineage of the Tawaif, positions them in the 'margins of the society.' She argues that even with their cultural, economic, and political role within the society, she always remained the 'other woman' and hence marginal. Pande interestingly also engages with the question of why women would choose the profession of Tawaifs and argues the path was a means of independence or avoidance of violent/degrading relationships. She argues that becoming a courtesan was the only path available for women who wanted financial independence and had to pay the price of becoming consorts of entertaining men and tending to their sexual pleasures. She creates a clear dichotomy in her research of woman as *wife* v/s *prostitute* and argues that even though both kinds of women serviced men, the wife was at the receiving end of less ridicule due to the domesticity of her existence.

In opposition to Pande, Jagpal (2009) writes about the courtesan as a 'liberated nautch girl.' She draws on their autonomous lifestyle through a range of 19th-century fiction/nonfiction that sets up the courtesan as a subject of envy for the '*memsahibs*.'¹¹ Jagpal also refers to Oldenburg's scholarships and posits the courtesans as being part of a 'counterculture to patriarchy' characterized by their layers of independence. To elucidate, she uses examples from the writings of Emma Roberts, who described the Tawaifs in a lucrative position of 'wealth, education, property, nonmarital sexuality' and draws the nautch girl in opposition to the white woman stuck in her Anglo-Indian home. Jagpal brings to light a range of accounts under the theme of 'Going

¹¹ The wives or daughters of high-ranking civil servants and officers in colonial India (Jagpal, 2009).

nautch girl' that challenged Victorian morality and the construction of the racialized subject of womanhood that functioned as a central tenet of the British colonizing mission. She points out how the British civilizing mission ended up as a moral ground to justify intervention into native women's lives by proving native savagery through instances of child marriage, sati, and infanticide but struggled to position the Tawaif within that trope. The reading of Tawaif as a liberated subject whom the emancipated white woman wanted to emulate to give up their own subjugated status disturbs the organization of colonial relationships.

- Limitations within the scholarship

Although from this range of scholarship, it becomes apparent that Tawaif histories are full of glorious accounts of their cultural role, contribution to the institutionalization and patronage of arts, and a crucial power center of the Mughal state. However, I briefly enumerate the limitations of this thematic scholarship. The description of Tawaifs as wealthy/free/sexual paints their history in one broad swoop. What of her contestations within the courts, the complexity of her accessibility within the public sphere, and the range of meanings that could have been ascribed to her and her arts beyond the elite circles she operated in? Moreover, in the context of the revolt, the scholars struggle to position her as an agent of resistance.

It is worth asking why the Tawaif is included differently within the scholarship on the mutiny than her fellow mutineers. While she is accredited for playing assistive roles to aid the revolt and is not recognized as a revolutionary or rebel. It is thus assumed that as her institution and existence were based on patronship, her political agency was synonymous with her patron. To elucidate, I highlight the example from Tripurari Sharma's (2005) play on Azeezunisa, a courtesan from Kanpur who revolted against the British army. Although the play is a mixture of fact and fiction, Sharma discusses how Azeezun's politics, resistance and nationalist acts of massacring British women and children were influenced by her lover and her intention to dress/act like the man.

I remain wary of associating moral definitions in understanding the existence, positionality, and political participation of women and setting them up as a 'cultured subject' and instead question how contextualizing them as a subject of their milieu, finding of ways to sustain themselves and

their shifting interactions with different patrons be understood. While consistently impressing upon the courtesan in her cultural milieu, the historian ensures that she remains defined by her cultural function and utility- to perform and to entertain. While subaltern scholars critique colonial policy and account for not fully recognizing the impact of the Tawaif and her institution, they forget how they are complicit in defining, limiting, and encoding her by her cultural function. The subaltern scholar thereby engages her as a subject of 'desire' and, in the process, reveals their own moral positioning. This point is crucial for a later claim in this thesis about the struggle of Tawaifs to self-define and represent themselves. Internalizing the shame and stigma associated with them led to attempting to disassociate from the arts they came to represent. As Kidwai (2004) argues, 'When Tawaifs did speak, they had to constantly reinvent themselves through polite myths.'

2.2 Immoral rebel: Constituting the Tawaif as a subject of shame

This line of scholarship focuses on the construction of the Tawaif as the 'immoral other' existing in opposition to both colonial and nationalist moralities. The reflections on the native women's morality and sexuality became a crucial tenet for knowledge production about her and establishing codification and regulation to control her.

As Lata Singh (2007) argues, the representation of the Tawaif as a public entertainer did not fit within the respectable 'Victorian' norms of the colonial state. Similarly, her publicness did not find resonance with the early Indian nationalists engaged in the production of a refashioned identity of their community as well as its women through the construction of the '*suhgrihni*'.¹² Singh argues that the 'commonness, everydayness, and ordinariness of the Tawaif led to their stigmatization of the 'other woman' in public discourse. Their accessibility beyond the rigid formation of the societal normative organization led to the conflation of their publicness with being a prostitute. This construction of the archetypal image of the Tawaif layered with value, morals, and shame-laden connotations has become the strongest trope of her representation.

Levine (2004) agrees with this thread of scholarship by arguing that within colonial discourse, the 'East' was invoked as the place of sexual promiscuity and decadence. Hence, the belief that as one

¹² Chaste/moral/pure Indian housewife

moved east, prostitution was common and did not 'offend native susceptibility.' The construction of prostitution as routine, everyday, and normal by the colonial state made it easier to utilize native women for their own needs without fearing having to explain themselves. Therefore, prostitution was constituted as a 'necessity and problem' and thus a convenient foil to explain and engage with the savagery of the natives.

The construction of the 'fallenness' of the Tawaif became most prominent with their involvement in the mutiny. Williams (2017) argues that the British began discouraging relationships with the Tawaifs and lost interest in their arts after the mutiny. Instead, they engaged in a campaign of disciplining by calling for 'de-eroticizing song genres, making nautch unpopular and making respectable women performers.' Williams elucidates through a pamphlet published by James Paton of the Baptist Mission Press. He wrote about the dancing girls as 'part of an industry spreading disease and immorality' while constituting the '*kotha*' as an institution to subjugate and exploit girls. One very engaging link that Williams developed is the birth of new cities with the growth of the colonial state, which in turn led to the emergence of a new middle class and the introduction of new technologies that further de-popularised old arts that the Tawaifs came to represent.

Rumana Mehdi (2021) discusses how the British definition of Tawaifs as 'uninhibited, decadent and feudal' shaped the emergent native middle-class discourse as well. Lucknow's Tawaifs, once the signifiers of the culture and prestige, transformed into the cause of its shame and stigma. The shaping of a new city was also defined by the distaste of the Tawaifs and the arts that were seen to be traditional and uncultured. Mehdi argues that the Tawaif cannot be placed either in an 'overly oppressed or a significantly feminist position' as her position within the changing society was full of contradictions. Mehdi successfully opens up the engagement to investigate Tawaif's histories as being constituted by inequalities, contradictions, and conjectures that lead to the production of her subjecthood.

It becomes imperative to recognize that sexual attitudes shaped the colonizer, as well as the subjects of the Empire. Ronald Hyam (1990) argued that sexual dynamics were the linchpin of the operation to expand the British Empire. Interestingly, Hyam argued that sexual relations between the British and the non-Europeans did more 'long-term good than harm to race relations' (p. 215).

His line of argument elucidates that sexual interaction was a crucial way to tackle fears of racial intermixing, suggesting that marriage was a solution to a more peaceful society. Through intermarriage and sexual relationships, he argued that the world could not be said to be worse off because of the sexual activity of the British in their Empire. Hyam's argument was subject to significant criticism, most of which was based on his imagination that sexual relations in the Empire were equal in the constitution. Mark Berger (1988) condemned Hyam's argument by critiquing it as a male fantasy based on Eurocentric, phallogocentric imagination that was not constituted by reality but served as a justification for colonization. In the same vein, Stoler (1997) argued that the basis of Hyam's argument was based on the Freudian notion of the West being sexually repressed. Colonization and the existence of colonies were seen as a 'revenge of the repressed' and became an open ground for Europeans to live out their fantasies. Stoler also crucially brings to attention the production of sexual fantasies and how it was not a matter of orientation but a subversive system to regulate sex and display imperial power. She highlights that the system while tending to male fantasies and desires, did not take into account the rights/agency/autonomy of the women involved and how many of the native women were forced into prostitution.

- Limitations of scholarship

The production of the Tawaif, as an immoral rebel, clearly owes its constitution to a multitude of factors ranging from notions of morality, modernity, disease, and power. However, this range of scholarship needs to respond to some crucial interlinkages of how that characterization comes about. Most scholars write about the production of the fallenness of the Tawaif as being attributed to colonial power. While there is recognition that, with the emergence of nationalism and the constitution of middle-class morality, British indignation and condemnation were taken on by the emergent elite. However, they struggled to build upon how meanings concerning the Tawaif and her deviance were constantly being produced/reproduced, and there was a coproduction of morality that constituted the Tawaif as a deviant. Secondly, while recognizing that 1857 was a crucial moment for the disavowal of the Tawaifs, it does not become entirely clear how the shift of the roles of the British in the colonies as emissaries to Mughal courts, merchants, colonial masters, and patrons of the Tawaifs also transformed their relationship.

Moreover, the position of Tawaifs in military establishments before the mutiny and after 1857, with them being forced out of their '*Kotha*' into the Cantonment, remains an open line of inquiry. Finally, with respect to the middle class that decided to distance itself from the deviance of the Tawaif, morality is offered as a crucial explanation for their condemnation. However, the undercurrent of the discourse of morality is also shaped by the change in the contours of the city, family and the introduction of new English arts like ballroom dancing that offered new influences for the middle class to engage with and reconstitute their own morality (Nevile, 1996).

2.3 Gender and Empire

The premise of this thesis is to engage with how gender forms a crucial lens to understand how empires and subjects identified as deviant, opening a window to articulate the morality, inconsistencies, and complexity of the changing dynamic between the colonizer/colonized. Feminist research is a praxis of demanding to foreground the unheard and the unseen, delve into questions of voice and representation, and attempt to deconstruct epistemology and methodology that leads to the production of a subject as marginal/voiceless/invisible (Rao, 1999).

As Ghosh (2022) argues, the concern with gender and Empire began with assessing the role of white women in colonies but has now gone beyond to delve into crucial questions of religion/caste/class/sexuality. Levine (2007) argues that to speak of gender is not merely to add on more historical protagonists and diversify the cast of colonial histories but is based on the exploration of social processes and power, using gender as an analytic. It opens a line of questioning to understand a set of relations that mutually constituted/produced/challenged categories that led to the control and organization of moral codes to govern societies. Gender thus exposes the fractures of the regimes and brings to the fore moments of resistance as well as the different material and cultural resources utilized to contest the Empire and its legitimacy (Cooper & Stoler, 1989).

Drawing from Mohanty (1988), one can argue that the analysis of gender intervention into empires can undo categories that lead to the production of hegemonic discourses and be used as a political

praxis to resist/subvert/ rethink legitimate scientific knowledge. How power itself is redefined/countered/supported within colonial relations of power can be analyzed. Moreover, the qualification of all reality as gendered is an act of contestation. As Lina Gordon (1991) argues, the constitution of the female experience as powerless is both false and impossible. However, important questions remain that highlight the challenges of engaging with gender.

Ghosh (2002) questions if the concerns of gender have also been taken on as concerns in other fields, such as military, labor, medicine etc. Secondly, how does one write about gender and colonialism without reproducing the same hierarchy that the scholarship aims to do away with? Finally, how to grapple with how gender history, although included within mainstream history writing, ends up becoming a marginal footnote to conventional imperial/national histories. By extension, I argue that the challenge of the scholarship is the significant lack of material to substantiate arguments and the position of vexed subjects like the Tawaifs within the imperial design. Moreover, within ambiguity and lack of sources, the historian becomes implicit in filling the gaps and writing histories that fit subjects within specific tropes.

However, feminist and gender history problematize group identification significantly Levine (2007). This complicates the representation of invocation of all men and women within colonial histories in a similar fashion and suggests hierarchization in how different subjects were included within the Empire. Moreover, the categories employed to understand gender histories are not fixed and are instead in flux. For instance, the production of 'wives, nurses, prostitutes' was for the utilization of specific political aims by the colonial Empire (Mitra, 2020a). The shifting categories of analysis also inform and reconstitute the social institutions, expectations, and morality that were taken as truisms for organizing societies (Levine, 2007). Finally, gender and women's histories seem to occupy particular lines of inquiry rather than impacting broader historical processes. This produces more respectable avenues of engaging with gender, such as with family, reproduction, domesticity, etc., and consequently produces respectable actors of gender histories versus the deviant. Beyond the broader analysis of how gender is impactful, my question is, how does gendered colonial scholarship support engagement with deviant subjects? Women's behavior, demeanor, and position within native societies became the fulcrum to produce knowledge about the society at large. The understanding of the 'other' and labeling them has been constituent of

binaries like black masculinity/white masculinity, white femininity/brown femininity possible (Levine, 2007).

The generation of anxieties is racial/sexual/class-based, and it becomes the justification for rule, authority, and subservience of the 'other' and as unrestrained sexuality becomes a danger for the Empire, it becomes imperative to regulate deviant subjects and outcasts (Stoler, 2010). Not only were they delineated as a danger, but they were also constituted as the subject of reform. Thus, bad sex/wrong sex/deviant sex offered up subjects who could be saved by the Empire and become examples of their altruism (Levine, 2007). Colonialism and sexuality remained inextricably tied to produce discourses of economy/profit, politics/pleasure, and reform/desire (Meiu, 2015).

The impact of this scholarship on Tawaifs comes about in complex ways. The control of the deviant Indian Tawaif did not just have an impact on the Empire in India but was crucial in the constitution of whiteness and control across locations of colonization (Hyam, 1990). The control over women's sexuality, thus, was not limited to a handful of administrators in India but was constituted by complex contestation between the Westminster Parliament, local authorities, and women themselves (Burton, 1994). In British India, the needs of the Empire took precedence, and the agreement was to determine how to discipline but accommodate deviant subjects such that sexual liaisons were encouraged but monitored, seen as unacceptable but tolerated, and operated from a distance but also physical proximity (Levine, 2007).

It is true that historians need to know more about women and other understudied genders to recuperate what has been lost in our attempt at writing specific histories (Ghosh, 2002). The burden, however, does not lie in investigating colonial sources but also in crucial moments of Indian nationalist historiography that makes sweeping claims of women participating in the freedom struggle in the second half of the resistance (1900-1947), using respectable women as examples of a chaste history and pushing the others, like the Tawaifs into paradigms, that can be marginalized (Sangari & Vaid, 2006). The strength of gendered imperial history is that, in doing away with conventional knowledge, the guarded constructions of narratives and discursive homogenization are threatened. Moreover, with the trans-disciplinary engagements and global histories, the sharing of knowledge, methods, and intricacies of power are revealed to engage

critically with the Imperial and its many lives. Finally, to recognize that in an attempt to rewrite histories and save the marginal subject, there lies the danger of constructing them as 'rebellious heroines,' which not only does away with the complexity of their position but also reveals the reductive conceptions of understanding female agency (Nair, 1994).

2.4 Constituting the subject within Subaltern /micro-histories

My final concern with this literature review is to engage with recovering the gendered colonized subject as produced in historical writing. How do we engage with the possibility of the Tawaif to self-explain and represent herself? Tula (2014) argues that women's historiography positions the Tawaif as a vexed character with Indian modernity. She points out that even though the Tawaif is of interest across various sources of knowledge production, the dearth of literature to support that engagement is unsettling. However, these multiple sources produce the Tawaif as a monolith product of history that can be traced and written about easily across time and space. Mohanty (1988) warned of precisely this discursive homogenization that claims to represent objective knowledge about the subject and asks essential questions of how the articulation of the relation between woman as a cultural/ideological/composite 'other' constituted through scientific/literally/juridical/medicinal discourses be integrated with women as the actual material subject of their collective histories.

To position the Tawaif as a complex actor reveals how the colonization's gendered methods were not foreordained but instead derived meaning through interactional processes. Hence, 'sexuality,' 'race,' 'nation,' and 'morality' were not cohesive categories but remained open for critical engagement (Morgensen, 2012). Rethinking Tawaif histories in this manner offer the radical possibility of engaging with an actor who was not a victim of colonial processes but instead was constitutive of them. Critically analyzing the subject production of the Tawaif opens up this research to a reflexive engagement within the framework of postcolonial resistance and scholarship in engaging with questions of morality, power, agency, subjectivity, and epistemology that constitute a subject. As Asher (2017) argues, postcolonial scholarship offers anti-colonial resistance possibilities in two ways. By analyzing the emergence of the modern world shaped by

colonial imaginations and the Eurocentric forms of knowledge production that explain it and by using scholarly and academic analysis to decolonize, liberate, and rethink justice within colonial histories. I engage with two crucial forms of postcolonial representational paradigms- micro-histories and subaltern history writing. Here, the attempt is not to pit one against the other but instead to engage with how both these paradigms bring to attention the complex and dynamic conceptions of agency, thereby offering the possibility of rethinking subjects and subjecthood within colonial histories.

Tula (2014) engages with the challenges of constituting the subject through minority history writing attempts. There are significant struggles with micro-histories, such as constructing histories of groups that have not left behind sources and how one writes histories of suppressed groups and engages with the vexed relationship between the history/historian/historiography within these processes. Hinchy (2017), however, suggests that micro-histories can reveal why particular deviant bodies were recorded and archived at specific times. Another challenge with micro-history is the fusion of its undertaking with a good history project. The expression micro-history, according to Chakrabarty (1998), has incorporated in one sweeping gesture all who can be constituted as being under-represented and invisibilized. While essential, the struggle for inclusion and representation is also political, and who is afforded the status of being a minority, when, how, and how are their narratives included highlight how micro-histories are only one way to represent. To elucidate, I use the example of the British colonizing mission in India to emancipate women, the discourse and policy heavily rooted in that version of racial superiority, limited liberation of specific women constituents, and their strategic representation as victims. As they became protectors of native women, or as Spivak (2003) famously argued, *'White man, saving the Brown women from Brown men,'* they did not extend the same emancipation project to the Tawaifs. While women were subjugated under colonialism, there are more questions to be asked about which women, on what accounts, for what purposes, and what were the means of the subjugation.

Now that I have invoked Spivak, engaging with subaltern history, writing, and representation of the Tawaifs becomes imperative. Spivak's (2003) significant contribution to subaltern studies and postcolonial scholarship at large remains her analysis of the question of representation. She charted out two modalities of thinking about representation- as 'constitution of' subjects of interest

and 'speaking for' the marginalized and the subaltern. She also highlights how the question of representation within history writing offered through either paradigm remains, at best, necessary but impossible.

Leela Dube (1986) confronted the assumed invisibility of women due to the production of invisibility by external agents (planners, policymakers, anthropologists, historians) and insiders for whom women's invisibility remained a result of the cultural/traditional organization of societies. This, within the internal/external knowledge production, women emerged as wives/mothers, private actors, who were excised from politics and production. The subaltern history research within South Asian historiography dealing with British colonialism engaged with the production of dominant male orthodoxies- colonialist and nationalist and their interaction/imagination/integration that produced the woman as 'subaltern' (Sangari & Vaid, 2006)

In postcolonial history, the 'subaltern' was drawn from the proletariat- the working class devoid of mainstream power and privilege, subject to the cultural/political hegemony of the ruling class. Hence, the invocation of all marginal groups in one breath- peasants, laborers, Dalits, and women as a monolithic, voiceless group (Dang, 1993). The subaltern history group remained inattentive to gender in organizing their criticism against colonial history (Currie, 1998). Subaltern has been turned into a metaphor and an exercise in positioning actors hierarchically by situating them within the accessibility gained to relative privileges with the colonial state. Although, as O'Hanlon (1998) argues, the invocation of the subaltern, by virtue of its radical practice, refutes assimilation and rejects the known by questioning social knowledge production. Additionally, as Prakash (1992) argues, subaltern scholarship attempts to uncover the blind spots/silences/anxieties that conventional history writing misses out on.

Subaltern history projects immediately characterize Tawaifs as the 'most subaltern' and, in that, begin to explicate their role as passive/voiceless/ripped of agency without engaging with the role of the postcolonial scholar in the production of epistemic violence that invisibilizes the Tawaif (Sengupta, 2014). Furthermore, while dealing with subaltern history accounts, the aim is to contribute to the paradigm of understanding historiography as a site of knowledge production and question the basis, reflexivity, and positionality of scholars engaged therein. Finally, the aim is not

to condemn postcolonial scholarship per se but also to think beyond its existence as revolutionary by virtue of being postcolonial and to understand the politics of respectable history writing that invisibilizes Tawaifs or chooses to produce her as a fragment of her identity.

This research attempts to move beyond the binary representational paradigm that does not offer space for a complex figure like the Tawaif, who cannot be merely reduced to a passive, helpless, other status waiting to be rescued by the historian. In an attempt to write about the Tawaif through the lens of deviant sexuality, the endeavor highlights how engagement with sexuality remained crucial to the consolidation and expansion of the Empire. Moreover, in the accommodation/policing/shaming/invisibilizing dynamic that the colonial state set out for the Tawaif, the contradiction of fascination and utility of native sexualities, yet the need to dismiss and discipline it, comes to the fore. Thus, the production of the Tawaif as the native prostitute remained mediated by colonial knowledge production, and prohibition was organized through legal, moral, and forensic discourses that marked their body as signifiers of difference and legitimized colonial rule. My research, by extension, looks at the native elite responses to coloniality through the figure of the Tawaif and how the search for respectability, vision for a new nation, and the attempt at creating a class of respectable women intersected with colonial tropes to distance the Tawaif from the nationalist imagination. This thesis also attempts to go beyond resistance as a 'speech act.' Instead, it looks for moments of embodied resistance of the Tawaif and the complex, creative, and devious ways in which Tawaifs sustained themselves. Going beyond the production of silences in archives, codes, and documents, this research observed that the study of women's history is not only as good as its sources (Nair, 1994).

2.5 Research Impact

This research is more than just an attempt to merely fill the blanks between the disparaged historiography of 1857. Instead, it is an attempt to engage with the mutiny of 1857 and its afterlife as a turning point for the British Raj to deal with native subjects. The emergence of native resistance, specifically the resistance of the deviant Tawaif, constituted her as a criminal for the colonial state as she came to be explained by all kinds of vices, social/sexual/medicine, hence an appropriate subject to punish. I lay out the framework of controls through engagement with

different chapters on morality, medicine, and memory. While I engage with the colonial move and imperial control, I also attempt to engage with a native susceptibility and emergent Hindu nationalism that contributed to the coproduction of the discourses mentioned above. This research is fresh in its attempt to lay out a broad explanation of the global processes to qualify the Tawaif as deviant, bring together native/colonial morality, and engage with the possibilities of the Tawaif to represent herself beyond the propaganda of erasure.

This research challenges the signification of deviant subjects as marginal within the colonial processes. Instead, it offers an alternative framework to position them as not just being 'constituted by' but also 'constitutive of' the frameworks of control and regulation that produce them. I undertake a study that identifies how the Tawaif remained a constant cause of anxiety for the colonial state and in their negotiation with the Tawaif; this research contributes to scholarship that engages with the masculine constitution of the Empire. Additionally, it brings to light how sweeping conclusions cannot explain the relationship with the native female subjects. Instead, in the interaction with the Tawaifs, the inconsistencies/hierarchies/utilities through which the native women are put to use within the colonial design are investigated. It is this dynamic within the colonial Empire that tolerates/abuses/accommodates the Tawaif.

This study has draws on and impacts the field of global studies significantly. As such, the production of Tawaif as a deviant in the British Raj is not a local tale of criminality and retribution. Instead, it is the product of colonial sexuality research linked to the global imaginations of exotic bodies that have a postcolonial afterlife and is reproduced through discourses on excessive sexuality (health/development), morality (third-world immorality and nativity), and difference (unequal distribution due to differential capacities (Meiu, 2015). Moreover, as Ann Stoler (2010) argues with the organization of 'imperial sexual circuits,' the connectivity between the development of sexual knowledge, norms, and morality is co-produced in the metropolis and the colony, highlighting how various spatialities produced imperial sexual networks.

Another line of scholarship that connects Tawaifs to broader colonial processes is the engagement with the politics of codification/classification/enumeration that the colonial state employs to

signify the Tawaifs as prostitutes. The production of taxonomies of colonial order was not a benign exercise but instead had significant political consequences, the changing status of colonial corporeality thus revealing multiple techniques to control the colonized body (Rao & Pierce, 2001). Amrita Pande's (2020) scholarship on the production of 'fallen woman' across the Empire is one way to engage with the codification in a more transnational, trans-imperial fashion by identifying which women, at what points, were constituted as deviants within colonial regimes. Colonial regimes not only reproduced people but also reproduced ways of life (Cooper & Stoler, 1989).

Within feminist studies, looking at the Tawaif also becomes an important point to disturb the trope of the exceptionalism of Western women/Western values. The retelling of the Tawaif histories does not simply end with the comfortable narrative of British women's superiority and the reifying of the 'Third World woman' as a passive/infantilized victim (Jagpal, 2011) Instead, it puts into question how feminist scholarship has reproduced and written about women in the colonies and represented them. Instances in this research will highlight how first-world women came to the rescue of Tawaifs by speaking for them as 'sisters united in struggle' (Stoler, 1989). The sustenance of these tropes within global feminist politics today is another thread worth engaging with.

Thirdly, the research will consistently draw attention to the politics of history writing in the production of deviant subjects. While most marginalized/subaltern groups struggle to find records, testimonials, and writings that situate them within the milieu. It is worth engaging to identify alternative methods to go beyond the archive and find ways to reconstruct the subject beyond written sources. However, it becomes imperative to mention how subaltern scholarship remains complicit in filling the gaps for deviant subjects, like the Tawaifs, and in the process, signifying her to specific realms and monolithic discursive tropes of understanding. This scholarship also engages with a postcolonial afterlife of colonial knowledge production and the asymmetries introduced in colonial statistics, records, and policies in their engagement with caste/class/gender/religion that the postcolonial state took on to police, explain, and restrict populations. Finally, this research is an attempt. Perhaps a radical one to write about women who resist. The Tawaifs sustained themselves as an artist, through their flesh, remembrance of their

voice and movement, but beyond all as an agent who constantly flouted the 'normal' to unsettle patriarchal/bourgeois/defeating systems that could contain them.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY- ENGAGING WITH DEVIANCE

Anne McClintock describes a map drawn by a Portuguese trader, Jose de Silvestre, in 1590. The map depicts the trajectory to the treasure chambers of King Solomon's mines in South Africa as a journey across a female bodily shape. The male explorer must pass between the "breasts" to eventually find the treasure in the "vagina." The symbolic moment of penetration serves here as a metaphoric representation of the colonial conquest (McClintock, 1995, p. 4).

The control over sexuality within the colonial state was not only a moral concern but was leveraged to produce medico-legal discourses that, in turn, produced new iterations of power, control, and disciplinary tactics (Chatterjee, 1989). Concubinage, prostitution, and relationships with natives fell into disfavor with the standardization of colonial administration (Stoler, 1989). 1860 onwards, the crucial concern with sexuality was not incidental; instead, it was used to characterize 'primitive promiscuity' as a crucial feature of Victorian morality and constitute it in opposition to 'native animality' (Callaway, 1993). Thus, amongst all other spheres, it became imperative to triumph over the natives sexually. Sexuality appeared most often in three areas of colonial rule and was invoked parallelly in the metropole and colony- sexualized images/stereotypes, masculinity/sexuality of armed forces, and the behavior of the colonizer/colonized (Aldrich, 2016).

The British Raj, post the mutiny, centralized power by regulating/containing behavior that was identified as characterized by dissent, divergence, and deviance. The production of the Tawaif as deviant was a new code to justify the violence to contain her. As Megan Vaughan (1983) argues, there was a constant need to produce a new language of inferiority when race provided the master code for operationalization. However, in engaging with deviance as a productive analytical tool, the discretion and deceit of the empire to engage/hide/utilize transgression becomes visible. Thus, behaviors that could throw a spanner in the intellectual works of colonial design could be qualified as deviant (Jackson & Manktelow, 2015)

I foreground the dissent and deviance of Tawaifs against the British Raj to understand the dynamic of turning them into subjects through complex inclusion/ exclusion processes through

surveillance, definition, and regulation. Another concern of this chapter is to delve into the transformation of the Tawaif from a *nautchni* to eventually a prostitute and explore the underlying power dynamic that leads to this slippage to manage their 'transgressive sexuality.' In engaging with deviance as social transgression, there is engagement with the structures of morality that constitute it as such, but also the focus is on subcultures and subjectivities of those who break down colonial structures of rule (Jackson & Manktelow, 2015).

Scholars have argued that the production of genders and nations are signifiers of difference and are constructed around social relations of power that are hierarchical, racialized, and deeply political (Sinha, 2000). The invocation of Western bourgeois notions of Victorian morality to order civilization and colonization effectively came to be the fulcrum to measure the savagery/difference/deviance of the natives. The engagement with deviance reveals how it has been invoked across time and space and explains a range of actions, behaviors, and moralities, thereby exposing in its iteration the constitutive power that leads to its utilization. The threat of deviance itself reigns in panic- both moral and political (Gupta, 2011). The move to deal with panic results in - the definition/codification/ classification of the deviant and eventually finding means to regulate them (Pande, 2020). This scheme sounds all too familiar for the Tawaifs and how their flouting of boundaries of normalcy, morality, and loyalty by the yardstick of the colonial regime sets them as being constituted by all forms of deviance- social, sexual, criminal, and medicinal.

3.1 Non-normative bodies and deviance

To engage with the body as a site of resistance, its constitution as a site of oppression becomes crucial. Foucault is invoked across discourses on sexuality to grapple with the understanding of 'non-normative' bodies and their relationship with governmentality. Through Biopower, deviant bodies are subjugated, and the production of 'docile bodies' rests on 'using, transforming and improving it' (Pylypa, 1998). The body in question is regulated through state apparatus and 'self-disciplinary' practices through which the process of self-subjugation takes place. Self-monitoring is, therefore, constitution by disciplining and surveillance through which individuals monitor themselves while attempting to fit within the moral, normative codes of the society (Long, 2018).

A second thread of the Foucauldian argument is the maintenance of the political order through the production of the 'docile body.' through punitive institutions. State-instituted institutions of police, prison, education, family, etc., are utilized to bring the deviant body under the state's gaze and regulate them. The production of 'useful bodies' rests on creating a system whereby 'disciplining, optimization, regulation, and integration' are utilized as mechanisms of control (Foucault, 1977; cited in Long, 2018). The connection between knowledge and power forms the third thread of his argument, which is the articulation of power as a productive process and the subsequent understanding of the production of knowledge and desire. This relationship points out how the discourses produced out of systems of knowledge through medicine/morality/criminality/psychiatry are not objective or neutral but instead offer a window to understand specific interests, motivations, and conventions that sustain systems (Foucault, 1980; quoted in Pylypa, 1998).

I find here Ann Stoler's discussion on the history of sexuality very productive (Stoler, 1995). Stoler argues that European discourses on sexuality were not charted in Europe alone. She suggests that Foucault missed out on how racialized bodies become key sites to produce a discourse of European sexuality and the resultant characterization as a 'healthy, vigorous, bourgeois' body invoked across the empire (p. 2). The tracing of the process of production of sexuality through the imperial route not only underscores the singular motivations, influences, and morality that constitute European systems but opens the discussion on how native interactions and influences through the 'circuitous' imperial routes impact the understanding of sex (p.7). Secondly, she highlights how the discourses on sexuality are not merely employed to define the behavior and moralities of the elites but also recognize the 'marginal members' of the body politic in their definition of what they represent v/s what they condemn. The constitution and reconstitution of sexual morality effectively redraw the boundaries of communities, races, and civilizations. Here, engagement with deviance as constituted by marginalized bodies opens the space to recognize that they were not merely 'peripheral to the activation of morality but instead constitutive of it' (p.11).

This brief engagement with Foucault is an attempt to grapple with the use of sexuality both as a 'result and instrument' within the colonial design. Moreover, the focus on deviant sexualities can

offer new ways to articulate the entangled futures of the bourgeois/marginalized, metropole/colony, chaste/deviant.

3.2 Deviance and the Tawaif

Representation, argued Said, is never 'free floating' and instead is utilized in the domestic economy of the society (quoted in Burton, 2004). The production of primitiveness and decadence of the Eastern woman became essential signifiers to refer to the savagery, sexuality, and deviance of their cultures. Mitra (2020a) argues that deviance is not an attempt to characterize historical subjects as just that. However, it opens up the possibility to gauge how deviance and its delineation become integral in the constitution of the colonial knowledge economy and to engage with the diversities of ideas/thoughts/behaviors that flouted moral boundaries of colonial systems of knowledge. I argue, by extension, that the foregrounding of the Tawaif into the realm of deviance helps to read dissent in her being instead of ascribing her to a 'victim' of the colonial and nationalist moral systems of control. Furthermore, engaging with deviance also invites an investigation into the underlying norm, morality, and politics of the time that constitutes the subject as deviant.

For instance, in her research, Hinchy (2014) points out how '*Hijra*'¹³ households and '*Kothas*' were understood as environments of 'deviant domesticities' by the colonial state. The presence of extra procreative/non-procreative sexuality blurred the lines between biological and nonbiological kinship and hence became a source of confusion and anxiety for the empire. The deviant thus existed as a threat to all that is known, contained, and regulated to maintain normativity and control in the organization of colonial society (Jackson & Manktelow, 2015).

The height of the British colonial state and the fractures in rule exposed through anti-colonial movements like the mutiny of 1857 led to considerable fears amongst the colonial machinery of losing control over subjects. Deviant sexuality and the production of it is tied deeply to the political transformations of a given period. The 19th century, for instance, was the period for British expansionism and parallelly also the period for the development of laws and penal

¹³ invoked in this research to signify 'eunuchs' and 'intersex' individuals

structures to govern the native populace. As Tambe (2009) points out, the laws associated with codification, regulation, and anti-trafficking can clearly be tied with colonialism's high/low points. Sexuality became a crucial concern from the Westminster Parliament to the colony because of the dissent of native women, the venereal disease and death of British soldiers, and the lack of colonial control over its subjects (Levine, 2007). The dilution of racial superiority, fears of miscegenation, and the consequences of interracial sex were seen as the collapse of racial difference, which, if left unregulated, could lead to the end of the empire (Tambe, 2009, p. 165).

The prostitute became a signifier of difference and visible deviance against normativity, control, and loyalty to the empire. While I delve into the discussion later, it is essential to highlight that all women flouting norms of conjugal domesticity or seen to be deviants came to be categorized as prostitutes by the state. Mitra (2020b) argues that the term and its definitional fluidity demand a history of its own. The prostitute thus became a coherent subject of study and regulation but, in fact, encompassed ambiguities, multiplicity of meaning, and contradiction in its usage. This discursive homogenization made her the poster child to be invoked in debates about race, morality, disease, and religion. The native prostitute came to be seen as an amalgamation of all four: disease, vice, filth, and rebellion (Chatterjee, 2016).

Thus, the use of deviant female sexuality and the foregrounding of the Tawaif in that space accounts for an investigation into the 'surplus of ideas, moralities, classification' that led to her marginality (Mitra, 2020a). Investigating the category and process of its production also offers the possibility to uncover a range of history of diverse groups of women who, under one swooping colonial gesture, came to be defined as being diseased/dangerous/deviant/unbound.

3.3 Studying the deviant subject

Sexuality is a dense transfer point for relations of power, claimed Foucault (quoted in Saria, 2022). The negotiations between the state and sexuality are visible in the formal public institutions and the private sites constituted by sexual relations. Saria (2022) makes a rather interesting point about the incompleteness of the state's project on sexuality and argues that in the face of desire, state control can easily be drained. My concern in this section is to engage with the process of writing

histories of sexuality that unsettle colonial knowledge systems while decolonizing methodologies and engaging with alternative ways of locating the deviant subject.

Arondekar (2014) argues that marginality, loss, and disenfranchisement constitute the common currency while engaging with the history of sexuality. Pertaining to our analysis of the Tawaif and undoing entanglement with specific tropes of representation remain crucial. How do we recuperate the histories of minority collectives who deal with the loss of evidence that could help locate their lost bodies, texts, and evidence (Tula, 2014)? As Ruby Lal (quoted in Arondekar, 2014) has argued, 'history can never escape the question of history itself.' The attempt at historical recovery provides an analysis of the truth effects of records and the impact of regimes in establishing specific kinds of knowledge as truth. Colonial archiving becomes a power process that has multiple effects on diverse bodies. The seamless narrative of the archive as the source of knowledge production fails to reveal evidence for the Tawaif, who exists between confused but continuous systems of representation as her meanings remain in flux. Shifting the focus from the archive as fact to understanding the multi-vocal existence of its production can reveal the encounters that lead to its organization.

Tula (2014) argues that the courtesan cannot be understood through a singular discourse or a stable product of history but instead is produced through the intersection of multiple discourses. As the Tawaif takes on different lives, from the *nautchni* to the prostitute, there are underlying processes and materiality at work that lead to her representation. Furthermore, undoing the formal structure of the codes that hold the histories of these subjects and establishing them as cohesive constituents leads to a loss of the dynamism and contradiction suggested above. The removal of the Tawaif from culture and her reconstitution into sex point out the complexity of the discursive formation that makes/unmakes/remakes her to the satisfaction of the colonial and later nationalist interests (Williams, 2017). The Tawaif then comes to be produced through an interlocking of motives- regulating her sexuality, restricting her movement, tainting her professional but also finding ways to utilize her for her body and being for colonial interests.

The understanding of Tawaifs as deviant subjects also offers up the opportunity to engage with the relative continuity and sustenance of their representation, the continuity of which constantly offers

the possibility to undo what we already know about her history. Here, Tula's (2020) suggestion of not making pompous claims to emancipate her or to construct her within a female tradition becomes essential. The possibility to engage with the Tawaif is to engage with the various means of representation that sustain them to understand all that has been unsaid, hidden, and removed. In writing about Tawaif histories, therefore, the researcher will always have to respond to the question of how to rouse the subject who remains situated in the oppressive, discursive memory (Mishra, 2016).

3.4 Research Methodology

This research is developed with secondary sources and involves reusing pre-existing qualitative data to relook at the debates around Tawaifs while introducing a new framework to comprehensively understand the mutiny's impact on them. As Heaton (2008) argues, looking at secondary sources centrally offers up two possibilities- to investigate or introduce new research questions or verify the findings of previous research. With my intervention, I attempt to do both; my research deconstructs the Tawaif in historiography and attempts to foreground her in the realm of deviant sexuality to understand the processes of disciplining her after her dissent against the British Raj in 1857. This research attempts to examine the production of discourses about the Tawaif through her constitution as an immoral, dirty, sexually promiscuous prostitute, signifying the decadence and savagery of the colonized.

Most literature used to engage with my proposed research questions has been developed with a feminist methodology. The basis of the methodology is to uncover the impact of patriarchy and how it impacts the lives, histories, and power of subjects (Atkinson, 2017). Additionally, the feminist methodology also deconstructs categories of knowledge production, such as morality, modernity, and sexuality. It instead presents them as malleable categories and suggests that they remain in flux and are constituted by dominant power relations based on their normativity, morality, and understanding of the world (Smilde & Hanson, 2018).

Deconstructing the categories of knowledge production also aids the research in gaining insights into the production of deviance and its interactional possibilities. A feminist-informed inquiry into

literature thereby shifts the focus towards the constitution of private relations, for they become the cause of charged political posturing. Not only does the literature employ connections between gender and empire, but it also brings to light the hierarchical reordering of native women based on their utility to the empire. The undoing of the virile, masculine projection of the empire through gendered conceptions shifts the analysis from a simple power relationship from the metropolis to the colony. Instead, it engages with the radical possibility of how marginalized subjects determine the meanings, normativity, and limits of the empire.

I also attempt to draw on alternative sources through movies, novels, songs, and poetry, through which I attempt to identify creative ways that sustain Tawaifs beyond historiography in imagination, arts, aesthetics, and beyond. The organization of this thesis into chapters around morality, medicine, and the memory of Tawaif histories highlights that power production and hegemonic pasts are no longer foregone conclusions but instead are open for contestation and renegotiation.

3.5 Limitations of Research

A significant limitation of this research is the dearth of available historiography about Tawaifs. The bibliography of the literature referred to in the thesis will highlight how the research on Tawaifs is, at best, a budding area of research, and a logical explanation is the need for primary sources to construct and engage in writing histories of Tawaifs. Although the secondary sources I have referred to are all in English, this limits the possibility of materials to engage with. For future research along with archival sources, it is imperative to engage with sources in Hindi and Urdu to look at material within the north Indian region of Lucknow and neighboring cities.

Secondly, my research is limited to the Awadh region (Lucknow and nearby cities), which was a crucial center of the mutiny and Tawaif presence. I do not engage with the possibility of political engagement and relationships between the Tawaifs and the British Raj in other parts of the country, and it remains an open question to determine how the local contextualities of religion, caste, class, language politics could change the broad arguments I lay out in my research.

Thirdly, my research looks at some cultural sources in the form of books, poetry, music, and films; however, much more remains to be said about the production of Tawaif histories within the cultural sphere and how arts and aesthetics open a possibility to step beyond historiography to write about Tawaifs. However, the period I engage with is from 1857-1900, which remained a restricted period for the circulation of mediums of entertainment. It was only after 1900 that the introduction of technologies into middle-class households changed the scale of art production. In drawing attention to alternative sources, it is a possibility that I read agency or exaggerate it beyond the framework of its constitution.

Fourthly, I only briefly referred to missionary relationships and dynamics with the Tawaifs, and that remains a crucial link to understanding how missionaries took on the civilizing mission of the British and their anxieties related to the Tawaifs. My research also selectively brings about the role of feminist collectives who were a crucial source to understanding the representations and politics related to the native women of India beyond the interests of the masculine empire. Finally, this research could have delved deeper into the politics of an emergent Hindu nation and the othering of the Muslim Tawaif as the trope of all evil within that dynamic. However, I am hopeful that the identification of these research threads will remain open questions for me to engage with as I develop my research.

CHAPTER 4: TAWAIF AS A SUBJECT OF SHAME: ENGAGING WITH THE IMMORAL SUBJECT

"I believe if that truth were known throughout the length and breadth of our land, it would become impossible for our rulers to continue to maintain the cruel and wicked Regulations by which these Indian women are enslaved and destroyed" (Josephine Butler quoted in Andrew and Bushnell, 2014, p.8)

Ronald Hyam (1990) argued that the expansion of the British Empire was not merely a matter of commerce and Christianity but instead was also centralized on copulation and concubinage. Rethinking and reworking imperial sexual histories reveals great tensions between the otherwise homogenized and organized understanding of the Empire. Gender and sexuality in the imperial relationship reveal that the colonial policy was not unidirectional and fixated but contextual and full of fissures and fractures (Phillips, 2002). It is this revelation of the centrality of sexuality and sexual lives in the imperial design that post-colonial scholars have been drawing attention to.

Opening the space to determine the relationship between the metropolis and the colony also creates the possibility to question if the colony merely had a download of colonial policy, attitudes, or worldviews developed elsewhere and transported to reorder native lives or if, instead, the colony itself reordered the imperial design and positioned the policies in flux (Stoler, 1989). What I am suggesting, therefore, is that the colony does not exist merely in its 'marginality' in the dynamic but instead can be visualized as a 'productive in between space' shaped by agency, resistance, and contextual specifics, which reveal the tenuous relationship that puts to test normalized imperial binaries (Diane Watt quoted in Philips, 2022).

Foregrounding the prostitute in this dynamic reveals the fractures and contradictions I initially referred to. Three crucial changes can be identified as crucial to the visualization of the role of the prostitute in society. First, the changing clientele and its hierarchies (Sahni et al., 2008). The Tawaifs were documented as being most successful within the time of Mughal patrons and Nawabs, who found them a crucial linchpin in the organization of the Mughal life as connoisseurs of art, culture, decency, and even politics (Burman, 2021). However, with the change of patrons

from the Mughal to the colonial state and the inability of the courtesan's art to be translated within Victorian morality, she remained a body to be exploited and serviced for the interest of the Empire. The pre-colonial state, therefore, played multiple roles- as a willing patron, client, and insider, and, in turn, defined the scope of the profession and limited the role of the market. The colonial state, however, marketed the body and the labor and continued to be a client and a regulator of the relationship (Kersenboom, 1998).

While their name and profession came to be tainted with shame and vice, early nationalists found it necessary to distance them from the emerging notions of nationhood, and they were removed on account of respectable excision from the nationalist imagination (Kidwai, 2004). The second significant change was the creation of spaces for prostitution. Tawaifs in the *Pari Khana* of Nawab Wajid Ali's rule had a delineated space to organize their lives, host patrons and admirers, and in control of their visibility and accessibility (Chatterjee, 2016). However, the revolt of 1857 created massive distrust in the spaces occupied by the courtesans, primarily because of their establishments as the 'kothas' became spaces to harbor mutineers, fuel the revolt, and challenge the Empire. The control of Kothas post the mutiny became central to British policy; while the colonial state took over, most Kothas and Tawaifs were thrown out of their homes, and others were burned to signal the quelling of the revolt (Oldenburg, 1990). As the Tawaifs moved out of the Kotha and onto the cantonment, their agency, respectability, and visibility became matters of the state, and eventually, they found themselves spatially restricted to the 'lal bazaars' (red light districts) that are until now recalled and reaffirmed and places of deviance, disease, and shame (Legg, 2014).

Thirdly, the surveillance and regulation that shaped the characteristics of prostitution to a particular regime. While it might be a stretch to suggest, like many others have, that the Tawaifs were in equal and liberated relationships with their Mughal patrons, my argument is focused on developing the unique relationship that the colonial state imagined with the Tawaif by employing both tolerance and discipline as a way to accommodate her into the Empire and as a subject (Meghani & Saeed, 2019). The difference I suggest, therefore, is the reconstruction of the Tawaif from her earlier 'socio-religious interpretation' and position with the social order to the understanding of her profession in the 'socio-legal' vein that by law codified her as a criminal and deviant (Mitra, 2018).

The signification of the prostitute then is brought about by many factors, moralities in flux, and contexts and contests that produce her as a deviant subject for the Empire. As Hyam (1990) suggests, the prostitute had to be simultaneously 'alienated and tolerated, abused and accommodated to maintain the colonial order.' The focus on the colonial intimate as a 'porous zone' highlighted the role of affection and morality in constituting the sentiments, strategies, and sexualities of colonial rule; on the other hand, the intimate, as a 'zone of intervention,' conflated with questions of agency, desire, regulation, and resistance (Camiscioli, 2013). In the following, I develop my analysis by focusing on three constitutive morality-based arguments that led to the marginalization of the Tawaif by basing the discussion on the intimate relations, spaces, and connections that morally shaped her legacy as the 'immoral woman'.

4.1 Constituting the prostitute as a 'signifier of difference'

Iconography is crucial to the imagination of the colonial project. The representation of the 'oriental dancing girl' laden in jewelry and opulent silks and her sultry demeanor became an unwavering image to constitute the native woman (Shadab Bano, 2010). This image of the Tawaif became a crucial portrayal to signify the difference between the West and the East. The Tawaif and her recurring imagination were translated as a vision of Eastern decadence, unhindered sexuality, and the publicness of the native woman (L. Stoler, 1989).

Gilman argues that 'sexuality illustrated the iconography of rule, not its pragmatics' (Gilman, 1985, p. 79). By extension, I argue that the iconography was based on the pragmatics of racial difference, disorder, and decadence that led to the organization of colonial policy. Engagement and intervention with sexual policy thus not only shaped the imaginations of the Empire but also led to new forms of scrutiny and regulation to contain what they accepted as a truism. In addition to the policy itself, iconography became crucial to ascribe meanings to the role of Tawaifs in society, for instance, from icons of opulence to diseased, 'wayward women' (Sinha, 2015).

While defining the native 'other,' it became essential to shape the notion of self as a sexual, superior other, which constituted the basis of European supremacy's moral, legal, and political

premise. As Edward Said argued, 'sexual submission and possession of Oriental woman by European men stands for the relative strength between the East and the West' (Said, 1979 p.6). The masculine organization of the Empire also had an impact on the bodies of native women, which became sites of imperial control and violence. The Orient thus was 'penetrated, silenced and possessed,' and the ownership of native women, their bodies, and sexualities became a crucial signifier of European predominance (p. 207).

Here, the earlier discussion of the relationship between the metropolis and the colony can be elucidated further. In understanding sexual asymmetry, it is worth investigating the basis of moral design and organization. Did the Europeans shape their morality based on normativity at home, was it a reaction to the pressures and demands of the colonial structures, or was it a response to the conquest of the colony and the need to rethink power, hegemony, and sexuality (Stoler, 1989)? As Levine (2007) argues, context and circumstance became crucial to the imperial control of female sexuality, which was a product of colonial imageries, nationalist resistance, and Tawaif's claim to self-define and position themselves within the changing political and cultural structure.

Contesting Gilman's claim that 'sexual asymmetries are tropes to depict other centers of power,' I argue that the construction of the asymmetries itself is a colonial project that leads to the suzerainty of the (white) self over the (native) other (Gilman, 1985). The production of sexual asymmetries also served as the justification of the Empire. In a context that 'India could be condemned as sexually lax, the men as ignoble and the women as promiscuous,' imperial rule was justified, validated, and established as the norm in the same breath (Levine, 1994). The existence of what the British believed qualified as 'prostitution and was inextricable from the fabric of the Indian society gave them enough reason to contribute to the downfall of the native women while also ensuring that Western men could utilize its services (Dang, 1993).

Another crucial argument for the justification of prostitution has been what D'Cunha calls the necessity of prostitution as a 'safety valve against the rape of innocent women and the disintegration of the family structure' (quoted in Khadka, 2014). Two arguments need to be made about this argument. Firstly, I do not intend to condemn the existence of prostitution but instead intend to draw attention to which bodies and women fall under the rubric of 'innocent' while others

are set up to be exploited and utilized to maintain order/values/normalcy/moralities/respectabilities in acceptable and sanctioned sexual relations. Secondly, this argument also reveals the morality behind the setting up of the law to regulate Tawaifs, whose bodies were set up for the pleasure of the British troops while ripping them off their agency, arts, and liberties - all while claiming to maintain sexual order in the colony. Here, the colonial move of taking the courtesan out of 'art' into 'sex' solved the question of deviance of difference for colonial administrators (Levine, 2004).

The colonial concern with deviant subjects became even more pronounced after the mutiny of 1857. Tawaifs became targets of reform, regulation, and punishment owing to their role in fuelling dissent against the Empire (Oldenburg, 1990). Furthermore, recognition of their material wealth, success, and freedom placed them as an antithesis to the colonial understanding of native women's rights, liberties, and material wealth. While the British set out to 'save' native Indian women in instances of child marriage, sati, widow remarriage, etc., by setting them as subjects to be emancipated, it is interesting to ask why Tawaifs were not included in the emancipatory idealism of the British (Sangari & Vaid, 2006). The instances of British intervention in saving native women were premised on the construction of 'desexualized femininity' where their liberal, rational, and legal project would save women but ensure their subordinate position' to the Raj (Tambe, 2009). On the other hand, there were Tawaifs who did not fit within the Hindu norm of the family that the Raj had familiarised itself with; their gender roles and sexual preferences were fluid, their sexuality was both extra and non-pro creative, and the inability to record and know their domestic spaces was seen as potential trouble for the colonial order (Hinchy, 2014).

The mid-19th century saw a shift of the colonial state regulating subjects from civil law to criminal law, enumerating and constructing individuals as criminals (Mitra, 2020a). The 1860 Indian penal code introduced laws that would regulate the bodies of women, their sexuality, and their reproductive behavior through laws on foeticide, infanticide, selling and vying girls for prostitution, and rape (Mitra, 2020b). The criminalization of behavior also led to the definition of prostitution, which was an amalgamation of a range of beliefs, professions, and sexualities that did not fit British Victorian morality and hence could be classified as criminal (Dang, 1993). With the Indian Penal Code- governance came to be orchestrated through criminal law and rules and

procedures, criminalizing the private but also opening up the sexual activity of the native women for the vision of the colonial state (Mitra, 2018). The formalization of the colonial state meant that institutional control was enhanced, and these institutions were then used to control civil society. An example of regulation is the taxing of the prostitute by the regime (Tambe, 2009). Not only did this set up prostitution in a formalized/ racialized economy, but additionally turned it into a labor service at the behest of the Empire whereby bodies of native women, in this case, the Tawaifs, were set up for utilization by European soldiers.

The concept of 'prostitute' was not a given but instead was 'trafficked' by the colonial state to make meaning of sexual secrets they were unaware of and, through taxonomy, identification, and legal codes, orchestrated the control over deviant womanhood (Mitra, 2020a). Not only did these new criminal laws lead to a conflation of crimes but also a conflation of identities where prostitutes could mean any woman that could be ascribed with notions of immorality, inappropriate, and simply non-domestic. The undoing of the category of prostitution can reveal the violence whereby the constructed-ness of the concept was brought to fruition by consistent utterance through officials of the state, art, archives, and memory. The strength of the colonial turn then lies within the making/unmaking/remaking of categories that delimit, describe, encode, and shape the lives of the subjects. The regulation by the colonial state and its dynamic with native women also shows the construction of hierarchies between the women themselves based on their utility to the Empire, the understanding of their sexuality, and the possible danger they pose to the colonial order.

4.2 'They don't belong with us'- imagining a new nation and excision of Tawaifs

Historians have written about the coming together of the sexual and moral anxieties of the British and the aspiring middle class, which was organized through a coercive regulation of native women to 'reify colonial authority, modernize indigenous patriarchy and articulate a collective identity' (Sangri & Vaid, 2006). The spread of English education and the training of upper-class elites by the British set up a new bourgeois class, influenced by the colonial masters with a new vision of reordering the nation based on a new morality (Nevile, 1996). In the aspiration to do away with all that could legitimize their subjecthood status and with a reigning sense of inferiority, the intelligentsia distanced itself from the 'traditional' and all that it represented, including the Tawaif.

It is here that Partha Chatterjee's discussion in the constitution of the women's question in the nationalist resolution becomes crucial (Chatterjee, 1989). Chatterjee argues that the domain of culture was separated into two spheres: material and spiritual. While the elite realized the supremacy of the West in the material sphere owing to advancements in education, economics, science, and statecraft. They believed the spiritual realm must be regulated, controlled, and developed as the supreme realm to get out of their subject status and secure freedom from colonial rule. This conceptualization set up clear demarcation and binaries between the outer/inner-regarding the world/home and the physical/spiritual aspects of the individual. The setting up of the home as a sanctified space meant that the public was equated with the profane. Thus, controlling women and their sexuality became a concern to regulate the private domain and, hence, a crucial cornerstone for the new nationalist paradigm (Wald, 2009).

This new nationalist paradigm, much like the imperial mission, was also reformatory in its iteration, and it was here that the 'brown men wanted to save their women' (Spivak, 2003). The construction of clear binaries between the private and the public also became definitional for the women who occupied those spaces. The good Indian housewife or the 'suhgrihni' in her untainted, pure, devotional self became essential to the constitution of a chaste home and, in turn, a moral nation (Sangari & Vaid, 2006). In opposition, the public woman, loud/coarse/vulgar and sexually deviant, was seen as 'being subjected to physical oppression by men' (Chatterjee, 1989). This reform and attempt at a new self-definition were also tied up with class politics and the shaping of nationalist politics by the middle class with a middle-class ethos, worldview, and morality. The image of the chaste 'wife' and 'mother,' their protection, and upholding their sanctity generated emotive solidarity amongst nationalists (Sinha, 2015). One of the early reformers who attempted to integrate Christian theology within the Hindu social order, Keshub Chandra Sen, described the nautch girl in malicious and censorious terms as a creature who is "a hideous woman, hell is in her eyes and her breast is a vast ocean of poison . Her blandishments are India's ruin. Alas! her smile is India's death" (quoted in Qadri & Inzamam, 2023).

Initial attempts at colonial law-making were attempted by utilizing religious scriptures; hence, *Maulvis* (Muslim clerics) and *Pandits* (Hindu clerics) were appointed as in charge of explaining

but also constituting the moral fabric of the native society under the rubric of 'official knowledge'. *Pandits* who acted as cultural translators for the colonial masters also acted with their own interests in upholding the virtues and morality of the Hindu woman, Hindu nation, and Hindu morality where the Tawaif had no place (Waheed, 2014). Moreover, the appointment of select natives to contribute to and legitimize colonial discourse meant that they could refashion their own version of traditional/modern, acceptable/ deviant, and moral/immoral. The Tawaif was characterized as a constituent of a Muslim past and was not fully done away with but was invoked as a signifier of 'fracturing' the moral fabric of the Indian (read Hindu) society (Ansari, 2008).

But what of the Muslim society? In tandem with the Hindu reformers and nationalists, Muslim social reformers responded to colonial modernity in a bid to refashion their influences, arts, and imagination. Thus, much like the Hindu '*suhgrihni*', the Muslim reformers reformulated the private sphere by invoking 'Ashraf women'¹⁴ and an 'Ashraf society'.¹⁵ Moreover, in an attempt to save their women from colonial modernity and retain the sanctity of their homes, the dichotomy of the sharif household v/s the bazaar, and the wicked woman v/s the good woman emerged (Jalal, 2000) Abdul Gaffar Khan, through his novel '*Laila Ke Khatut*,' draws on the contradiction of the assumed morality of the Muslim society. Khan was married to Munni Jan, who is believed to have a major role in the writing of the novel where the Tawaif and her voice are signified as a political protest against the ethics of the 'ashraf' society (quoted in Waheed, 2014)

Laila, the protagonist of the novel, characterized herself as a philosopher of '*husn faroshi*' (beauty trade), cultural refinement, and Islamic legal codes. In the novel, she directs her harshest criticism against men who speak out against prostitution publically but confess love to her privately. She criticizes religious leaders, the colonial masters and the literati who plagiarize her writing and publish them for public consumption (pp. 1004-1006) Drawing on Laila, written either through Khan or his wife, suggests a rupture in the discourse of the impossibility of Tawaif representation. Moreover, positing the Tawaif as a figure of protest and criticizing the milieu that ostracizes her also contributes to understanding how her deviance threatens men, colonial and native alike. In

¹⁴ Respectable Muslim women

¹⁵ Respectable Muslim society

thinking with deviance, therefore, the embodiment, resistance, and negotiation of the Tawaifs becomes visible (Jackson & Manktelow, 2015).

The Tawaif, with her history of arts, public performance, sexual freedom, and non-submissive sexuality, became the 'fallen woman' of the nation and her arts as a constituent of immorality (Waheed, 2014). Their art became the target of reform with anti-naught campaigns to restrict the 'vulgar cultural forms' that had brought shame to the entire culture (Sharma, 2020). The anti-naught campaign clearly shows the conflation of Victorian morality with emergent Hindu/Muslim revivalism to constrain the deviant sexuality of Tawaifs and to remove them through respectable excision from public spaces, ideology, archives, and arts. For instance, an excerpt from *Chaand*, a popular women's journal, defined the ideal woman as "she should be free from the present ignorance, bad influences and ill feelings...she should not observe purdah, but this does not mean that she should go out laden with jewels, unnecessarily attracting men's attention...she should know how to fight oppression and to defend herself with her own hands, singing and keeping merry are her ornaments, but only songs that become a respectable woman, she should be as virtuous as a heroic wife and as courageous as a mother of lions and bear sons who will free India from servitude" (quoted in Tula, 2014).

4.3 Multitude of Moralities and the Tawaif: Conclusion

This section has discussed the moral politics at work that led to the production of a deviant subject. Imperial colonial histories, worldviews, and politics were not produced in the metropolis and transferred onto the colony, but instead, looking at the interactional possibilities that emerged also led to an understanding of the joint production of meanings and symbols of difference. The Tawaif came to signify as a crucial marker between the colonial/Indian, the modern/savage, and the cultured/deviant, and it is the construction of these binaries of difference that became essential for the vocabulary of colonial policy leading to legislation shaped by emergent morality (Waheed, 2014). Additionally, looking at the production of these binaries offers the opportunity to engage with the larger social processes at work that lead to the codification of subjects, how behaviors are utilized to assess relationships and morality based on Tawaifs as a fulcrum of difference, and

eventually the development of gender-specific sanctions based on the constructed tropes of morality (Levine, 2007).

This research engages with the uneasiness of the emergent nationalists in accommodating the public performer within their respectability discourses. The shame they endured on the part of the colonizer made it imperative for them to reconstruct and reformulate their moralities to uphold the moral basis of their society. The construction and idealization of a new woman domesticated/chaste/loyal/private thus make a sharp break from the past of engaging performers who occupied the public space and were agents of free will (Rao, 1999). Thus, the Tawaif, as a threat to domesticity, conjugal relations, and morally sanctioned relationships of religion/caste/class, became the 'other woman' of Indian history (Sinha, 2000).

The panic around the 'unsettledness' of the Tawaif made it imperative to discipline her through legislation (Singh, 2007). It is through looking at the development of morality discourses in the production of the subject that connections can be drawn between various foci of study that link together the changing ideas of morality, family, military, and missionary influences that lead to the constitution of the Tawaif as a prostitute (Wald, 2009). Moreover, the shift in her invocation from artist/performer to criminal also suggests the necessity to criminalize behaviors identified as sexually deviant in order to retain the sanctity of the Empire. However, the post-colonial state has taken on this language of criminality, highlighting the potency of morality discourses. The language of criminality and the production of legislation also had native interference and intervention to act as interlocutors between pre-colonial Indian society and the British regime (Rao, 1999).

Sexual vice became the frame for regulating and controlling bad/deviant/wrong sex making a case for British altruism and their mission to civilize, educate, and regulate the lives of deviant subjects (Mitra, 2020a). Thus, control over sexuality was made not just acceptable but also imperative. This research also suggests how the degeneration and disciplining of Tawaifs was taken as an example to discipline all women by containing them through a dichotomous order of the moral woman v/s other woman, introducing the Tawaif as a common prostitute in legal discourses and utilizing her services to make her sexuality and service constitutive of her identity.

CHAPTER 5: DISEASE AND DESIRE: MEDICINAL PRECEPTS TO REGULATE TAWAIFS

'Forensic medical knowledge continues to travel from the particular physical features of the body to prejudices about women's chastity, past sexual history, and moral character' (Mitra, 2020b).

In colonial India, native women were regarded as both a nuisance and a necessity for the British Empire (Levine, 2007) The native female body became a site of social meanings, conquest, contestation, regulation, and utilization for the utility of the colonial state (Megha, 2020). This chapter discusses how the Tawaif's body, as a site of disease and vice, became the property of the colonial state to be regulated and inspected. Furthermore, it highlights how their social function was seen to be synonymous with their sexuality and was thereby put to use to fend off the sexual needs of the British soldiers. Furthermore, I discuss how the colonial processes that led to the examination of their body, the process of their enumeration as diseased criminals, and the regulation of their sexuality for imperial ends ironically turned them into a subject of the Empire.

Andrew and Bushnell argue that in the process of taking over 'heathen India' by 'Christian England,' full provisions were made for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof' (Andrew and Bushnell, 1899; quoted in Mondol 2022). Military cantonments were institutionalized not merely as places of colonial residence but also as sites of provisioning safe sexual services to soldiers of the Empire (Hyam, 2017). The European soldier was seen as 'unrestrained' and was not allowed to take white wives to the colony as wives were seen to be a drag on mobility, additional expenses with housing, and unfit for the conditions of the colony (Callaway, 1993). The British soldier's unrestrained sexuality became a marker of the virility and masculinity of the Empire. Furthermore, his indulgences with native women were seen as the colonial subjugation of the body of the native woman and, hence, was another means to dominate and conquer the populace (Mishra, 1999). The mutiny of 1857 also served as a wake-up call for the Empire as it signified that not only were the native women, specifically Tawaifs, not constituted by passive sexuality but were also not ready to service their bodies for the Empire. Worse still, they were dissenters, mutineers, and deviants and

were perceived to be loyal to their 'own men,' this was seen as enough reason to dominate and discipline them.

Furthermore, while the sex between the soldier and the Tawaif could not be contained, it could be regulated due to the fear that unlimited sex would infect the soldier with venereal diseases and turn the virile soldiers of the Empire into diseased ones (Megha, 2020). This need for regulation led to the institutionalization of prostitution and further led to military prostitution becoming a norm to punish native women, especially those unwilling to offer up sexual services to the British army (Levine, 2007). The result of this dynamic was the dehumanization of the Tawaif and her profession while being stripped of her dignity and the process of selecting the healthy specimen of Tawaifs to be distributed across various military cantonments across the Empire (Oldenburg, 1990).

It is imperative to understand and deconstruct how the effective maintenance of the Empire rested heavily on the regulation of 'sexually unruly' behavior by ensuring that disease, deviancy, and dissent did not become the Empire's death knell (Levine, 1996). As Ashish Nandy has argued, homology between sexual and political dominance western colonialism used was not an accidental by-product of colonial history (Nandy, 1982). The debates about venereal disease, control over the sexuality of the native women, and provisioning of the possibilities for the sexual satisfaction of the Empire were not merely incidental occurrences but are crucial markers in understanding the manifold impact and the complex means employed by the colonial state to control native subjects. As Phillips argues, sexual practices and institutionalization of socio-sexual dictates, from the codification of prostitution to the regulation of morality and family, were not merely adaption from the colonial context but were 'means to structure and facilitate colonisations' (Phillips, 2002).

Questions around sanitation and disease became central to colonial measures and were utilized to know the population and simultaneously codify, classify, quantify, and produce knowledge about them (Mitra, 2020b). The classification and production of statistics in the form of religion/sex/caste/class/race/occupation became vital for imperial control, not to forget how the classifications have lived on as concrete categories for the postcolonial state to restrict/define/police, women and their sexuality (Levine, 2000). Moreover, the reliance on

Victorian morality, although challenged by native customs, also led to the moral rendition of meanings to categories of social organization such as 'sexuality,' 'gender,' 'evolution' etc., which not only became the touchstone of colonial policies but also produced the immoral 'others' as objects to be controlled/observed and experimented with (Dang, 1993).

Finally, a crucial role the colonial state visualized for itself was of 'civilizing' the natives, and the spread of the propaganda of civilizing mission coupled with Christian missionary knowledge circulation in the colony led to the constitution of the Tawaif and her body as sites of -filth, immorality, and decadence (Megha, 2020). This chapter, therefore, problematizes the underlying processes of control, regulation, and restriction through medication that constituted the Tawaif as a diseased criminal.

5.1 Institutionalizing military prostitution

The British man, since the beginning of his arrival in precolonial India, was involved sexually with native women. The question, however, lies in understanding at what point this interaction became a cause of threat to the Empire and had to be thereby regulated in an institutionalized fashion (Wald, 2009, p. 1476). A more significant number of European casualties during the mutiny of 1857 resulted from venereal diseases rather than death by combat (Ballhatchet, 1980). This discovery brought extreme shame and shock to the Empire but also a rather revealing statistic that 'one in four soldiers deployed by the colonial state were affected by venereal disease' across the British Raj (Levine, 1994). The reduction of European morality rates depended on ensuring that men lived on the battlefield and also outside of it. As the soldier could not be blamed for contracting the disease, the native woman became the apparent suspect and was criminalized as the carrier of the disease. Her body and sexuality were seen as a reason for the death of soldiers and a recurring threat to the progression of the Empire.

After the mutiny of 1857, European military presence was significantly increased across the Empire to deal with the possibility of revolution and strengthen colonialism's expansionist aims. The soldiers were seen to be in great danger from the native women due to their 'innocence, youth and recklessness,' which could potentially lead to them being 'diseased or dead' (Mondal, 2022,

p.162). However, a life of continence was seen as impossible and even undesirable for the soldiers as the virility of the Empire rested strongly on maintaining the virility of its soldiers (L. Stoler, 1989). Moreover, there was a significant fear that if men did not have access to native women, they would resort to 'raping each other' or possibly entering into 'homosexual relations' (Levine, 1994, p. 593–595). The development of 'homosexual relations' was despised as 'unmanly' and increasingly threatened the fabric of the Empire that prided itself on being dominant, masculine, and virile (Ballhatchet, 1980, p. 10). Thus, the provision of native women to satisfy the soldiers and the conquest of colonized women became an 'emblematic practice of hegemony' (Stoler, 1990). This illustration highlights how the setting out of tolerable/intolerable practices for the British soldiers characterized both the body of the soldier and the person they were in contact with as a site of contestation and effectively the business of the colonial state (Peers, 2006).

Why weren't white prostitutes included as a solution to the problem with a widening clientele and the need to stave off soldiers? The colonial regime recognized that the import of prostitutes was a costly enterprise and defamatory to British women and the Empire at large (Levine, 1994).

Therefore, they arranged for regulated liaisons of 'short-term sexual relations' with native women in the cantonments. Military brothels were considered to be a necessary solution for soldiers from the lower classes of British society who were employed in the army and unable to control themselves sexually (Ballhatchet, 1980, p. 2). Here, an interesting contradiction occurs between the colonial policy of discouraging relationships with native women due to fear of disease, mixed-race children, and dissent of native women but, also the need to provide opportunities for the sexual scarification of the soldiers for the sustenance of the Empire (Tambe, 2009)

William Acton became one of the revered figures to classify prostitution as the 'artificial supply of a natural demand' owing to the necessity of catering to the sexual needs of the male on attaining puberty (Acton, 1870; quoted in Chatterjee, 2016). In 1863, when a Royal Commission for the sanitary state of the army in India was constituted, it found two solutions to handle disease and demand- to significantly increase married soldiers in the army or to strengthen the system of hospitals and make regulations stringent. Preventive strategies clearly had more significant ramifications for native women who were seen to be both the 'source and conduit' of sexually transmitted diseases (Mishra, 1999). Tawaifs, in this context, already had sexual relations with

British soldiers before the mutiny of 1857. However, the difference post-mutiny came about with the regulation of the sex between the soldier and the Tawaif, the institutionalization of prostitution, and the codification of the Tawaifs as prostitutes. The visceral and embodied experience of domination and control became a crucial tenet of the corporeality of the state (Rao & Pierce, 2001). Moreover, the European soldiers now became the singular patron and client, and the British regime became the regulator of their relationship, effectively turning the Tawaif into the business of sex trade for the Empire (Megha, 2020).

Tawaifs could move freely between classes and conditions, transgressing boundaries of the home/community/religion and all other manifestations of what constituted the 'private domain.' Their freedom and accessibility had enabled them to offer assistance during the mutiny in the first place, and the need to spatially confine them within the military establishments became a priority for the Empire (Bano, 2009). Not only was their dissent criminalized, but their body, being, and everything they came to represent were seen as being delinquent and deviant, turning them into registered criminals for the colonial state. Thus, through legislation, codification, and criminalization, the colonial state completed the commodification of the Tawaif (Chatterjee, 2016).

5.2 Regulating diseased subjects

The Contagious Diseases Act was first introduced in England as legislation to contain the spread of venereal disease in ports and garrisons (Ballhatchet, 1980). In the colony version of the regulation, a woman could be categorized and identified as a prostitute by a 'common clothes policeman' (Dang, 1993). She would then be subjected to an internal examination, and if found to be carrying the disease, she would be admitted to a 'lock hospital' (Megha, 2020). The openness and ambiguity of the definition meant that all native women were potentially in danger of being categorized as a prostitute if they were seen to be sexually or politically transgressive to the interests of the colonial state (Mitra, 2020b).

The act led to an 'epistemic shift' wherein the sexual practices of Indians became the primary objects of knowledge for the colonial state (Mitra, 2020a). The Tawaif consequently came to be

utilized to explain and signify a new set of meanings- that of filth and disease. Moreover, it produced a new hierarchical set of meanings, descriptions, and explanations to understand the sexual relations between the white man and the native woman. Levine (2004) highlights how the callous and cruel assumptions of native women as diseased prostitutes were significant and violent to the colonial move of organizing societies around racial hierarchy and racialized meanings. She elucidates by drawing attention to how, in 1905, a memorandum Lord Kitchener issued to troops in India advised that 'common women and prostitutes are almost all more or less infected with disease, and that any native woman soliciting their attention could be infected' (quoted in Levine, 2004). This kind of slippage is crucial to understanding the colonial strategy and the impact it had on all native women being brought under the dubious category of 'diseased prostitutes', effectively becoming signifiers of their savage existence.

The term 'Lock hospital' came to be used in England first and was supposed to connote some form of social regulation and was initially used as an institution to contain lepers (Levine, 2004). From the 19th century onwards, Lock hospitals were used for the treatment of venerable diseases, and it was assumed that patients in the Lock hospital were invariably prostitutes. It was used to control the movement of the prostitute and determine who could use her body (Ballhatchet, 1980, pp. 40- 42). Under the colonial gaze and the regulation, punitive institutions like the lock hospitals were used to facilitate accessibility to native women's bodies and determine the organization of racialized sex (Mitra, 2018). The examination in itself was a vastly unsettling process and was thought to be 'indecent' and even qualified to be 'surgical rape' (Andrew & Bushnell, 1899, p.8). The body of the Tawaif, as has been argued before, became a colonial site to play out control and exploitation. A comparative analysis of the organization of the Contagious Disease Act in England and the colony would also explain how it was a crucial racialized mechanism to regulate deviant sexualities. The system, however, was not free of scrutiny, and even with the benign claims the British Raj made of humanitarianism in the name of preventing disease, it was highly criticized. It was, in fact, a system instituted to facilitate 'clean sex' for soldiers while orbiting into the domain of female sexuality and ensuring that legislation controlling sex could be levied for the interests of the Empire (Whitehead, 1995).

It was Josephine Butler who became the most vital voice against the repeal of the act. She was the leader of the repeal movement in England and took up the case of the native legislation after securing a win against the repeal of the act in England (Levine, 1996b). She argued that Contagious disease acts subjected women to exploitation and degradation while placing the burden of disease on the woman (Burton, 1994). Butler came to the rescue of Indian prostitutes by invoking the language of 'sisterhood' and has been written about significantly as the 'great feminist' who tied together the women of the world and hence 'belonged to all nations' (Peacey, 1968). The foray of British feminists and reformers into the conversation of legislation and regulation was characterized as essential to womanhood and its manifestations through virtue, purity, welfare, and decency.

Furthermore, the process of ambiguous branding of native women as 'prostitutes' was also investigated by Elizabeth Andrew and Kate Bushnell of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who demanded the repeal of the act as well and identified the supplying of 'native prostitutes' as a moral problem of the Empire (R. Chatterjee, 2014). They reported how women were 'forcefully put under examination, had to leave their homes and families behind, and were not allowed to meet families if there was no compliance with official demands.' While the demand for repealing the act started in Europe, it soon took on a moral and religious life through missionary protests, eventually becoming an impactful political demand (Whitehead, 1995). Perhaps it was the fear of dissent of the Englishwoman and how it would reflect on the Empire that led to the repeal of the act.

This illustration also helps to understand how policies to regulate the native populace were not merely produced in the metropolis but were instead produced through a continuous conversation between multiple influences, moralities, and political projects. However, it must be reiterated that even though these contestations tried to highlight the colonial machinery and the people who came to represent it did not speak in the same voice, the sustenance of the Empire by any means was the primary concern at all times (Stockstill, 2017). Moreover, the 'speaking for' native women was not free of bias and was used to strengthen the movement on the 'passion for Purity' solidifying Anglo-Saxon morality, motherhood, and virtue (Callaway, 1993). In invoking the 'fight for the Indian woman,' the trope of her representation as sexual, unhindered, unchaste, and in opposition to the

British gets reified. Perhaps it was an attempt synonymous with Bronte's imagination of Jane Eyre 'washing away the sins of the Englishmen and the Empire' by othering 'Indianness' while upholding the 'Christian spirit' (Ichikawa, 2014). As colonial law and regulation 'de-established' them, the Tawaifs clung to their given identity and held up their registration tickets to be recognized as colonial subjects (Chatterjee, 2016).

5.3 Managing Disease and Demand: Conclusion

Post the mutiny of 1857, the colonial state centralized its focus on concerns over loyalty, safety, and sanitation to ensure the expansion of its Empire. Crucial to this endeavor was the control of women's bodies and their sexuality, which, if left unhindered and unregulated, could infect the soldiers and threaten their lives and, by extension, the longevity of the Empire (Levine, 1996b). By shifting the Tawaif out of her Kotha into the military cantonments, not only was their past life done away with, but they were also brought into a new relationship with the colonizer wherein their body was traded to the colonial state for prostitution.

Jenny Sharpe (1993), in drawing out the connection between the management of the rebellion alongside race and rape, argues that how the rebellion was seen to have been started in the bazaar-the residence of the Tawaif instead of the military cantonments (quoted in Ghosh, 2002). The criminalization of Tawaifs, thus through the utilization of the contagious disease act post-mutiny, cast the woman who rebelled against the Empire as the diseased/deviant/immoral constituent of the populace. Moving between the slum and suburb, dirt and cleanliness, ignorance and civilization, morality, and profligacy, the prostitute made it hard for the colonial state to control her and keep these categories apart (Need, 1988).

There is now new research on understanding how native managers, matrons, etc., were instituted by the colonial state to control the prostitutes within the lock hospitals (Gopalakrishnan, 2022). This thread of research examines the agency and politics of native managers in ensuring that colonial punitive institutions sustained and punished their 'own women.' Moreover, the Indian nationalist response and moral indignation were also severely tied to classifying the Tawaif as a

diseased criminal. The colonial state's corporeal access to her body became a cause of shame for the emergent elite, making it essential for them to distance her from the community, both real and imagined (Dang, 1993). The socio-spatial organization of the Tawaif also forms an interesting line of inquiry to determine how their limitations, either in cantonments or 'lal bazaars,' meant that certain parts of the city were seen as being constituted by disease and deviance. This spatiality has taken an afterlife in the postcolonial state with the emergence of 'red light districts' attracting a specific kind of gaze, regulation, and moral resentment.

The presence of the Tawaif, her body, and her unhindered sexuality became a major cause of anxiety for the colonial state. In disciplining the Tawaif, it becomes clear that health/morality/sexuality did not exist as disparaged zones of control but crucially intersected in the maintenance of the colonial order. When put to colonial use, medical jurisprudence produced an ethno-scientific knowledge of the body that linked the sociological explanation and classification to forensic domination (Mitra, 2018).

CHAPTER 6: REMEMBERING THE TAWAIF: THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION

"What is important in a work is what it does not say. This is no simple equation with what it refuses to say but rather this: what the work cannot say is important because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence" (Pierre Macherey, 1987, p. 87)

The Tawaif, as a shifting category constituted by meanings in flux and invoked through aesthetic, legal, and ethical tropes, provides a crucial window into the contestations of the politics of colonialism and nationalism in regulating sexuality and deviance (Waheed, 2014). As an archetypal image attributed to shame, disease, and deviance, it has sustained an unwavering impact on their remembrance across time and space. While postcolonial theorists attempt to write about her, they relegate her to being 'the most subaltern group of all' (Sengupta, 2014). Her erasure, silence, and inconsistency of her remembrance are blamed on colonial violence while not fully engaging with how the truisms in which she is placed find repetition through arts, aesthetics, knowledge production, and imagination in nationalist and postcolonial iterations.

Performance and performing women remain contentious terrain within conversations around public morality (Banerjee, 1989). Similarly, the Tawaif and her arts came to be deeply tied with the cultural ethos of an emerging middle class and civilizing notions of the colonial regime. However, the changing contours of the city, the introduction of new forms of technology, and the availability of the arts to the masses meant that the Tawaif could not be spatially contained anymore. However, this liberatory possibility of not depending on patrons but on technology to engage in their arts was not free from moral regulations and cultural sanctions. It is here I engage with the complexity of how the remembrance of the Tawaif remains a colonial site riddled with the refurbishing of morality within memory previously produced through sanctions of sexuality, morality, and religion.

The integration of the Tawaif as a performer can be understood within a unique dynamic of including her cultural function while excluding her sexuality and body (Tula, 2020). Thus, the cultural sphere was organized around an engendered discourse as well of the chaste/ monogamous performer or the unchaste/sexualized woman. This chapter will discuss how Tawaif's sensuous

indulgence and appeal to the male gaze remained a cause for moral panic, thereby leading to mechanisms of invisibilizing them to retain their art but hide their body from the public gaze. This chapter also engages with the question of how deviant bodies are recorded and invoked at particular times. By extension, if stepping beyond historiography and boundaries of knowledge production offers the possibility to undo what we already know about the Tawaif. Furthermore, I attempt to engage with how Tawaifs attempted to produce their cultural commons, what were the means of their inclusion/exclusion within the changing norms of the society, and how they found devious albeit creative means to sustain themselves visually, vocally, and through imaginations.

6.1 Codification of prostitution

Partha Chatterjee argued that the British employed the 'rule of colonial difference' to ensure the positioning of the native as the 'other' and simultaneously, under the garb of modernity, justify the use of disciplinary tactics to turn them into good subjects of the empire (Chatterjee, 1989). The construction of stigmatized label stamps of Tawaifs as prostitutes, which were also upheld by the early Indian nationalists, ended up isolating the Tawaif and turning her into a subject of erasure and misunderstanding.

In this section, I argue that the British codification of Tawaifs, either initially as 'singing and dancing girls' (*nautchnis*) or later as prostitutes, cannot just be understood as a profound misunderstanding but instead, the production of categories of discursive homogenization and the resultant codification must also be seen as a disciplinary tactic employed by the Raj to control native women (Pinch, 2013). The construction of colonial categories also reflects the inherent anxiety of the Raj to micro-manage not just the sexual arrangements but also the associated effective attachments that would form as the basis of regulating the intimate (Stoler, 2002).

The colonial order benefitted from this amorphous categorization in several ways. On the one hand, the codification became an unwavering reflection and reference point for invoking the barbarity and sexual deviance of a specific class of women (Pande, 2020). Moreover, repeated usage in colonial and native knowledge production led to the naturalization of the Tawaif as a prostitute, establishing it as a fact of colonial history. The second significant achievement of this

open-ended categorization scheme was that it did not effectively define- who constitutes a prostitute and thus put all native women in danger of being identified, classified, and effectively remembered within the same category (Mitra, 2020b). Thirdly and most importantly, this codification created a straightforward binary between the home and the market, the private and public, thereby resulting in which roles, labor, and races could occupy legitimate/illegitimate spaces.

Codification impacted not just colonial knowledge production but also native understanding of deviance. To unpack the colonial turn is to understand how the conflation of multiple women like *veshya/ganika/tawaiif/randi*¹⁶ under a singular category of prostitute prevents the understanding of the diversity of the individual political projects, identities, negotiations, and their evolution across time and space (Chatterjee, 2016). Due to the production of their sameness, their affective development as 'ultimate villain or the ultimate victim' happens, undermining their agency, the complexity of their negotiations, and the devious ways in which they sustained themselves (Waheed, 2014). While prostitution was never fully defined and remained an open category, the colonial state nevertheless enumerated and, in the process, produced knowledge about what prostitution looked like and which women and bodies were engaged in it as the gendered and racialized other (Mitra, 2020a).

How does the postcolonial scholar then write a history of subjects who, in one sweep, were categorized as the marker of all vices and the signifier of difference and debauchery? It is here that postcolonial scholars have called for moving beyond the apparent truism of the archive, unraveling the categories and instead reading between the lines to understand the politics and violence that resulted in the production of codes (Mitra, 2020b). These classifications stripped Tawaiifs of the ability to self-define and effectively could not name their own occupation and remained to be known by the definition of the colonial masters (Chatterjee, 2016). The definitional categorizations became crucial to mark the difference between native and European values/understanding/practices and served as influential indices to construct a racialized order based on the epistemology of difference. (Levine, 1994)

¹⁶ Different categories of public women included under the rubric of prostitute and understood for their sexual utility and function.

Our understanding of the social world we inhabit is colored very much by using social categories, descriptions, and definitions through which we claim to understand our subjects, their roles, and marginalization. However, Gender historians are drawing attention to the fact that the production of 'sociological typologies' cannot be taken at face value (Levine, 2000). Moreover, the question to ask is how do we get the subject in question to speak back to the archive and locate her in the processes of elusive enumeration, codification, and description that have endured to become the cause of her invisibilisation and marginalization (Ghosh, 2003).

6.2 Erasure in archives

This research started out as a project to understand how Tawaifs became footnotes in Indian history and to uncover the processes that led to their effective marginalization. Archives are crucial knowledge sources as they blend reportage, memory, and imagination of events that effectively lead to the positioning of a social actor within her milieu (Arondekar, 2014). However, the complication of using archives as sources of truth rests on understanding how archives include/exclude 'vexed figures' and 'deviant actors' like the Tawaif, who are products of ambiguity, violence, simplification, and stereotypes produced by nationalist and colonial accounts. As Arondekar argues, 'the archive has merged as the register of epistemic arrangements, recording in its proliferating avatars the shifting tenor of academic debates about the production and institutionalization of knowledge.' (Arondekar, 2005, pp.11–12).

Feminist historians draw attention to the erasure, silences, and subjectivities of archival research and propose methods to read between the lines to recover and record the wilful omissions (Gupta, 2011). However, to center materials that are left unsaid produces dangers of its own of introducing stereotypes, wilful representations, and utilizing meaning-making processes to serve specific political ends. The excision of the Tawaifs resulted from both Orientalist knowledge production and the native attempt at upholding a respectful version of history (Sangari & Vaid, 2006). The process of reading memories and reinterpreting them is not a benign exercise or an attempt rooted to 'save the subaltern' from her marginality. How can we then utilize archives to 'observe the observed' while coming clear on our positionality, the limits of our understanding, and the

recognition that histories of sexualities are riddled with memory, myth, and erasures and do not provide cohesive narratives of historical processes (Sahni et al., 2008; quoted in Gupta, 2011)?

Historians writing about Tawaif histories also end up pitting the colonial archive against the nationalist ones. While still squeamishly engaging with the fact that the nationalist archives also produce the Tawaif for her voice/dance/performance function or condemn her for her unhindered sexuality and publicness. The archives reveal their existence and the disjunctures that constituted them and cannot be utilized to recover pasts without grappling with the 'confused forms of knowledge' they produce (Hubel, 2005). However, pitting archives against one another can offer a productive exercise in grappling with the conditions/fractures/complexities of documented narratives. The challenge is to juxtapose productively the archive's fiction effects (as representation) alongside its truth effects (as material/real) as agnostic and co-constitutive (Arondekar, 2005, p. 12).

The reading of supplementary material alongside the archive prevents the reading of the archive as the 'locus of all knowledge' (Pande, 2020). By this prescription, I mean to engage with the possibility of introducing supplementary sources of knowledge that come to be circulated by 'unofficial' channels and can constitute everything from oral histories, songs, poetry, and even imagination. This exercise of speaking to the archive and engaging in a back and forth to find new sources of meaning please the historian in conversation with the 'inheritors of the past event' while also opening up the radical possibility of challenging the known, organized, homogenized narratives to create the space for deviant histories (Arondekar, 2014).

One excellent example elucidating my point is Gupta's (2011) research on sexuality in the Awadh region. Beyond looking at official archival sources in the state libraries, she stepped into the by-lanes of neighboring cities of Allahabad, Banaras, Lucknow, and Kanpur, cities that served as major power centers of mutiny against the British and centers of exuberant Tawaif pasts. Gupta attempted to supplement documented sources on sexuality with 'indigenous sources' of popular Hindi culture writing that came to be circulated with the growth of cities, strengthening their economic, informational, and political engagement with the printing press. The possibility of printing produced multiple regional sources in the form of newspapers, press releases, regional

literature, pamphlets, etc., leading to the broader circulation of ideas amongst the native populace through vernacular knowledge production. Gupta opens up the radical possibility of questioning what qualifies as an archive and how, in engaging with figures omitted in history writing, the engagement with private, unofficial, and loosely circulated material chart possibilities of making deviant bodies visible.

However, Hubel (2005) characterizes histories of deviant bodies as 'irrevocably elusive.' Owing to the fact that these actors did not give speeches that are recorded and their ideas/beliefs/sayings were not painstakingly preserved and quoted across centuries, they remain puzzling and beyond our reach. This is a critical point to grapple with, especially in the context of Indian nationalist histories. The construction of the 'new woman' who was chaste, domesticated, and moral also meant that she had to be motivated by actors within historiography who emulated the same morality of the new nationalist imagination (Sinha, 2015). In this context, the Rani of Jhansi¹⁷ and Begum Hazrat Mahal¹⁸ become important examples of women who participated in the revolt as revolutionaries but are significantly written about as 'dutiful wives, valiant mothers' (Singh, 2007). Hence, making them extensively visible in history books and popular songs and metaphorically invoking them across various times and spaces as examples of female bravery, emancipation, ethics, and values all remain within the purview of morality. On the other hand, the bad girls of history, the Tawaifs, existed in direct opposition to these female heroines. Tawaif's existence in opposition to patriarchal norms and their memorialization is looked down upon and they are silenced in archives and popular imagination, effectively rendering them irrevocable.

This discussion, however, brings to light another important question regarding when these figures catch the attention of the historian and at what times deviant bodies are invoked within historiography. As Hubel (2005) argues, by invoking them through archives, records, and testimonials, they remain fictionalized within narratives that are used for the historian's purposes. This warrants asking at what point in history have Tawaifs been invoked, for what purposes, and

¹⁷ Queen consort of the kingdom of Jhansi and one of the very visibilised, memorialized iconic rebels in the mutiny of 1857.

¹⁸ Wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh, also a mutineer in 1857

by whom? Moreover, how does their memory benefit particular kinds of histories and actors, and more importantly, when do they become an essential object of knowledge for the historian?

What we know of the Tawaif then is a mediated process produced by historical colonial intervention and nationalist bourgeois intervention (Hubel, 2005). The Tawaif exists as an object of knowledge in historiography where she does not speak back but instead is only spoken about. Looking at alternative and creative ways of her representation offers radical possibilities to engage the Tawaif in producing knowledge about them. The following section discusses the possibilities of engaging with alternative sources offering insights into Tawaif histories.

6.3 *Memsahibs* and Tawaifs- the chaste v/s the other?

Literary sources offer crucial observations of missing subject's perceptions, knowledge, moralities, and politics beyond history writing. Anglo-Indian fiction has become a niche of its own for its representation of the native women and specifically the Tawaifs. The *Memsahibs* held a very significant but contradictory position in the imperial design. As a powerful force within the colonial household, much like the Indian '*suhgrihni*', they were constructed as the 'Victorian domestic angels' servicing the moral interests of the colonial family and, by extension, the empire (L. Singh, 2007). The intriguing thread in the production of these writings is the charting out of comparison and self-definition that white women engaged with within the colonial context vis-a-vis the native woman. The colonial policy of encouraging white wives within the colony post-mutiny was seen as an opportunity to restrain not just the white man from entering conjugal relations with the native woman and taking up a native '*bibi*'¹⁹ but also restraining the sexuality of the colonial man within the chaste boundaries of the colonial home (Sen, 2017).

Many historians have already engaged with how the chastity, loyalty, morality, and restrained sexuality of the white *Memsahib* was pitted against the immorality, unrestrained sexuality, and disloyalty of native woman, hence setting up the native woman as a sexual rival for the *Memsahib* (Burton, 1994). This might lead to the assumption that the waywardness of the Tawaif was a foregone conclusion in writings. However, much like the policies that governed her, the

¹⁹ Native wife

representation in literature was also full of ambiguities and contradictions. The native woman was constantly being constituted and reconstituted owing to the political context in which the writing was developed. On the one hand, she was the sensuous/exotic/other, and on the other hand, the symbol of passivity/docility/submissiveness.

British feminist periodicals, writings, and engagements took on the function of mediators and translators of Indian women to the audience in Britain and beyond (Burton, 1994). Not only was the construction of the Tawaif in her laxity/promiscuity/deviance one way to validate the colonial policy, but it also reaffirmed the greatness and superiority of the white woman. The 'oriental courtesan,' 'dancing woman,' and '*nautchni*' were strategically brought into debates about cleanliness, sexuality, domesticity, and racial superiority (Sen, 2017).

However, a range of novels written in the period unsettle the trope of representation highlighted above. The development of a thematic novel based on the idea of 'Memsahib turned nautch girl' revealed the quelling desire of the *Memsahib* to live like the nautch girl and to rebel against the domesticity, morality, and physical restraint she was socialized into (Jagpal, 2009). Helena Blavatsky, for instance, in the 1890s, wrote about the freedom of the *nautchnis* and how they 'were free to move around and live a life of happiness and respect' (Blavatsky, 1892; quoted in Jagpal, 2009).

Two novels can be drawn as examples of this range of writing. Grace Arbuthnot, in the novel 'Voices of the Night,' is introduced as a white woman from a respectable family with significant contributions to the colonial empire in India. Grace was married to Arbuthnot and resided in the fictional Towson of Nushapore. She struggled to meet the expectations set out for the British housewife and pitied herself for her situation of being trapped in the household while being in love with another man. However, her being trapped in the household leads her to an emancipatory connection with the courtesan living in the bazaar. This affinity to the courtesan not only holds the dangerous possibility of disturbing the organization of imperial power and the domesticity of the colonial home but, through a radical gesture, brings together the deviant *nautchni* together with the chaste Memsahib. Grace finds herself connected to the local Tawaif, Dilram, who believes the 'women of the bazaar lead the world by the nose.' The attraction of the Tawaif's world is

highlighted through the use of music from the Tawaif's *kotha* that penetrates the walls of the colonial home, inviting seduction, desire, and deviance (Jagpal, 2009, pp. 253-255)

Another example is the novel 'On the Face of Waters'; another *memsahib*, 'Kate,' is introduced as being trapped in an unhappy marriage. Kate was widowed during the mutiny of 1857 and wished to flout the limits of widowhood by identifying with the courtesan. In an act of dissent, she assumed the disguise of a Tawaif and started living on a rooftop in a Tawaif household. The desire to look like a courtesan is so strong that she adorned herself in the clothes and jewelry of a deceased Tawaif and darkened her skin and hair to fit the representation. She experienced thrill and freedom in visualizing herself as the dancing girl and wished for a 'looking glass to see her reflection.' (pp. 256-257)

These examples unsettle the narrative of Tawaif as an object of repulsion and instead encourage the problematization of the trope of oppressed Indian woman/emancipated white woman. Moreover, it opens up another line of sources and inquiry to determine the politics of colonial domesticity burden of Victorian morality and engages with the radical possibility of bringing the deviant together with the ideal woman. These writings also bring to light the construction of notions about the white woman's materialism, idleness, and frivolity in the colony while also presenting her as the victim of colonization exposed to disease, harsh climate, and sorrow of being restricted within the colonial home (Sen, 2000).

To write about actors such as the Tawaif laden with contradictions and obscurity and produce them as subjects of history are deeply politicized acts, and with the inclusion of fiction as an archive, the underlying process of their constitution further becomes complicated but full of possibilities.

6.4 On performance, representation, and culture

In the last section of this chapter, I discuss how the remembrance and memorialization of the Tawaif is crucial to the performance culture in India. I make a few leaps here with the timeline and include examples of populist literature, music, and films to suggest how arts are used in

constructing the lineage of Tawaifs. The representation of Tawaifs in arts is a reminiscent act to constitute her as a majestic, cultural, beautiful, sensuous woman riddled with colonial and nationalist meanings that are ascribed to her existence. As Anitha Anantharam argues, when 'women's bodies are displaced, ignited or out rightly silenced, they reconfigure back into the public body by various stage issues, and we need to look in different places to find these voices' (Anantharam, 2012)

In engaging with performance art in a relatively limited fashion, my concern is to foreground the possibility of including popular representations in art and question if it can constitute the possibility to understand the resistance of the Tawaif, her ability to self-define and effectively free herself from the discursive trope that limits her in historiography. Tawaifs, most significantly, were renowned for their singing abilities and patrons of Hindustani music, leading to the construction of 'Tawaifs as *'ganewalis'* (singers). Musical reform became the most significant demand of the anti-nautch movement, and it is interesting to analyze how the politics to distance the performer from respectable settings due to her understood deviance, but inclusion within the public sphere owing to her artistic ability came about (Singh, 2014).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Gramophone spread across India as a hit source of entertainment, the possession of which signified a cultured elite home. Tawaifs who were pushed out of Kothas into the cantonments and, finally, bazaars found the Gramophone a liberatory possibility to honor the arts they were renowned for (Tula, 2014). Singers like *Gauhar Jan*, *Jaddan Bai*, and *Kali Jan* became celebrity singers and voices of the gramophone industry. However, their popularity on the Gramophone did not translate into cultural and moral acceptance within the 'respectable society,' making their status and position ambivalent. While the Gramophone provided a medium to liberate and circulate their voice amongst the masses, their description remained tied to being a 'fallen woman.' Much like the cantonments, the Gramophone also became an 'unliveable zone' constituted by the colonial sphere (p. 1134).

To be accepted within the respectable public sphere, Tawaifs started finding ways to reinvent themselves and do away with the pasts they were so significantly tied to. One example of this is the insistence of the performers to remove the often used 'Bai/Jan' as a title that signified her status

as a Tawaif and to include the term 'amateur instead' to subvert their deviant/decadent status (p.1128). The example of the Gramophone also offers an insight into how it became possible to engage the Tawaif for her voice without engaging with her body. The technology offered the possibility to disembody her voice while offering a refined cultural, ethical, and modern possibility to listen to the Tawaif within the safe confines of the 'respectable home' (p. 1135)

Through poetry, another example emerges of engaging Tawaifs in the arts through deviant means through 'Tazkiras' (Williams, 2017). Late nineteenth-century poetics of Tazkiras included female poets and specifically Tawaifs. The poetries were compiled as anthologies with directories of renowned and popular poets. The excision of the Tawaif came about by the omission of 'prostitutes with pardarshinin'²⁰ poets (p. 602). Similarly, Rekhti is a genre of poetry that was written by men, invoking women's persona and language (Vanita, 2004). Perhaps not incidentally, this genre originated in Luckow, the center of arts and Tawaifs. Rekhti can be qualified as a 'stereotype-shatterer' as it disregards the dichotomies of elite/subordinate, man/woman, Hindi/Urdu, wife/mistress, and in the process, becomes a genre of protest. The themes of sexual pleasures of women, their relationships, homosexual partnerships, deviant desires, and political criticism all were tied together through poetry, making it naturally intersectional (Kaushik, 2019). Thus, by becoming a 'voice of the woman,' it went beyond just that and accommodated those marginal within imagination, discourse, and representation, hence a paradigm for native resistance (Vanita, 2004).

While Rekhta (male vantage point) became the respectable genre of poetry, Rekhti was qualified as '*randi ki zubaan*'²¹, tying it to the Tawaif (Williams, 2017). Moreover, historians have also argued that the focus on the sexual lives of women and the description of their bodies, desires, and deviance was merely a way to cater to the male audience and dehumanize women (Vanita, 2004). While the possibility of the dehumanizing gesture cannot be ruled out, the trope of 'rekhti as the voice of the prostitute' still remains an interesting thread of investigation and forays into deviant resistance. Moreover, the fear of Rekhti also reveals the constitution of women as unreliable

²⁰ hidden/veiled/out of public gaze

²¹ speech of the whore

sexual narrators, either seen as speaking only to male desires or disbelieved when they do (Williams, 1991).

6.5 Representation in Cinema: Visualizing the Tawaif

The most significant representation and source of production of visual imagination of the Tawaif has been through Bollywood films. Tawaif becomes a signifier whose gendered meaning remains in flux' and reading through her multiple iterations in cinema provides a lens to understand the complexities of her signification (Ansari, 2008). Cinema became a vital genre to refashion and rearticulate Tawaif's selfhood in the public sphere while offering the possibility to trace the development of their character with the change in patronship, politics, and the cultural milieu (Niazi, 2013).

The genre of Tawaif films is nostalgic in the reconstitution of their cultural setting with a focus on the dance performance (*mujra*) within a gathering of her admirers (*mehfils*) and focused on her grace, movement, expression, and sway (Allen & Bhaskar, 2009). However, it would be an oversimplification to argue that the liberatory possibility through visual representation did not come at a cost. In most cinematic representations, the Tawaifs serve as an anti-thesis or a split image of the 'modern woman,' thus reaffirming the carnal woman versus modern woman trope (Allen & Bhaskar, 2009). Perhaps most significantly, the protagonist, the Tawaif, plays out her subaltern status in cinema (Sengupta, 2014). She became a victim in cinematic representation who deceitfully entered the profession, was wronged, and suffered at the hands of multiple patrons who used her for her body. Her life in the *kotha* is portrayed as demeaning, painful, and tragic as she lives out her days in anguish, shame, and marginalization, living at the brink of society (Hasan, 1994). While some instances do highlight her abilities to make men fall incessantly in love with her, enough to leave their families, communities, and nation to be one with the Tawaif (Niazi, 2013). They remain largely at the mercy of the lover and the kindness of the community and hopeful to someday find themselves within the folds of a respectable society. To illustrate, I use the example of the Bollywood film *Pakeezah*.

Pakeezah (1972)²² is a story of two generations of Tawaif women, Nargis and her daughter Sahibjaan. The fates of both women are tied together in their hope for a respectable life and the desire to love beyond the norms set out for them. They attempt to run away from the Kotha to escape the profession and the life of misery, shame, and discomfort they find themselves in. In the dialogues, iconography, and symbolism of the film, the dream of the Tawaif to escape is almost constituted as philosophical. A dream to transcend her materiality, her position of shame, and a world where her body is entrapped within the structure of commodification and use. The desire to fall in love, get married, stay with one man in a respectable home, and start a respectable family remains a raging will. Her agony and pain tie the viewer to the heroine as she sings and dances in agony, the lyrics of her song tied to her suffering and her tears a representation of her pain. Much like the historians, the character's meanings and the plot are left to the audience to determine if the Tawaif can be constituted as a respectable artist or remain a prostitute (Vanita, 2019). Thus, films reveal the changing realities in which the Tawaif is positioned- loss of patrons, social reform, legislation, and mass mediums of entertainment. The Tawaif, thus, does not exist by herself in cinematic representation but is produced/reproduced through the interaction with the processes of her time but still sustains. As Sahibjaan in Pakeezah sings²³, 'Today I will see the results of my prayer/ I will see the wounds the arrows of my sight cause/ I will survive tonight and see dawn' (Ansari, 2008).

6.6 'Imagining Tawaifs' - Conclusion:

This chapter briefly discusses the tropes of artistic representation that have emerged as practices of engaging the Tawaif and her memory. It remains fascinating to analyze how the strong meanings, ascriptive qualities, and moral condemnation that constituted Tawaifs in the political sphere fuse so well in the cultural forms that shape their legacies. However, I do not suggest that these archives/arts/imagination only exist to signify the Tawaif as a victim; instead, I argue that the inclusion of multiple sources and the multiple readings of her representation highlights the contradictory politics of accommodating/revering/shunning her. Additionally, the discussion of

²² Bollywood film, directed by Kamal Amrohi in 1972

²³ 'Aaj hum apni dua ka asar dekhenge/ teer-e-nazar dekhenge zakhm-e-jigar dekhenge/ aaj kee raat bachenge seher dekhenge'

the spread of new technologies like the Gramophone, radio, and cinema in new cities presents the possibility to engage with the realities of the past and how they respond to new modern influences. The Tawaifs, were marketed as cultural commodities that could be consumed and distributed as artifacts to the masses. However, new ways of hiding her publicness, disembodying her, or engaging with her only through a cinematic screen highlight the shame and moral indignation that sustained across time and space. The illustrated examples suggest the possibility of the sustenance of the Tawaif and her arts, albeit by devious means of existing and utilizing new technologies, reconstruction of their image, and attempts to reconfigure back into the public sphere while responding to the morality of the time. These negotiations and contestations highlight the resistance of Tawaif's existence.

IN CONCLUSION:

This research has attempted to engage with many questions, but much still needs to be said about Tawaifs. In engaging with deviance as an analysis, I have attempted to make a case to understand the production, circulation, and institutionalization of sexual politics within the colonial framework and how Tawaifs were constitutive of the processes, not victims of it.

My engagement has not been directly with the Tawaifs; in this respect, ' I speak from a distance.' However, it has now led to a quelling desire to go back to the sites of their eminence, look for new materials, and speak directly to the few women who now represent Tawaif households.

Researching the Tawaif's history necessitates field research and the possibility of engaging with alternative sources that make the deviant visible and help rethink historiography against the grain.

Any future development in the research on Tawaifs must respond to hierarchies within the groups and crucial markers of their difference in terms of caste/class/religion, etc. Moreover, the postcolonial afterlife of Tawaif as a prostitute and the utilization of colonial regulation to limit them today (through laws) or their characterization of being constituted by deviance and disease (through morality) speaks volumes of the strength of colonial knowledge production. Though massive in its production, this research barely teases the possibilities of the avenues research on Tawaif could foray into.

Finally, in the context of the Indian state, Tawaifs still continue to threaten the new Hindu state and its authoritarian overtures through attempts at redefining the society, redrawing moral boundaries, and rewriting histories. Thus, they will remain a subject of enticement for historians to thread out various means to understand the society at large through their dissent, sustenance and positionality. As Hubel (2012) argues, our role is to transform our colonial desire into postcolonial support for them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldrich, R. (2016). *Sex matters*. In Manchester University Press eBooks.
<https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526112552.00010>
- Allen, R., & Bhaskar, I. (2009). *Pakeezah: Dreamscape of desire*. *Projections*.
<https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2009.030203>
- Anantharam, A. (2012). *Bodies that remember: Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Cosmopolitanism in South Asian Poetry*. Syracuse University Press.
- Ansari, U. (2008). 'There are Thousands Drunk by the Passion of These Eyes'. *Bollywood's Tawa'if: Narrating the Nation and 'The Muslim.'* *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 31(2), 290–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400802192929>
- Arondekar, A. (2005). *Without A Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive*. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14(1), 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sex.2006.0001>
- Arondekar, A. (2014). *In the Absence of Reliable Ghosts: Sexuality, Historiography, South Asia*. *Differences*, 25(3), 98–122. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2847964>
- Asher, K. (2017). *Spivak and Rivera Cusicanqui on the dilemmas of representation in postcolonial and decolonial feminisms*. *Feminist Studies*, 43(3), 512.
<https://doi.org/10.15767/feministstudies.43.3.0512>
- Attwood, F. (2009). *Dirty work: researching women and sexual representation*. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 193–203). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203927045-24>
- Ballhatchet, K. (1980). *Race, sex, and class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793-1905*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bano, S. (2009). *Women Performers and Prostitutes in Medieval India* on JSTOR.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147673>
- Bender, J. C. (2016). *Introduction*. In Cambridge University Press eBooks (pp. 1–26).
<https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471463.001>
- Bierman, I. A. (1979). *Edward Said, Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. \$15. *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 13(1), 68. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026318400007185>
- Blunt, A. (2000). *Embodying war: British women and domestic defilement in the Indian «Mutiny», 1857–8*. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26(3), 403–428.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2000.0236>

- Bryder, L. (1998, December). Sex, Race, and Colonialism: An Historiographical Review on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40107997>
- Burckhardt Qureshi, R. (2001). In Search of Begum Akhtar: Patriarchy, Poetry, and Twentieth-Century Indian Music on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41699354>
- Burman, T. (2021). From pari khanas to lal bazaars and further away: female performers in nineteenth century Awadh. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*, 28(1), 01–20. <https://doi.org/10.46521/pjws.028.01.0085>
- Burton, A. M. (1994). *Burdens of history: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*. Univ of North Carolina Press.
- Callaway, H. (1993). Legitimacy and the state in Twentieth-Century Africa. In T. Ranger & O. Vaughan (Eds.), *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-12342-1>
- Camiscioli, E. (2013). Women, Gender, intimacy, and empire. *Journal of Women's History*, 25(4), 138–148. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2013.0056>
- Chakrabarty, D. (1998). Minority histories, subaltern pasts. *Scrutiny*2, 3(1), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18125441.1998.10877327>
- Chanda, S., Patnaik, A., & Chatterjee, S. (2021). The Courtesan Project and the Tawa'ifs' Cultural Commons on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48656874>
- Chatterjee, I. (2012). When “Sexuality” floated free of histories in South Asia. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 71(4), 945–962. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021911812001246>
- Chatterjee, P. (1989). Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/645113>
- Chatterjee, R. (1989). *The Queens' Daughters: Prostitutes as an Outcast Group in Colonial India*. Chr. Michelsen Institute. http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/380/1/R%201992_8%20Ratnabali%20Chatterjee-07122007_1.pdf
- Chatterjee, R. (2016). Prostituted Women and the British Empire. *Antyajaa: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 1(1), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455632716648560>
- Cheem, A. (1876). *Lays of ind*. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL20494684M/Lays_of_Ind

- Choudhury, D. K. L. (2004). Sinews of Panic and the Nerves of Empire: the Imagined State's Entanglement with Information Panic, India c.1880–1912. *Modern Asian Studies*, 38(4), 965–1002. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x0400126x>
- Cooper, F., & Stoler, A. L. (1989). introduction tensions of empire: colonial control and visions of rule. *American Ethnologist*, 16(4), 609–621. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1989.16.4.02a00010>
- D. Atkinson, J. (2017). Qualitative Methods from Journey into Social Activism: Qualitative Approaches on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1hfr0rk.6>
- Dang, K. (1993). Prostitutes, Patrons and the State: Nineteenth century Awadh on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3520432>
- D'Cunha, J. (1992, April). Prostitution Laws: Ideological Dimensions and Enforcement Practices on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4397796>
- De Groot, J. (2017). Depicting conflict in India in 1857-8: the instabilities of gender, violence, and colonialism. *Cultural & Social History*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2017.1329129>
- D'Emilio, J. (2019). THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE FIELD. *History and Theory*, 58(1), 126–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12103>
- Drayton, R. (2011, July). Where does the world historian write from? Objectivity, moral conscience and the past and present of imperialism on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41305352>
- Flood, D. R. (2007). Deviance gendered, criminology exposed. *Journal of Women's History*, 19(1), 214–223. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2007.0011>
- Ghosh, D. (2002). Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalization? on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4091763>
- Ghosh, D. (2023). Can an archive be revolutionary?: how to document radical aspirations in a time of dissensus. *Womens History Review*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2023.2208408>
- Gopalakrishnan, D. R. (2022). Gomastahs, Peons, Police and Chowdhanies: The role of Indian Subordinate in the functioning of the Lock Hospitals and the Indian Contagious Diseases Act, 1805 to 1889. *Ntm*, 30(1), 29–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00048-022-00324-z>
- Gupta, C. (2011). Writing Sex and sexuality: Archives of Colonial North India. *Journal of Women's History*, 23(4), 12–35. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2011.0050>

- Habib, I. (1998). The Coming of 1857 on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3517577>
- Hasan, Z. (1994). Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, And The State In India. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA26013045>
- Heaton, J. (2008). Secondary Analysis of Qualitative data: An overview on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20762299>
- Hinchy, J. (2014). Deviant Domesticities and Sexualised Childhoods: Prostitutes, Eunuchs and the Limits of the State Child “Rescue” Mission in Colonial India from Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific on JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctt13wwvck.14>
- Hinchy, J. (2017). The eunuch archive: Colonial records of non-normative gender and sexuality in India. *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 58(2), 127–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2017.1279555>
- Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (1994, season-01). Power and Desire: The Embodiment of Female Sexuality on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1395415>
- Hubel, T. (2005). The high cost of dancing: When the Indian women’s movement went after the devadasis. *Scholarship@Western*. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/englishpub/134>
- Hubel, T. (2012). From tawa’if to wife? Making sense of Bollywood’s courtesan genre. *Scholarship@Western*. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/englishpub/137>
- Hyam, R. (1990). *Empire and sexuality: The British Experience*. Manchester University Press.
- Hyam, R. (2017). *Empire and sexuality*. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526119520>
- Ichikawa, C. (2014). *Jane Eyre’s Daughters: the feminist missions of Mary Carpenter and Josephine Butler in India*. *Womens History Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2013.849142>
- Jackson, W., & Manktelow, E. J. (2015). *Subverting Empire*. In Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137465870>
- Jagpal, C. (2009). “Going Nautch Girl” in the Fin de Siècle: The White Woman Burdened by Colonial Domesticity. *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 52(3), 252–272. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/english_literature_in_transition/v052/52.3.jagpal.html
- Jha, S. S. (2016). Tawa’if as poet and patron. In Duke University Press eBooks (pp. 141–164). <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822374978-007>

- Kaushik, P. (2019). *Rekhti: The Lost Genre Of Urdu Feminist Poetry*. *Feminism in India*.
<https://feminisminindia.com/2019/08/06/rekhti-the-lost-genre-of-urdu-feminist-poetry/>
- Khadka, K. H. (2014). The spread of HIV/STD among sex workers in Nepal: Exploring its causes. In 109. <https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/220954>
- L. Stoler, A. (1989, November). *Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures* on JSTOR.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/645114>
- Laws of Pleasure: The making of Indian Contagious Diseases Act, 1868* on JSTOR. (n.d.).
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44144123>
- Legg, S. (2005). Foucault's population geographies: classifications, biopolitics and governmental spaces. *Population Space and Place*, 11(3), 137–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.357>
- Legg, S. (2012a). Stimulation, Segregation and Scandal: Geographies of Prostitution Regulation in British India, between Registration (1888) and Suppression (1923). *Modern Asian Studies*, 46(6), 1459–1505. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x11000503>
- Legg, S. (2012b). Stimulation, Segregation and Scandal: Geographies of Prostitution Regulation in British India, between Registration (1888) and Suppression (1923). *Modern Asian Studies*, 46(6), 1459–1505. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x11000503>
- Legg, S. (2014). *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire*. In Duke University Press eBooks.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822376170>
- Levine, P. (1994). Venereal disease, prostitution, and the politics of Empire: the case of British India. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4(4).
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4617154.pdf?addFooter=false>
- Levine, P. (1996a, August). Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as “Constitutional Crisis” in Britain and British India on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2646447>
- Levine, P. (1996b). Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as “Constitutional Crisis” in Britain and British India. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 55(3), 585–612.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2646447>
- Levine, P. (2000). Orientalist sociology and the creation of colonial sexualities. *Feminist Review*, 65(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/014177800406912>
- Levine, P. (2004). A Multitude of Unchaste Women; Prostitution in the British Empire. *Journal of Women's History*, 15(4), 159–163. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0014>

- Levine, P. (2007). *Gender and Empire*. In Oxford University Press eBooks.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199249503.001.0001>
- Levy, A. (1991). Other women: the writing of class, race, and gender, 1832-1898. *Choice Reviews Online*, 29(01), 29–0149. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.29-0149>
- Liddle, J., & Joshi, R. J. (1985). Gender and colonialism: Women’s organisation under the Raj. *Womens Studies International Forum*, 8(5), 521–529. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(85\)90083-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(85)90083-4)
- Lifestyle as resistance: The case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India on JSTOR. (n.d.).
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177850>
- Long, R. (2018). Sexual subjectivities within neoliberalism: Can queer and crip engagements offer an alternative praxis? *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 19(1), 78–93.
<http://awdflibrary.org/handle/123456789/693>
- Lugones, M. (2016). The coloniality of gender. In Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks (pp. 13–33).
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-38273-3_2
- Majumdar, N. (2017). Silencing the subaltern: Resistance and Gender in Postcolonial Theory.
<https://catalyst-journal.com/2017/11/silencing-the-subaltern/>
- Mani, L. (2017). Contentious Traditions: The debate on SATI in Colonial India. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 381–418). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315255934-19>
- Megha, M. (2020). Sexuality, Health and Hygiene in Colonial India (1860-1930). *International Journal for Intersectional Feminist Studies*, 6(1–2). <https://doi.org/10.26021/10374>
- Meghani, S. A., & Saeed, H. (2019). Postcolonial/sexuality, or, sexuality in “Other” contexts: Introduction. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55(3), 293–307.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1617969>
- Meiu, G. P. (2015). Colonialism and sexuality. *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*, 197–290. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118896877.wbiehs093>
- Midgley, C. (2000). Female emancipation in an imperial frame: english women and the campaign against sati (widow-burning) in India, 1813–30. *Womens History Review*, 9(1), 95–121.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020000200234>
- Mishra, M. (n.d.). “Your Woman is a Very Bad Woman”: Revisiting Female Deviance in Colonial Fiji. Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University.
<https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol17/iss4/5>

- Mishra, M. (2016). “Your Woman is a Very Bad Woman”: Revisiting Female Deviance in Colonial Fiji. *Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University*.
<https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol17/iss4/5>
- Mishra, S. S. (1999). Laws of Pleasure: the making of the Indian Contagious diseases act 1868. *Indian History Congress*, 40, 550–561. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44144123>
- Mitra, D. (2018). Sociological Description and the Forensics of Sexuality. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 23–46). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199486717.003.0002>
- Mitra, D. (2020a). Indian sex life. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691197029>
- Mitra, D. (2020b). Sexuality and the history of disciplinary transgression. *South Asia-journal of South Asian Studies*, 43(6), 1216–1227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1838076>
- Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Under Western Eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Feminist Review*, 30(1), 61–88. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42>
- Mondal, S. (2022). Women in cantonments: Evolution of regulated military prostitution in Colonial India. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(3), 384–393.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09715215221111130>
- Morgensen, S. L. (2012). Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2(2), 2–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2012.10648839>
- Moulton, E. C., & Ballhatchet, K. (1981). Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905. *The American Historical Review*, 86(2), 441.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1857553>
- Mukherjee, R. (1990). “Satan Let Loose upon Earth”: The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857 on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/651010>
- Mukherjee, T. (2012). *Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation*.
<https://www.amazon.com/Staging-Resistance-Plays-Women-Translation/dp/0198084919>
- Nair, J. (1994). On the Question of Agency in Indian Feminist Historiography. *Gender & History*, 6(1), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1994.tb00196.x>
- Nandy, A. (1982). The Psychology of Colonialism: Sex, Age, and Ideology in British India. *Psychiatry MMC*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1982.11024151>
- Nevile, P. (1996). *Nautch Girls of India: dancers, singers, playmates*.
<http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA36170378>

- Niazi, S. (2013). Recasting Bodies And The Transformation Of The Self: Women Performers in the Bombay Film Industry (1925–1947) on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24394285>
- O’Hanlon, R. (1988). Recovering the subject Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/312498>
- O’Hanlon, R. (1989, September). Cultures of Rule, Communities of Resistance: Gender, discourse and tradition in recent South Asian historiographies on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23163054>
- Oldenburg, V. T. (1990). Lifestyle as resistance: The case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India. *Feminist Studies*, 16(2), 259. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177850>
- Orsini, F. (2009). The Hindi Public sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA62470481>
- Pande, A. (2020). De(coding) ‘loose women’ in colonial archives. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2020.1761012>
- Pande, R. (2018). Writing the history of women in the margins: The Courtesans in India. *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, IV(2). <http://mzuhssjournal.in/images/resources/v4n2/pande.pdf>
- Parpart, J. L. (2013). Choosing silence: rethinking voice, agency and women’s empowerment. *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*, 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203927045-10>
- Pati, B. (2007). Historians and Historiography: Situating 1857 on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419570>
- Peacey, B. (1968). Josephine Butler, “The Great Feminist.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, 8(92), 555–570. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020860400077214>
- Peers, D. M. (2006). The Raj’s other great game. In *Duke University Press eBooks* (pp. 115–150). <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822387930-005>
- Phillips, R. (2002). Imperialism and the regulation of sexuality: colonial legislation on contagious diseases and ages of consent. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28(3), 339–362. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2002.0456>
- Phillips, R. (2007a). Histories of Sexuality and Imperialism: What’s the use? *History Workshop Journal*, 63(1), 136–153. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbm004>

- Phillips, R. (2007b). Histories of Sexuality and Imperialism: What's the use? *History Workshop Journal*, 63(1), 136–153. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbm004>
- Pinch, W. W. (2013). *Prostituting the Mutiny: Sex-Slavery and Crime in the Making of 1857. Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, 1. <https://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/histfacpub/63/>
- Power and Desire: The Embodiment of Female Sexuality on JSTOR. (n.d.). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1395415>
- Prakash, G. (1992). Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466216>
- Pylypa, J. (1998). Power and Bodily Practice: Applying the work of Foucault to an anthropology of the body. *Arizona Anthropologist*, 13, 21–36. https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/10150/110194/1/azu_gn1_a785_n13_21_36_w-ocr.pdf
- Qadri, H., & Inzamam, Q. (2023). The movement to place India's belittled courtesans in a more positive light. *New Lines Magazine*. <https://newlinesmag.com/photo-essays/the-movement-to-place-indias-belittled-courtesans-in-a-more-positive-light/>
- Rao, A., & Pierce, S. (2001). DISCIPLINE AND THE OTHER BODY correction, corporeality, and colonial rule. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 3(2), 159–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698010120059582>
- Rao, S. (1999). *Woman-As-Symbol: Intersections of Indian nationalism, gender, and identity*. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12648/1209>
- Rumana Mehdi, S. (2021). On Female Muslim Bodies and Morality: The Tawaif in the Indian Subcontinent. *Cultivate*, 3, 47–51. <https://cultivatefeminism.com/issues/issue-three/on-female-muslim-bodies-andmorality>
- Ryan-Flood, R., & Gill, R. C. (2010). *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist Reflections*. Routledge.
- Sahni, R., Shankar, V., & Apte, H. (2008). *Prostitution and Beyond: An analysis of sex workers in India*. <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA91775573>
- Sangari, K., & Vaid, S. (2006). *Recasting women : essays in colonial history*. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA78306647>

- Saria, V. (2022). *Jessica Hinchy, Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, C.1850–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) *Liat Kozma, Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2017) *Durba Mitra, Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020) *Ishita Pande, Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age: Child Marriage in India, 1891–1937* (Cambridge: . . . *Gender & History*, 34(1), 293–304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12603>
- Scoular, J. (2004). The ‘subject’ of prostitution. *Feminist Theory*, 5(3), 343–355. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700104046983>
- Sen, I. (2000). Gendering (Anglo) India: Rudyard Kipling and the Construction of Women. *Social Scientist*, 28(9/10), 12–32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3517975.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5819b9a60aa8ce68b9e36602fd09dfc5&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1
- Sen, I. (2017). Devoted Wife/Sensuous Bibi: Colonial Constructions of the Indian Woman, 1860–1900. In Springer eBooks (pp. 47–71). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5166-1_2
- Sengupta, M. (2011). Courtesan Culture in India: the transition from the Devdasi to the Tawaif or Bojree on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44733578>
- Sengupta, M. (2014). Courtesan Culture In India: The Transition from the Devdasi to the Tawaif or Bojree on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44733578>
- Shah, S. P. (2014). Street Corner secrets: sex, work, and migration in the city of Mumbai. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB19074477>
- Sharma, P. (2020). Chaste Bodies, Chaste Canon: Nationalist discourse and the female Performing Body in Munshi Premchand’s *Sevasadan*. *South Asian Review*, 42(3), 234–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2020.1821570>
- Singh, A. (2014). WOMEN’S WORLD: ARTISTES, COURTESANS AND WIVES IN EARLY INDIA on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158367>
- Singh, L. (2007). Courtesans and the 1857 Revolt: Role of Azeezun in Kanpur. *Indian Historical Review*, 34(2), 58–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/037698360703400204>
- Singh, V. P. (2014). From Tawaif to Nautch Girl: the Transition of the Lucknow Courtesan. *South Asian Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2014.11932977>

- Sinha, M. (2000). Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and nationalism in Late-Colonial India. *Feminist Studies*, 26(3), 623. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178643>
- Sinha, M. (2015). Wayward Women, Wicked Singing. In Springer eBooks (pp. 135–143). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-2437-2_13
- Smilde, D., & Hanson, R. (2018). Studying Gender and Sexualities with Qualitative Methods. *Qualitative Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-018-9395-x>
- Spivak, G. C. (2003). Can the Subaltern Speak? *Die Philosophin*, 14(27), 42–58. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philosophin200314275>
- Stockstill, E. J. (2017). Degenerate or victim? fallen women, disease, and the moral strength of the British Empire. *Nineteenth Century Prose*, 44(1), 21–38. <https://pennstate.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/degenerate-or-victim-fatten-women-disease-and-the-moral-strength->
- Stoler, A. L. (1989). Rethinking colonial categories: European communities and the boundaries of rule. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31(1), 134–161. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500015693>
- Stoler, A. L. (1995). Race and the education of desire. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11319d6>
- Stoler, A. L. (2002). Colonial archives and the arts of governance. *Archival Science*, 2(1–2), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02435632>
- Stoler, A. L. (2010). Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule. Univ of California Press.
- Summers, A. (2006). Which women? what Europe? Josephine Butler and the International Abolitionist Federation. *History Workshop Journal*, 62(1), 214–231. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbl005>
- Tambe, A. (2009). Codes of misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay. U of Minnesota Press.
- Tambe, A., Nair, J., Sinha, M., Chakravarti, U., & Uberoi, P. (2000). Colluding Patriarchies: The Colonial reform of Sexual relations in India. *Feminist Studies*, 26(3), 586. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178641>
- Terry, J. (1991). Theorizing deviant historiography. *Differences*, 3(2), 55–74. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3-2-55>

- Thapar, S. (1993). Women as activists; Women as symbols: A study of the Indian Nationalist movement. *Feminist Review*, 44(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1993.22>
- Tula, M. (2014). Re-Inscribing the Indian Courtesan: A Genealogical approach. *Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University*. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol15/iss1/5>
- Tula, M. (2020). Gentrified fantasies: women singers on the gramophone in late colonial India. *Womens History Review*, 30(7), 1119–1140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1825170>
- Vanita, R. (2004). "Married Among Their Companions": Female Homoerotic Relations in Nineteenth-Century Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India. *Journal of Women's History*, 16(1), 12–53. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0038>
- Waheed, S. (2014, July). Women of "Ill Repute": Ethics and Urdu literature in colonial India on JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24494611>
- Wald, E. (2009). Defining Prostitution and Redefining Women's Roles: The Colonial State and Society in Early 19th Century India. *History Compass*, 7(6), 1470–1483. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00647.x>
- Walkowitz, J. R. (2016). The politics of prostitution and sexual labour. *History Workshop Journal*, 82(1), 188–198. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbw029>
- Whitehead, J. (1995). Bodies clean and unclean: Prostitution, sanitary legislation, and respectable femininity in colonial North India. *Gender & History*, 7(1), 41–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1995.tb00013.x>
- Williams, R. D. (2017). Songs between cities: listening to courtesans in colonial north India. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 27(4), 591–610. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1356186317000311>