



Wives, Widows, and Concubines: The Conjugal Family Ideal in Colonial India (Contemporary Indian Studies)

Mytheli Sreenivas

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The family was at the center of intense debates about identity, community, and nation in colonial Tamil Nadu, India. Emerging ideas about love, marriage, and desire were linked to caste politics, the colonial economy, and nationalist agitation. In the first detailed historical study of Tamil families in colonial India, *Wives, Widows, and Concubines* maps changes in the late colonial family in relation to the region's culture, politics, and economy. Among professional and mercantile elites, the conjugal relationship displaced the extended family as the focal point of household dynamics. Conjugalinity provided a language with which women laid claim to new rights, even as the structures of the conjugal family reinscribed women's oppression inside and outside marriage.

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