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**The Body Language of Caste: Marathi Sexual Modernity**

**(1920–1950)**

**by**

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degree of

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government library in Pune. Uttamrao Patil from Tarawadi, Ahmadnagar, and Ramesh Chavan from Pune gave me access to their collections of Marathi non-Brahmin movement literature.

Used-book shops, *raddi wale*, roadside booksellers and bookstalls selling religious books in Pune and Mumbai were important archival locations for colonial Marathi sex-education texts. Mumbai, which is almost my hometown, has always compelled me to rethink the ‘modern’ and the ‘archival’.

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### **Declaration and Inclusion of Material from a Prior Thesis**

I declare that the research presented in this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. Nothing has been included from a prior thesis.

## Summary

Late colonial Maharashtra witnessed a proliferation of sex literature that claimed to be scientific. Sexual-health journals and books on sexual science and eugenics, as well as marriage manuals insisting on sex reforms, were produced in Marathi in considerable numbers between 1920 and 1950. Why did sex reformism blossom in Maharashtra? What was reformed in the name of sex and science? What larger purpose did this writing serve in late colonial times? The present research work answers these questions while problematising the Marathi sexual modernity articulated through this literature. In critically assessing sex reforms, my argument highlights the rearrangement of an inextricable nexus between caste and sexuality that shaped late colonial Marathi expressions of modernity. The proliferation of scientific sexuality in this process, I argue, was an upper-caste resolution of the Brahminical crisis over dominating reformism in Maharashtra. To demonstrate this, my work situates sex literature in the context of Marathi caste politics. While explaining the Brahminical crisis and its resolution through analysing sexual discourses of *brahmacharya* (celibacy), marriage, and obscenity, this work unpacks the making of sex reforms as a journey to create a caste-sexual subject of Marathi modernity—the respectable upper-caste man.



## Abbreviations

SS: *Samajaswasthya*

## Introduction: Writing Caste-Sexual Modernity

The early twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of sex literature in Maharashtra. Most of this writing laid claim to scientific authority. Its creators not only wrote about sex but acted as public consultants on sexual hygiene and birth control. They saw themselves as sex reformers and educators and claimed, through their many publications, a project of rationalising sex problems, suggesting appropriate sexual behaviour, and raising awareness about common sexual difficulties. They made ‘sex reform’ a well-circulated rhetoric in late colonial Maharashtra and covered a range of issues, such as *brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य, celibacy), marriage, sexual intercourse, birth control, and sexual freedom. They emphasised that the central problem around issues of sex was silence, and that this could be solved by spreading scientific sexual knowledge.

The drive behind sex reformism was a civilising mission, in a sense. Such discourse located itself within, and drew authority, from the global sexology conversations of the time. Indeed, the global community recognised Maharashtra as a hotbed of sex-reform publishing. These sex educators saw their project as intended especially for the people of Maharashtra—the Marathis. One of the most prominent, R.D. Karve, is still celebrated in ‘progressive’ Marathi intellectual circles. Several books and articles have been written on him, and his biography was converted into a Marathi movie, *Dhyasaparva* (ध्यासपर्व, *Era of Dedication*). In 2018 a play based on his ideas, *Samajswasthya* (समाजस्वास्थ्य, *Social Health*), was being performed in Marathi theatres.<sup>1</sup> Other sex educators’ late colonial writings are also still available in

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<sup>1</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Ra Dho* [R.D. (Karve)] (Pune: H.V. Mote Prakashan, 1981); Y.D. Phadke, *Vyakti ani Vichar* [Person and His Thought] (Pune: Shree Vidya Publications, 1979); M.V. Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra* [Moon in the Net] (Pune: Rajahansa Prakashan, [1994] 1998); Anant Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar* [The Creator of *Samajswasthya*] (Pune: Padmagandha Publications, 2010); Anant Deshmukh, *Ra Dho: Samajswasthyatil Nivadak Lekh* [Selected Writings from *Samajswasthya*] (Pune: Padmagandha Prakashan, 2010). Amol Palekar, dir., *Dhyaas Parva*, film, in Marathi (2001); Atul Pethe, dir., *Samajswasthya*, play, in Marathi (2017–18); *Daily Sakal*, 24 December 2017), 6; *Daily Loksatta*, 9 April 2018,

the Marathi print market, marketed as relevant sex-education material in revised and updated editions.<sup>2</sup>

Why did this sex-reform movement emerge in Maharashtra? What was reformed in the name of sex and science? What larger purpose did this writing serve in late colonial times? What aspects of sex-reform discourse constituted this so-called progressive thought, and how did the politics of sex progressivism evolve in late colonial Maharashtra? My dissertation answers these questions while analysing sexual modernity as it was articulated through Marathi sex literature produced between 1920 and 1950. In other words, this work analyses the making of the late colonial Marathi modern through sex-reform writing. The late colonial cultural politics of sex reformism and the post-colonial politics constructed around its relevance are two distinct research areas; working on the former is a precondition for examining the latter. The present work, therefore, while focusing on the earlier period, analyses the writing of late colonial Marathi sexual modernity.

Through these writings, sex reformers responded to the perceived 'backwardness' of sexual relations. They were also caught up in a crisis of Brahminical dominance—particularly as it engaged with a broader project of 'social reform'. This dissertation thus sees sex-reform literature—and its authors—as engaged in a double project. They sought to reform sex; yet it was through reforming sex that caste and its healthy reproduction—in particular, Brahminical dominance—could be made fit for purpose in a newly modern India. In interrogating this through claims to sexual modernity, this work operates at the intersection of the modern history of caste, colonial history of sexuality, and colonial social history of medicine.

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<https://www.loksatta.com/manoranjan-news/marathi-play-drama-samajswasthya-raghunath-dhondo-karve-lokprabha-article-1659891>.

<sup>2</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jeevan Veerya Nash Hach Mrutu* [Brahmacharya Is Life, Sensuality Is Death], 5th ed. (Bombay: Lakhani Press, [1922] 2012); K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jeevan* [Married Life] (Pune: Varada Publications, [1946] 1999); Vijay Phadke (ed.), *Samagra Na. Si. Phadke* [N.S. Phadke's Collected Writings] (14 vols., Pune: N.S. Phadke Foundation, 2010).

In critically assessing Marathi sex reforms, my argument highlights the rearrangement of an inextricable nexus between caste and sexuality that shaped late colonial Marathi expressions of modernity. The making and remaking of this caste-sex nexus, as this work argues, was foundational to modern Marathi Brahminical governmentality. In other words, sex education, generated through proliferating sex literature, functioned as a new reformist medium to reach the goal of Brahminical governance. In making this argument, I analyse sex reforms within the broader analytical structure of the modern governmentality of caste.

### **Governmentality and Caste**

To understand Marathi sexual modernity, my argument draws upon Michel Foucault's writings on governmentality<sup>3</sup> and the 'repressive hypothesis'.<sup>4</sup> Analysing colonial caste realities using the concept of governmentality raises two sets of questions. The first is about Foucault's applicability to non-Occidental pasts and presents; this question also demands an explanation about how governmentality is understood in the present narrative. Second, it necessitates articulating the distinctness of my work in relation to the already available governmentality writings on colonial India.

While deploying governmentality analytics to examine Marathi sex reforms, I draw upon Foucault in terms of the spirit of his fundamental inquiry into power relations. Foucault traced the emergence and development of governmentality in relation to state formation in early modern Europe as well as to the eighteenth-century liberal state and the post-war neo-liberal state. If his articulations were contextualised by modern European discussions on the 'art of governance' and 'political economy', he also saw modern

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 99–101. Also see Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction' in the same volume, pp. 1–51.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 17–35.

governmentalities as a combination of juridical power and the revived Christian pastoral morality—what he called a ‘secular political pastorate’ combining individualisation and totalisation.<sup>5</sup> Foucault’s analytical formulations were located in the modern Western nation-state and society. Pastoral morality and the state—early modern or neoliberal—were the examples he used to understand governmentality, rather than being the creators of this concept. In this analysis, the emergence and development of governmentality was a response to the crisis emerging from societal transformations affecting then-prevalent ideas of state power.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, problematising this crisis was crucial to understanding the mechanisms of governance. The spirit behind Foucault’s inquiry—leading to governmentality analytics—is to understand the articulation, execution, and operation of power relations. Consequently, in such an analytic, tracing the rationalities of government is central to comprehending governmentality as the ‘conduct of the conduct’.<sup>7</sup> While making sense of this spirit of inquiry, I understand governmentality as a discourse of crisis. My analysis of sex reforms as a response to the Brahminical crisis draws upon Foucault in the sense of understanding this intrinsic relation between crisis, governmentality, and power.

Apart from my explanation, the existing scholarly writings on governmentality and colonial India are also evident of Foucault’s applicability in analysing the non-Western and Indian situations. These writings, rather than applying Foucault chapter and verse to colonial Indian pasts, are largely about engaging with the idea of governance while addressing the politics of power relations.

However, my argument about governmentality and caste is distinct from these writings in terms of problematising the agency of governance. Governmentality scholarship on colonial India, by and large (with exceptions), has focused on examining the colonial state’s governmentality

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, ‘Governmentality,’ pp. 87–96.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, p. 2.

as exercised over colonised populations. For example, Partha Chatterjee, while problematising the political rationalities of the colonisers and the colonised, tries to trace the development of governmentalities in the East.<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Dirks has investigated the governance of colonialism to make an argument about the re-invention of caste as a project of British colonialism in India.<sup>9</sup> Caste appears in Dirks's governmentality narrative—but as a category governed by the colonial state, not as a governing agency.

Beyond this, the colonial state's governance rationalities have also been underlined in analysing the making of science, medicine, and urban administration. For instance, Gyan Prakash sees the construction of the Indian body as a matter of colonial and (Indian) national governmentalities, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Stephan Legg has decoded colonial cultural governance by analysing prostitution regulations in Delhi to point out the differences between the colonial legal agenda and its actual practice in regulating urban spaces.<sup>11</sup> Thus shaped, governmentality analytics remain engaged with interrogating the colonial state's governing mechanisms and in turn speak about the Indian response to them. In one sense, this goes beyond the problematics of colonialism. Sarah Hodges emphasises the government of health and medicine in colonialism, rather than exclusively focusing on the state. Significantly, while arguing about the governmentality of lock hospitals, Hodges interprets this medical space beyond colonial governance

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<sup>8</sup> Partha Chatterjee, 'Governmentality in the East', lecture delivered at University of California, Berkeley, 27 April 2015, <https://soundcloud.com/cirucberkeley/partha-chatterjee-governmentality-in-the-east>.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 63–123.

<sup>10</sup> Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1999), pp. 123–58.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Legg, 'Governing Prostitution in Colonial Delhi: From Cantonment Regulations to International Hygiene (1864–1939)', *Social History*, 34, 4 (November 2009), pp. 447–66.

as the site where unfree Indian subjects—prostitutes and destitute women—develop self-governance strategies.<sup>12</sup>

While I acknowledge the relevance of colonial governmentality, my work in a way follows Hodges in going beyond the colonial state's governance. Simultaneously, in not focusing on colonialism, I also depart from one of Foucault's theoretical locations for articulating governmentality—the bureaucratic state. I propose to look at the governmentality of caste under colonial conditions. My usage of the terms *governmentality of caste* and *Brahminical governmentality* signifies a rationality deployed by the hegemonic social system to rule culturally over the populations socially hierarchised in colonial India. During the colonial crisis of Brahminism, this rationality, through multiple pedagogic mechanisms, was made into a 'conduct' for conducting the 'Self' and thereby the 'Other'. I also understand governmentality of caste as a rationality deployed to produce 'counter-conduct' that challenged the hegemonic spirit behind the dominant hierarchical structure. This historical narrative is about the exercise of power beyond the bureaucratic state—colonial or otherwise. In its construction I focus on the realm of activities that preceded and exceeded the juridical level.

Within this framework, my argument considers Marathi sex reformism as an issue of Brahminical governmentality, with the ideas of 'sexual repression' and 'scientific sex' as integral components of its making. In building such an analysis, I address in a new light the issue of writing colonial histories of caste and colonial histories of sexuality in India.

Because the endogamous nature of the caste system is a fundamental principle of its reproduction, the relation between caste and sexuality is explicit and self-evident. However, a critical reading of colonial histories of sexuality and caste and of social histories of medicine demonstrates the marginal attention caste and sexuality have received in those disciplines when

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<sup>12</sup> Sarah Hodges, "'Looting' the Lock Hospitals in Colonial Madras during the Famine Years of the 1870s", *Social History of Medicine*, 18, 3 (2005), pp. 379–97. In Britain and its colonies, including India, lock hospitals treated sexually transmitted diseases.

they were not the main focus. I argue that the historical frames created through such writings are sites of necessary intervention, particularly when problematising the remaking of the late colonial caste-sexuality nexus. Hence, my work has developed through responding to this historically constructed indifference to caste and sexuality and the marginalisation of these issues. I extend some of my arguments to important perspectives, frames, and arguments invested in these histories.

### **Peripheral Sexuality**

Caste has never been a static phenomenon in South Asia. As a social system it has kept reinventing itself. More importantly, it adapted to modernity in colonial times. Colonial histories of caste are important to consider in analysing sexual modernity because they highlight the significance of caste to colonial modernity. While underlining the marginalisation of sexuality in caste histories, I use the term *history of caste* beyond the narrow disciplinary understandings of history to refer to the process of historicising caste, as done by various scholars.

From late colonial times to the present, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have contributed to historicising caste with their functionalist, ethnographic, anti-caste, feminist, and cultural-studies agendas. While considering caste as a hindrance to envisioning ‘modern’ India, G.S. Ghurye and M.N. Srinivas rooted their concepts of caste in their criticism of the colonial government’s political representation policies and early-twentieth-century lower-caste assertions to power.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, although Ghurye’s influential thesis *Caste and Race in India* evolved into the book *Caste and Class in India*,<sup>14</sup> published in five editions up to the 1970s, and Ghurye simultaneously continued writing on the sexual habits of middle-class

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<sup>13</sup> M.N. Srinivas, ‘Caste in Modern India’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 16, 4 (August 1957), pp. 529–36; G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1957), pp. 184–290.

<sup>14</sup> G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (London: Kegan Paul, 1932).



Bombay,<sup>15</sup> caste and sexuality were not related subjects in his nationalist sociology.

Sexuality was further absent in the anti-caste historical analytics responding to such nationalist and upper-caste understandings of the caste problem, which developed as a dominant trope in historicising caste beginning in the 1970s. Written within a social-justice framework, these writings analysed the relevance of the anti-caste movement along with providing critical biographies of colonial anti-caste radicals. Gail Omvedt, for example, in emphasising the caste realities of class formation in colonial Maharashtra, sees the non-Brahmin and Dalit movements as a cultural revolt in colonial India.<sup>16</sup> Eleanor Zelliot's analysis of the Ambedkarite movement traces the historical journey of lower-caste political consciousness from being 'untouchable' to being Dalit, navigating through caste politics, Dalit literature, and Dalit popular culture.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, S.V. Rajdurai and V. Geetha's comprehensive history of south Indian non-Brahminism analyses the successes, trials, limitations, and dilemmas of the Dravidian movement.<sup>18</sup> For Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar, documenting women's crucial role in the Dalit movement was a matter of challenging male exclusivity in histories of anti-caste radicalism.<sup>19</sup>

While exposing the oppressive nature of Brahminism, the modern historicising of caste reflected in these works was embedded in constructing

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<sup>15</sup> G.S. Ghurye, 'Sex Habits of a Sample of Middle Class People of Bombay' in *I and the Other Explorations* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1973), pp. 287–305. This survey-based essay was originally published by and presented at the Second All India Population and First Family Hygiene Conference, held in Bombay in 1938.

<sup>16</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India, 1873–1930* (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkarite Movement* (Delhi: Manohar Publications, [1992] 2015).

<sup>18</sup> S.V. Rajdurai and V. Geetha, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium: Iyothee Thass to Periyar* (Calcutta: Samya, 1999), p. xi

<sup>19</sup> Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar, *We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement*, translated by Wandana Sonalkar (Delhi: Zubaan, 2008).

and foregrounding a lower-caste representational claim on the present through the past. Anti-caste politics as understood through such narratives is an unavoidable reference point in contextualising late colonial sex reforms. Simultaneously, caste realities thus historicised provide multiple reference points with regard to discussions and debates during this period about kinship and marriage, as well as inter-caste marriages. Despite such insightful references, sexuality as a crucial aspect defining caste remained outside of these analytical frames.

The absence of sexuality further continued in ethno-historical writings on specific castes, as well as in works examining colonial caste organisations. For instance, Robert Hardgrave discusses the predominantly modern historical transformation of the Nadar caste in South India through Nadars' political organisation, institutionalisation, and upward mobility.<sup>20</sup> Although Hardgrave reflects on the caste-sexuality nexus through narrating the controversy about Nadar women not being allowed to wear breast-cloths, such conflict, for him, did not go beyond a drive for upward mobility, shaped by the interventions of state, caste, and religion.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, a range of scholars—David Arnold, James Manor, David Washbrook,<sup>22</sup> Lucy Carroll,<sup>23</sup> Gail Omvedt,<sup>24</sup> Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph<sup>25</sup>—have in different ways focused on the role caste associations have played in shaping Indian politics since colonial times. However, caste-organisation

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnadu: Political Culture of the Community in Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 43–238.

<sup>21</sup> Hardgrave, *Nadars of Tamilnadu*, pp. 55–70 and 61–69.

<sup>22</sup> David Arnold, James Manor, and Robin Jeffrey, 'Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 13, 3 (July 1976), pp. 353–73.

<sup>23</sup> Lucy Carroll, 'Caste, Social Change, and the Social Scientist: A Note on the Ahistorical Approach to Indian Social History', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 35, 1 (November 1975), pp. 63–84.

<sup>24</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 163–76.

<sup>25</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, 'The Political Role of India's Caste Associations', *Pacific Affairs*, 33, 1 (March 1960), pp. 5–22.

scholarship has not touched the issue of sexual reorganisation through political reorganisation.

However, the modern historicising of caste has not been limited to its socio-political role under colonialism. It is also about how colonisers and colonised Indians articulated and deployed caste. Bernard Cohn, picking up this thread to understand imperial knowledge politics, examines orientalist', missionaries', and the colonial government's official views on caste as well as the methodologies of its making.<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Dirks continues this inquiry by examining the documentation and mechanisms of colonial knowledge production and by arguing that 'archival governmentality' made modern caste into a colonial construct.<sup>27</sup> M.S.S. Pandian, by contrast, examines Tamil Brahmin and non-Brahmin identity formation in reference to the crisis created by colonialism.<sup>28</sup> Despite historicising caste through the lens of colonial governmentality and knowledge-production politics, none of the aforementioned scholars examines sexuality as a constituent of caste.

This historiographical narrative is not a lament on the absence of sexuality in thinking about the modernity of caste; in fact, it underlines the necessity of the present work, which focusses on the interlock of caste and sexuality. In this analysis, problematising the sexual silence over modernising caste helps to contextualise how caste was understood and used—not just in colonial times but in post-colonial reconstructions and interpretations.

Feminist accounts of colonial caste and gender analysis paint a somewhat different picture. The interconnectedness of caste and sexuality is reflected, for example, in Tanika Sarkar's interpretation of the colonial child-marriage debate, which exposes the upper-caste texture of nationalist men's

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<sup>26</sup> Bernard Cohn, 'Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture', in Bernard Cohn and Milton Singer (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1996), pp. 6–23.

<sup>27</sup> Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 63–227.

<sup>28</sup> M.S.S. Pandian, *Brahmin Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), p. 13.

pro-child-marriage arguments.<sup>29</sup> Beyond this, Brahminical patriarchy has been the dominant framework within which feminist scholarship comments upon caste and sexual relations. While articulating this frame, Uma Chakravarty sees regulation and control of women's sexuality as one of the aspects shaping nineteenth-century social-reform discourse.<sup>30</sup> Sexuality was an important part of the context of Dalit women's exploitation and regulation referred to in Sharmila Rege's writings on Marathi *lavani* (लावणी)<sup>31</sup> songs as well as performances and in her interpretation of B.R. Ambedkar's thoughts on endogamy, Manu, and *devadasis* (देवदासी, women dedicated to God).<sup>32</sup> The Brahminical patriarchy framework also continues in Shailaja Paik's work, underlining the feminist credentials of Phule-Ambedkarite thought while interpreting Ambedkar's moral appeal to Dalit women as an attempt to emasculate them for challenging their own subordination.<sup>33</sup>

For Anupama Rao, the caste/sexual respectability agenda, focused on the feminised body, is an axis for the modern refashioning of the Brahmin, Maratha, and Dalit reformist self.<sup>34</sup> While going beyond the 'women's regulation' thesis and Brahminical patriarchy in arguing about multiple caste

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<sup>29</sup> Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), pp. 191–249.

<sup>30</sup> Uma Chakravarty, *Gendering Caste: Through the Feminist Lens* (Calcutta: Stree, 2003), pp. 130–31.

<sup>31</sup> Sharmila Rege, 'Conceptualizing Popular Culture: *Lawani* and *Powada* in Maharashtra', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, 11 (16 March 2002), pp. 1038–45. *Lawani* is historically understood as a type of devotional and erotic folk song performed by women from certain 'untouchable' castes in Maharashtra.

<sup>32</sup> Sharmila Rege, *Madness of Manu: B.R. Ambedkar's Writings on Brahminical Patriarchy* (Delhi: Navayana Publications, 2013), pp. 61, 143–49. *Devadasi* is a practice of dedicating 'untouchable' and lower-caste girls to the service of God. The practice includes sexual exploitation of the dedicated women.

<sup>33</sup> Shailaja Paik, 'Forging a New Dalit Womanhood in Colonial Western India: Discourse on Modernity, Rights, Education, and Emancipation', *Journal of Women's History*, 28, 4 (2016), pp. 17–30.

<sup>34</sup> Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), pp. 50–68.

patriarchies, Rao also reflects on the male subjectivity of gender reforms and the colonial politicisation of caste.<sup>35</sup>

Beyond references to caste-specific subjectivities, sexuality has appeared as a reference contextualising caste in feminist writings about popular literature and language. Charu Gupta's historical inquiries exploring the caste of gender highlight the sexualised, effeminised, and emasculated projections of lower castes reflected in late colonial popular Hindi literature.<sup>36</sup> Shefali Chandra understands the sexualised spaces of language that shaped the patriarchal caste politics of dominance through deploying the rhetoric of English in colonial upper-caste Marathi narratives.<sup>37</sup>

Though considered in such contexts, sexuality has remained marginal overall to feminist historical accounts of caste, whereas analytical narratives of caste that principally focus on sexuality are absent. While referring to colonial times, these feminist histories largely remain within the caste-and-gender frame. Such works predominantly engage with the regulation of sexuality, particularly of women's bodies and their corporeal exploitation. Discussion of the distinct problematisation of masculinities, while ubiquitous, is exceptionally present in the historicising of caste. Beyond this, writings on colonial Indian men that particularly focus on caste and sexual identity are rare.

The present work thus problematises the figure of the late colonial upper-caste Marathi male. Historicising caste, sexuality, and sexual relations is central to my analysis. The work begins by situating late colonial Marathi sex reforms in the well-studied context of socio-political reformism, which used both caste and anti-caste language (chapter 1).

Despite the marginality of sexuality to academic historical accounts of caste, this work finds it useful to draw upon such accounts in thinking about

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<sup>35</sup> Rao, *Caste Question*, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> Charu Gupta, *The Gender of Caste: Representing Dalits In Print* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2016), pp. 28–165.

<sup>37</sup> Shefali Chandra, *The Sexual Life of English: Languages of Caste and Desire in Colonial India* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2012).

the role of archives and of language in writing caste-sexual histories. Making sense of the presence and absence of archival sources has always been crucial to academic histories on colonialism, caste, gender, and sexuality; however, the political question of archives lies at the intersection of caste and sexuality history writing in modern times. In the spirit of rigorous archival research, my work follows Nicholas Dirks in understanding the colonial modernity of caste but goes beyond by employing the lens of sexuality in the process (chapters 2 to 6). This research further shares Anjali Arondekar's concerns about the politics of the absence of sexuality in the archives<sup>38</sup> and searches for traces of sexuality not within but *outside* the colonial record rooms. My work also brings out the sexual meanings of caste and anti-caste literature and the caste-related meanings of explicit literary sexual expressions to establish the presence of a 'caste-sexual' archive. In other words, I foreground the necessity of a caste-sexual reading of texts when confronted by the historical and political question of the presence and absence of archival sources (see chapters 1, 3, and 6).

Another side to interpreting the archives is language. Unlike Shefali Chandra's work on the 'sexuality of language', my work focuses on the 'language of sexuality' in a colonial caste society. In addition to written language, it is necessary to understand the body language of the historical source: if language can represent explicit meaning, it also functions with an implied set of expressions, spoken indirectly. Considering this, I problematise Marathi sex reforms by thinking through how caste and sexuality were expressed. In so doing, I extend M.S.S. Pandian's argument about the 'other language of caste' in writing the colonial Marathi history of sexuality (chapters 2 to 6).<sup>39</sup>

While my work has evolved through questioning the relation of sexuality to the writing of caste histories, it has also developed through an

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<sup>38</sup> Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2010), pp. 1–21.

<sup>39</sup> M.S.S. Pandian, 'One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and the Public Sphere', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, 18 (4 May 2002), pp. 1735–37.

attempt to understand the relation of caste to the writing of modern histories of sexuality.

### **Caste on the Margins**

Histories of colonial Indian sexuality have thus far foregrounded the centrality of sexual relations. Identities created, aspired to, and resisted in the colonial era—including that of colonialism—were fundamentally shaped by sexual concerns. Sexuality histories about these identity formations emphasise how thought about modernity was inevitably linked to thought about sexuality. However, if sexuality remained marginal to the writing of caste histories, analysing caste was also peripheral to histories of sexuality. Except for writings on eugenics and birth control, histories of colonial Indian sexuality are written in a ‘gender and sexuality’ framework rather than casting light on the determined structure of caste-gender-sexuality.

Within this gender and sexuality framework, categories such as imperial and Indian men and women, middle-class men, nationalists, Hindus and Muslims, and elites and bourgeoisie became the subjects. Several sexual histories interrogate the ideas of empire, nation, sexual knowledge, and the body mostly through these categories. Ronald Hyam, amongst other things, has examined how sexual needs affected the careers and behaviours of imperial administrators while writing about the Indian *bibi* (wife) and the English memsahib.<sup>40</sup> Durba Ghosh, in responding to the political naivety of such narratives and working on the same coloniser-colonised sexual intersection, demonstrated how the respectability concerns of the colonial state were mapped onto the native woman’s body.<sup>41</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, further taking history of sexuality to a degeneration discourse, views the ‘effeminisation thesis’ as equally shared by colonisers and nationalist Bengali

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<sup>40</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 25–56.

<sup>41</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of an Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 69–107.

elites.<sup>42</sup> The critique of Indians sharing colonisers' view of 'Indian sexuality' also appears in Kumkum Roy's comments on Richard Burton's nineteenth-century interpretation of the *Kamasutra* and its continuation by Indians.<sup>43</sup> Joseph Alter, however, sees M.K. Gandhi's thoughts on sex, diet, and yoga as his attempt to create a rational science of moral health for the rejuvenation of colonised nation.<sup>44</sup>

Beyond the moral construction of the national self, sexuality was also crucial in historicising the religion- and class-based identities of the nation. Charu Gupta's analysis of obscenity and popular Hindi sex literature theorises communalism and Hindu-Muslim subjectivities.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, middle-class male readers of sexual science were central to Douglas Haynes's and my analysis of male anxieties in late colonial Marathi sexual knowledge production.<sup>46</sup> Such categories and subjectivities are grounded in the kind of politics the historian invokes, from the past for the present: contesting the myth of masculine Englishmen and effeminate Bengalis, understanding Gandhi and the nation, or the understanding the identity of 'middle-class man' are all attempts to understand the politics of broader social structures through the lens of sexuality. Colonialism and nationalism have remained the axes of power determining how these sexuality histories are articulated.

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<sup>42</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 1–24.

<sup>43</sup> Kumkum Roy, 'Unravelling the Kamasutra', in Mary John and Janaki Nair (eds.), *A Question of Silence: The Sexual Economics of Modern India* (London: Zed Books, 2000), pp. 66–74.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet and Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 26–27.

<sup>45</sup> Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), pp. 66–84.

<sup>46</sup> Shrikant Botre and Douglas E. Haynes, 'Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Anxieties: Middle-Class Males in Western India and the Correspondence in *Samaj Swasthya*, 1927–53', *Modern Asian Studies*, 51, 4 (July 2017), pp. 991–1034.



My work responds to such subjectivities by raising a caste question. I mention nation, class, and religion but do not treat them as subject-categories of the arguments. Without denying the relevance of the politics decoded to date in these works, my historical narrative considers caste as the axis of power when analysing Marathi sex reforms. Picking up where my earlier work related to Marathi sexual knowledge production left off,<sup>47</sup> I problematise elite-caste sex educators and their sexual knowledge instead of focusing on middle-class readers of sexual science.

For academic histories on colonial sexuality, sexual and sexualised behaviour are another site for politicising and historicising gender-based power relations. With the political vibrancy of late colonial times and the genesis of respectability politics, the sexual body became the terrain for mapping modernist sensibilities. Against the backdrop of these cultural politics, my work reflects on the late colonial caste-coded Marathi construction of heterosexual corporeality. While contesting colonial histories of brahmacharya analysed in their Hindu/nationalist socio-cultural distinctness, it foregrounds the bio-moral and sexual making of brahmacharya as a mechanism to recreate caste (chapter 3).

With the rhetoric of the repressive Victorian regime dominant in the modern West and the colonial East, Indian scholars writing on sexuality and obscenity have generally worked within the framework of sexual repression. Despite their many references to Foucault, they have not considered sexual repression as a political construction. On the contrary, certain histories, citing the influence of Victorian morality, argue that obscenity as a phenomenon became dominant with the coming of colonialism.<sup>48</sup> In their criticism of colonialism, Sumanta Banerjee and Anindita Ghosh situate obscenity within

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<sup>47</sup> Botre and Haynes, 'Sexual Knowledge'.

<sup>48</sup> Sumanta Banerjee, 'Bogey of the Bawdy: The Changing Concept of "Obscenity" in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Bengali Culture', *Economic and Political Weekly* 22, 29 (18 July 1987), pp. 1197–1206.

an elite/subaltern binary.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, Gupta's writing on obscenity problematises late colonial Hindu communalism within a gender and sexuality framework.<sup>50</sup> Neither analyses the caste identities of subalterns and elites, despite referring to caste.

While my work narrates the proliferation of Marathi sex literature, it also problematises claims of sexual silence and repression in colonial times. Without denying their reality, I analyse sexual repression and silence as a politically manufactured discourse connected to Brahminical governmentality (chapter 2). I also analyse the caste subjectivities of obscenity and the obscene as reflected in Marathi sex literature (chapter 6).

However, the question of sexual silence and sexual science is not limited to colonial obscenity analytics. The politics of combating sexual ignorance is also reconceptualised in the history of late colonial Indian sexology and its pioneers. Sanjay Srivastava's exploration of passionate modernities sees Indian sex educators, particularly the eugenicist N.S. Phadke, almost as middle-class sex radicals who went beyond the bounds of caste and communalism.<sup>51</sup> Sanjam Ahluwalia's analysis of A.P. Pillay problematises sexology as a location for recovering Indian sexological expertise against the Western domination of sexual science.<sup>52</sup> Late colonial Indian sexology was also seen as a site to decode the modern capitalism-governed politics of time in understanding sexual life and celibacy: according to Ishita Pande, Hindu sexology conceived the body as a sexual clock in which brahmacharya corresponded to the corporeal temporal phase of

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<sup>49</sup> Banerjee, 'Bogey of the Bawdy'; Anindita Ghosh, 'Cheap Books, "Bad" Books: Contesting Print Cultures in Colonial Bengal', *South Asia Research* 18, 2 (1998), pp. 173–94.

<sup>50</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, pp. 66–84 and 268–320.

<sup>51</sup> Sanjay Srivastava, *Passionate Modernities: Sexuality Class and Consumption in India* (Delhi: Routledge, 2007), pp. 66–76.

<sup>52</sup> Sanjam Ahluwalia, "'The Tyranny of Orgasm': Global Governance of Sexuality from Bombay 1930–1950", in Veronica Fuechtner, Douglas Haynes, and Ryan Jones (eds.), *A Global History of Sexual Science, 1880–1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), pp. 353–69.

adolescence.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, Douglas Haynes and I have written elsewhere analysing Marathi sex educator R.D. Karve's thought on brahmacharya as his attempt to establish the coeval nature of efforts to combat sexual ignorance in the modern West and India.<sup>54</sup>

Thus constructed, sexology analytics provides useful insights into sexual modernity politics, particularly with regard to its global and Indian making. Caste appears in these interpretations, but not as an analytical concern. While responding to such interpretations, my work understands Marathi sexology as a hybrid and caste discourse. In unpacking this through chapters 2 to 6, I also challenge some of the above-mentioned interpretations of sex educators as reformers and radicals who went beyond caste.

Given these discussions of marginalisation, writings on colonial Indian reproductive politics, such as birth-control histories, have raised questions about the relationship between caste and sexuality. Sanjam Ahluwalia's work on colonial birth-control politics goes beyond exploratory feminist narratives about birth control advocates and their opponents,<sup>55</sup> pointing out the upper-caste and elite backgrounds of Indian eugenicists.<sup>56</sup> Ahluwalia also touches on indigenous midwives as well as Ambedkar's birth-control bill, but ultimately remains in a middle-class framework than moving into the realm of caste.<sup>57</sup> However, birth control was not exclusively an elite caste agenda in its colonial deployment. S. Anandhi's inquiry into interpretations of colonial birth-control activism by neo-Malthusians, the

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<sup>53</sup> Ishita Pande, 'Time for Sex: The Education of Desire and the Conduct of Childhood in Global/Hindu Sexology', in Fuechtner, Haynes, and Jones (eds.), *Global History of Sexual Science*, pp. 279–80.

<sup>54</sup> Shrikant Botre and Douglas Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve: Brahmacharya, Modernity, and the Appropriation of Global Sexual Science in Western India, 1927–1953', in Fuechtner, Haynes, and Jones (eds.), *Global History of Sexual Science*, pp. 171.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Embattled Advocates: The Debate over Birth Control in India', *Journal of Women's History*, 1, 2 (Fall 1989), pp. 34–35.

<sup>56</sup> Sanjam Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints: Birth Control in India, 1877–1947* (New Delhi: Permanent Black 2008), pp. 35–41.

<sup>57</sup> Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints*, pp. 28–29, 62–63, 165–71.

Tamil anti-caste movement, and the women's movement questions a monolithic understanding.<sup>58</sup>

The politics of reproduction were located in conceptualising contraception and the Indian eugenics movement. Sarah Hodges, in addition to emphasising the ideological difference between the neo-Malthusian and Tamil anti-caste birth-control agendas, analyses the late colonial caste-coded careers of contraceptive technologies and argues that arranged marriage centred on caste endogamy was the foundation of Indian eugenic articulations.<sup>59</sup>

Although late colonial Maharashtra was known for its birth-control advocacy, my work does not analyse it as a distinct discourse. Marathi sex reformers often discussed birth control. In fact, some of them were seen as embattled advocates of the birth-control movement in India.<sup>60</sup> However, not all of them advocated contraception, and birth control, for Marathi scientific sexuality, was part of the larger issue of marriage and eugenics. Hence, my work examines the politics of endo-caste (within caste) marriages, articulated alongside the rhetoric of sexual science and eugenics. Drawing upon Hodges' interpretation, my work focuses on the reciprocal engagement of eugenics and marriages to reinforce caste endogamy in Marathi sex reformers' thought on marriage. Chapters 4 and 5 analyse the rhetoric of eugenics and sexual science in the caste-influenced remaking of marriage arrangements seen as sex reform in late colonial Maharashtra. While considering the politics of such rhetoric in relation to the issues of caste and sexuality, my work further speaks to the colonial social history of medicine.

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<sup>58</sup> S. Anandhi, 'Reproductive Bodies and Regulated Sexuality: Birth Control in Debates in Early-Twentieth-Century Tamil Nadu', in Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (eds.), *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economics of Modern India* (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 139–56.

<sup>59</sup> Sarah Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce: Birth Control in South India, 1920–1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 77–103; Sarah Hodges, 'Indian Eugenics in an Age of Reforms', in *Reproductive Health in India: History, Politics, Controversies* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006), pp. 125–29.

<sup>60</sup> Ramusack, 'Embattled Advocates'.

## **Caste, Sexuality, and Colonial Histories of Medicine**

Since the late colonial rhetoric of writing ‘scientific sex’ was intrinsically linked with the discourse of health, the colonial history of medicine is an important location for inquiring into the academic and historical marginalisation of caste and sexuality. Not only have these histories been decisive in the politics of the ‘medical’, they inevitably created an understanding of the colonial ‘social’ and ‘political’.

Themes of historicising the colonial body, institutionalising medicine, lunatic asylums, epidemic diseases, medical practices, and health governance have remained dominant in social histories of public health and medicine. Except for a few of the above-mentioned birth-control histories, social histories of medicine exemplify the disciplinary marginalisation of caste and sexuality. Many do not view caste and sexuality as analytical concerns at all.<sup>61</sup> Most treat it as one of many issues shaping the historical narrative.

David Arnold’s work on medical institutionalisation and the epidemic-disease politics analyses the conquest of Western medicine in colonial India, which was accomplished through strategies of appropriation, subordination, and denigration.<sup>62</sup> Though Arnold references the caste discourse over plague, distinct-caste hospitals, and caste-based patient concessions and surgical jobs,<sup>63</sup> caste is not a major concern in his theorisation of the body. Bishwamoy Pati and Chandi Nanda’s history of leprosy and its institutionalised treatment in colonial Odisha references dietary issues of vegetarianism, caste conflict over food-making, and restrictions on intimate relations, but in the context of Hinduisation.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Laxman Satya, *Medicine Disease and Ecology in Colonial India: The Deccan Plateau in the 19th Century* (Delhi, Manohar Publications, 2009); Mridula Ramanna, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay, 1845–1895* (Delhi, Orient Longman, 2002).

<sup>62</sup> David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 59

<sup>63</sup> Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, pp. 212–13, 250–52.

<sup>64</sup> Biswamoy Pati and Chandi Nanda, ‘The Leprosy Patient and Society: Colonial Orissa, 1870s to 1940s’, in Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (eds.), *The Social History of Health and Medicine in Colonial India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2011), pp. 114–15, 121.

Ashwini Tambe's work on sexual trafficking, the Contagious Diseases Act, and Indian nationalism considers prostitution regulation in colonial Bombay as a racialised discourse.<sup>65</sup> However, the predominantly lower-caste reality of prostitution is only marginally mentioned; in such narrative;<sup>66</sup> colonial governance of sexuality remains the frame of analysis.

Public-health histories of medicine also interpret distinct practices of medicine in India. For instance, Rachel Berger traces the bio-moral genealogies of Ayurveda while situating it in the context of late colonial, as well as early post-colonial, governance of public health. Her discursive frame remains the middle class, however, despite crucially reflecting on textuality, language (Sanskrit), and the reproductive body through analysing popular Ayurvedic literature.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in Projit Bihari Mukharji's history of colonial *daktari* (डाक्टरी) medicine<sup>68</sup> and print culture, seminal weakness (*dhatudaurbalya*, धातू दौर्बल्य) receives an analytical treatment but not in relation to caste.<sup>69</sup> Even Madhuri Sharma, who elaborates the fluid boundaries between Western and indigenous medicine and analyses the creation of the medical consumer, seems to view middle-class Brahmin elites' scripting of anatomy and scientific sex as a matter of appreciation rather than a political issue.<sup>70</sup>

In chapters 3 and 5, I analyse the bio-moral governance of Brahminism while examining the seminal concerns of brahmacharya and the sexual-pleasure narratives of marriage. I argue in chapter 2 that the medical

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<sup>65</sup> Ashwini Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2009), pp. 52–78.

<sup>66</sup> Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>67</sup> Rachel Berger, *Ayurveda Made Modern: Political Histories of Indigenous Medicine in North India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 75–105.

<sup>68</sup> The term *daktar* refers to the social identity and literary representation of various people associated with medical practice in colonial Bengal.

<sup>69</sup> Projit Bihari Mukharji, *Nationalizing the Body: The Medical Market, Print and Daktari Medicine* (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2012), pp. 213–247.

<sup>70</sup> Madhuri Sharma, *Indigenous and Western Medicine in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2012), pp. 46–50, 120–136

market is not just a matter of creating consumers but of Brahminising and commodifying sexual knowledge. The scripting of pleasure and the sexual body (anatomy) are treated in chapters 2, 5, and 6 as caste political facts rather than secular and progressive public concerns. Continuing my interrogation of cultural body politics in chapter 6, I look at the advocacy of prostitution that emerged from scientific sexuality discourse as a matter of Brahminical governance of health in late colonial Maharashtra.

In Indian histories of medicine, the relationship between colonialism and body has received major attention. Gyan Prakash raises the question: What was colonial about the colonisation of the body? How was the materialisation of the body in institutions, knowledges, and tactics affected by the conditions of alien rule?<sup>71</sup> In analysing the political making of the 'sexual body', my work asks the same question but adapts it to the Indian context: What was Indian about the Indianisation of the body? How was the understanding of the body in social institutions and knowledges shaped by caste and cultural politics? In chapters 3, 5, and 6, I unpack the cultural biopolitics behind making the body to understand the body language of Marathi sex reform.

This bio-political making of the body came along with the rhetoric of science and sexual modernity, disseminated through Marathi sex literature. By analysing the roots of the Marathi sexual-science discourse, I reflect on the relation between science and the rhetoric of sexual science in the pedagogy of modernity.

With this rhetoric of sexual modernity popular in late colonial times, the cultural politics of progressivism and modernity lay at the intersection of caste, sexuality, and the body. Decoding colonial sexual modernity is therefore essential to a historical understanding of the caste-sexual foundations of Indian society, and Marathi scientific sexuality is an ideal site for this process of decoding.

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<sup>71</sup> Prakash, *Another Reason*, p. 127.

## **Dissertation Preview**

This work is not about ‘breaking the silence’ around sexuality. Nor does it simply narrate what modern thoughts were introduced by writing on sex. Rather, it is about analysing the constitution and projections of late colonial Marathi sexual modernity and the making of the modern Brahminical male. In doing this the dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first two introduce the late colonial Marathi historical landscape and the Marathi sex literature produced in this period, respectively. The subsequent four chapters analyse three major discourses emerging from this literature: brahmacharya, marriage, and obscenity.

The first chapter sets the backdrop for the emergence of Marathi sex literature: the context of colonial and late colonial Maharashtra. It analyses the Marathi historical narrative of social and political reforms popular in the period to situate discussions around sex reform in that cultural setting and explains the crisis in Brahminical governmentality over reforms.

Chapter 2 introduces the proliferation of Marathi sex literature. By situating sex-education writing in the context of global sex reform and the modernist Marathi literary landscape, the chapter details the cultural biography of late colonial Marathi sexual science and speaks about the production politics of the sexual-science literature.

The next four chapters analyse sex literature by exploring three dominant themes that emerge from it. Chapter 3 discusses brahmacharya by focusing on the writings of three prominent sex educators: Shivananda, R.D. Karve, and N.S. Phadke. While situating brahmacharya in the lexical and cultural politics of the period, the chapter examines its nationalist, rationalist, and culturally strategic sexual constructions. In doing this it brings out brahmacharya’s bio-moral politics, which addressed the reformist crisis.

Chapters 4 and 5 interrogate endo-caste marriage in late colonial Maharashtra. Chapter 4 pays attention to the social aspects of marriage arrangements and the invention of the Marathi marriage manual. It also examines the political journey of Marathi marriage writings that made new classifications focusing on quality reproduction through debating marriage sanctions. Chapter 5 interrogates the sexualisation of conjugality, reflecting on Marathi marriage manuals. Based on various sex educators’ narratives, the



chapter brings out the role of caste in shaping the ‘body language’ of marriage writings. Subsequently, it discusses endo-caste marriage by analysing the politics of the scripted pedagogy behind sexual matchmaking and marriage consummation.

In the process of constructing the respectable, modern sexual self, Marathi sex reformers also constructed an obscene lower-caste ‘Other’ in body and mind. To decode these cultural and caste politics, the last chapter discusses obscenity through an analysis of their writings on anatomy and of the so-called scientific literature’s rhetoric of nudity.

This analysis of sexual modernity treats celibacy, eugenic marriage, and obscenity in late colonial Marathi sex reforms. This thematic arrangement is a matter of methodological systematisation, not random convenience. The concepts of the *brahmachari* (ब्रह्मचारी, unmarried man), *grihastha* (गृहस्थ, married man), and *sadabhiruchi* (सदभिरुची, person with respectable taste) resulted from Marathi sex reformers’ discussions on these topics. This was the modern Brahminical journey of constructing the respectable upper-caste male sexual self. Following Brahminical logic to unpack the modern Brahminical male self is thus a methodological requirement.

## Chapter 1. Modern Maharashtra: The Crisis of Brahminical Reform

Sex literature emerged in early-twentieth-century Maharashtra and was widely disseminated across the region. Marathi sex reformers were recognised in the global circuits of sexology. They took pride in being Maharashtrians and categorically wrote in Marathi. In fact, these sex reforms were entrenched in the cultural politics of modern Maharashtra. They were also a product of the forces shaping the region's modern identity formation. What did Maharashtra look like on the eve of these reforms? What was the socio-political background to Marathi literary production at the time? The present chapter answers these questions and analyses the late colonial era while setting the background for Marathi sexual modernity.

The modern linguistic state of Maharashtra takes pride in the progressive historical legacy of a social-reform movement that resisted caste and gender discrimination. It contributed to moderate, extremist, and militant varieties of anti-colonial nationalist politics. Beyond this, the region is known for its multiple and at times conflicting identities throughout its nineteenth-century colonial and early-twentieth-century late colonial history. While it was famous for the social and religious reform movements and the tribal and peasant uprisings of the colonial period, it also produced vibrant non-Brahmin, Dalit, cooperative, and labour movements in the late colonial period.

The late colonial period is usually considered a time of crisis in the history of modern Maharashtra. Marathi public intellectual Sadanand More's cultural and political history of modern Maharashtra calls it *nirwanicha kalakhanda* (निर्वाणीचा कालखंड, period of crisis).<sup>1</sup> Marathi scholar Y.D. Phadke's historical detailing of the unsettled early twentieth century also describes a state of crisis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sadanand More, *Samajgat* [Social Condition], a series of articles published in *Daily Loksatta*, Pune (2013–14).

<sup>2</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Visavya Shatakatala Maharashtra* [Maharashtra in the Twentieth Century], vol. 2 (Pune: Shri Vidya Prakashan, 1989), pp. 1–11.

Along with this, various Marathi literary critics saw post-1920 Maharashtra as a period of transformation and instability but also of mediocrity.<sup>3</sup> In such writings, different sets of socio-political conditions were interpreted as expressions of the crisis. This talk about disturbed times is also reflected in contemporary sex literature.<sup>4</sup> If one takes the crisis as a point of departure when analysing Marathi sexual modernity, sex reform becomes apparent as the product of this crisis.

What, then, is the relation of this distinct deployment of sexuality to so-called troubled times? What was the crisis? How does it relate to Maharashtra's proud reformism? This chapter argues that the publishing of 'sexual modernity' was a response to a crisis in Brahmin governmentality over setting the terms of social reforms and reformism. This crisis was driven by caste- and gender-based assertions of political agency, which led to a democratisation<sup>5</sup> of the debates around social reforms.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses the historiography of reformism and the caste conflict in colonial and late colonial Maharashtra. The second section speaks about nineteenth-century reformism as the project of Brahminical governmentality. The third section analyses the democratisation of reformism, with caste-based and women's assertions at its core, that produced a crisis in Brahminical cultural governance.

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<sup>3</sup> S.R. Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar' [Thoughts on the Principles of Literature] in G.M. Kulkarni et al. (eds.), *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas* [History of Marathi Literature] (Pune: Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad, 1991), pp. 239–40; Kusumawati Deshpande, *Marathi Sahitya* [Marathi Literature] (New Delhi: Maharashtra Information Center, 1966), pp. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati* [Desired Children] (Amravati: Rashtroddhar Karyalaya, 1928), pp. 71–76; N. S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India* (Mumbai: Taraporwala and Sons, 1927), pp. 7–11 and 21–24.

<sup>5</sup> I am using the word *democratisation* under colonial conditions more in a technical sense than a moral one.

## **I. The Historiographic Marathi Modern**

Colonial and late colonial times (the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) witnessed a drive of socio-political reformism across India.<sup>6</sup> In fact, colonial Maharashtra is historically known for its investment in social reform. In a popular sense, colonial Indian social reforms were Indian intellectuals' attempts and interventions, supported at times by the colonial state, to liberalise social relations from the much-criticised social and religious oppression of caste and gender identities. Colonial Maharashtra, in the process, also produced a conceptual distinction between social and political reforms and a vibrant discussion around which of the two was more important.

While Maharashtra's investment in the reform movement was a reality, it was also a politically constructed fact, constructed through writing histories of socio-political reforms. In constructing modern Maharashtra, English- and Marathi-language scholars have more substantially focused on the nineteenth-century socio-religious reform movement, as have popular histories. Comparatively less attention has been paid to the caste and gender reformulations of the late colonial era. Also, works that engage with reconstructing late colonial history discuss colonial times. In this historiographic politics, land revenue, colonial administration, urbanism, and publications and literature are important

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<sup>6</sup> For socio-political reform movements in India, see S.P. Sen (ed.), *Social and Religious Reform Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1960); Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and the Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); Kenneth Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Richard Tucker, *Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1972); V.D. Divekar (ed.), *Social Reform Movements in India: A Historical Perspective* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1992).

themes deployed to decode western India.<sup>7</sup> However, reformism, with reference to colonial transition, has remained a popular subject in the modern historiography of the region. This engagement is closely linked with the need to analyse late colonial Marathi sex reforms. Hence, to understand the Maharashtra that produced sexual modernity, a critical gaze on the historiography of Marathi modernity and its caste, gender, and reformist analysis is required.

### ***Reforming Colonial Marathi Modernity***

The historiography of modern Maharashtra does not just narrate reforms: it recreates them as relevant for the present. While ubiquitously using the rhetoric of *adhunikata* (आधुनिकता, modernity), scholarly writings on colonial times extensively cover social reformers and their activities and institutions, as well as Marathi nationalist figures (political reformers), anti-caste radicals, public intellectuals, modern learned Brahmins, and self-declared historians. In these reconstructions, reformers are appreciated as well as criticised.

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<sup>7</sup> For administrative and revenue histories, see Kenneth Ballhatch, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957); Ravindra Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London: Routledge, 1968); Neil Charlesworth, *British Rule and the Indian Economy, 1800–1914* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1980); Arvind Deshpande, *John Briggs in Maharashtra: A Study of District Administration under Early British Rule* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987).

For urbanisation, see Meera Kosambi, *Bombay and Poona: A Socio-Ecological Study of Two Indian Cities, 1650–1900* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1980); Mariam Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1845–1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

For publication and literature, see Ellen E. McDonald, 'The Modernizing of Communication: Vernacular Publishing in Nineteenth-Century Maharashtra', *Asian Survey* 8, 7 (1968); K. Deshpande, *Marathi Sahitya*; Kulkarni et al. (eds.), *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas*; Raja Dixit, *Itihas Samajwicar ani Keshavsuta* [History Social Thought and Keshavsuta] (Mumbai: Lokwangamaya, 2006); Rohini Tukadev, *Marathi Kadambariche Prarambhik Walan* [The Early Form of the Marathi Novel] (Pune: Dimond, 2014).

Dhananjay Keer's biographical writings, as well as G.B. Sardar and Y.D. Phadke's essays on several reformist figures, have underlined the importance of reformism in creating a new Maharashtra.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, J.V. Naik's work on the Prarthana Samaj and Bhau Mahajan and Arun Tikekar's historical sketch of M.G. Ranade view nineteenth-century reforms as the key to understanding Marathi modernity.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Arvind Ganachari comprehensively comments on the rationalist making of Maharashtra through analysing social reformer G.G. Agarkar's thought, but also makes Agarkar a 'Rationalist Saint'.<sup>10</sup> Further, to understand the nineteenth-century rise of the Marathi middle class, Raja Dixit uses Gramscian terminology and interprets Marathi reform movements as 'middle-class hegemony' even while admiring the reformers.<sup>11</sup> The relevance of

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<sup>8</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Lokmanya Tilak, Bharatiya Swatantrya Sangramache Janak* [Lokmanya Tilak: Father of the Indian Freedom Struggle] (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2016); Dhananjay Keer, *Mahata Jotirao Phule: Amchya Samajkranti Che Janak* [Mahatma Jotirao Phule: Father of Our Social Revolution] (Mumbai Popular Prakashan, 2013); G.B. Sardar, *Agarkarancha Samajik Tatva Vichar* [The Social Thought of Agarkar] (Pune: Vinus, 1975); G.B. Sardar, *Ranade Pranit Samajsudharnechi Tatva Mimansa* [An Analysis of the Ranade-Inspired Social Reform Movement] (Pune: Pune University Publications, 1973); Y.D. Phadke, *Social Reformers of Maharashtra* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 1975): p. xii.

<sup>9</sup> J.V. Naik, 'Social Composition of the Prarthana Samaj: A Statistical Analysis', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 48 (1987), pp. 502–11; J.V. Naik, 'Bhau Mahajan and His Prabhakar, Dhumaketu and Dnyanadarshan: A Study in Maharashtrian Response to British Rule', in K.N. Wagale (ed.), *Writers, Editors and Reformers: Social and Political Transformations in Maharashtra, 1830–1930* (Delhi: Manohar, 1999), pp. 64–78; Aroon Tikekar, *Ranade—The Renaissance Man* (Pune: Srividya Prakasana, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Arvind Ganachari, *Gopal Ganesh Agarkar: The Secular Rationalist Reformer* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan 2011), pp. 125–210, 251–56.

<sup>11</sup> Raja Dixit, *Ekonisavva Shatakatil Maharashtra: Madhyamwargacha Uday* [Nineteenth-Century Maharashtra: Rise of the Middle Class] (Pune: Dimond, 2009), pp. 123–82.

rationalist reformism is also underlined in Abida Ghumatkar's writing on Balaji Prabhakar Modak's science-propagation efforts.<sup>12</sup>

These contribution-centric narratives, while referring to social reformers' confrontation with orthodox Brahminism, projected reformist movements as the moral base necessary for the making of Marathi modernity. However, being moral was being political. Such frames admiring the nineteenth-century Marathi renaissance evade analysing the fundamental caste conflict evident amongst public intellectuals of the period, while projecting a common reformist concern shared by all. The attempt to construct this homogeneity is also reflected in some historians interpreting the non-Brahmin anti-caste radical Jotirao Phule, along with other Brahmin social reformers, as middle-class intellectuals.<sup>13</sup>

Moving away from this moral approach, Rajendra Vora,<sup>14</sup> Suhas Palshikar,<sup>15</sup> Pradip Gokhale,<sup>16</sup> and Parimala Rao<sup>17</sup> unpack the reformers' religious orthodoxy and caste biases in their respective essays on Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Vishnubuva Brahmachari, Lokhitwadi, and B.G. Tilak. And while G.P. Deshpande notes the falsity of the 'social reform'/'political reform' binary

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<sup>12</sup> Abida Ghumatkar, 'Balaji Prabhakar Modak: A 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Science Propagator in Maharashtra', *Indian Journal of History of Science* 39, 3 (2004): pp. 307–34.

<sup>13</sup> Dixit, *Ekonisavya Shatakatil Maharashtra*, pp. 90, 130.

<sup>14</sup> Rajendra Vora, 'Paurvatyawadane Prabhawit Zalela Rashtrawad: Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar' [Nationalism Influenced by Orientalism: Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar], in Rajendra Vora (ed.), *Adhunikata ani Parampara* [Tradition and Modernity] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2000), pp. 183–224.

<sup>15</sup> Suhas Palshikar, 'Vishnubuva Brahmachari: Uthal Adhunikate Mage Dadlela Sanatanwad' [Vishnubuva Brahmachari: Orthodoxy Masquerading as Shallow Modernity] in Vora (ed.), *Adhunikata ani Parampara*, pp. 154–82.

<sup>16</sup> Pradip Gokhale, 'Gopal Hari Deshmukh', in Yashwant Sumant and Datatreya Punde (eds.), *Maharashtratil Jati Sansthavishayak Vichar* [Thought about Caste System in Maharashtra] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 1988), pp. 39–47.

<sup>17</sup> Parimala Rao, *The Foundations of Tilak's Nationalism* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2010), pp. 138–58.

popular in colonial Maharashtra,<sup>18</sup> Arvind Deshpande points out the influence of racism on historian V.K. Rajwade's Brahminical writings.<sup>19</sup>

Another way to reconstruct Marathi social reforms is examining the making of an ideology. In Rosalind O'Hanlon's interpretation of nineteenth-century Marathi anti-caste radicalism, missionary influence, leadership conflict, organisational activism, and ambiguous caste-identity formation are all constituents of Jotirao Phule's Satyashodhak ideology.<sup>20</sup>

However, the historical discourse on reform was also about analysing language politics. While substantially reflecting on the colonial Marathi reformist ethos, Veena Naregal and Dilip Chavan have demonstrated how linguistic hierarchies were perpetuated through colonial education policy and native elites' engagement with it. Nevertheless, despite referring to caste-coded Marathi print publics, 'class interest' remains Naregal's analytical framework.<sup>21</sup> Chavan examines the contribution of caste to shaping colonial education policy but has assumed such policy's continuation in post-colonial times without going into its late colonial making.<sup>22</sup>

All these interpretations reflect on the role of caste in reformers' articulations of their thoughts and actions. However, in the historiography discussed so far, the relation between reformism and sexuality has remained

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<sup>18</sup> G.P. Deshpande, 'Prabodhan Shatakachi Kahani' [Story of the Renaissance Era], in Kishor Bedkihal (ed.), *Badalata Maharashtra* [Changing Maharashtra] (Satara: Ambedkar Akadami, 2003), pp. 1–10.

<sup>19</sup> Arvind Deshpande, 'Itihasacharya Vishwanatha Kashinath Rajwade' [Historian V.K. Rajwade], in Sumant and Punde (eds.), *Maharashtratil Jati Sansthavishayak Vichar*, 90–98.

<sup>20</sup> Rosalind Hanlon, *Caste Conflict Ideology, Mahatma Jotirao Phule, and Lower-Caste Identity in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 63–87, 274–302.

<sup>21</sup> Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), pp. 55–100.

<sup>22</sup> Dilip Chavan, *Language Politics under Colonialism: Caste, Class and Language Pedagogy in Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. xiii, xiv.



beyond analysis. This connection does appear in Brahminical patriarchy scholars' writings on colonial Maharashtra. Uma Chakravarty, followed by Vidut Bhagwat and Umesh Bagade, refers to 'control over women's sexuality' as one of the important issues in discussing the nineteenth-century Marathi renaissance.<sup>23</sup> All three scholars, while pointing out the caste limits of Brahmin reformers, treat sexuality only cursorily, as a constituent of Brahminical patriarchy and an ancillary component of gender analysis. Except for these brief mentions, the historiography of colonial Maharashtra by and large has maintained silence over the caste-sexual nature of Marathi reformism. This chapter addresses that gap with a caste-sexual reading of reformist politics.

Although these scholarly writings are critical of Brahminism and the elite classes in many ways, the moral value of the reformist frame is not taken up in their analysis. This body of work problematises the reformers' ideological positions and speaks about the elements of Brahminism reflected in their thoughts but does not pose a 'caste question' to the idea of reform. Nor does it interrogate the sexual texture of this frame. Rather, nineteenth-century reformism has remained a relevant historical thought structure with issues of reform, reformers, and their ideological positions and institutional work as its basic units of inquiry. Exceptionally breaking the sexual silence prevailing over interpreting the reformist movement, this nineteenth-century-focused biography of reform has governed the comprehension of Marathi modernity while leaving its impressions on late colonial histories of the region.

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<sup>23</sup> Uma Chakravarty, *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* (Calcutta: Stree, 2003), pp. 130–31, 136; Vidut Bhagwat, *Stri Prashnachi Watachal: Parivartanachuya Disheni* [The Journey of the Women's Question: Towards Social Change] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2004), pp. 61–68; Umesh Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabhodhan ani Varag-jati-prabutwa* [Maharashtrian Renaissance and Caste—Class Hegemony] (Pune: Sugawa Prakashan, 2006), pp. 104–107.

### *Articulating Late Colonial Caste and Gender*

For the Marathis, moving from colonial into the late colonial times was not just a continuation of *earlier* politics of the nation and the reform. In fact, the early twentieth century was an era of explicit redefining of identities, and of actual and conceptual socio-cultural confrontations inextricably linked with this transformation. Marathi sex reformism was a part of this period of redefinition. However, in comparison to the literature's heavy emphasis on colonial Marathi reformism, much less attention is paid to late colonial Maharashtra. Also, most histories of the late colonial period discuss the intersection of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, with a focus on the latter. While some of these narratives have commented on the making of Marathi caste politics, others theorise non-Brahmin and Dalit subjectivities.

Y.D. Phadke's voluminous history of twentieth-century Maharashtra<sup>24</sup> and Sadanand More's writings unpacking the historical journey from B.G. Tilak to M.K. Gandhi were attempts to reinterpret late colonial Marathi political life.<sup>25</sup> Even Jayant Lele has analysed the political structure of modern Maharashtra by examining the late colonial non-Brahmin movement.<sup>26</sup> With their enormous detailing of local politics, these grand narratives have been instrumental in constructing popular perceptions about caste conflict in the early twentieth century. They see the nineteenth century Satyashodhak movement as the real anti-caste legacy and view the late colonial non-Brahmin movement's 'Brahmin

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<sup>24</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Visavya Shatakatil Maharashtra* [Maharashtra in the Twentieth Century], vols. 1–5 (Pune: Shrividya Prakashan, 1989)

<sup>25</sup> Sadanand More, *Lokmanya Te Mahatma* [From B.G. Tilak to M.K. Gandhi] (Pune: Rajhans Prakashan, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Jayant Lele, 'From Reformism to Interest Group Pluralism: The Relevance of Non-Brahmin Movement for an Understanding of Contemporary Maharashtra', in Narendra Wagale (ed.), *Writers, Editors and Reformers: Social and Political Transformations of Maharashtra, 1830-1930* (Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1999), pp. 13–21.

rejection' policy as a distortion of this real vision, whereas the Ambedkarite Dalit movement according to them was an inevitability.<sup>27</sup>

Late colonial Maharashtra has also been reconstructed through understanding the making of non-Brahmin and Dalit political consciousness. Gail Omvedt's work on the *brahmnetar* (ब्राह्मणेतार, non-Brahmin) movement examines the caste and class dynamics of anti-caste political mobilisation in Maharashtra and its connections to the peasant and labour movements.<sup>28</sup> Simultaneously, Eleanor Zelliott focuses on Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar and the political constitution of the Mahar caste, as well as on the deployment of neo-Buddhism in Maharashtra.<sup>29</sup> The issues of social category formation and political consciousness are also central to Prachi Deshpande's work on Maratha identity.<sup>30</sup>

However, caste identity formation was not a gender-neutral idea. It was intrinsically linked to gender reform and representational politics. Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar reflect on this, highlighting Dalit women's role in the Ambedkarite movement. By contrast, while going beyond the representational frame, Shailaja Paik analyses Dalit women's understanding of Ambedkar's inspiration in developing their own political consciousness.<sup>31</sup>

The late colonial articulation of the gender and caste question was fundamentally connected to the making of public and private spheres, as well as to the reconstitution of patriarchies. Sharmila Rege, in addressing these concerns, examines the formulation of the 'women's question' in the non-Brahmin and

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<sup>27</sup> This is my interpretation based on reading Phadke, More, and Lele.

<sup>28</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 163–207, 248–67, 285–304.

<sup>29</sup> Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, pp. 53–145.

<sup>30</sup> Prachi Deshpande, 'Caste as Maratha: Social Categories Colonial Policy and Identity in Early Twentieth Century Maharashtra', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 41, 1 (2004): pp. 17–31.

<sup>31</sup> S. Paik, 'Forging a New Dalit Womanhood', 20–30.

Ambedkarite public spheres.<sup>32</sup> Anupama Rao has interrogated the reconstructions of Maratha and Dalit patriarchies on the gender-sensitivity scale. While referring to expressions of masculinity reflected in the late colonial Marathi caste conflict—marginally, but in a significant way—Rao contributes by analysing the gender-sexuality interface of caste-coded patriarchies.<sup>33</sup>

The hereto narrated scholarly survey underlines the crucial role reformist and the caste-gender reformulation historiography has played in constructing modern Maharashtra. If the nineteenth-century reformist frame has dominated the Marathi modernity discourse, scholarship on late colonial times has focused on identity politics and representation as well as on the making of patriarchies and public spheres. Brahminism, particularly in narratives about the late colonial period, has remained as context to examine the text of non-Brahmin and Dalit subjectivities. Analysing the caste question, articulating Ambedkarism, and using the rhetoric of anti-casteism to construct popular historical progressivism constitute the core of late colonial Marathi histories. The reformism-sexuality nexus, which spans both periods, has received only marginal treatment. Nor do the modern Maharashtra constructions interpret early-twentieth-century sex literature in the context of colonial and late colonial reformism.<sup>34</sup> While popular Marathi histories did refer to the late colonial crisis and the ‘disturbed times’, these ‘crisis times’ in relation to caste and sexuality were not a core subject of analysis while talking about Marathi historicity.

Given this lacuna, this analysis of early-twentieth-century Marathi sex literature crucially reflects on the historical intersection between caste, sexuality,

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<sup>32</sup> Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonies* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2006), pp. 43–78.

<sup>33</sup> A. Rao, *Caste Question*, pp. 50–68.

<sup>34</sup> The Marathi biographical narratives appreciating sex educator R.D. Karve are available, but there is no work on late colonial Marathi sex literature in total nor in the context of Marathi reformism. For Marathi works on Karve, see Introduction footnote 1; For English-language work on Marathi sex literature, see Botre and Haynes, ‘Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Anxieties’.

and Marathi 'crisis' projections. As the following chapters will demonstrate, Marathi sex reformers kept referring back to the work of the nineteenth-century Brahmin social and political reformers in search of the legacy they required to support their sexual constructions and expressions of social concern. They commented on the contemporary state of reformism while talking about the crisis, which points to a relation between Brahminism, reformism, sex literature, and the perception of crisis. To unpack this relationship, a revisit to Marathi reformism—colonial and late colonial—is needed.

All discussions of Marathi colonial modernity are invariably connected to reformism, with a focus on the nineteenth century, but Marathi reformism was inextricably linked to Brahminism, as well as Brahmin reformers' dominant presence in the colonial times. It is not that Brahmin women and non-Brahmins did not contribute to the nineteenth-century discourse of reform. They did, and sometimes they also used the terminology of reformism. However, as the following section shows, the reform discourse of the period reflects Brahmin men's attempt to maintain dominance over articulating social reform while becoming modern. It was this dominance that was challenged in the early twentieth century. My work problematises this situation as a Brahminical governmentality crisis in late colonial Maharashtra and sees Marathi sex reforms as a response to that crisis.

This Brahmin power crisis can be divided, I argue, into two interconnected phases, in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The first phase was related to the advent of colonialism and was resolved by initiating the social-reform movement. The second was related to Brahmins losing dominance over articulating reformism and their search for resolution in the making of sex reforms. This work is principally focused on the second phase, briefly but significantly connecting it to the first. To understand this crisis-resolution dialectics of caste and sexuality, the relationship between Brahmins, Brahminism, and social reform requires more unpacking. What did reform mean for Brahmins in modern Maharashtra?

The twentieth-century crisis of Brahminical cultural dominance was intrinsically connected to two interrelated aspects: the nineteenth-century Brahmin-dominated rhetoric of reformism and the early-twentieth-century changes brought about by groups such as non-Brahmin, Dalits, and women asserting claims to representation. To analyse the governance of sex reforms, we therefore need to understand the nineteenth-century Brahminical governmentality of reform and its subsequent crisis.

## **II. Colonial Marathi Reformism: The Language of Brahmin Governmentality**

Social reformism in the nineteenth century was an important historical phase for modern India and Maharashtra. Its discourse comprised reformers' attempts to articulate thoughts and implement actions regarding caste hierarchies, women's education, child marriage, and widow remarriage, among other issues. Religion was a frame of reference within which most of these politically determined social concerns were debated. In addition, talking of reform meant talking a social language of power. Brahmins, non-Brahmins, women of different castes, and Dalits (so-called untouchables)<sup>35</sup> spoke and wrote about social concerns. Non-Brahmin thinker Jotirao Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers' Society) and the anti-caste movement it led were a crucial subaltern caste assertion in the late-nineteenth-century colonial situation. Phule's contemporary followers and colleagues used the term *reform* to indicate the struggle for freedom of *shudratishudras* (शूद्रातिशूद्र, lower castes and 'untouchables') and women from the tyranny of the caste system and of Brahmin socio-cultural domination.<sup>36</sup> In a

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<sup>35</sup> I use the word *Dalit* to denote the politicised identity and consciousness of the so-called 'untouchable' castes, including their pre-Ambedkarite political consciousness in colonial Maharashtra.

<sup>36</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Mahatma Phule Samagra Wangmay* [Collected Works of Mahatma Phule] (Mumbai: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskriti Mandal, 1991), pp. 195–203.

caste society, however, speaking of social concern was neither a neutral and uniform idea of change nor a battle fought together against orthodoxy. It was a political discourse shaped by caste and gender hierarchies and the social background of the interlocutors. Who articulated which social concerns, in what language, and how were political questions related to these hierarchies. The point here is not to say that Brahmins and ‘Others’ talked about different issues when speaking of social reform, but to underline the politics of articulating social concern while creating the discourse of reformism. To formulate the expression of social concern in this sense was an articulation of power relations. Brahmin dominance of reformism, therefore, was not simply a numerical question of many reformers being Brahmins but defined social concern as a mechanism for restructuring power relations within society.

Marathi Brahmins were not just the traditional upper-caste elites of Maharashtra; they were the pre-colonial political rulers in western India for a century before the advent of colonialism. *Peshwai* (the dynastic rule of Chitpavan Peshwas) was a representation of the political, cultural, and social rule of the Brahmins and Brahminism. The social power of caste and the political power of the state in pre-colonial Maharashtra were unified, not separate. Political and cultural governance was a matter of Brahmin caste clusters’ dominance, with the Chitpavan caste most prominent. Such dominance is evident from the fact that the early colonial administration initially had to continue the donations given to the Brahmins—a policy adopted by the Peshwa rulers.<sup>37</sup> Even the early colonial judicial decisions explicitly favoured Brahmins while not disobeying the caste hierarchy that was then prevalent.

However, the onslaught of colonialism and the Brahmin man’s loss of power were simultaneous realities. In a changed situation, despite the colonial state’s appeasement policy, Brahmin caste power had to depend on colonialism

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<sup>37</sup> Ravindra Kumar, *Western India in the 19th Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London: Routledge, [1968] 2007), pp. 49–50.

for its legitimacy and reframe its own operational structure in accordance with the colonial power. But the Brahminical power structure also had to address the criticism about caste and gender inequalities that came along with the colonial reality from the colonial state, as well as from Christian missionaries and non-Brahmins, who tried to resist and break away from Brahmin dominance.<sup>38</sup> The Brahmin male's loss of social and political position was fundamentally connected to the criticism the Brahminical social structure faced. The advent of colonialism was, in this sense, the first crisis for modern Marathi Brahminism and the absolute Brahmin power. The facts of colonialism and criticism of the social structure constituted the core of this crisis.

In response to this power loss, the systemic Brahmin domination of the colonial educational institutions and bureaucracy, along with the reorganisation of the social structure through articulating social reforms, are locations to understand the cultural and political remaking of caste power. With numerous educators and bureaucrats as leading reformers, the nineteenth-century Brahmin understanding of social reform was a response to and a resolution of the crisis. Further, if remaking power was central to social reform, subsequent distinct articulations of political reform were logical extensions to the resolution of this Brahminical crisis.

Social reform thus emerged as a response to criticism of the Brahminical social structure. The colonial state, Christian missionaries, and the anti-Brahmin critique of caste and gender oppression in Hinduism all shaped the Brahmin language of reform, while positioning themselves on issues ranging from caste to education to widow remarriage. The chief architects of this reformist language were Balshastri Jambhekar, Lokhitwadi (G.H. Deshmukh), Dadoba Tarkhadka,

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<sup>38</sup> I am referring to Christian conversions and Marathi reformism's response to them, as well as to lower-caste resistance against the Brahmin domination that began with Jotirao Phule after 1850.



Vishnu Shastri Pandit, M.G. Ranade, G.G. Agarkar, and R.G. Bhandarkar, amongst many others.

In formulating their ideas of reform and the question of caste, all the above reformers were concerned with redefining the *varna* system by basing it on *gunas* (गुणकर्म, merit), by distinguishing between learned and non-learned Brahmins (ब्राह्मण आणि भट, *Brahman ani Bhatt*), or both.<sup>39</sup> An equally important concern was inter-dining and inter-marriages (रोटी-बेटी व्यवहार, *roti-beti vyawahar*, literally ‘sharing bread and matrimonial exchanges’). Most theoretically agreed on inter-dining. The extent of Lokhitwadi’s radicalism was to advocate inter-marriage between different Brahmin castes, but not beyond that.<sup>40</sup> Balshastri Jambhekar, the first reformer of Maharashtra, encouraged debate around caste in his journal *Darpan* (दर्पण, *The Mirror*), while refusing to share his opinion on the matter in the name of journalistic objectivity and neutrality.<sup>41</sup> For Tarkhadkar, *upanayana* (उपनयन) and *panigrahana* (पाणिग्रहण) were rituals ‘not to be forgotten’.<sup>42</sup> *Upanayana* was the Brahminical initiation ceremony to bring upper-caste boys within the four-fold structure of *varna ashrama dharma* (वर्णाश्रम धर्म, following the caste-coded *varna* and *ashrama* systems) to begin the first phase of life; *panigrahana* was a ritual indicating a couple’s desire to reproduce.<sup>43</sup> Ranade, despite writing at length on the *bhakti* (भक्ती, devotion) movement, did not speak of caste distinctions much, beyond considering them a hindrance to national unity. Even the Prarthana Samaj (प्रार्थना समाज, Prayer Society), which he

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<sup>39</sup> P.G. Sahasrabuddhe (ed.), *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre* [Hundred Letters of Lokhitwadi] (Pune: Continental, 2004), pp. 287–90, 232–33, 237–39; Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, pp. 147–48.

<sup>40</sup> Sahasrabuddhe, *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre*, pp. 180, 296–7.

<sup>41</sup> Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, p. 99.

<sup>42</sup> Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, p. 139.

<sup>43</sup> P.V. Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar* [Thoughts on the Dharmashastras] (Pune: Prabhat Kacheri, 1935), p. 82.

led, refused to take the 'caste question' on board.<sup>44</sup> Ranade's contemporary, the non-Brahmin anti-caste radical Jotirao Phule, mentioned that Ranade did not consider caste hierarchy a social problem.<sup>45</sup> However, Bhandarkar, the well-known thinker on caste, spoke of inter-caste marriages but between upper castes, such as Brahmins, Shenavis, and Sonars. Along with advocating such a selective inter-caste unity, he also referred to unions of 'Aryans and Negroes' as inferior to support his point about caste-selective inter-marriages.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Brahmin Marathi reformers' fundamental concerns remained within the confines of the upper-caste boundaries of sexuality in defining reform and redefining caste. Caste and sexual governmentality thus became intricately intertwined.

While thought on caste remained confined to caste-determined sexual concerns, the attention paid to women's education, child marriage, and widow remarriage continued to circle around the issue of adultery and women. Debaters in *Darpan* saw women's education as a crucial factor in either making women adulterous or protecting them from adultery.<sup>47</sup> Although Agarkar, the proud Aryan reformer, proposed equal and co-education to boys and girls by the late nineteenth century,<sup>48</sup> he also considered women's intelligence to be inferior, which he put down to their reproductive anatomy.<sup>49</sup> For Agarkar, advocating co-education was an important move to eliminate illicit sexual desires between girls and boys.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, 285–87.

<sup>45</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Mahatma Phule Samagra*, 383–85.

<sup>46</sup> Narayan Bapu Utagikar (ed.), *Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar* (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1928), p. 483.

<sup>47</sup> Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, pp. 101–103.

<sup>48</sup> G.G. Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar* [Complete Works of Agarkar], vol. 1 (Pune: Varada, 1994), pp. 168–74.

<sup>49</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 3, pp. 332–33.

<sup>50</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 1, pp. 72–173

Widow remarriage was also fundamentally connected to adultery. Orthodox Brahmins such as Gangadharshastri Phadke and Balkrishna Shastri Bapat, as well as the reformer Vishnu Shastri Pandit, looked for scriptural sanctions to find a rationale for and against widow remarriage—with the orthodox Brahmins opposing and the reformer advocating the practice.<sup>51</sup> That women are eight times more sexual than men (अष्ट गुणः कामः, *ashta guna kama*), rhetoric found in the Hindu scriptures, was invoked not just by orthodox Brahmins but also by reformers debating in *Darpan*.<sup>52</sup> Vishnu Shastri Pandit, despite being an advocate, argued that only childless widows were remarriageable.<sup>53</sup> Beyond humanist concerns, adultery was invariably fraught with the danger of transgressing caste, leading to the hybridisation of varnas (वर्णसंकर, *varnasankara*), and this remained a crucial aspect in rationalising widow remarriage. The high-caste boundaries of these discussions were particularly emphasised.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, scriptural sanctions and the dangers of caste transgression were central to political reformer and orthodox-nationalist Brahmin B.G. Tilak's stern opposition to the Age of Consent Act of 1891, which would increase the age of sexual consent for women.<sup>55</sup> His opponent, Agarkar, usually known for

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<sup>51</sup> Vishnu Shastri Pundit, *Arya Lokanchya Prachin wa Arvachin Riti va Tyanchi Parasparanshi Tulana* [Practices of Ancient and Modern Aryan People and Their Comparisons] (Bombay: Indu Prakash Press, 1872), pp. 13–18; Balakrishna Laxman Shastri Bapat, *Vidhavivaha Khandana* [Critique of Widow Remarriage] (Bombay: Ganpat Krishnaji Chapkhana, 1865), pp. 5–29.

<sup>52</sup> Bagade, *Maharashtratil Prabodhan*, p. 104.

<sup>53</sup> Pundit, *Arya Lokanchya*, p. 13.

<sup>54</sup> Pundit, *Arya Lokanchya*, pp. 2–3; Bapat, *Vidhavivaha Khandana*, pp. 8–10.

<sup>55</sup> B.G. Tilak, *Lokmanya Tilkanche Kesaritul Agralekh Rajakiya* [Tilak's Editorials from *Kesari* on Political Issues], vol. 4 (Pune: Kesari Marathi Sanstha, 1930), pp. 118–21; Parimala V. Rao, *Foundations of Tilak's Nationalism: Discrimination, Education and Hindutva* (Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, 2010), p. 119.

rejecting the scriptures, now drew on scriptural sanctions to support the Act.<sup>56</sup> With all the humanist talk about caste and the women's question, Marathi Brahmins' reformist language was thus oriented towards the caste-sexual governance of upper-caste society, keeping in mind an endo-caste reproductive sexuality.

However, the language of caste-sexual governance was also about determining the subject of reformist governance. To whom was this concept of reform talking? Reform agendas were Brahminical because reformers were discussing and citing the scriptures, but also because they did so within the Brahmin social context. Despite acknowledging widowhood as a multi-caste problem, Lokhitwadi was only writing for Brahmins when advocating remarriage.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Agarkar considered the discussion around the Age of Consent Act for the conflict between the orthodox and the reformers, and only gave a passing and objective comment on the fact that the colonial government did not consult non-Brahmins and women.<sup>58</sup> Thus constructed, reformism spoke the language of the 'nation' and 'reform'—but the subjects of reform remained the Brahmins. Although Lokhitwadi's reformist agenda, spelled out in his *Shatapatre* (शतपत्रे, *Hundred Letters*, 1848–49), was addressed to the Hindus in general, it was actually written to and for Brahmins.<sup>59</sup> Explaining this, he categorically said:

I apologise to the Brahmins. I have criticised them a great deal. This is because in our people Brahmins are the chiefs. Others do as the Brahmins do. [...] Therefore, I work for reforming the

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<sup>56</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 1, 343–52.

<sup>57</sup> Sahasrabuddhe, *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre*, 297.

<sup>58</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 1, pp. 337.

<sup>59</sup> Sahasrabuddhe, *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre*, p. 287.

Brahmins. Once they will be reformed, all Hindus will be [believed to be] reformed.<sup>60</sup>

मी ब्राह्मणांची माफी मागतो. ब्राह्मणांचे दोष विवेचन मी फार केले आहे. याचे कारण आमचे लोकात मुख्य ब्राह्मण. ते जे करतील तसे इतर वर्ततात... म्हणून ब्राह्मणांचे सुधारणुकेस्तव मी झटतो. त्यांची सुधारणा जाहली म्हणजे सर्व हिंदू लोकांची जाहली.

A similar male Brahmin subjecthood was further explicit in Agarkar's social Darwinist defence of pre-colonial Brahmin dominance in Maharashtra:

That the Brahmins did this [dominated], at least to me, looks obvious. [...] After acquiring wisdom who would not take benefit from it? That one's ignorance has not proved advantageous to the other—has this ever happened? [...] At least till this date, survival of the fittest has been the rule of the world.<sup>61</sup>

ब्राह्मणांनी असे केले हे निदान आम्हास तरी स्वाभाविक दिसते... शहाणपण अंगी आल्यावर त्यापासून आपले हित करून घेण्याचा प्रयत्न कोण करित नाही? एकाच्या अज्ञानाचा फायदा दुसऱ्याला मिळाला नाही असे कोठे झाले आहे? [...] अजून तरी बळी तो कान पिळी अशीच जगाची राहाटी आहे.

Thus reformism, to use Agarkar's words, was a *Brahmnani chalawalela shakat* (ब्राह्मणांनी चालवलेला शकट, Brahmin-driven chariot) in Maharashtra.<sup>62</sup> When others spoke about social concerns, they were doubted in their intentions: Jotirao Phule was criticised, and not just by orthodox Brahmins. Even the reformer Agarkar denigrated him as 'Reverend Phule'.<sup>63</sup> When Phule wrote his seminal text,

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<sup>60</sup> Sahasrabuddhe, *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre*, pp. 65, 181.

<sup>61</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 3, p. 444.

<sup>62</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol 1, p. 247.

<sup>63</sup> Baba Adhav, 'Brahmnetar Patrakarita' [Non-Brahmin Journalism], in Baba Adhav (ed.), *Purogami Satyashodhak* [The Progressive Truth Seeker] (Pune: Mahatma Phule Samata Pratishthan, 1996), p. 12.

*Gulamgiri* (गुलामगिरी, *Slavery*), to expose the exploitative structure of Brahminism, Agarkar's intellectual mentor, political reformist Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, sarcastically addressed him as *shudra shiromani* and *satyashodhak walyancha Jagadguru* (शूद्र शिरोमणी, leader, and सत्यशोधकवाल्यांचा जगद्गुरु, universal guru of the Shudras) and derogated him for writing in grammatically incorrect Marathi.<sup>64</sup> Agarkar demanded assurance from the Christian convert, feminist reformer, and Sanskrit scholar Pandita Ramabai that she would not convert women to Christianity.<sup>65</sup> B.G. Tilak, the other disciple of Chiplunkar, addressed her using the sexually abusive slur *revranda* (रेव्हरंडा), which combines the English word *reverend* and the Marathi word *randa* (रंडा, prostitute).<sup>66</sup>

The issue of reformism revolved around the caste-sexual governance of upper-caste Brahmins, but if reform for a Brahmin meant the cultural governance of society under colonialism, 'Brahmin' was the self-made subject of reformism. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was this governmentality of Brahminism that split the notion of reformism into 'social' versus 'political' reforms, with the orthodox Brahmin camp of Tilak and Chiplunkar incorporated into the realm of reformism.

It is believed in the historical grand narrative of Maharashtra that political reformism won out over social in the early twentieth century, and that the orthodox camp of Tilak dominated the socio-political scene.<sup>67</sup> The question that

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<sup>64</sup> Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, *Nibandhamala* [Collected Essays], vol. 1 (Pune: Varada Books, [1872] 1993), pp. 450, 454.

<sup>65</sup> Arvind Ganachari, 'Pandita Ramabaichya Sharada Sadanache Agarkarkrut Samarthan' [Agarkar's Defence of Pandita Ramabai's Sahrada Sadan], in Vora (ed.), *Adhunika ani Parampara*, p. 279.

<sup>66</sup> Nilkanth Rath, 'Ratha Yatretil Smaran Chitre' [Memories from the *Ratha Yatra*], *Sadhana* (17 November 2012): p. 67.

<sup>67</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Shodh Bal Gopalanacha* [In Search of Bal-Gopal (Balgangadhar Tilak and G.G. Agarkar)] (Pune: Shrividya Prakashan, 1977), pp. 39–81; Y.D. Phadke, *Visavya Shatakatil*, vol. 2, pp. 8–9.

needs to be examined is: What happened to the grand rhetoric of reformism? Did it disappear? Or did it transform itself? Brahmin Marathi reformism was produced through generations, from the early 1840s to the turn of the century; however, the women's question and the caste question were not resolved by this time. Partha Chatterjee's 'nationalist resolution of the women's question' is one answer,<sup>68</sup> but to understand the emergence of late colonial Marathi sex literature, it is necessary to know what happened to Brahminical reformist governance. Equally important is to understand how and why the rhetoric of reformism transformed. The answers lie in the particularities of twentieth-century colonialism and the changing caste and gender realities of late colonial times.

### **III. The Twentieth-Century Crisis of Reform**

The early twentieth century substantially changed the meaning of the 'social' and the 'political' in India, and thereby in Maharashtra, too. Colonialism underwent a change, from its late-nineteenth-century high-imperialist attitude to the beginning of the gradual imperial decline after 1920. Even as the nationalist movement gained popularity with the rise of the movements against the Partition of Bengal and for Home Rule, the Indian National Congress divided in the Surat session and reunited in the Lucknow session. Tilak and extremist Brahmins dominated the Congress party's nationalist landscape in Maharashtra. The Swadeshi movement; the Marathi Home Rule agitations; and Tilak's alignment with liberal, orthodox, and even Communist factions made him a dominant nationalist leader in India and thus in late colonial Maharashtra.

At the same time, Maharashtra saw the increase of caste consciousness as a result of nineteenth-century anti-caste movements and the colonial management of the population through gazetteers and the census. Indian women

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<sup>68</sup> Partha Chatterjee, 'Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Woman: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), pp. 233–52.

from different castes and communities started organising themselves. The realities of colonialism and anti-colonialism, as well as caste, gender, and the public sphere, were transforming. The equations of creating, acquiring, and managing power also changed. Consequently, the relationships between the ideas of reform, caste politics, and governance could hardly remain unaffected. The concept of social and political power under these conditions started getting rearticulated. A gradual process of decentralisation of power began. Reform was the language through which this transformation revealed itself. In accordance with this decentralisation, the idea of reform witnessed democratisation. I do not use the term *democratisation* in reference to a free subject-citizen and a non-colonised free state; however, as the following sections will explain, the late colonial times saw widespread use of the rhetoric of reform and reformism by ‘Others’ in comparison to its monopolistic deployment by Brahminical men in the nineteenth century. Such democratisation of reform, shaped by colonialism and assertions along the lines of caste and gender, was at the core of the Brahminical crisis over reformist governmentality.

### ***Late Colonial Reformist Intervention***

The relation of late colonialism to reform was not limited to British Indian government supporting or remaining unaligned with social reforms. The state now was an active player in the theoretical and practical power play over the idea of reform. The Morley-Minto Reforms (also known as the Indian Councils Act) of 1909 spoke about satisfying constitutional aspirations; the state was discussing how to give people wider opportunities to express their views on how they should be governed.<sup>69</sup> More than this, the government started the process of giving political powers to Indians. Officially and popularly known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and administratively referred to as dyarchy, the model of

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<sup>69</sup> Edwin Montague, *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1918), p. 2.



devolving power was enacted through passing the Government of India Act of 1919. It was an attempt at incorporating the colonised to administer themselves. In the shadow of World War I, dyarchic devolution emerged out of an imperial compulsion to manage the empire in its decline phase. The empire projected it as the 'gift of self-administration'<sup>70</sup> to their colonial subjects in response to their long-standing demand for political rights.<sup>71</sup> If giving power to the natives as a gift was empire's political language, Indians' demand for power since the late nineteenth century was a political reality. The Brahminical crisis of dominance over reform is connected to this dyarchic arrangement and the conceptual and practical changes it brought in.

Dyarchy was one of the most important chapters in the constitutional development of India; it changed the governing logic of the state and the management of power relations under late colonialism in two ways. First, the principle of devolution divided the functions of the government into central and provincial issues. Second, it subdivided provincial governance issues into reserved and transferred subjects. In creating this local self-government, Indian representatives were given the power to govern on subjects like medical administration, public health, sanitation, education, agriculture, cooperative societies, and public works to name a few.<sup>72</sup> Many Indian nationalists doubted the generosity projections of these empowerment measures and questioned the reality of the political autonomy granted. Nationalist historians also saw this as the colonial government's way to address the organised power of the Indian National Congress as well as rising unrest. Nevertheless, the conflict amongst

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<sup>70</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), 'The Royal Proclamation on Indian Reforms', in *Government of India Act 1919, Rules Thereunder and Govt Reports of 1920* (Calcutta: N.N. Mitter, Annual Register Office, 1921), p. ii.

<sup>71</sup> Edwin Montague, *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Government of India Act*, 123–32; Stephen Legg, 'Dyarchy: Democracy, Autocracy and the Scalar Sovereignty of Interwar India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, 1 (2016), pp. 2–3.

contemporary Indians over participating in the government under dyarchy indicates their desire to acquire political power.

In addition, the principle of devolution crucially redefined the idea of representation in Indian politics, calling new forms of political subjectivities into being amongst the colonised population.<sup>73</sup> For the first time, a comparatively wider franchise was granted to colonial subjects. The Bombay Provincial Legislative Council was enlarged, and the number of elected members was increased over the number of nominated members.<sup>74</sup> Spaces in politics were created for Marathas (मराठा), Malis (माळी), Kolis (कोळी), Bhandaris (भंडारी), Shimpis (शिंपी, tailors), Dhangars (धनगर, shepherds), Kumbhars (कुंभार), and other non-Brahmin castes, with seats reserved under the umbrella term *Marathas*.<sup>75</sup> Along with the legislative councils, non-Brahmin political participation also became a reality at the district and *taluka* (तालुका, administrative unit of a group of villages) level in the shape of local boards<sup>76</sup> and municipal corporations.<sup>77</sup>

However, dyarchy was not just about getting legislative-council seats. It was also a means of political learning. Legislative-council politics became a competitive platform and a means to assert the political self in a caste society. It brought up the issue of caste and political participation for non-Brahmins and, significantly, for the traditionally elite and politically dominant Brahmins. Implementing dyarchy came as a political challenge to the colonial state, as well as to the Brahmins and non-Brahmins sharing power, in terms of articulating political participation and the execution of governance.

This experiment in governance changed the ideas of reform and reformism. The Indian Councils Acts were dubbed 'reform acts' because they

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<sup>73</sup> Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Government of India Act*, p. 202.

<sup>75</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 188.

<sup>76</sup> Local boards were subject-based local administrative bodies such as school boards.

<sup>77</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 198–204.

widened representation. Against the backdrop of Brahmin reformism and its governmentality of the Marathi public sphere, the colonial state adopting reformist terminology was an important intervention. The 1909 and 1919 acts were officially termed constitutional reforms. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, in particular, underlined the colonial government's commitment to social reforms in India while introducing dyarchy.<sup>78</sup> The colonisers' politics of implementing these reforms was, amongst many other things, an inevitable consequence of Indian elites' long-time demand for political rights. Moreover, such political autonomy was granted to them in incremental steps for the progressive realisation of responsible government in India.<sup>79</sup> Accepting or rejecting reforms produced the most crucial conflicts between Brahmin and non-Brahmin politicians.<sup>80</sup> The effectiveness of the 'reform act', the actual power devolved, and the democratic projections of the empire in introducing the reforms were always matters of debate amongst contemporaries (and later historians). Nevertheless, the concept of reform started changing. Colonialism, with its imperial compulsions and politics, 'packaged' the idea of reform.<sup>81</sup> The late colonial Brahmin and non-Brahmin newspapers called the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms *sudharnancha hafta* (सुधारणांचा हफ्ता, instalment of reform) and *sudharnanche pudke* (सुधारणांचे पुडके, pouch of reforms). G.G. Agarkar's nineteenth-century 'Brahmin-driven chariot' of reformism<sup>82</sup> was converted into the language of reform in instalments, a political package given by the colonial state. With such a definitional shift under late-colonial conditions, Brahminism

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<sup>78</sup> Montague, *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> H.N. Mitra (ed.), *Government of India Act*, p. 3; Mukundrao Patil, *Dinamitra*, 24 July 1918, p. 4. *Dinamitra* was a weekly edited by Mukundrao Patil from Tarawadi, Ahmadnagar, Maharashtra, between 1910 and 1960.

<sup>80</sup> *Kesari*, editorial, 9 July 1918, pp. 407–14; *Dinamitra*, 25 September 1918, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> *Dinamitra*, 24 July 1918, p. 4. *Dinamitra* described the council act as *sudharnanche pudke*, a pouch of reforms.

<sup>82</sup> Agarkar, *Sampurna Agarkar*, vol. 1, p. 247.

turned into the receiver of reform, along with its caste Others, instead of what it had been before—the proud manufacturer of reformism. Reformism went from being a cultural mode of Brahmin governmentality to a device of late colonial governance. If the conceptual and actual changing of reform under late colonial governance was one challenge for Brahminism, the resistance of non-Brahmins, Dalit radicals, and organising women were the others.

### *The Challenge of Caste Consciousness*

A distinct challenge to modern Brahminism and its reformist governmentality came from the political caste consciousness that developed in late colonial Maharashtra. The non-Brahmin movement and the Ambedkarite Dalit movement were two grand expressions of this awakening. While making Dalits and non-Brahmins into political subjectivities, exposing the Brahminical structure and Brahmin oppression was central to these respective activisms. To compete and counter Brahmins in the political and cultural domain and making a critique of Brahmin oppression was central to non-Brahmin political ideology. An extremist faction of non-Brahmins advocating the policy of ‘Brahmin rejection’ was also part of the counter-attack against Brahminism. Beyond this, the Dalit movement in particular, under B.R. Ambedkar’s leadership, was crucial to the development of a Dalit political self in Maharashtra and had the theoretical and practical aim of annihilating caste. Though ‘Brahmin criticism’ was a common issue between them, non-Brahmins and Dalits remained distinct in late colonial political activism due to their positional difference in thinking about battling caste while opposing Brahminism.

With all this, the early-twentieth-century Marathi discourse on caste was not just about the Brahmin, non-Brahmin and Dalit politics: it was fundamentally about the making of caste consciousness, which served both the caste and the anti-caste agendas. However, with the legacy of Phule’s nineteenth-century Satyashodhak anti-caste movement, building political consciousness around caste was not unique to the late colonial times. Nevertheless, such consciousness building was distinct in its content, operational modalities and impact. Twentieth

century Dalits and non-Brahmins both claimed the previous Satyashodhak legacy. The latter camp even considered itself as the revival of Satyashodhak movement and carried out activism with the same name in several ways as the following sections will explain.

However, the new consciousness beyond its legacy claims was a product of the changing realities of the region and that of the time. The late colonial non-Brahmins' assertiveness in a sense was a reflection of their empowerment. Implementation of the late nineteenth century Deccan agricultural relief act,<sup>83</sup> cooperative societies act<sup>84</sup> and the power circulation through the non-Brahmin activism in urban and rural cooperative societies were important contributors to this empowerment. The state-related aspects moulding caste consciousness were public work employment networks, military recruitment drives, and population regulation through census reports and gazetteer making. Simultaneously, the spread of anti-caste thought into the Marathi rural hinterlands, as well as lower-caste and 'untouchable' Marathi workers' migration to metropolitan Bombay, shaped the organisation of caste consciousness and redefining its relationship with the public domain. Such consciousness led non-Brahmins and so-called untouchables to start caste-specific organisations and hold conferences. It also gave rise to the non-Brahmin and Dalit movements.

The Marathas, from 1907, and Dhangars, Malis, and Bhandaris, from 1910, started organising periodic educational conferences. The Shimpis organised eighteen conferences between 1905 and 1923. Salis (साळी, weavers) came together after 1916. The Nhavis (ऩ्हावी, barbers) and Parits (परीट, washermen)

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<sup>83</sup> Ignatius Chithelen, 'Origins of Co-operative Sugar Industry in Maharashtra', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20,14 (6 April 1985), pp. 604–605.

<sup>84</sup> I.J. Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India, 1875–1930: Rural Credit and the Co-operative Movement in the Bombay Presidency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp.144–47, 150.

started their conferences in 1920 and continued throughout the decade.<sup>85</sup> The pre-Ambedkarite Maharas (महार) started their organisation Somavanshiya Hitachintak Samaj (सोमवंशीय हितचिंतक समाज, Well-Wisher Society of the Somavanshiyas) in 1904,<sup>86</sup> whereas the Matangs (मातंग) and Ramoshis (रामोशी) organised in the early 1920s.<sup>87</sup>

Conferences and organisations also spawned journals, such as *Somavanshiya Mitra* (सोमवंशीय मित्र, *Friend of the Somavanshiyas*, 1909),<sup>88</sup> *Maratha Mitra* (मराठा मित्र, *Friend of the Marathas*, 1909), *Bhandari Vijay* (भंडारी विजय, *Victory of the Bhandaris*, 1910), *Kshatriya Mali* (क्षत्रिय माळी, *Warrior Malis*, 1920), *Kasar Masik* (कासार मासिक, *Kasar Magazine*, 1921), and *Kshatriya Ramoshi* (क्षत्रिय रामोशी, *Warrior Ramoshis*, 1923).<sup>89</sup> Many such caste representations were based in Mumbai (Bombay), Pune, Amravati, Solapur, and the rural areas around these cities. Interestingly, these sites were also important for Marathi sex publishing, as we shall see in the next chapter.

One of the most important characteristics of this caste consciousness was its expression through the language of reform. Such organisations and platforms often expressed their agenda as reforming their own community. To organise around caste and to work explicitly for improving caste conditions gave a new definition to reform. In the nineteenth century, Brahmin reformism had aimed to redefine the Brahmin, problematising social issues and redefining the ‘social’ in an upper-caste, Brahminical way. The Brahmin was assumed as the core of the Indian ‘social’ and the ‘political’. The new non-Brahmin and Dalit

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<sup>85</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 157–58.

<sup>86</sup> H.N. Navalkar, *Shivaram Janaba Kamble Sankshipta Charitra* [S.J. Kamble’s Brief Biography] (Pune: Sugava, [1930] 1997), p. 49.

<sup>87</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 158; G.A. Ugale, *Vidya Devi Savitribai Rode* [Savitribai Rode’s Biography] (Satara: Vasant Phalke, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Navalkar, *Shivaram Janaba Kamble*, 59.

<sup>89</sup> This is a selection of journals available from the government libraries of Pune and Mumbai.

consciousness, however, raised the idea of reform through a distinct caste-inflected language. Also, reformism in these articulations was not single-issue rhetoric but part of caste-organisation efforts. Caste consciousness developed in this way was further associated with the non-Brahmin and the Dalit movement.

### ***The Multi-Dimensional Non-Brahmin Challenge***

The late colonial Marathi non-Brahmin movement which is notoriously famous amongst popular Marathi historians for some of its members adopting the ‘Reject Brahmins’ policy—was a critique of modern Brahminism in the cultural and political arenas. The non-Brahmin movement began with reviving the Satyashodhak anti-caste platform and organised nine yearly conferences from 1911 onward.<sup>90</sup> By 1920, the Satyashodhak anti-Brahmin resistance was well established in most Marathi districts.<sup>91</sup> Pune, Mumbai, Ahmadnagar, Satara, Otur, Amravati, Buldhana, Karajgao, Nasik and Solapur became major centres of non-Brahmin activism by 1925. With a range of leaders such as Bhaskararao Jadhav, Khanderao Bagal, Mukundrao Patil, Bhagwanrao Palekar, Shripatrao Shinde, Valchand Kothari, S.K. Bole, Jedhe-Jawalkar, and K.C. Thakray, the revived Satyashodhak movement became a multi-caste non-Brahmin force, though it came to be dominated by Marathas at the end of the 1930s. The anti-Brahmin Kolhapur principality chief Shahu’s support for the non-Brahmin ideologues proved crucial in this resurgence.

The Satyashodhak resurgence and organisational network generated a massive proliferation of non-Brahmin press and popular literature. By 1920, eighteen major non-Brahmin periodicals were being published in Marathi urban centers like Ahmadnagar, Pune, Mumbai, Baroda, Kolhapur, Belgaon, and Amravati. These included *Dinamitra* (दीनमित्र, *Friend of the Weak*), *Vijayi*

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<sup>90</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 132; Shriram Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas* [History of Satyashodhak Literature], vol. 1 (Latur: Satyashodhak Prakashan, 2013), p. 508.

<sup>91</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 137.

*Maratha* (विजयी मराठा, *Victorious Maratha*),<sup>92</sup> *Deccan Rayat* (published in English as *People of Deccan*),<sup>93</sup> *Jagruti* (जागृती, *Awareness*),<sup>94</sup> *Kaivari* (कैवारी, *The Concerned*), *Hunter* (हंटर), *Brahmnetar* (ब्राह्मणेतर, *Non-Brahmin*), *Jana-Vijay* (जन विजय, *People's Victory*), and *Jagaruk* (जागरूक, *The Conscious*).<sup>95</sup>

Satyashodhak popular literature, anti-Brahmin in its attitude, flourished in western, eastern, and northern Maharashtra. It was an all-round counter-attack on Brahmins and Brahminism came in the form of publishing conference memorandums, books attacking contemporary Brahmin writings, and narratives criticising them.<sup>96</sup> This included books such as *Shreshtha Kon Nhavi Ki Brahman?* (पवित्र कोण न्हावी कि ब्राह्मण, *Who Is More Sacred, Nhavi or Brahmin?*, 1923), *Brahmin ani Bahishkar* (ब्राह्मण आणि बहिष्कार, *Brahmin and Boycott*, 1913),<sup>97</sup> *Satyashodhak Chabuk* (सत्यशोधक चाबूक, *Satyashodhak Hunter*, 1908)<sup>98</sup> and *Vidya Prakash* (विद्या प्रकाश, *Light of Knowledge*, 1911).<sup>99</sup> The literature also produced Satyashodhak novels, such as *Dhaddhashastri Paranne* (ढढाशास्त्री परान्ने, *The*

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<sup>92</sup> *Vijayi Maratha* was started in 1919 by Shripatrao Shinde from Pune. See M.D. Nalawade (ed.), *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh Brahnetaranche Vicahrdhan* [*Vijayi Maratha* Editorials: The Non-Brahmin Wealth of Thought] (Pune: Choice Book Stall, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Nalawade (ed.), *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh*, p. 1; *Deccan Rayat* was started in 1918 by Annasaheb Latthe and Valchand Kothari from Pune.

<sup>94</sup> *Jagruti* was started in 1917 by Bhagwantrao Palekar from Baroda. See Sadanand More (ed.), *Jagrutikar Palekar* [Palekar, the Founder of *Jagruti*] (Pune: Jotirao Phule Samata Pratishthan, 1996).

<sup>95</sup> More (ed.), *Jagrutikar Palekar*, 4. From 1910 to the late 1950s was the prime period for most of these newsletters.

<sup>96</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vols. 1 and 2; Ashok Chopade, *Vidharbhatil Satyashodhak Chalwaliche Sahitya* [Satyashodhak Movement Literature from Vidharbha] (Vardha: Candid Publications Vardha, 2003), pp. 11–41.

<sup>97</sup> From the author's collection of Satyashodhak literature.

<sup>98</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, p. 340.

<sup>99</sup> From the private collection of Ramesh Chavan, Satara.



*Foolish Brahmin Parasite*, 1914),<sup>100</sup> and musical plays about inter-caste marriage, such as *Sangit Pranaya Prabhav* (संगीत प्रणय प्रभाव, *The Effect of Love*, 1925).<sup>101</sup> In addition, the movement generated counter-ritual texts such as *Swayam Purohit* (स्वयं पुरोहित, *Self-Priest*) and *Jalasa Shikshak* (जलसा शिक्षक, *Jalasa Teacher*) by Bhimrao Mahamuni,<sup>102</sup> which acted as a training guide for non-Brahmin rituals and public performances.

The very existence of such a vibrant print and institutional network was a challenge to the late colonial Brahmin-dominated public sphere. The rhetoric of reformism appeared as part of this proliferating literature and public activism. Reform was a multi-caste reality, opposing rather than dominated by Brahmins. It also became, in the realm of colonial governance, a part of other castes' political consciousness. By 1920, reform had moved into the predominantly non-Brahmin and Dalit domain of articulation.

This non-Brahmin resurgence, with its emergent reformist self, was diplomatic in its relations with caste conferences and with Brahminism. Satyashodhak leader Bhaskararao Jadhav was a leading figure in organising Maratha caste conferences from 1907 on.<sup>103</sup> Bhagwanrao Palekar and Shripatrao Shinde underlined the utility of caste conferences for mobilising non-Brahmins,<sup>104</sup> whereas Mukundrao Patil and Dinkararao Jawalkar opposed the inward-looking nature of the caste gatherings.<sup>105</sup> Books such as *Brahmin ani*

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<sup>100</sup> Mukundrao Patil, *Dhadhashastri Paranne* (Tarawadi Ahmadnagar: Mukundrao Patil Smarak Samiti Publications, [1914] 2004). *Dhadhashastri Paranne* was a sarcastic name given to the leading male character in the novel, indicating Brahmins' tendency to live on others' gains while projecting the traditional Brahmin as a fool.

<sup>101</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra Wangmaya* [Collected Works of Dinkararao Jawalkar] (Pune: Jotirao Phule Samata Pratishthan Publications, 1984), p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> From the author's collection.

<sup>103</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 165.

<sup>104</sup> Nalawade, *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh*, pp. 83–86.

<sup>105</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 166.

*Bahishkar* (ब्राह्मण आणि बहिष्कार, *Brahmin and Boycott*), while using anti-Brahmin language, mentioned in passing that they were not against all Brahmins, only the bad ones. Palekar, Shinde, and Patil supported radical Ambedkarite anti-caste agendas in the late 1930s through their newspapers.<sup>106</sup> Though Satyashodhak print networks and platforms were mostly occupied by dominant non-Brahmin castes, they spoke the language of inclusion: to speak of self-development while using inclusive caste language was a characteristic feature of late colonial non-Brahmin literature.<sup>107</sup> Non-Brahmin and Dalit differences were evident, along with attempts to patch them up.<sup>108</sup> *Bahujan samaj* (बहुजन समाज)<sup>109</sup> became an umbrella term to talk about the particular ‘caste self’ as well as about all other non-Brahmin castes. While they worked out this position with the rhetoric of reformism, opposition to Brahmins and Brahminism was a common goal to all. Thus created non brahmin reformism further asserted itself by rejecting the Brahmins along with their rituals. Simultaneously, it also started to claim a Kshatriya identity to strengthen the non-Brahmin socio-political presence. These formulations necessitated nearly constant, intertwined references to caste and sexuality.

### ***Satyashodhak Counter-Ritualism***

Performing rituals was an important site where power relations between Brahmins and non-Brahmins were asserted. Marriage was one of the most crucial rituals in the lifecycle and therefore a major site of non-Brahmin reformist

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<sup>106</sup> Nalawade, *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh* (10 October 1927), pp.151.

<sup>107</sup> Motiram Wankhede, *Brahmin ani Bahishkar* [Brahmin and Boycott] (Karajgaon-Amravati: Satyodaya Press, 1929), p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Ambedkar’s differences with Dinkararao Jawalkar regarding Brahmins’ participation in Dalit action programs; see Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra Wangmaya*, 30–31.

<sup>109</sup> *Bahujan* is the umbrella term used in Marathi to address various non-Brahmin castes. It was used by Brahmins to indicate the Other and, since the beginning of the twentieth century, by non-Brahmins to assert their identity.

articulation. They combated Brahminism by rejecting Brahmin-administered rituals and the Brahmin's personified authority. Self-help ritual texts such as *Gharcha Purohit* (घरचा पुरोहित, *Home Priest*), *Swayam Purohit* (स्वयं पुरोहित, *Self-Priest*) and *Brahmnacha Hakka Nahi* (ब्राह्मणाचा हक्क नाही, *Brahmins Don't Have the Right*) were produced to provide guidance on how to hold rituals in addition to anti-Brahmin commentary.<sup>110</sup> Satyashodhaks omitted *kanyadana* (कन्यादान, the ritual of bride-giving) from their marriage rituals. According to the *dharmashastras*, the ritual symbolises Brahmins and gods handing control of the bride over to the husband.<sup>111</sup> In the Satyashodhak interpretation, this was a symbol of Brahminical sexual exploitation of the bride, as Sahmrao Kulat wrote in 1911's *Brahman Hach Wadhucha Navara* (ब्राह्मण हाच वधू चा नवरा, *Brahmin Priest Projecting Himself as Husband*).<sup>112</sup> Similarly, *garbhadhana* (गर्भाधान, conception) was another ritual performed by Brahmins. With Sanskrit word *garbhadhana* meaning conception, a Brahmin priest giving sexual intercourse related instructions to the couple in their initial phase of married life was at the core of this ritual. For Satyashodhak marriage reformers opposed to Brahmin ritualism, *garbhadhana* instructions were another site of Brahminical exploitation: The Brahmin, while chanting the *garbhadhana* mantras, projects himself to be the husband. To explain this, Govind Walke, a lawyer from Solapur, translated the Sanskrit ritual into poetic Marathi with commentary:

‘Oh dear, your sacred womb has matured for conception. You have also developed a desire for a child. Hence I will unite with you’. This is supposed to be the conversation of the couple! But Brahmin priests’ mouths have started saying this in Sanskrit

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<sup>110</sup> From the author's collection.

<sup>111</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 733; Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>112</sup> Chopade, *Vidharbhatil Satyashodhak*, pp.48–49.

[while performing the *garbhadhana* ritual] and the husband and wife could never understand this trick.<sup>113</sup>

प्रिये तव शुचिर्भूत गर्भाशय! जाहले गर्भधारणा योग्य। तुज गर्भच्छही प्राप्त होय। तेणे सहगमन करितो तुज सवे!! ऐशा पतिपत्नीच्या बोली। पुरोहित मुखे बोलू लागली। वधुवरा नाही कळली! ती संस्कृत कासया॥

Walke was rejecting Brahmin masculine power as enacted through sexual symbolism, understood as crucial to the making of any marriage and to the subsequent conception ritual performed for couples, except those from the lowermost castes. Counter-rituals and Brahmin rejection can also be found in Jotirao Phule's anti-Brahmin articulation, but the revived Satyashodhak movement transformed it into an effective instrument while putting Brahminism in crisis. A report in 1915 reported 16 Satyashodhak marriages in Baramati, 315 in Pune, and thousands in Kolhapur and Khed districts.<sup>114</sup> Such rejection of Brahmins' hereditary rights to perform rituals sparked legal battles in Otur, Amravati, Satara, and Pune.<sup>115</sup> Even the details of selected court cases were made part of Satyashodhak anti-Brahmin propagations.<sup>116</sup> The emancipatory force of such rejections is debatable. The late colonial Satyashodhaks did not reject patriarchy in any way, though they challenged the caste-sexual logic of Brahmin symbolism in marriage and conception-related rituals, along with the authority of Brahmins.

### ***Kshatriya Problematisation of the Brahmin***

Brahminism got another challenge through the formation of Kshatriya identity. At caste conferences, non-Brahmin and Dalit castes such as Marathas, Malis,

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<sup>113</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, p. 552.

<sup>114</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 144.

<sup>115</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, pp. 346–49.

<sup>116</sup> Wankhede, *Brahman ani Bahishkar*, pp. 32–33.

Mahars, and Ramoshis declared themselves to be Kshatriyas. Deciding and declaring their own status was in itself contradictory to traditional Brahminical hierarchy, and the Brahmin nationalist newspaper *Kesari*, run by B.G. Tilak, expressed concern over it in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>117</sup> The claims to Kshatriya status, in one sense, followed Brahminical logic and the frame of the varna system while opposing Brahminism. Nevertheless, the higher status, thus declared, was a means to struggle for the cultural autonomy of the caste community, instead of accepting the conventional lower status within the Brahminical caste hierarchy.

Caste organisations aside, reformed caste consciousness—or Kshatriyaisation—was a direct and explicit way of opposing Brahmin dominance. The Kshatriya identity was invoked in the nineteenth century even by Phule, but he used Kshatriya only as a metaphor and did not advocate becoming one. In contrast, late colonial times saw Kshatriyaisation become a multi-caste claim. There was also a selective claiming of Phule’s legacy as part of the new Satyashodhak anti-caste agenda: Brahmins were rejected but the Brahminical structure was not. In fact, the Brahminical structure was politically and diplomatically engaged with. Kolhapur principality chief Shahu’s conflict with the Marathi Brahmins over his Kshatriya status—the *vedokta* controversy (वेदोक्त प्रकरण, laying claim over Vedic rituals as a Kshatriya) of 1902—escalated to placing a Maratha-caste person as *Shankaracharya* (one of the official religious heads of Hinduism) on the seat of the *karveer peetha* (one of the four classical Hindu religious establishments) in 1922.<sup>118</sup> Despite his inclinations towards the Hindu revivalist organisation Arya Samaj, Shahu was recognised widely as an eminent Satyashodhak. And despite Satyashodhak leaders Patil and Palekar’s opposition to Shahu’s claim on the Shankaracharya seat,

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<sup>117</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 164.

<sup>118</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Rajashree Shahu Chatrapati* [The Royal King Shahu] (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1991), pp. 87–102.

Kshatriyaisation remained a popular aspiration in the wider movement. Thus, resistance to Brahminism came to be articulated in popular books and booklets written within the realm of Satyashodhak literature while articulating Kshatriya claims. Examples include *Kshatriya Mahatmya* (क्षत्रिय माहात्म्य, *The Greatness of Kshatriya*),<sup>119</sup> *Kshatriya Vaishyanchya Hakkanche Rakshan* (क्षत्रिय वैश्यांच्या हक्कांचे रक्षण, *Protecting the Rights of the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas*),<sup>120</sup> *Kshatriya Vaishyancha Brahmnanshi Samna* (क्षत्रिय वैश्यांचा ब्राह्मणांशी सामना, *The Kshatriyas' and Vaishyas' Fight with the Brahmins*).<sup>121</sup>

Kshatriya identity, thus claimed, was not a one-sided status elevation but part of the Brahmin–non-Brahmin caste conflict going on at the time in the Marathi public sphere. Pre-colonial Brahminical texts like *Jati vivek* (जाती विवेक, *The Rationale of Caste*) that talked emphatically about sexual hybridity and the making of caste hierarchy circulated in the first three decades of twentieth century and were also criticised by men of various castes to project the purity of their own community.<sup>122</sup> Well-known Marathi Brahminical historian and Sanskrit scholar V.K. Rajwade, in the early 1920s, wrote *Bharatiya Vivaha Sansthecha Itihas* (भारतीय विवाह संस्थेचा इतिहास, *The History of the Indian Marriage System*), treating the hybrid sexual status of the lower castes as a fact in his various writings.<sup>123</sup> The Marathi Brahmin Mahadev Bodas called the Bhandari forward caste ‘untouchable’,<sup>124</sup> and in 1921 another Brahmin, Krishnashashtri

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<sup>119</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, pp. 541–52.

<sup>120</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, pp. 526–30.

<sup>121</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 2, pp. 69–72.

<sup>122</sup> T.V. Gupte, *Ethnographical Notes on the Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu* (Pune: CKP Social Club, 1904), 3–4; Dinkararao Jawalkar, ‘Sawal Number Don’ [Question Number Two], in Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 126–33.

<sup>123</sup> Y.D. phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, p. 127; V.K. Rajwade (ed.), *Bharatiya Vivaha Sansthecha Itihas* [History of Indian Marriage System] (Mumbai: Lokwangmay Prakashan, 1999), preface pp. 25–26.

<sup>124</sup> Nalawade, *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh*, pp. 77–81.

Telang, suggested that Kshatriya varna did not exist in the *kaliyuga* (कलियुग, modern times).<sup>125</sup> Reformist Brahmin writers were targeting Nhavis rather than Brahmin orthodoxy, blaming them for tonsuring Brahmin widows and criticising their claim for a higher varna status.<sup>126</sup> Significantly, the seventeenth-century text *Shudra Kamalakara* (शूद्र कमलाकर, *Shudra Defined by Kamalakara*) underlining non-Brahmins' sexually hybrid status<sup>127</sup> was well-known in early-twentieth-century Maharashtra, and later it became popular, circulating during the Brahmin-dominated Ganapati festivals in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>128</sup> The orthodox Brahmins of Pune, in their songs sung at the Ganapati festival, even used corporeal metaphors of Mahar women to denigrate the reformers:

You will get a Mahar woman who has a disproportionate body  
bent in seven places. She is ugly black like the owl. Then you will  
be the king and she will be your queen.<sup>129</sup>

तुझ मिळेल महारीण कोणी वाकडी! वाकडी जी सात ठिकाणी||

काळुंद्री घुबडवाणी! तू राजा मग ती राणी||

Insults invoking women's corporeality and caste were present in both contemporary Brahmin and non-Brahmin writings that shaped the conflict.<sup>130</sup>

The Kshatriya consciousness of non-Brahmins and pre-Ambedkarite Dalits was shaped in this environment of caste conflict. The Kolhapur principality chief Shahu held the *shruties* and the *shastras* (Brahmin scriptures) responsible for the inferior status of kshatriyas and criticised the *puranas* (पुराणे,

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<sup>125</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, p. 526.

<sup>126</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, 166; Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, p. 354.

<sup>127</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 118–20.

<sup>128</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, p. 132.

<sup>129</sup> Y.D. Phadke, 'Preface', in Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>130</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Keshavrao Jedhe* (Pune: Shree Vidya Prakashan, 1982), pp. 40–50; Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 85–86.

Hindu mythology) for producing vulgarity.<sup>131</sup> Citing the *puranas*, other Sanskrit texts, and colonial English writings, Savitribai Rode, a woman from the Ramoshi caste, argued that in fact the Brahmins were born out of hybrid unions:

*Deshasthas* are born of a Shudra woman, is what Dr John Wilson suggests. The *Karhade brahmand purana A-11* says that the *karhade's* [Brahmin's] origin is that of a very [sexually] fallen nature, hence they should not be invited to any public functions. . . . The *Skand purana* mentions . . . *Palse* Brahmins are born out of a union between Golak [Brahmin] caste woman and Bhil tribe man.<sup>132</sup>

देशस्थ यांची उत्पत्ती शूद्र स्त्रियांपासून असावी असे डॉ जॉन विल्सन साहेबाच्या ग्रंथात आहे.... कऱ्हाडे ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण अ ११ यामध्ये असे आहे की कऱ्हाडे ब्राह्मणाची उत्पत्ती अति पतित व नीच मानून कोणत्याही कार्यास बोलवू नये.... स्कंद पुराणान्तर्गत... गोलक जातीची स्त्री व भिल्ल पुरुष यापासून पाळश्याची उत्पत्ती आहे.

Gopal Dalvi, a popular Satyashodhak writer from eastern Maharashtra, proposed that the genesis of Brahmins was rooted in illicit sexual practices and adultery.<sup>133</sup> Such a sexual critique became ferocious in Dinkararao Jawalkar's male-chauvinist denigration of Brahmin women.<sup>134</sup> Sexuality, as an axis of Kshatriya identity and the varna status, became the battleground of the Brahmin–non-Brahmin struggle for cultural dominance.

Whether used as an analysis of the varna-jati structure, by lower castes to re-caste themselves, or as a tool to unpack Brahmin hypocrisy, Kshatriyaisation

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<sup>131</sup> Pradeep Gaikwad (ed.), *Shahu Maharajanchi Niwadak Bhashane ani Adnya Patre* [Shahu Maharaj's Selected Speeches and Orders] (Nagpur: Kshitij Prakashan, 2002), pp. 22–23, 48–49.

<sup>132</sup> Ugale, *Vidya Devi Savitribai Rode*, pp. 27–28.

<sup>133</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, p. 529.

<sup>134</sup> Dinkararao Jawalkar, 'Deshache Dushman' [Enemies of the Nation, 1925], in Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 85–86.



countered the caste-sexual reproductive frame articulated by Brahminism. Such caste articulations were not intended to write sex. Nevertheless, they were trying to make sense out of caste-sexual reproductive politics with their own responses to Brahmins' arguments about caste and sexuality. This process of Kshatriya self-making, in turn became a non-Brahmin construction of Brahminism. Instead of Brahmins constructing the 'Others' through reforms, the Brahmin here was constructed by the *bahujan* Other through appropriation of the reformist agenda. Late colonial non-Brahmin opposition to Brahminism thus was an issue of inverting authority over the making of caste-sexual frames. In asserting authority, neither the Brahminical practice of denigrating non-Brahmin women nor the non-Brahmin response to it, given the ubiquitous emphasis on 'women's chastity' on all sides, can be considered a fight for gender equality. Despite women's marginal participation in these debates, the Brahmin–non-Brahmin struggle, in this sense, was predominantly a power struggle between men. While creating vertical mobility within the language of varnas, Kshatriyaisation, amongst other things, was a journey of inverting Brahmin power over determining the caste status through constructions of reproduction. The conflict further escalated with the entry of non-Brahmins into the political sphere under dyarchy.

### ***Dyarchy: The Non-Brahmin Reform***

Although non-Brahmin resistance to Brahminism was shaped by cultural drives originating from before 1920, the introduction of the political reform of dyarchy proved a crucial turn in the making of Marathi non-Brahmins' dominant presence. The dyarchy brought political representation to non-Brahmins in the Bombay Provincial Legislative Council. Political parties like the Brahmnetar Paksh (Non-Brahmin Party) and Brahmnetar League were established. With non-Brahmin political presence in the legislative council established through reservations and elections, the legislative council became a new location for the Brahmin–non-Brahmin struggle. S.K. Bole introduced the Khoti Bill, which would protect tenants against Brahmin landlords (खोत, *khots*), and the Joshi

(village priest) Bill, which take away Brahmins' hereditary rights to perform religious rituals. This led to significant debates inside and outside the council.<sup>135</sup>

Although non-Brahmins' participation in the council was not revolutionary, their support for bills introducing a ceiling on landholding, lifting the traditional obligations of 'untouchables', and curtailing village priests' rights did help loosen rural caste restrictions.<sup>136</sup> In addition to council politics (where their success is debatable), non-Brahmins also succeeded in dominating local boards and district school boards.<sup>137</sup> This non-Brahmin presence certainly helped to democratise political institutions.

Considering these facts, dyarchy was not simply an issue of non-Brahmin presence or representation as an end in itself. Political representation was in fact the combined product of the non-Brahmin movement and the changing mode of colonial governance. It brought caste and the caste conflict explicitly into the realm of politics. This political representation produced a distinct discourse in the Marathi public sphere before and after its implementation, as well as outside and in relation to council politics.

After 1918, both the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin press wrote enthusiastically on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Act. While non-Brahmin newspapers *Dinamitra* and *Vijayi Maratha* welcomed caste representation, the Brahmin political reformer and nationalist B.G. Tilak sarcastically said,

What will the trading classes like Lingayats and Jains do by going to council? Will they be weighing goods? Are the tailors going to run a tailoring machine there? Will the farmers plough land in the councils?<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 198–99.

<sup>136</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 202.

<sup>137</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 203–5.

<sup>138</sup> Keer, *Rajarshree Shahu Chatrapati*, pp. 428–29; and Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, p. 83.

लिंगायत जैन वैगरे व्यापारी वर्गाने कौंसिलांत जाऊन काय तागडी धरायची आहे?  
शिंप्यांना कौंसिलांत जाऊन काय मशीन चालवायची आहे का? शेतकऱ्यांना तेथे काय  
नांगर चालवायचा आहे का?

In parallel, Patil's editorials in *Dinamitra*, with titles like 'Pudhe Vhach' (पुढे व्हाच!  
Go Ahead!), appealed to non-Brahmins to take this opportunity:

To make the reforms suitable to give voice to backward people, leaders from the backward castes should come forward in the political reforms that Hindustan is getting. Their deputation should go to England . . . and therefore we are appealing to the awakened leaders of the non-Brahmins—[they must] come forward!<sup>139</sup>

हिंदुस्थानास मिळणाऱ्या राजकीय सुधारणामध्ये मागासलेल्यांच्या हक्कांची दाद लागेल  
अशा सुधारणा करण्यासाठी मागासलेल्या वर्गातलेच काही पुढारी पुढे आले पाहिजेत. या  
पुढाऱ्यांचे डेप्युटेशन विलायतेस गेले पाहिजे...म्हणूनच आम्ही ब्राह्मणेतरांच्या जागृत  
पुढाऱ्यास म्हणत आहोत कि पुढे व्हाच!!

Through such conflicts, reformism became the language of rights that was inextricably connected to opposing Brahminism.

Some non-Brahmin journals opposed granting political representation on the basis of caste and demanded it on the basis of class; these were publicly burned, and several readers sent these particular issues back to the editors.<sup>140</sup> During the period, the intense Brahmin–non-Brahmin conflict surfaced even during public festivals. Non-Brahmins organised their own Ganapati festival processions, called *Chatrapati melas* (छत्रपती मेळा), to challenge those held by

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<sup>139</sup> *Dinamitra*, 26 February 1919, pp. 4–5.

<sup>140</sup> More, *Jagrutikar Palekar*, p. 63. Issues of the non-Brahmin newspaper *Jagrut* were sent back.

Brahmins. The two factions fought and disturbed each other's public meetings while making allegations and counter-allegations about these disturbances.<sup>141</sup>

In these times wrought with conflict, Marathi Brahmins, led by B.G. Tilak, opposed the Patel Inter-Caste Marriage Bill, while most non-Brahmin presses enthusiastically supported it. Introduced by Vithalbhai Patel in the central legislative council the Bill was about legalising inter-caste marriages. Mukundrao Patil, in a series of articles titled 'Tumchi Gotre Marat Nahit' (तुमची गोत्रे मारत नाहीत, Your *Gotras* [Clans] Don't Die), published in 1918, underlined the futility of Brahmins' opposition to the Bill. Articulating unity for Hindus through inter-caste marriage, Patil explained,

Similarly to how marriages within the same caste are considered valid today, marriage between a bride of one caste and a bridegroom from another should be officially sanctioned. ... The curtains of ignorance should be lifted off the Hindu mind. This is the only intention of the Bill.<sup>142</sup>

जातीतले जातीत झालेले विवाह आज जसे योग्य मानले जातात तसेच एका जातीचा वर  
व दुसऱ्या जातीची वधू यांचा विवाह झाला तरी तो सरकारात योग्य मानला जावा [...]  
हिंदू म्हणवणाऱ्या लोकांत आज जे अज्ञानाचे पडदे पडले आहेत ते नष्ट व्हावे इतकाच  
या बिलाचा हेतू आहे

In their political arguments, the non-Brahmins continued to consider their support for the Inter-Caste Marriage Bill as the marker of their success for years to come. Shripatrao Shinde even considered the passing of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 as a victory of non-Brahmin reforms over orthodox

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<sup>141</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Jawalkar Samagra*, pp. 6–12; Y.D. Phadke, *Keshavrao Jedhe*, pp. 40–45, 12–17.

<sup>142</sup> *Dinamitra*, 4 December 1918, pp. 4–5.

Brahminism, writing editorials with titles like ‘Samajik Sudharnecha Vijay’ (सामाजिक सुधारणेचा विजय, The Victory of Social Reform).<sup>143</sup>

As they mounted opposition to Brahminism, dyarchy became an opportunity for non-Brahmins to articulate the relationship between ‘reform’ and the ‘nation’. Through their print networks, they asserted their right to decide over what constituted a reform. Nineteenth-century Marathi Brahminical reformism had operated under a binary—social reforms versus political reforms—while debating which one deserved more attention. Shahu Maharaj, the chief of Kolhapur principality, rejected this binary, calling it a false idea and essentially a Brahmin conspiracy.<sup>144</sup> V.R. Shinde criticised the same binary in ‘Sudharana Ka Yashaswi Hot Nahit?’ (सुधारणा का यशस्वी होत नाही? Why Don’t Social Reforms Succeed?).<sup>145</sup> Palekar’s newspaper *Jagruti* asked the Brahmins to think for all, whereas, Shripatrao Shinde’s *Vijayi Maratha* stressed that *bahujan* reform meant progress for everyone and criticised the Brahmin idea of *swarajya* (स्वराज्य, self-rule) for being akin to *pot mhanje swarajyach* (पोट म्हणजे स्वराज्याच, understanding self-rule as feeling one’s own stomach).<sup>146</sup> Taking on Brahmins for their parochial vision of the nation and reforms, Mukundrao Patil warned them that *rashtra mhanje tumacha gharche angan nave* (म्हणजे तुमच्या घरचे अंगण नव्हे! The nation is not your home garden!).<sup>147</sup> While challenging Brahminism through dyarchy, non-Brahmins translated reforms into the language of rights. Dyarchy significantly contributed to making reform non-Brahmin, while non-Brahmins crucially shaped the era of dyarchy.

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<sup>143</sup> Nalawade, *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh* (7 October 1929), pp. 168–73.

<sup>144</sup> Keer, *Rajashree Shahu*, p. 43.

<sup>145</sup> Arun Kamble et al. (eds.), *Marathi Vaicharic Gadya* [Marathi Critical Prose] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2004), 42–51.

<sup>146</sup> Nalawade, *Vijayi Maratha Agralekh* (12 Nov 1928), pp. 162.

<sup>147</sup> *Dinamitra* (15 Aug 1917); Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 2.

However, for Brahmins in the early twentieth century, non-Brahmins were not the only challenge. The emergence of Dalit radicalism after 1920 and the organisation of women were equally crucial in shaping the crisis of Brahminical dominance over reform.

### ***The Radical Dalit Response to Brahminism***

After the emergence of B.R. Ambedkar around 1920, Dalit political consciousness radically re-contextualised reformism. Dalits were organising before Ambedkar—figures like Gopalbaba Walangkar, Kisan Fagoji Bansode, V.R. Shinde (despite not being Dalit), and Shivram Janaba Kamble were bringing together ‘untouchables’ through the Somavanshiya Hitachintak Samaj and Nirashtri Sahayak Mandali (निराश्रित सहाय्यक मंडळी Depressed Class Mission).<sup>148</sup> However, Ambedkar substantially influenced Dalit political consciousness by transforming untouchability into a political identity. Brahmin reformism was crucial to Ambedkar’s criticism of Hinduism, articulated through his mouthpiece newspapers *Muknayak* (मूकनायक, *Mute Hero*) and *Bahishkruta Bharata* (बहिष्कृत भारत, *Untouchable India*) in addition to his own writings. Explaining the failure of 19<sup>th</sup> century Brahmin reformism to understand correctly the relation between *anishta deshachar* (अनिष्ट देशाचार, nationwide social evils like caste exploitation and untouchability) and *anishta kulachar* (अनिष्ट कुलाचार, social evils, like widow remarriage, that were seen as within-caste issues). Ambedkar remarked:

The social-conference-type social reformers did not understand this difference. Therefore, while forgetting nationwide issues such as caste and untouchability, they kept fighting only *kulachar*-based issues such as widow tonsure, remarriages, and child marriages. Though these are social questions, they don’t come in

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<sup>148</sup> Navalkar, *Shivaram Janaba Kamble*, pp. 49, 58; Y.D. Phadke, *Vissavya Shatakatil Maharashtra* [Maharashtra in the Twentieth Century], vol. 2 (Pune: Shree Vidya, 1989), p. 302.

the way of political demands . . . they [Brahmin reformers] never thought beyond *kulachar*. They spent all the time in purifying their own caste. Hence, despite chanting social reforms, they kept caste-difference and untouchability as it was.<sup>149</sup>

सामाजिक परिषदवाल्या सुधारकांना हा भेद कळला नाही. आणि म्हणूनच जाती भेद आणि स्पर्शास्पर्श भेद इत्यादी सर्वजनव्यापी प्रश्नास विसरून जाऊन विधवांचे वपन आणि गतभर्तृकाचे पाट व पोरपणातील लग्ने अशा कुलवाचक प्रश्नावर त्यांनी रणे पाडली. हे प्रश्न समाजीक असले तरी राजकीय मागणी च्या आड ते येऊ शकत नाहीत... त्यांची दृष्टी कुलाचाराचे पलीकडे गेली नाही. स्वजाती ची शुद्धता करण्यात त्यांनी सारा वेळ घालवला आणि सामाजिक सुधारणेचा जप करूनही जाती भेद आणि स्पर्शास्पर्श भेद होता तास ठेऊन दिला.

Ambedkar thus criticised the nineteenth-century Marathi reformers for failing to understand the politics of social questions and selecting self- and domestic reforms for political reasons. This criticism continued to be valid even for the early-twentieth-century Brahmin progressives. To underline their hypocrisy, Ambedkar commented:

We don't see much difference between orthodox people who deny reforms and progressives who are willing but leave them on times to come. Rather, the second type of people are thorns in the way of reforms. . . . They will not benefit anyone . . . but their chant of reformism certainly misleads people. Such people who are ready to verbally fight with their own caste fellows, are ready to walk

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<sup>149</sup> Vasant Moon (ed), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Yanche Bahishkrut Bharat ani Mooka Nayak* ([Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's 'India in Exile' and 'Mute Hero'] (Mumbai: Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1990), p. 43.

away from reformism when actually objected to by their caste with an attitude that ‘caste has to be followed’.<sup>150</sup>

सुधारणा नको असे म्हणणाऱ्या प्रतिगामी लोकांत व सुधारणा हवी पण ती कालगतीवर सोपवून बोलण्यापलीकडे काही ना करणाऱ्या प्रागतिक लोकांत काही विशेष अंतर आहे असे आम्हास वाटत नाही. उलट हे दुसऱ्या धर्तीचे लोकच सुधारणेच्या मार्गातील काटे आहेत आणि म्हणूनच त्यांच्या पासून कोणाला लाभ होणे शक्य नाही...या लोकांच्या चर्पटपंजरीने दिशाभूल मात्र होते... एकीकडे सुधारणे संबंधी आपल्या जातीशी शाब्दिक वाद घालावाया तयार असलेले हे लोक पुन्हा जाती ने अडवले कि जाती ‘साठी माती खायची’ असे म्हणून सुधारणे ला मूठमाती द्यायला तयार....

With a similar approach to a critique of reformism, Ambedkar, in his sociological essay ‘Castes in India’ (1917), analysed historical questions crucially connected to social reformism in colonial times—sati, widowhood, and child marriage were his main topics. This piece explained the genesis of caste by unpacking these questions. He advanced the politics of ‘closing the doors of class’ as the main cause of endogamy, which he argued was a Brahminical method of managing surplus women with the result of creating caste.<sup>151</sup> ‘Castes in India’ was written not simply to explain caste genesis but to highlight the mechanisms of sexual governance as the main upholder of the caste system, crucial to the making of Hindu society. Analysing the failure of Brahmin social reformism, pointing out its caste-political limitations, and unpacking caste endogamy was Ambedkar’s radical response to the Brahminically monopolised rhetoric of social reforms.

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<sup>150</sup> Changdev Khairmode, *Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*, vol. 3 (Pune: Sugava, [1960] 2013), p. 57.

<sup>151</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, ‘Caste in India’ in Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Govt. of Maharashtra, 1979), pp. 9–14.



Marathi Brahminism remained conceptually and spatially crucial to Ambedkar's anti-caste analysis of modern Hinduism from a Dalit perspective.<sup>152</sup> Despite having de-Brahminised Brahmin allies like Kamalakant Chitre, Surendra Tipnis, and Gangadhar Sahasrabuddhe, Ambedkar held that the Brahmin class, due to its position of dominance, would never be willing to eradicate the varna system through inter-caste marriages.<sup>153</sup>

Beyond this, Dalit identity formation was put into action against Brahminism in late colonial Maharashtra. After reading the caste-exploitative injunctions of Manu, the ancient creator of Brahminical law, or *smriti*, aloud, Dalits publicly burned the Brahmin scripture *Manusmriti* in 1927. Ambedkar also cited Manu's mentioned reproductive genesis of the lower castes when giving reasons for this radical act. He explained:

Our reading of the *Manusmriti* has confirmed that this text is full of derogatory remarks for the Shudra castes; it humiliates them, includes innumerable statements disrespecting them, and charges them with an illicit reproductive genesis. There is no homogeneity of religion in this text. On the contrary, it is a vicious play of inequality. Reformers heading towards establishing self-rule will never accept such a text.<sup>154</sup>

आम्ही जे मनुस्मृती चे वाचन केले आहे त्यावरून आमची खात्री झाली आहे की त्या ग्रंथात शूद्र जातीची निंदा करणारी, त्यांचा उपमर्द करणारी, कुटाळ उत्पत्तीचा कलंक त्यांच्या माथी मारणारी व त्यांच्या विषयी समाजात अनादर वाढवणारी वचने ओतप्रोत भरलेली आहेत. त्यात धर्माची धारणा नसून असमानतेची मात्र धुळवड घातलेली आहे.

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<sup>152</sup> *Bahishkrut Bharat*, 3 February 1928, p. 158. Ambedkar's articulation of Dalit exploitation included an analysis of the landless Mahars in coastal Maharashtra before 1930.

<sup>153</sup> *Bahishkrut Bharat*, 3 February 1928, p.184.

<sup>154</sup> *Bahishkrut Bharat*, 3 February 1928, p.158.

स्वयंनिर्णयाचे तत्व प्रस्थापित करावयास निघालेल्या सुधारणवाद्यास असला ग्रंथ कधीच  
मान्य होणे शक्य नाही

Even Ambedkar's allies mention Manu's denigration and belittling of women and so-called untouchables as their reason for burning the text.<sup>155</sup> Ambedkarite radical actions came with their own terminology of reformism, while criticising the Brahminical version. Thus articulated and worked out, radicalism was a shock and a challenge to both progressive and conservative Marathi Brahminism that the Brahmins could not forget for years to come.<sup>156</sup>

Ambedkar's argument substantially referred to Maharashtra and Marathi Brahminism. His pre-1930 writings on the exploitation of so-called untouchables analyse the conditions of landless Mahars in coastal Maharashtra. The first radical Dalit action for access to common water resources was held by the water tank in Mahad, the same place where the *Manusmriti* was burned. Coastal Maharashtra, the heartland of the Chitpavan Brahmins, was also a main site of Dalit exploitation; it was not a coincidence that Dalit anti-caste radicals chose it.

Such actions continued in the subsequent temple-entry movements in Amravati and Nasik up to 1930.<sup>157</sup> The impact and aim of anti-caste radicalism remained connected to Brahmins and Brahminism in the struggle to access water tanks, to gain entry into temples and when burning the *Manusmriti*. The water access action in Mahad underlined public access to resources, the temple entry

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<sup>155</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, 'Memories of G.N. Sahasrabuddhe', *Janata* (15 May 1933), p. 54.

<sup>156</sup> Memories of Dalits burning the *Manusmriti* lasted long in Maharashtra and were revived in the aftermath of the anti-Brahmin violence that ensued after Gandhi's assassination. Marathi Brahmins, in their modernist cultural understandings and articulations, kept responding to *Manusmriti* burning for years: for example, the Sanskrit scholars T.L. Joshi and P.V. Kane commented on it on various occasions between 1940 and 1960. For Joshi's brief comment see the documentary *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's Life*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRbmGJrkbYs>.

<sup>157</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Visavaya Shataktila Maharashtra*, vol. 3 (Pune: Shree Vidya, 1989), pp. 256–57, 264–65.

movements demanded rights to public places, and the burning of the *Manusmriti* asserted a political right to protest caste-sexual servitude. Central to all this was a challenge to Brahminism.

Ambedkar's 'Castes in India' was a Dalit critique analysing Brahminism and the burning of the *Manusmriti* was a symbolic act to counter Brahminical cultural hegemony. 'Castes in India' focused on unpacking the sexual governance of Brahminism, while the burning of the *Manusmriti* was an outright rejection of Brahminical caste-sexual governmentality in modern times. Both interventions, theoretical and practical, responded fundamentally to Marathi Brahmin reformism by unpacking and rejecting Brahmin governance. Burning one of the most sacred Brahmin scriptures was a radical challenge, as these scriptures were crucial to the making of Brahminical reformism.

However, the late colonial crisis of upper-caste Brahmin dominance was not related only to the political consciousness of caste. It was also intricately tied up with awareness of women's position in society. The challenge to Manu and modern Brahminism emerged not only from non-Brahmin and Dalit criticism but from the increasing participation of Marathi women in the public domain.

### ***Women's Organising***

Social-reform movements in colonial and late colonial India generally, as well as Maharashtra specifically, were inextricably linked with redefining the position of women in a modern society.<sup>158</sup> Reformist discussions in the nineteenth century

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<sup>158</sup> For social reforms and the women's question, see Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, vols. 1 and 2 (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007); Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali For Women, 1989); Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2013); Rosalind O'Hanlon, *A Comparison Between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India: 1850–1920*

revolved predominantly around the ‘women’s question’. In practice, however, this was mostly men talking with a concern for and about women. At the turn of the century, the picture changed considerably. One way to understand the process was proposed by Chatterjee, who argued that nationalists were resolving the women’s question by making a distinction between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ world, designating the household as the domain of autonomy from colonial rule and as the domain of women.<sup>159</sup> However, the sex literature of the early twentieth century spoke the language of ‘women’s freedom’ through sex education. The elite caste nationalists’ male psyches must therefore be kept in mind as we revisit this question.

The early twentieth century saw Marathi women gradually emerging with their own voice in the public sphere. They asserted themselves as writers, editors, organisers, and protestors. The volume of their writing slowly but steadily increased from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. One index of Marathi women writers from 1921 listed 300 active female authors from the late nineteenth century.<sup>160</sup> Women wrote in various male-edited literary journals, but they also started their own magazines, such as *Arya Bhagini* (आर्य भगिनी, *The Aryan Sister*, 1886), *Maharashtra Mahila* (महाराष्ट्र महिला, *Maharashtrian Women*, 1902), *Grihini Ratnamala* (गृहिणी रत्नमाला, *Jewelled Chain of Housewives*, 1916) and *Griha Laxmi* (गृह लक्ष्मी, *Home Goddess*, 1927).<sup>161</sup>

More importantly, at the end of the nineteenth century, women started organising themselves. In 1904, networks of elite and upper-caste women led by

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(Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005); Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai: Life and Landmark Writings* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>159</sup> Chatterjee, ‘Nationalist Resolution’, pp. 237–40.

<sup>160</sup> Vidyut Bhagwat, *Maharashtratil Stri Prashnachi Watchal* [The Journey of the Women’s Question in Maharashtra] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2004), p. 389.

<sup>161</sup> Swati Karve, *Striyanchi Shatapatre* [100 Letters of Women] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2009), pp. 40, 64–66, 70–71, 82, 103; *Mahila Masik* [Women’s Monthly] 3, 6 (July 1936).

Ramabai Ranade organised the Bharatiya Mahila Parishad (भारतीय महिला परिषद, Indian Women's Conference) in Bombay.<sup>162</sup> In 1927 Pune hosted the first All-India Women's Conference with eminent Marathi upper-caste and Brahmin women as some of the leading contributors. The emergence of non-Brahmin and Dalit political consciousness also resulted, subsequently, in lower-caste and Dalit women coming together. Janakka Shinde and Gangubai Khedkar founded the Adi Hindu Mahila Samaj (आदी हिंदू महिला समाज, Original Hindu Women's Society) in 1920.<sup>163</sup> The Asprushya Mahila Samaj (अस्पृश्य महिला समाज, Untouchable Women's Society) was started in Amravati in 1928. Dalit women Shivubai Shivtarkar, Devaki Satambkar, and Ramabai Ambedkar organised a Dalit women's conference the same year.<sup>164</sup> The Matang Mahila Parishad (मातंग महिला परिषद, Matang Women's Conference) was organised by Gangubai Salve in 1924.<sup>165</sup> The Ramoshi-caste woman leader Savitribai Rode was heading her own caste organisation in the world of male-dominated caste conferences by the 1920s.<sup>166</sup> In 1932 Dalit woman Subadhrabai Ramteke was making a critique of the Indian National Congress and Hindu Mahasabha's policies.<sup>167</sup> Another Dalit woman's conference, under the leadership of Anusayabai Ingole in 1936, passed resolutions regarding legislative assembly representation, woman mill-workers' salaries, marriage after schooling, and Dalit women as teachers.<sup>168</sup> By the early 1930s Dalit women were also active editorial members of the Ambedkarite mouthpiece *Janata*.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Swati Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas* [History of Women's Conferences] (Pune: Abhijit Publication, 2015), p. 31.

<sup>163</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 44.

<sup>164</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 86; Moon and Pawar, *We Also Made History*, p. 136.

<sup>165</sup> Pawar, *We Also Made History*, p. 44.

<sup>166</sup> Ugale, *Vidya Devi Savitribai Rode*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>167</sup> Pawar, *We Also Made History*, p. 137.

<sup>168</sup> Pawar, *We Also Made History*, pp. 137–38.

<sup>169</sup> Pawar, *We Also Made History*, pp. 136–37.

That is not to say that women were not active already in the nineteenth-century public sphere. Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde, Mukta Salve, and Anandabai Joshi contributed to debates in the public sphere, and Dalit women were always working in the public domain. However, organisational interaction combined with politicised women's consciousness to become a distinct characteristic of the early twentieth century. Some of the leading women in the early twentieth century were also connected to eminent men, who helped them organise women's conferences. Still, their organisational effort and interest indicates a politicised assertion of women's agency, inflected by their caste identities.

While such organising efforts were assisted by some men, they were also heavily criticised by others, such as B.G. Tilak. Concerning the Bharat Mahila Parishad in 1904, Tilak remarked:

The rise and decline of our women is dependent on the rise and decline of our men. Unless men progress, it is impossible for women to progress independently. Anyway, at present we don't intend to write more about this *toom* [fashionable thing].<sup>170</sup>

आमच्या स्त्रियांची उन्नती व अवनती पुरुषांच्या उन्नती व अवनती वर अवलंबून आहे आणि जोपर्यंत पुरुषांची उन्नती झालेली नाही तोवर स्त्रियांनी स्वतंत्रपणे आपल्या उन्नतीस लागणे आमच्या मते अशक्य आहे. असो या टूमी संबंधाने सध्या जास्त लिहिण्याचा आमचा इरादा नाही.

Despite such criticism, women were commenting significantly on social reform and its relation to the new woman. Manoramabai Mitra, the editor of *Maharashtra Mahila*, complained at the 1904 Indian women's conference:

Every year a social conference is held along with the Indian National Congress and concerned speeches are given for one or

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<sup>170</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 35.

two days [by male reformers], but in reality, no one seems to be making any effort to improve the conditions of the widows.<sup>171</sup>

दर साल राष्ट्रीय सभे प्रमाणे सामाजिक परिषद भरवण्यात येते व त्या ठिकाणी एकदोन दिवस मोठी कळकळीची भाषणे होतात परंतु विधवांची स्थिती सुधारण्याचे वास्तविक कोणी प्रयत्न करीत असल्याचे आढळून येत नाही.

Similarly, conference chairwoman Ramabai Ranade emphasised the need for a separate women's conference, saying, 'Women cannot talk freely in the social conferences organised by men and we can't discuss some important and delicate issues [exclusive to women] in the men's gatherings'.<sup>172</sup> Going further, Mathurabai Joshi, at the same conference, appealed to the men to teach their wives, but insisted that women have no less intellect than men.<sup>173</sup> Given Agarkar's view that women were less intelligent because of their reproductive biology, this was an important statement.

Thus, women's organising in the 1920s was not about gathering alongside national and provincial Congress meetings. Women's organisational spirit was converted into resistance and protest. A petition for women's right to vote, signed by 800 women, was submitted to the Southborough Franchise Committee in Bombay in 1919, and more than a hundred women were present in the gallery of the Bombay Legislative Council to listen to the decision about franchise in 1921.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, non-Brahmin, Dalit, and Brahmin women in Pune strongly protested the Primary Education Act of 1920, which prioritised the compulsory education of boys over girls.<sup>175</sup> Janakka Shinde, the leader of the lower-caste and 'untouchable' women's march, published a critique of the Act in the non-Brahmin newspaper *Jagruti*:

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<sup>171</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 30.

<sup>172</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 33.

<sup>173</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 32.

<sup>174</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, pp. 51–53.

<sup>175</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, pp. 51–53.

Universal, compulsory and free education has started [in the princely states] in the last many years. Looking at the reservations and hesitance of my Pune-based friends, I don't know what to say. . . . Educating boys without educating girls is dangerous to the family's happiness. Even our Mahar and Mang women are able to understand this. And my brain fails to understand its opposition by the upper-class [caste] Sadashiv Peth intellectuals [Brahmins].<sup>176</sup>

सार्वत्रिक व मोफत आणि सक्तीचे शिक्षण सुरु होऊन आहे बरीच वर्षे झाली. आमच्या पुणेकर मित्रांनी त्याची चालवलेली टाळाटाळ बघून काय म्हणावे समजत नाही [...] मुलींना शिकवल्या खेरीज मुलांना शिकवणे गृह सौख्याच्या दृष्टीने घातक आहे. या गोष्टी आमच्या महारमांगांच्या बायकांना काळात असून सदाशिव पेठेतील उच्च वर्गातील विद्वानांचा विरोध पाहून माझी माती गुंग होत आहे.

These were crucial interventions in the public sphere, as were Dalit women's participation in radical Ambedkarite direct actions such as the *Mahad Satyagraha* (Mahad water-tank movement of 1927), the burning of the *Manusmruti*, and the temple-entry movements.<sup>177</sup>

Thus, women's assertion in the late colonial Marathi public domain was not simply enacted through the writing, editing, and organising done by upper-caste women. It was a matter of women from different castes making their political subjectivity explicit. Yet women posed a challenge and responded to the upper-caste male rhetoric of reformism. As opposed to Brahmin governmentality, which had determined reformism under colonial rule, the late

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<sup>176</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 50. Sadashiv Peth was a heavily Brahmin-dominated settlement in western Pune from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Even today, *Sadashiv Peth* is a phrase used in Marathi to indicate Brahminical culture, as a mark of upper-caste pride and of criticism by those who resist Brahmin dominance.

<sup>177</sup> Narayana Bhosale, *Maharashtratil Strivishyak Sudharanawadache Sattakaran* [The Politics of Women's Reforms in Maharashtra] (Pune: Taichi Prakashan, 2008), pp. 310–12.



colonial assertion of women was a multi-caste reality helped by wider political and cultural representation. The fight against patriarchy was inseparably a struggle against caste hierarchy. The burning of the *Manusmruti* and the organising of the first All-India Women's Conference happened in parallel in late colonial Maharashtra in 1927. The former took place in the traditional heartland of the Chitpavan Brahmins, Mahad; the latter in the heartland of modern Marathi Brahminism, western Pune. An anonymous woman at the time informed the nationalist Brahminical newspaper *Kesari*, 'The time has come—women have to lead the social-reform movement themselves'.<sup>178</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Brahminical Crisis**

Changing the meaning of the reformist discourse was the late colonial times' contribution to the crisis of Brahminical dominance over reform in Maharashtra. The change in the modality of colonial governance altered the meaning of reformism. The power equations of the language of reform underwent considerable change. This was when Dalits, non-Brahmins, and women began to articulate their political subjectivities explicitly. As a consequence, their assertion through their caste-sexual identities and agendas was a political requirement of making their own subjecthood. These traditional 'Others' articulating their subjectivities caused a crisis in Brahmin patriarchy.

Brahmin governmentality was also challenged because the rules of participation in the public sphere started changing. The crisis was not simply related to non-Brahmin counter-ritualism and the Dalits' burning the *Manusmruti*. It was also embedded in counter-actions by traditional Others to the Brahminical mode of caste-sexual governance. The crisis of the Brahmin male was caused in part by non-Brahmins' demands for separate seats in the legislative council, but it was more fundamentally caused by the lower-caste Other professing to the upper-caste Brahmin what *social*, *political*, and *national* exactly meant.

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<sup>178</sup> Karve, *Stree Parishadancha Itihas*, p. 59.

Brahminical crisis was not created by Ambedkar writing 'Castes in India' but by the politically assertive Dalit analysis of the Brahminical governance of reformism. The Other also questioned the Brahmin male's reformist governance through non-Brahmin political interventions during dyarchy while re-defining reform for themselves. Reform for Brahminism was a frame of modernisation and of remaking the caste-sexuality nexus. It was a governmentality apparatus. Challenges to this frame made it necessary to remake governance. A new conceptualisation of reformism became a requirement of modern Brahminism—and sex reforms appeared in late colonial Maharashtra.

## **Chapter 2. Publishing Marathi Sex Reforms**

While a crisis brewed in Brahmin dominance over reformism between 1920 and 1950, Marathi sex publishing emerged: print networks devoted to discussing sexual relations and their social context. Most of these publications emphasised the importance of, and claimed to be imparting, a scientific approach to knowledge about sexuality the same. Some of the literature was also aimed at satisfying sexual curiosity. Its forms included scientific books on sexuality, tracts and essays on eugenics, marriage manuals, sexual health journals, and literary magazines with titillating stories. Among these, narratives claiming to be scientific were dominant. Although women contributed to this literature, in many cases men used female pen names. Caste and gender shaped the conditions of publishing: in particular, sexual writing that claimed to impart scientific information was entirely authored by Brahmin men and published mostly in the upper-caste publishing world. All writings were in prose form.

Why did the upper-caste men, and particularly Brahmins, write sexual science? What were the politics of this literature and what purpose did it serve? How did it shape Marathi modernity? This chapter demonstrates the proliferation and reach of Marathi sex literature its social and cultural presence, explaining the interwar and post-war upper-caste Marathi literary reality and the global talk of sex reform of the early twentieth century to give context to scientific sexuality. It then illuminates the ways that caste and gender shaped the scripting of scientific sexuality with a cultural biography of writings and authors of sexual science and addresses sociosexual concerns. It ends by examining the production of sexual literature and the politics of its dissemination, with special reference to narratives of scientific sexuality. I argue that the scientific sex literature of this period (from 1920 to 1950) did not simply address sociosexual concerns; rather, through the politics of its production and dissemination, it manufactured a repressive hypothesis while restructuring Brahminism.

## **I. Situating Marathi Sex Talk**

Late colonial Marathi sex talk was predominantly literary and an important part of Marathi literature.<sup>1</sup> Rationally discussing the sexual aspects of human life was core to the sexuality writing's claim to be scientific. Such discourse was contextualised by the larger rhetoric of modernity then prevalent amongst Marathi literary circles. In fact, against the background of caste and gender assertions and the caste conflict, the emergence of literary modernism and sexual modernity were simultaneous realities in late colonial Maharashtra, with the latter being part of the former as well as connected to the modern global circulation of sexual knowledge, as the following sections will show.

### ***The Marathi Literary Publishing World***

With the increase in literacy and socio-political awareness, around 1920 Maharashtra saw a major increase in its reading public and the Marathi-language press proliferated.<sup>2</sup> Countless Marathi newspapers occupied the socio-political landscape. This proliferation was mostly upper-caste and nationalist in nature, but there was a vibrant non-Brahmin, Communist, and Dalit press, too.<sup>3</sup> This was a period of expansion and regulation in Marathi literature. There was also a significant increase in literary criticism.<sup>4</sup> The number of yearly literary conferences doubled between 1920 and 1950.<sup>5</sup> Literary journals proliferated,

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<sup>1</sup> There are references to birth-control clinics after 1920, but scientific-sexuality rhetoric was mostly a literary fact.

<sup>2</sup> Kusumawati Deshpande, *Marathi Sahitya* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 1966), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> R.K. Lele, *Marathi Vritta Patrancha Itihas* [History of the Marathi Press] (Pune: Continental Publications, [1984] 2009), pp. 647–891; for non-Brahmin presses, see chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> S.R. Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar' [A Thought in Literature], in G.M. Kulkarni and V.D. Kulkarni (eds.), *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas* [History of Marathi Literature], vol. 2 (Pune: Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad Publications, 1991), p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar', p. 296.

with a considerable impact on the contemporary literary world through which inter-war Marathi literature circulated,<sup>6</sup> with telling titles like *Pratibha* (प्रतिभा, *Elan*), *Pratima* (प्रतिमा, *Reflection*), *Chitra* (चित्रा, *One of the [Indian] Lunar Mansions*), *Dhanurdhari* (धनुर्धारी, *Archer*), *Pratod* (प्रतोद, *Whip*), *Mauj* (मौज, *Fun*), *Ratnakar* (रत्नाकर, *The Mine of Jewels*), *Dhruva* (ध्रुव, *Pole Star*), *Yashawanta* (यशवंत, *Successful*), *Vihar* (विहार, *Voyage*), and *Vividha Vrutta* (विविधवृत्त, *Multi Informative*).<sup>7</sup> Despite the presence of non-Brahmin and women literary figures, the literary world was still the domain of the Brahmin male, and from their inception in 1878 to 1950 it was Brahmin men who chaired Marathi literary conferences.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, new writers, influenced by modern European literature and shaped by contemporary global political thought, emerged on the literary horizon. V.S. Khandekar, N.S. Phadke, Y.G. Joshi, and Anant Kanekar, among many others, became major literary figures. Along with the new generation of authors appeared romantic novels.<sup>9</sup> Short essays modelled on Francis Bacon's appealed to upper-caste literary taste. These, along with short stories and serialised novels, became the backbones of literary journals and magazines.<sup>10</sup> A new band of writers and critics, like J.S. Karandikar, C.V. Joshi, N.K. Behere, V.V. Hadap, G.S. Jog, K.N. Kale, and P.K. Atre, through their engagement with journals, dominated the literary world.<sup>11</sup> Writers and poets were inspired by the European traditions of romanticism and classicism, such as the poetry group

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<sup>6</sup> Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar', p. 298; Pratima Gokhale, 'Wangmayeen Niyatkalike' [Literary Journals], in Kulkarni and Kulkarni, *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas*, pp. 302–15.

<sup>7</sup> Lele, *Marathi Vritta Patrancha Itihas*, pp. 900–80.

<sup>8</sup> Journal chart of literary conference details from 1878 to 1929 by D.V. Potdar, in journal *Ratnakar*, edited by M.V. Sane [Jan 1933] (Pune: Vijay Press), pp. 50–51.

<sup>9</sup> N.S. Phadke is well known in Maharashtra as the pioneer of modern Marathi romantic novels.

<sup>10</sup> The novels of N.S. Phadke, C.V. Gurjar, and many others were serialised in literary journals such as *Ratnakar* (e.g., February 1928, cover; May 1930, pp. 39–44).

<sup>11</sup> This claim is based upon my survey of *Ratnakar* between 1926 and 1933.

Ravikiran Mandal (रविकिरण मंडळ), which was influenced by modern English and European poets like Alfred Tennyson as well as by the pre-Raphaelites like Christina Rossetti.<sup>12</sup> Some also expressed social concerns by looking at inter-war and post-war European socio-political situations.<sup>13</sup>

Many of these writers wrote essays and poems on individual autonomy and the social limits of interpersonal relations, while constructing an image of the modern man and woman through discussions of romance and love. By projecting all-encompassing visions, they discussed materialism, the purpose of art, and individualism and made the upper-caste Brahmin literary world a vibrant sphere. Inspired by the ideas of Marx, Freud, and Tolstoy, they began to shape an understanding of the role of sexuality, materiality, and art in life.<sup>14</sup> N.S. Phadke's debates with S.D. Javdekar, V.S. Khandekar, and P.S. Sane on pleasure, materiality, and morality in life became hallmarks of Marathi upper-caste literary modernism.<sup>15</sup> Women writers like Kashibai Kanitkar and Krishnabai Mote were also writing on conjugality in modern times,<sup>16</sup> while the modernist novelist Vibhavari Shirurkar challenged conventional sense of morality though within the limits of the Brahminical structure.<sup>17</sup> These writers strove to define new literary

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<sup>12</sup> S.K. Kshirsagar, 'Ravikiran Mandalache Kavya ani Karya' [Poetry and Works of Ravikiran Mandal], in Kulkarni and Kulkarni, *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas*, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> M.D. Hatkanaglekar, 'Katha' [Stories], in Kulkarni and Kulkarni, *Marathi Wangmayacha Itihas*, p. 169.

<sup>14</sup> Hatkanaglekar, 'Katha', 168; Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar', pp. 254–66; Anant Deshmukh, *Nivdak Sharadechi Patre* [Selected Sharada Letters] (Pune: Padmagandha Prakashan, 2010), pp. 81–85.

<sup>15</sup> Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar', pp. 254–60.

<sup>16</sup> Vidyut Bhagwat (ed.), *Marathitil Striyanche Nibandha Lekhan* [Women's Essay Writing in Marathi] (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2013), pp. 58–61; Swati Karve, *Stri Vikasachya Paul Khuna 1850–1950* [Footsteps of Women's Development] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan, 2003), p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> Vibhawari Shirurkar, *Hindolyawar* [On the Swing], 3rd edition (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, [1934] 2004).

parameters by emphasising different literary forms and reacting against the rigidity of literary technique. N.S. Phadke in particular dominated this discourse.<sup>18</sup> Despite treating religion and touching upon caste, discussions of ethics, morality, literary taste, and art remained at the core of Marathi literary modernism. Modernism took upper-caste social life as its reference point, and the Brahminical upper caste started identifying itself as middle class. The terms *madhyam varga* (मध्यम वर्ग, middle class) and *brahman madhyam varga* (ब्राह्मण मध्यम वर्ग, Brahmin middle class) were used interchangeably terminologies not only in literature but in consumer-goods advertisements.<sup>19</sup> *Modernism* was the key word in remaking upper-caste society anew. Secular projections of literary canons and an upper-caste language of social concern were distinct features of this literary modernism.

Thus shaped, post-1920 literary activity has conventionally been seen as a paradigm shift in making claims to modernity through literature. The late colonial Marathi Brahmin crisis in reformism arose alongside an upper-caste Marathi literature that was busy establishing new credentials. Although the nineteenth-century trope of discussing social reforms in literature continued, the language of modernism was gradually replacing the language of reformism. Nineteenth-century reformism was also about becoming modern. However, in the early twentieth century, *adhunik asne* (आधुनिक असणे, being modern) became an issue of declaring oneself as modern. The idea of modernism became interchangeable with the rhetoric of social reform in the upper-caste-Brahmin-dominated literary world.

Sexual scientific literature emerged in Maharashtra simultaneously with the development of this literary landscape. The Marathi literary world was

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<sup>18</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Pratibha Sadhan* [Literary Imagination] (Pune: Deshmukh, [1932] 1963). In the Marathi literary world Phadke is known for this work even to this date.

<sup>19</sup> Gajanan Mills from Sangali explicitly advertised saris to 'Brahmin middle-class' customers in the 1920s in the nationalist newspaper *Kesari*.

concerned with the spread of sexual literature: literary gatherings frequently passed anti-obscenity memorandums.<sup>20</sup> Yet male literary critics elucidated on sexual moralism,<sup>21</sup> sex writers frequently wrote in literary journals, and literary modernists occasionally expressed their views in sexual-health journals.<sup>22</sup> Male and females writing in literary journals implicitly mentioned sexual restraints in conjugal relations and widowhood.<sup>23</sup> Though sex writers used the term *laingik wangmaya* (लैंगिक वाङ्मय, sexual literature) to describe their work, it was not conventionally seen as a distinct literary genre. Nevertheless, its development was intrinsically linked with that of late colonial upper-caste Marathi literature, and sex writers engaged with modernism by endorsing it or reacting to it. The global circulation of sexual knowledge was the other important influence.

### ***Global Sex Reforms***

The modern West, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, witnessed the advent of sexual science and sexology as well as of eugenics and birth-control activism. In the post-Enlightenment period, anxiety and moral panic about masturbation, degeneration, and the spoiling of youth played a crucial role in articulating worries about the decline of the nation.<sup>24</sup> Reading was one of the markers of print capitalism that produced modernity. However, solitary reading, especially novels, were heavily opposed for allegedly inciting uncontrolled sexual fantasies, causing effeminacy, encouraging solitary sex and masturbation,

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<sup>20</sup> R.D. Karve (ed.), *Samajswasthya* [Social Health], year 8, issue 8 (February 1935), pp. 254–55, and year 14, issue 11 (May 1941), p. 355. (Henceforth abbreviated as SS.)

<sup>21</sup> S.K. Kshirsagar, *Laingik Neeti ani Nyaya* [Sexual Morality and Justice] (Mumbai: Sahitya Sanskriti Mandal Publications, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Anant Deshmukh, *Asangrahit Ra Dho Karve* [Uncompiled R.D. Karve] (Pune: Padmagandha Publication, 2010), pp. 137–254; A.B. Bhide (ed.), *Jivan* [Life] (December 1941), pp. 27–31.

<sup>23</sup> S. Karve, *Stri Vikasachya Paul Khuna*, pp. 145–50.

<sup>24</sup> Anna Katharina Schaffner, *Modernisms and Perversions: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850–1930* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 5–10.



which in turn would lead to a total societal decline.<sup>25</sup> Such panic before World War I gave rise to moralistic sex-education tracts such as *What a Young Boy Ought to Know*, *What a Young Girl Ought to Know*, *What a Young Woman Ought to Know*, *What a Young Wife Ought to Know*, and *What a Young Husband Ought to Know*.<sup>26</sup> The authors of these texts—Mary Allen Wood, Emma F. Angell Drake, and Sylvanus Stall—were considered the conservatives of the modern sex reform movement at the time, but their works became international bestsellers and were translated into Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali.<sup>27</sup> Even *The Science of New Life*, by the late-nineteenth-century anti-masturbation moralist John Cowan,<sup>28</sup> and *Physical Culture*, the journal of American health advocate Bernarr Macfadden<sup>29</sup> were much-cited references during this period, both in the West and in late colonial Maharashtra.<sup>30</sup>

Around the same time, sexual science was gradually claiming space for itself as an epistemic intervention seeking to systematise knowledge of male-female sexual behaviour and determine the norms of modern sexual conduct. Malthus and Darwin's theories about population and natural selection provided the foundations for neo-Malthusian and eugenic concerns in the beginning of the

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: The Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zen Books, 2004), pp. 302–304.

<sup>26</sup> Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Boy Ought to Know* (London: Vir Publishing, 1897); Mary Allen Wood, *What a Young Girl Ought to Know* (London: Vir Publishing, [1897] 1913); Mary Allen Wood, *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* (London: Vir Publishing, [1898] 1913); Emma F. Angell Drake, *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* (London: Vir Publishing, 1901); Sylvanus Stall, *What a Young Husband Ought to Know* (London: Vir Publishing, [1899] 1907).

<sup>27</sup> Angus McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 30–31.

<sup>28</sup> John Cowan, *The Science of New Life* (New York: Cowan and Co., 1875).

<sup>29</sup> Bernarr Macfadden (ed.), *Physical Culture* (New York: Physical Culture Publishing Company, 1908). Reference to this work are common in Marathi sex educators' writings.

<sup>30</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya Vidnyan* [Conjugal Secrets] (Warud, Amravati: Rashtroddhar Karyalaya, 1929), endorsement page.

century.<sup>31</sup> The Spanish endocrinologist Gregorio Marañón even understood sexual life as the root of human biography.<sup>32</sup> With rapid industrial growth in the nineteenth century, there was a surge in new conventions, self-control practices, and sanitary prescriptions. All this was put together with sex education to control the unruly forces of sexuality, perceived as threatening the social structure. The good social conduct of the lower classes was perceived as crucial to the nation's health. Sexology, the biomedical domain that speculated about this conduct, emerged as an important rhetoric by 1930.<sup>33</sup> International sexual-reform congresses became popular among progressives and reformists.<sup>34</sup> Sexual surveys, reports, and classifications gained importance. The writings of Havelock Ellis, Iwan Bloch, and Auguste Forel, among others, became foundational to sexual science and sexology.<sup>35</sup>

While the late-nineteenth-century women's movement focused on resisting patriarchal hierarchies and sexual double standards,<sup>36</sup> the male-dominated field of sexual science started speaking the language of women's liberation.<sup>37</sup> Sexual science was instrumental in setting norms and categorising

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<sup>31</sup> Chris Waters, 'Sexology', in M. Holbrook and H.G. Cocks, ed., *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 43–44.

<sup>32</sup> Waters, 'Sexology', p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> Waters, 'Sexology', p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> Ralf Dose, 'World League of Sexual Reforms: Some Possible Approaches', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no.1 (2003), pp. 1–2.

<sup>35</sup> Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880–1930* (London: Pandora, 1985), p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret Jackson, 'Sexology and the Social Construction of Male Sexuality', in L. Coveney et al. (eds.), *The Sexuality Papers: Male Sexuality and the Social Control of Women* (London: Hutchison, 1984), pp. 46–47.

the sexual behaviours of men and women,<sup>38</sup> along with laying down the biological basis of gender hierarchy and subordination.<sup>39</sup> Sexual scientists, besides being occupied with threats of venereal diseases,<sup>40</sup> were also advocating prostitution as a 'safety valve' protecting heterosexuality, conjugality, and class purity.<sup>41</sup>

If sexologists thought of sexuality and perversions in an individual context, Freud theorised them in a civilisational context.<sup>42</sup> His writings on a wide range of topics—including sexuality, hysteria, psychopathology, psychoanalysis and heterosexuality—circulated widely in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> Establishing heterosexual normativity; constructing sexual perversions; criminalising pederasty, sodomy, and sexual inversion in men and women; and naturalising same-sex relations were all addressed by this sexual dialectic.<sup>44</sup> Sexual scientist Magnus Hirschfeld institutionalised sexology, travelled the world, and even visited Bombay when he was exiled from Germany.<sup>45</sup>

Sex education was also foundational to eugenic writings. The works of American urologist William J. Robinson and English-Australian sex educationist Norman Haire circulated widely beyond the Anglo-American world and also

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<sup>38</sup> Rita Flesci, 'Introduction', in Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (eds.), *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies*, pp. 128–9.

<sup>40</sup> Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Waters, 'Sexology', pp. 46–47.

<sup>44</sup> Waters, 'Sexology', pp. 44–47.

<sup>45</sup> Veronika Fuechtner, 'Indians, Jews, and Sex: Magnus Hirschfeld and Indian Sexology', in Veronika Fuechtner and Mary Rhiel (eds.), *Imagining Germany Imagining Asia: Essays in Asian-German Studies* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), pp. 112–15.

referred by the Marathi sexual modernity writers.<sup>46</sup> The British psychologist and pioneer of eugenics Francis Galton was an icon among Indian and Marathi eugenicists as well as Brahmin public intellectuals.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, after World War I, the discourse around birth control started to emerge, tinged with its concern for colonised people. Popular sexologists such as the English Marie Stopes and the American Margaret Sanger wrote prolifically on birth control and were known for their communication with the non-Western world.<sup>48</sup> Stopes's *Married Love* (1918) was an international bestseller and the most widely known book on sex. It was translated by publishers across the world, including India.<sup>49</sup>

Sexual modernism's popular claims of emancipation were politically shaped by the desire to restructure class and gender understandings. Such claims beyond Western boundaries were an integral part of colonial Indian and Marathi print networks.

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<sup>46</sup> There are frequent references to Robinson and Haire in Marathi sex educators' works: e.g., Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 7; R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra* [Modern Sexual Science] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1932), p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Hodges, 'Indian Eugenics in an Age of Reforms', in *Reproductive Health in India: History, Politics, Controversies* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006), pp. 127–28; Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, pp. 287–91.

<sup>48</sup> For Sanger, see Anna Aryee, 'Gandhi and Mrs. Sanger Debate Birth Control: Comment', in Hodges, *Reproductive Health in India*, pp. 227–34. For Marie Stopes's correspondence with Indians, see Wellcome Trust Library, PP/MCS/A313, box 51.

For Stopes's relationship with the South African birth-control movement, see Susanne Clausen, 'The Imperial Mother of Birth Control: Marie Stopes and the South African Birth Control Movement 1930–1950', in Gregory Bull, Martin Burton, and Ralph Croizier (eds.), *Colonialism and the Modern World: Selected Studies* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 182–95.

<sup>49</sup> Wellcome Trust Library, PP/MCS/A313, box 51; Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism, and Commerce*, p. 115; Alexander C. T. Geppert, 'Divine Sex, Happy Marriage, Regenerated Nation: Marie Stopes's Marital Manual *Married Love* and the Making of a Best-Seller, 1918–1955', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 3 (January 1998): p. 397.

Thus, sexual science in Maharashtra was intrinsically connected both to modern upper-caste Marathi literary publishing and the global politics of sexual knowledge. How did Marathi sexual science emerge in this context?

## II. A Cultural Biography of Marathi Sex Publishing

A wide range of Marathi authors wrote on sexual science in late colonial Maharashtra, including self-proclaimed religious figures, popular Ayurveda experts, doctors, college professors, popular literary figures, and legal advocates. All were men from an upper-caste background—most of them Brahmins; the key figures among them were Shivananda, R.D. Karve, and N.S. Phadke.

### *Shivananda: The Bestseller*

Shivananda, the most popular author in the Marathi world of sexual knowledge, was a Brahmin spiritualist from Warud-Amravati of the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra. While running the nationalist platform Rashtroddhar Karyalaya (राष्ट्रोद्धार कार्यालय, National Empowerment Centre), with its weekly mouthpiece *Nava-Shakti* (नव-शक्ती, *New Power*, 1928),<sup>50</sup> Shivananda was known for writing three bestsellers on sexual behaviour. One, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan, Virya Nash Hach Mrutyu* (ब्रह्मचर्य हेच जीवन, वीर्य नाश हाच मृत्यू, *Brahmacharya Is Life, Sensuality Is Death*, 1922), was known as a sensational piece of writing at the time and is in its sixth edition with various reprints. First three editions of this book were published between 1922 and 1928 and sold ten thousand copies.<sup>51</sup> A Hindi translation, *Brahmacharya Hi Jivan Hai* (ब्रह्मचर्य हि जीवन है, *Only Brahmacharya Is Life*, 1922), was published in Allahabad around the same time,

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<sup>50</sup> Lele, *Marathi Vritta Patrancha Itihas*, p. 872.

<sup>51</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan Veerya Nash Hach Mrutu* [Brahmacharya Is Life, Sensuality Is Death] (Baroda: Jummadada Vyayam Mandir, 1922); Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati* (Amravati: Rastrodhar Karyalaya, 1928), p. 13.

sold ten thousand copies in the same period, and ran to five editions.<sup>52</sup> This was followed by *Manowanchhit Santati* (मनोवांच्छित संतती, *Desired Children*, 1924), which sold out its first print run in eighteen months; the next run of ten thousand copies was published in 1928. The book is now in its eighth edition.<sup>53</sup> *Dampatya Rahasya Vidnyan: Sexual Science* (दाम्पत्य रहस्य विज्ञान, *Conjugal Secrets, Sexual Science*, 1929) sold 10000 copies with its first edition.<sup>54</sup> With four editions published up to 1972, the book claimed to have sold more than half a million copies in its Hindi, Kannada, Nepali, and Sinhala translations.<sup>55</sup> Shivananda was also said to have written *Ratishastra Mimansa* (रतिशास्त्र मीमांसा, *An Analysis of Conjugal Sex*), the details of which are not known. Though he did not run a sexual health journal, Shivananda claimed to have received more than 200,000 letters from readers about sexual health concerns.<sup>56</sup>

The original Marathi bestseller, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan*, was a guide for boys and men explaining the pre-marriage sexual code of conduct. This was an anti-masturbation tract that emphasised the importance of seminal conservation and suggested remedies against seminal wastage. It was aimed at keeping young men away from all situations and actions that could lead to sensual pleasures. *Dampatya Rahasya Vidnyan* was a marriage manual for heterosexual couples. Its reproduction-centred narrative focused on male-female sexual anatomy, sexual categorisations of men and women, foreplay, and intercourse. *Manowanchhit Santati* was a eugenic tract that discussed the reproduction of

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<sup>52</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hi Jivan Hai* [Hindi] (Allahabad: Chatra Hitkari Grantha Mala, [1922] 1929).

<sup>53</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 9–10; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati* (2009), copyright page.

<sup>54</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya Vidnyan* (Warud, Amravati: Rashtroddhar Karyalaya, 1929), cover.

<sup>55</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (Mumbai: Lakhani Press, 1972), p. 7 (सात).

<sup>56</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1972), p. 7 (सात).

‘desired children’ by referring to Vedic and Ayurvedic, and sexology literature while opposing contraceptive technologies. It also talked about reforms in sexual practices and the importance of family and laid down a sexual code of conduct for couples, pregnant women, and widows.

In the latter part of his life, Shivananda also wrote books on other, non-sexual issues, such as muscular development, stomach health, success, virtue, and meditation.<sup>57</sup> These were logical continuations of the sexual treatises. The trajectory of his writings reveals a project designed within the moralising Brahminical temporality of the *ashrama* system (आश्रम व्यवस्था) that designated the phases of a man’s life: celibacy (*brahmacharya*, ब्रह्मचर्य), conjugality (*grihastha*, गृहस्थ), and spiritual renunciation (*sanyasa*, सन्यास). All his writings, sexual or not, were steeped in Hindu religiosity. Urban life was the other organising logic in his work; Shivananda was from urban eastern Maharashtra and was a frequent visitor to metropolitan Bombay, and wrote and edited in both places.<sup>58</sup>

The eminent contemporary Sanskrit- and German-language scholars Chitrao Shastri and B.N. Hudlikar wrote forewords for Shivananda’s texts; Bombay High Court advocate and Pune Law College founder J.R. Gharpure and Ayurveda expert N.G. Sardesai endorsed them.<sup>59</sup> Readers curiously wrote about him and his ideas when corresponding with other Marathi sexual-health journals.

However, contemporary sex educators criticised Shivananda. His work on brahmacharya, in particular, caused panic among the young generation in the 1930s.<sup>60</sup> Eminent literary and cultural critics took him seriously—to the extent

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<sup>57</sup> Shivananda’s nonsexual writings were published after 1940 and are listed in Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan*, 6th edition [1962] (Mumbai: Lakhani Press Mumbai, 2012), back cover.

<sup>58</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>59</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), endorsement pages (Marathi page numbers ३ to ३८); Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 13–16.

<sup>60</sup> M.V. Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra* (Pune: Rajhansa Prakashan, 1994), p. 126.

of producing a blockbuster film, *Brahmachari* (1938), that criticised his ideas of celibacy.<sup>61</sup>

### ***R.D. Karve: The Self-Styled Rationalist***

Raghunath Dhondo Karve was another major contributor to Marathi scientific sexuality—a self-proclaimed intellectual, progressive, and pioneer of the birth-control movement in Maharashtra. Celebrated in historical and literary narratives as a ‘neglected visionary’, for Marathi progressive intellectuals he also represented a lament for the negligence of rationality.<sup>62</sup> Karve is believed to have started the first Indian birth-control clinic in 1921. He also wrote five major tracts concerning scientific sexuality and sexual morality.

He began to think about sexual science by writing *Santati Niyamana* (संतती नियमन, *Birth Control*, 1921),<sup>63</sup> in both English and Marathi. It was published in nine editions up to 1949, earning Karve his popularity.<sup>64</sup> He went on to write exclusively in Marathi. Concern about venereal disease prompted him to write *Guptaroganpasun Bachav* (गुप्त रोगांपासून बचाव, *Protection from Venereal Diseases*, 1927), with four subsequent editions running to at least 1,000 copies each, from 1927 to 1947.<sup>65</sup> A more comprehensive writing on various aspects of sexual life,

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<sup>61</sup> MasterVinayk (dir.), *Brahmachari* (1938), film in Marathi, posted by user ‘SEPL Vintage’, YouTube, December 30, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBM1bMRLfk>.

<sup>62</sup> All Marathi writings on Karve have considered him a neglected visionary. See Diwakar Bapat, *Upekshit Drashta* [Neglected Visionary] (Mumbai: Abhinav Prakashan, 1971); Pahdke, *Ra Dho Karve* [R.D. Karve] (Mumbai: H.V. Mote Prakashan, 1981).

<sup>63</sup> R.D. Karve, *Morality and Birth Control (Theory and Practice)* (Bombay: Right Agency, 1921); R.D. Karve, *Santati Niyamana Stri Swatantryachi Gurukilli* [Birth Control—The Master Key to Women’s Liberation] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1932).

<sup>64</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, [Modern Sexual Science], 5th ed. (Bombay: Right Agency, [1932] 1949), advertisement page.

<sup>65</sup> R.D. Karve, *Guptaroganpasuun Bachav* [Protection from Venereal Diseases], 4th ed. (Bombay: Right Agency, [1927] 1946), pp. 5, 8.



*Adhunik Kamashastra* (आधुनिक कामशास्त्र, *Modern Sexual Science*, 1932) was one of his most celebrated works and ran into five editions, selling around 11,000 copies in total.<sup>66</sup> Karve emphasised sexuality as the most prominent social problem, and analysing psychosexual and social impotence was his real social concern in writing *Klaibyachi Mimansa* (क्लैब्याची मीमांसा, *Analysis of Impotence*, 1949).<sup>67</sup> Similarly, his radicalism against conventional social morality found expression in *Veshya Vyawasaya* (वेश्या व्यवसाय, *Prostitution*, 1940).<sup>68</sup> In the heydays of eugenics and corporeal essentialisation, Karve also wrote *Twachechi Niga* (त्वचेची निगा, *Skin Protection*, 1935) and *Ahar Shastra* (आहार शास्त्र, *Dietetics*, 1938).<sup>69</sup> He also edited the first Marathi sexual-health journal, *Samajswasthya* (समाजस्वास्थ्य, *Social Health*, 1927–53) for twenty-seven years until his death, bringing out 317 issues with an average thirty pages of content each.<sup>70</sup> Edited collections of its articles were published from time to time as *Samajswasthyatil Nivadak Lekh* (समाजस्वास्थ्यातील निवडक लेख, *Selected Writings from Samajswasthya*, 1933).<sup>71</sup>

Although he began with birth control and sexual science, redefining morality and theorising sexual desire were central to Karve's thought. In unpacking this agenda in *Santati Niyamana*, like other birth-control advocates, Karve saw contraception as a *stri swantryachi gurukilli* (स्त्री स्वातंत्र्याची गुरुकिल्ली, master key to women's liberation).<sup>72</sup> *Adhunik Kamashastra* dealt with the

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<sup>66</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, table of contents.

<sup>67</sup> R.D. Karve, *Klaibyachi Mimansa* [Analysis of Impotence] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1932).

<sup>68</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya* [Prostitution] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1940).

<sup>69</sup> R.D. Karve, *Twachechi Niga* [Skin Protection] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1935); R.D. Karve, *Ahar Shastra* (Bombay: Right Agency, 1938).

<sup>70</sup> SS, year 1, issue 1 (July 1927); SS, year 27, issue 5 (November 1953).

<sup>71</sup> R.D. Karve, ed., *Samajswasthyatil Nivadak Lekh* [Selected Writings from *Samajswasthya*] (Bombay: Right Agency, 1933).

<sup>72</sup> SS, year 3, issue 3 (September 1929), advertisement pages.

importance of sexual desire, discussed sexual anatomy, and provided psychobiological explanations of foreplay and sexual intercourse (similar to Shivananda's writing). Along with this, it also discussed the social conditioning of sexual relations, match-making, birth control, and the irrationality and futility of brahmacharya. *Klaibychi Mimansa* attempted to explain the physical and psychological consequences of impotence. Karve's tone in this book is sympathetic regarding the causes of masturbation, but he did not entirely support the practice. The book was also an important attempt to argue that psychosexual impotence was the result of forcing Victorian morality on Indians. *Veshya Vyawasaya* argues that prostitution is globally inevitable to express the futility of a ban on the practice and to ultimately redefine morality. It deploys details of prostitution, from ancient India to modern Europe, to comment critically on regulation of sex work. As for the hygienic discussions on skin and food, these were part of Karve's agenda of remaking the sexual body, mind, and morals.<sup>73</sup>

Karve's journal *Samajswasthya*, devoted to the spread of rationality in sexual matters, was a platform for articulating his thoughts on sexual freedom and for translating global sexual modernism for Marathi readers.<sup>74</sup> Other authors complimenting and criticising Karve's sexual rationality also wrote in the journal, but he remained the main contributor. With his proficiency in English, French,<sup>75</sup> and Marathi, along with his assertive declaration of Sanskrit expertise, the journal attempted to construct an all-encompassing picture of sexual reform. It also discussed the sociocultural issues brought up by the logic of sexual

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<sup>73</sup> Karve, 'Foreword', *Ahar Shastra*, no page number.

<sup>74</sup> SS, year 1 issue 1 (July 1927), pp. 1–2; SS, year 16 issue 1 (July 1942), pp. 12–18. *Samajswasthya* ubiquitously referred to Western sexual-science discourse: for example, SS, year 7 issue 3 (September 1933), pp. 57–64.

<sup>75</sup> SS, year 7, issue 5 (November 1933), pp. 116–19. Karve frequently translated French author Guy de Maupassant's stories.

rationality in the column ‘Sharadechi Patre’ (शारदेची पत्रे, Sharada’s Letters), written by Karve himself.<sup>76</sup>

Since the colonial state as well as portions of the public perceived some of his articles and advertisements as obscene, Karve was charged with obscenity four times between 1932 and 1953.<sup>77</sup> In one of these court cases, he was defended by Ambedkar.<sup>78</sup> This narrative is emphatically mentioned in popular progressive writings and dramatisations of Karve’s life.<sup>79</sup>

Karve’s engagement with scientific sex, in his own view, was a part of a larger engagement with rationality. Besides editing *Samajswasthya*, he also edited *Reason*, the journal of the Rationalist Society of India, for some time.<sup>80</sup> Going further, Karve declared himself the only and real successor of Agarkar.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, pointing out how rationality had receded in Maharashtra after Agarkar,<sup>82</sup> Karve extended this claim to argue that he was even more of a rationalist in sexual matters than Agarkar.<sup>83</sup>

R.D. Karve was born into a Chitpavan Brahmin family, a son of D.K. Karve, a nationalist reformer known for advocating women’s education to create ideal modern housewives and mothers, and for running a welfare centre

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<sup>76</sup> ‘Sharada Letters’, SS, year 5, issue 1 (July 1931), pp. 19–22.

<sup>77</sup> Dhond, *Jayatil Chandra*, pp. 82, 117–18; Y.D. Phadke, ‘*Samajswasthyakaranche vicharvishwa*’ [The Thinking World of *Samajswasthya*], *Mauj* (Diwali issue, 1972), pp. 60–62.

<sup>78</sup> SS, year 9, issue 11 (May 1934), pp. 281–6.

<sup>79</sup> Shakuntala Paranjpe, ‘Appa Karve’, *Mauj* (Diwali issue, 1968), 166; Phadke, *Ra Dho Karve*; Amol Palekar (dir.), *Dhyasaparva* (film); Atul Pethe (dir.), *Samajswasthya* (play).

<sup>80</sup> Johannes Quack, *Disenchanting India: Organized Rationalism and Criticism of Religion in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 92–93; Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar* [The Creator of *Samahswasthya*] (Pune: Padmagandha Prakashan, 2010), p. 181.

<sup>81</sup> SS, year 21, issue 2 (August 1947), pp. 28–33.

<sup>82</sup> SS, year 19, issue 1 (July 1945), pp. 16–17.

<sup>83</sup> SS, year 26, issue 1 (July 1952), p. 1.

exclusively for Brahmin widows.<sup>84</sup> R.D.'s brother Shankar was trained in the United States as a medical doctor and Dinkar trained in England as a psychologist, while his sister-in-law Irawati Karve became an eminent anthropologist and sociologist.<sup>85</sup> Karve was also related to Sir Wrangler R.P. Paranjpe, who was a Cambridge-trained educator, the founder of the Indian Rationalist Association, and a minister in the colonial government under dyarchy<sup>86</sup> who once told B.R. Ambedkar to leave political activism if he wished to teach at Fergusson College in Pune. Karve was also related to and assisted by the staunch eugenics advocate Shakuntala Paranjpe, who believed in selective breeding as well as in sterilising beggars, the disabled, and the diseased.<sup>87</sup> He thus belonged to an eminent and highly influential family with a Brahmin reformist and medical background as well as eugenic influences.

Kartve was a mathematics professor by profession, partially trained in France. As he was forced to resign from Wilson College in Bombay for advocating birth control, Karve did other jobs before he started *Samajswasthya*.<sup>88</sup> In his self-claimed rationalist journey, Karve tried to project himself as a nonbeliever in caste and religion. However, he aggressively defended the Chitpavans against criticism from the other Brahmin sub-castes.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The equivalent to a bachelor's degree for women at D.K. Karve's women's university was called *gruhitagma* (knowledgeable one), meaning 'expert housewife' to the lay reader. The curriculum revolved around naturalising the reproductive role of motherhood. Also, the feminist activist Janakka Shinde, sister of non-Brahmin thinker V.R. Shinde, was refused admission to D.K. Karve's widow welfare centre in Pune.

<sup>85</sup> Dhond, *Jayatil Chandra*, pp. 94–106.

<sup>86</sup> R.P. Paranjpe, *Nabad* 89 [Not Out 89] (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1961), p. 66.

<sup>87</sup> SS, year 15, issue 3 (September 1941), 65–71; SS, year 15, issue 4 (October 1941), pp. 29–36; also 'Advertisement of Shakuntala Paranjpe for Sterilising Beggars', in B.L. Washtha (ed.), *Sushrut* (November–December 1955), p. 35. *Sushrut* was a health magazine published in the 1950s.

<sup>88</sup> Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar*, p. 11.

<sup>89</sup> SS, year 16, issue 2 (August 1942), pp. 51–52, 55.

As a member of an extended family based in the elite Brahmin settlements of Erandawane (एरंडवणे) in Pune and Bhatwadi (भटवाडी, Brahmin settlement) in Gurgaon, Bombay, Karve was part of the Brahmin cultural space by default. However, more importantly, he was actively involved in making the Marathi Brahmin public sphere that was emerging from the same urban spaces. Associated closely with Pune- and Bombay-based Brahmin literary circles,<sup>90</sup> Karve was unsuccessful as a playwright: his play, *Gurubaji (Pseudo-Spiritualism)*, was never staged.

He was more successful as a literary critic and was known for his commentary on D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the literary modernist Madhav Julian's poetry collection, and the Marathi Brahmin Communist Prabhakar Padhye's writings on art.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, his reviews of Marathi and Hindi movies by filmmaker V. Shantaram and the plays of Mama Varerkar and S.V. Vartak established his place in late colonial progressive Brahminical circles.<sup>92</sup> *Samajswasthya* provided him with a platform to elaborate his literary progressivism, intertwined with a rational perspective.<sup>93</sup>

*Samajswasthya* also reflects Karve's strong association with cultural spaces such as the Brahmin Sabha of Bombay (ब्राह्मण सभा, Brahmin Association) and the Marathi Sahitya Sangha (मराठी साहित्य संघ, Marathi Literary Confederation), an upper-caste literary organisation in which he held office for several years.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> SS, year 10, issue 8 (February 1937), p. 250.

<sup>91</sup> SS, year 23, issue 5 (November 1949), p. 109; SS, year 13, issue 6 (December 1939), pp. 174–82; SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), pp. 145–49.

<sup>92</sup> SS, year 11, issue 7 (January 1938), pp. 232–33; SS, year 18, issue 10 (April 1945), pp. 113–16; SS, year 7, issue 2 (August 1933), pp. 34–38. Karve commented on contemporary literature, cinema, and theatre through his Sharada letters in *Samajswasthya*: see year 25, issue 9 (March 1952), pp. 170–76.

<sup>93</sup> Reviews of books, films, and theatre were a regular feature of *Samajswasthya*.

<sup>94</sup> SS, year 15, issue 6 (December 1941), pp. 161–65; SS, year 10, issue 8 (February 1937), 250; Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar*, p. 198.

His colleagues, biographers, and readers admired his logical argumentation and debate style.<sup>95</sup> He was a vibrant character but, due to his uncompromising and aloof attitude, was left alone at the end of his life.

Karve's biographers since 1960 have consistently written about his views on birth control and sex reforms. His legacy has been revived in the form of several biographies, a film, a play, a novel, journal articles, newspaper articles, and a collected volume of his works. Such revivalism both projects Karve as the permanently neglected hero of Marathi rationalism and romantically celebrates his manufactured negligence. The celebrations and laments of his life trajectory reflect well the popularity of sexual modernism in the progressive Marathi world. With this I argue that caste-coded Marathi progressivism, by treating Karve as the personification of sex reform, dedicated itself to continuing to speak about sexual modernity forever, while exploiting Karve as the neglected visionary of sexual truth.

#### ***N.S. Phadke: The Literary Eugenicist***

Narayan Sitaram Phadke, a popular figure in the twentieth-century world of eugenics and birth control and the author of *The Sex Problem in India* (1927), was known by Marathi readers as an epoch-making novelist and short-story writer. Phadke was born into a well-respected Chitpavan Brahmin family; his mother was a housewife and his father a colonial revenue officer and Sanskrit scholar.<sup>96</sup> Phadke's Brahminical surroundings and education in the upper-caste Nutan Marathi Vidyalay (नूतन मराठी विद्यालय, New Marathi School) and Fergusson College led him to believe in the 'political versus social reform' binary popular in Maharashtra.<sup>97</sup> He became a nationalist and follower of political reformer B.G.

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<sup>95</sup> Paranjpe, 'Appa Karve', pp. 58, 166.

<sup>96</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 900.

<sup>97</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 8–9.

Tilak<sup>98</sup> and assistant editor of the nationalist newspapers *Kesari* and *Maratha*.<sup>99</sup> After Tilak's death, like most of Tilak's followers, Phadke converted to Gandhian political activism and joined the non-cooperation movement, even though Gandhi opposed contraceptive birth control and Phadke advocated it.<sup>100</sup> Soon he gave up the idea of contributing directly to the nationalist struggle.<sup>101</sup> Selectively following Tilak and Gandhi's thought after that, by 1921 he had moved on to teach philosophy and psychology.<sup>102</sup> Like Karve, Phadke was made to resign from Hislop College in Nagpur for his stance on birth control,<sup>103</sup> after which he joined Rajaram College of Kolhapur.<sup>104</sup>

Through his shifting career, Phadke contributed to eugenics and sex reform as well as to modern Marathi literature as a writer, critic, and editor. Based on an extensive reading of Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, Havelock Ellis, and Margaret Sanger, he wrote scientific tracts in Marathi and English. His titles included *Manasonnati* (मानसोन्नती, *Psychological Development*, 1925), and *Mansopachara* (मानसोपचार, *Psychotherapy*, 1922), produced at the request of Ganpule's psychoanalytic centre.<sup>105</sup> *Sukhache Sansar* (सुखाचे संसार, *Happy Conjugal Life*, 1926), was published by the Brahmin-owned publishing house Vijay Sahitya in Pune.<sup>106</sup> It grew out of his essay on eugenics, which was awarded a prize by the Maharashtra Sahitya Sabha in 1925, and his booklet *Birth Control* (*Santati Niyamana*, संतती नियमन), published in 1926.<sup>107</sup> His best-known book, *The*

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<sup>98</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 39.

<sup>99</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 41–42.

<sup>100</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 900.

<sup>101</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 43–44.

<sup>102</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 48.

<sup>103</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 96–99.

<sup>104</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 900.

<sup>105</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 44–48, 83–84.

<sup>106</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 103.

<sup>107</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 701; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 103.

*Sex Problem in India* (1927), was a revised English version of his Marathi writings on conjugality and birth control, published in the context of Katherine Mayo's criticism of the sexually exploitative Indian tradition in *Mother India* (1927).<sup>108</sup>

*Sukhache sansar* attempted to spell out the applicability and relevance of eugenics and the necessity of working out a eugenic policy for population regulation in India.<sup>109</sup> Convinced by neo-Malthusian concerns about overpopulation, Phadke's writing on eugenics dealt with the 'Indian population problem' and provided solution while referring to referring to Galtonian eugenics, contraceptive reformism and 'positive thought of brahmacharya'.<sup>110</sup> His Galtonian sexual reformism was situated within the Hindu marriage system. In articulating positive eugenic thought, he discussed the age of marriage, selection of partners, existing marriage practices, love marriage, reproductive anatomy, and the importance of sex education. His preventive eugenic policy was concerned with selective breeding, prostitution, sterilisation, and unhygienic settlements.<sup>111</sup> His writings on birth control emerged from his engagement with eugenics and elaborated the need to reform contraception within marriage. His critical appraisal of brahmacharya was considered within the same marital frame.<sup>112</sup>

Phadke's engagement with eugenic thought was also reflected in his effort to institutionalise eugenics and birth control in India. He was the only Marathi eugenicist in reciprocal communication with Western eugenic and birth-control circles, and he founded the Bombay Eugenic Society, the local branch of

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<sup>108</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India* (Bombay: Taraporewala and Sons, 1927); Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 103–105; Taraporewala and Sons' letter to Stopes, Wellcome Trust Library Collection, PP/MCS/A313, box 51.

<sup>109</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 702–705.

<sup>110</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 708–14, 815–822, 832–38, 853–86.

<sup>111</sup> Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 58–327; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 715–871.

<sup>112</sup> Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 91–275; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 715–852.



the Eugenic Society of London.<sup>113</sup> He was also associated with the Indian Birth Control League and wrote articles in Margaret Sanger's journal, *American Birth Control*, as a representative of India. Sanger invited him to participate in a birth-control conference in Geneva in 1924 and even wrote the preface for *The Sex Problem in India*.<sup>114</sup>

Phadke was also an epoch-making literary figure who shaped Marathi Brahminical modernity. Known as the pioneer of 'romantic novels' in Marathi, he authored seventy-four novels. He was equally known for setting down the form of the modern Marathi short story, and his stories were published in twenty-eight collections. Phadke also wrote five plays, though these were considerably less popular.<sup>115</sup> Besides the countless pieces of literary critique, his book-length narrative *Pratibha Sadhan* (प्रतिभा साधन, *The Technique of the Literary Imagination*), on the psychology of creative writing, is still well known.<sup>116</sup> Phadke was also the founding editor of three reputed Marathi literary journals: *Ratnakar* (रत्नाकर *The Mine of Jewels*), *Jhankar* (झंकार, *Clang*), and *Anjali* (अंजली, *The Divine Offering*). Many upper-caste Marathi writers made their literary careers on the pages of these magazines.<sup>117</sup>

Phadke wrote his novels with the literary agenda of making 'young heterosexual romantic love' central to the Marathi novel. This mission was complementary to his idea of 'love marriage', which he articulated while explaining Galtonian eugenics to Marathi readers.<sup>118</sup> His novels *Daulat* (दौलत, *Wealth*), *Kulabyachi Dandi* (कुलाब्याची दांडी, *The Colaba Strip*), *Jadugar* (जादूगार, *The*

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<sup>113</sup> Wellcome Trust Library Collection SA/Eug/E.9; and Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 79–81.

<sup>114</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 79–80, 90–92; Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. i–iii.

<sup>115</sup> The titles of Phadke's works are listed at

<http://naasiphadke.com/1.htm> and [http://naasiphadke.com/New% 20Page% 201.htm](http://naasiphadke.com/New%20Page%201.htm).

<sup>116</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 248.

<sup>117</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 105–106; Asha Savdekar, *Narayan Sitaram Phadke* (Delhi: Sahitya Akadami, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>118</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 756–57; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 91–92, 117–18.

*Magician*), *Atkepar* (अटकेपार, *Beyond Attack*), and *Samar Bhumi* (समर भूमी, *Battleground*) introduced the idea of pre-marriage love between young couples that would culminate in marriage. However, Phadke could never transcend caste boundaries when creating his main characters, and rarely crossed religious barriers in articulating 'love'. Even in his exceptional Hindu-Muslim love story (*Atkepar* and *Allah ho Akbar*), the main characters remained upper-caste Brahmin Hindu and high-class (खानदानी, Khandani) Muslim. Phadke's literary corpus thus reflects his eugenic thought.

Phadke was intensely engaged with the Brahmin literary world in other ways as well, such as appearing in public gatherings. He was a famously fine debater. His discussion on 'understanding art' with literary Brahmin intellectuals S.D. Javdekar, V.S. Khandekar, and P.K. Atre is a proud moment in modern Marathi literary history.<sup>119</sup> He was named chairman of the Marathi literary conference in 1940.<sup>120</sup> With all this, while writing eugenics, psychology, literary method, short stories, and romantic novels, Phadke thought of his life as a service to Marathi literature and thereby to modernity.<sup>121</sup>

### ***Miscellaneous Contributions***

Sex was a core subject for contemporary public intellectuals writing in other popular journals, marriage manuals, and issue-based writings. *Jivan* (जीवन, *Life*, 1941) and *Sawai Jivan* (सवाई जीवन, *Better Life*, 1942) were monthly sexual-health journals, edited by A.B. Bhide and Pandit Janardan Kulkarni, that respectively

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<sup>119</sup> Chuneekar, 'Sahitya Tatva Vichar', pp. 254–60.

<sup>120</sup> Savdekar, *Narayan Sitaram Phadke*, p. 10; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, p. 662.

<sup>121</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Mazya Sahitya Sevetil Smriti, Bhag-I* [My Memories in the Service of Literature, part 1] (Pune: Continental Book Service, 1943). Phadke's first autobiography consistently mentions his engagement with eugenics, psychology birth control and Marathi literature.

lasted for three and eight years.<sup>122</sup> They aimed to satisfy sexual curiosity and to spread scientific sexuality.<sup>123</sup> Bhide also wrote a book called *Taruni* (तरुणी, *Young Woman*, 1941),<sup>124</sup> which explained the mental, physical, and sexual development of women. These journals also aimed to arouse male sexual curiosity, using titillating language and imagery while raising sexual-health issues such as sexual freedom, masturbation, and birth control. Despite its short lifespan, *Sawai Jivan* claimed to have 75 selling agents in about 125 large and small urban centres in 1942, the very first year of its publication.<sup>125</sup> Such popularity led to competition among the various sexual-health journals.<sup>126</sup>

In the context of Marie Stopes's bestseller *Married Love* and the popularity of journals, Marathi marriage manuals addressing married couples and family life also became popular. A Brahmin teacher from Pune, K.P. Bhagwat, wrote *Vaivahik Jivan* (वैवाहिक जीवन, *Married Life*, 1946), which was printed in twelve editions up to 1999, and *Ai Bap Ani Mule* (आई बाप आणि मुले, *Mother, Father and Children*, 1944), which saw two editions until 1950.<sup>127</sup> Bhagwat, a Marathi Communist writing after the Bolshevik revolution, gave a Marxist flavour to his scientific sexuality while combining it with references from the Brahminical tradition.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> A.B. Bhide (ed.), *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), cover; P.J. Kulkarni (ed.), *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 6 (March 1942), cover. The mentioned lifespans of these journals are based on the available issues.

<sup>123</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 6 (March 1942), p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 8 (August 1941), p. 54.

<sup>125</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 6 (March 1942), p. 42.

<sup>126</sup> SS, year 14, issue 11 (May 1941), pp. 377–79.

<sup>127</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan* [Married Life], 9th ed. (Pune: Varada Publications, [1946], 1999); K.P. Bhagwat, *Ai Bap Ani Mule* [Mother, Father and Children] (Pune: Varada Publications, 1997).

<sup>128</sup> Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 62, 118–19.

This was a fertile period for marriage manuals. A Brahmin lawyer from Alibag, Maharashtra, L.K. Bhave, wrote another *Vaivahik Jivan* (1938), printed in two known editions till 1950, which referencing Marie Stopes throughout. It received a foreword from the editor of the nationalist newspaper *Kesari*.<sup>129</sup> Simultaneously, American birth control advocates and marriage counselling experts Abraham Stone and Hanna Stone's marriage manual inspired Ramakant Welde and A.B. Bhide (writing under the alias 'Kumari Shailaja') to write *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka?* (तुम्हाला लग्न करायचंय का?, *Would You Like to Get Married?*, 1942)<sup>130</sup> which consisted of one thousand questions and answers. J.R. Joshi's *Vivahitanche Nandanwan* (विवाहितांचे नंदनवन, *The Married Couple's Paradise*) and S.R. Naik's *Vivahitanche Kamashastra* (विवाहितांचे कामशास्त्र, *Sexual Science for Married Couples*, 1953) were mentioned in V.B. Potdar's *Unmad* (उन्माद, *Frenzy*), a literary journal of erotic stories.<sup>131</sup>

In addition, anatomy books, anti-promiscuity tracts, and translations of classical erotic texts remained favourite topics for Marathi scientific sexuality literature. For example, Kadegaokar's *Anglarya Sharir Vidnyan* (अंगलार्य शरीर विज्ञान, *Anglo-Aryan Anatomy*, 1930s) attempted to combine English and Aryan anatomical knowledge.<sup>132</sup> *Aryan*, in this context, may have referred to anatomical information mentioned in various Ayurvedic texts as well as Vedic literature. K.B. Lele worried about the evil consequences of sexual relations before and outside marriage in *Baheer Khyaliche Dushparinam* (बाहेर ख्यालीचे दुष्परिणाम, *The Evil Consequences of Promiscuity*, 1928).<sup>133</sup> G.R. Mule from Colaba-Karjat, Mumbai, who founded a 'sex institute' in the late 1930s, also translated the fifteenth-century erotic Sanskrit text *Anangaranga* (अनंगरंग, *The Stages of*

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<sup>129</sup> L.K. Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan* [Married Life] (Bombay: Bapat, [1938] 1950), pp. 1–4.

<sup>130</sup> Kumari Shailaja and Ramakant, *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka?* (Pune: Deshmukh, 1942).

<sup>131</sup> V.B. Potdar (ed.), *Unmad* [Frenzy] (1950–53).

<sup>132</sup> Pune City Library catalogue.

<sup>133</sup> SS, year 1, issue 5 (November 1927), pp. 19–22.

*Love*).<sup>134</sup> Some of these authors were frequent contributors to Karve's journal *Samajswasthya*.<sup>135</sup> Their books were advertised by sexual-health journals, reviewed by Karve, and sold through his multipurpose platform, Right Agency.<sup>136</sup>

While Brahmins and upper-caste men of different professions wrote sexual science books and journals, their publication was equally diverse and influenced by caste. All known publishers of sexual literature were based in Pune, Mumbai, or Solapur. Right Agency published all of Karve's writings, whereas Bhide's *Jivan* and Kulkarni's *Sawai Jivan* were published by Jivan Jyot Prakashan (जीवन ज्योत प्रकाशन, Flame of Life), in Mumbai, and Shobhna Prakashan (शोभना प्रकाशन), in Barshi, Solapur. Well-known upper-caste Marathi publishers such as P.K. Atre's Navayug Prakashan (नवयुग प्रकाशन, New Age Publications), Bapat and Co., Deshmukh and Co., Taraporewala and Sons, and the Pune-based Vijay Prakashan (Victory Publications, विजय प्रकाशन) published sex educators including Phadke, Welde, and Bhawe.<sup>137</sup> Beyond the literary world, nationalist establishments such as Rashtoddhar Karyalaya (राष्ट्रोद्धार कार्यालय), in Warud-Amravati, and the well-known gymnasium Jummadada Vyayam Mandir (जुम्मादादा व्यायाम मंदिर) in Baroda, were Shivananda's patrons. The authorship of Marathi sex reforms and the ownership of its publishers reflect the political relationship between sexuality, caste, gender, and the publishing world.

This cultural biography and microhistory of Marathi scientific sexuality is important in understanding the late colonial Marathi sex-publishing archives: their non-secular nature, their variety and vastness, the texture of caste within

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<sup>134</sup> SS, year 9, issue 7 (January 1936), advertisement page.

<sup>135</sup> SS, year 9, issue 5 (November 1935), pp. 145–48.

<sup>136</sup> SS, year 1, issue 5 (November 1927), pp. 19–22; SS, year 2, issue 2 (August 1928), back cover.

<sup>137</sup> Taraporwala and Sons was a Parsi publishing firm from Bombay which published Phadke's English book on eugenics.

them, the industry's global and local links, and the consistency with which scientific sexuality was deployed. The popularity of 'scientific sex' among the educated Marathi classes blurred the boundaries between the need for sexual information and the 'want' that educated lives generated. More importantly, in the context of the crisis of Brahmin dominance over reforms and the restructuring of the caste-sexuality nexus, the deployment of scientific sexuality was an important intervention in Marathi cultural politics. The modern Marathi literary world and global sexual science were two reference points for this homegrown sexual science. This challenges the conventional idea of a 'heroic sexual knowledge' breaking the sexual silence in a secular way. It also unpacks the politics of lamenting the neglect of sexual rationality, which ultimately endorses the heroism of advancing scientific sexuality.

Nevertheless, since everyone writing scientific sex lauded rationality, the relation of this civilising mission to the larger discourse of rationality needs some attention. Late colonial anti-caste and feminist movements did contribute substantially to the rationalist discourse in India generally and Maharashtra in particular. While Brahmins authored scientific sexuality in Maharashtra and claimed the credentials of rationality, the relationships between Brahmin, non-Brahmin, Dalits, and women with regard to socio-sexual rationalities require attention to contextualise this cultural biography of sex reform.

### **III. Caste, Gender, and the Scripting of Sexuality**

To write on caste and sexuality, whether in a traditional or radical fashion, is to write about mutually constituting phenomena. In the previous chapter, I analysed the challenges modern Marathi Brahminism faced over articulating reformism. In the process, Brahmin/non-Brahmin conflict in particular invoked masculine expressions with regard to social status and the reproduction of caste that revolved around women's bodies. Caste masculinities, while an important aspect, were not the exclusive reality of the caste/gender question in late colonial India. Brahmin-authored sexual rationality appeared in the same period.

Were the late colonial non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women writing in this period unconcerned with sexual matters in their anti-caste or feminist rationality? Did they write about sex reforms or scientific sexuality? The short answer to both questions is no.

Writing scientific sex and reflecting on sociosexual issues are not the same thing, though they share a concern with reproduction. That non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women did not write scientific-sexuality and conjugal sexual narratives like Karve and Shivananda does not mean they were unconcerned with sexual matters. *What constitutes* sociosexual concerns and sensibilities and how to elaborate on them was a political question shaped by caste and gender.

As explored in the previous chapter, several non-Brahmin leaders, including Mukundrao Patil and Shripatrao Shinde, wrote extensively in support of the Patel Inter-Caste Marriage Bill in the late 1920s. The upper-caste Maratha leaders Bhaskar Rao Jadhav and Madhavrao Bagal even contributed articles and short stories to *Samajswasthya*.<sup>138</sup> Jadhav, while intensely involved in anti-caste politics, was also known for preparing an amendment to the Indian penal code in 1933 that argued in favour of abortion.<sup>139</sup> B.R. Ambedkar drafted a birth-control bill and proposed it in the Bombay Legislative Assembly through another anti-caste colleague, P.J. Roham, in 1938.<sup>140</sup> In addition to legal action, Ambedkar theorised sexual relations in inter-caste marriage and underlined ‘blood fusion’ as the most important way to annihilate caste.<sup>141</sup>

Simultaneously, in late colonial Tamil south India, E.V. Ramasamy not just advocated contraception but also effectively integrated it in his anti-caste movement by propagating ‘self-respect marriage’, which challenged

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<sup>138</sup> SS, year 7, issue 4 (October 1933), pp. 92–97; SS, year 7, issue 7 (February 1934), pp. 197–203.

<sup>139</sup> SS, year 7, issue 1 (July 1933), pp. 15–18.

<sup>140</sup> Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2 (Mumbai: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 2014), pp. 263–76.

<sup>141</sup> Moon, *Ambedkar Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 66–69.

Brahminical norms about conjugality and joint families. As Sarah Hodges has pointed out, Ramasamy considered contraception a radical tool for women's progress towards independent subjectivity. Through the self-respect ideology, he even radically appealed to them to go on a 'reproductive strike' in the battle against caste and patriarchy.<sup>142</sup> Anti-caste thinkers considered inter-caste marriage an effective weapon against modern Brahminism; Ambedkar even tried to bring in the birth-control discussion into the realm of Marathi Dalit activism.<sup>143</sup> Compared to Ramasamy's radicalism, however, lack of engagement with contraceptive thought did remain a limitation of the Marathi non-Brahmin and Ambedkarite mass movements.<sup>144</sup>

On the other hand, for the women's movement, birth control was an important self-empowerment issue. Lakshmibai Rajwade and Muthulakshmi Reddy were leading liberal feminists supporting birth control and contraception. Though it had similarities with the neo-Malthusian nationalist and materialist understandings, such advocacy made birth control an important aspect of the interwar debates of the All India Women's Conference.<sup>145</sup> Indian feminists also fought successfully to pass the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929.

Despite such interventions on sexuality and reproductive sensibilities, however, none of them wrote on sex reforms or sexual science. Neither did they

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<sup>142</sup> Sarah Hodges, 'Revolutionary Family Life and the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil South India, 1926–49', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 39, no. 2 (2005), pp. 270–72.

<sup>143</sup> Contemporary Dalit activist R.G. Khandale quoted by M.P. Mangudkar, *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkaranche Loksankhya Wishayak Wichar* [Dr Ambedkar's Thoughts on Population], trans. by Arvind Pol (Pune: Sugava Prakashan, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>144</sup> Marathi authors have mentioned Ambedkar's contributions in the domain of birth control, but contraception was not part of the Dalit movement's agenda in late colonial and post-colonial Maharashtra.

<sup>145</sup> S. Anandhi, 'Reproductive Bodies and Regulated Sexuality: Birth Control in Debates in Early-Twentieth-Century Tamil Nadu', in Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (eds.), *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economics of Modern India* (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 149–53; Sarah Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, p. 13.



speak the language of interwar sexology. R.D. Karve's relative Shakuntala Paranjpe, who assisted him in running his birth-control clinic, defended Karve and spoke about eugenics—but, significantly, did not *write* about sexual science. Marathi sexual-science narratives were authored not just by Brahmins but by Brahmin men. This alliance between sexology and Marathi Brahminism was hardly a coincidence.

Against this background, the historiography of Marathi progressivism is an important location to further decode this authorship politics. Selectively picking up references from the abovementioned facts, Karve's Marathi biographers have to date projected a shared understanding of sociosexual concerns between Ambedkar and Karve. For example, they have underlined Ambedkar's legal defence of Karve in the obscenity case against him in 1932.<sup>146</sup> Based on such references, the literary and cinematic expressions mentioned earlier have depicted Ambedkar as Karve's follower in understanding the relevance of birth control.<sup>147</sup> However, Karve considered Ambedkar to be unnecessarily pampered and hyped by the late colonial government and held him responsible for keeping Dalits in their 'untouchable' position.<sup>148</sup> *Samajswasthaya* never mentioned Ambedkar's birth-control bill, debated in the Bombay legislative assembly six years after Karve's obscenity trial.<sup>149</sup> For his part, Ambedkar, in his birth-control bill, refers to socio-religious and economic conditions in Europe, global contraceptive activism, and Marie Stopes—but not to Karve or Phadke.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> SS, year 7, issue 11 (June 1934), pp. 281–86.

<sup>147</sup> Mangudkar, *Ambedkaranche Loksankhya*, pp. 13, 26; Amol Palekar (dir.), *Dhyasaparva*, film in Marathi.

<sup>148</sup> Anant Deshmukh (ed.), *Sharadechi Patre* [Letters of Sharada] (Pune: Padmagandha Prakashan, 2010), pp. 160–61.

<sup>149</sup> In November 1938 the assembly discussed and rejected the bill. My opinion about Karve's silence is based on reading *Samajswasthaya*'s issues between December 1938 and June 1940.

<sup>150</sup> Moon, *Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, pp. 267–68, 276.

The Marathi historiography has not addressed these contradictions and conflicts. Writing in post-1960 Maharashtra and in the zeal of constructing a progressive, united reformist front, Karve's biographers chose to ignore the difference of perspective at the root of such contradictions. Writing scientific sex and reflecting on sexuality were not the issues of reformist alliances. Neither was this simply a matter of being or not being concerned with sexual problems. Whether to write sexual science was not a neutral pick-and-choose option, given in a secular society. Rather, it was a political question rooted in Brahmins', non-Brahmins', Dalits', and women's respective visions about the social reconstruction of a caste society under colonial conditions and thereafter. While problematising the issue in this way, my intent is not to celebrate the diversity of understanding sexuality but to underline the caste-sexual politics fundamental to these differences in comprehending reality.

Beyond theorising, propagating, and legislating inter-caste marriage, non-Brahmin and Dalit thinkers emphasised governmentalising abortion and birth control, while liberal feminists tried to legalise adult marriage. In this process, though they shared concerns with the sex reformers, their positions in these matters were anchored respectively in caste-annihilation and self-empowerment ideologies. Their moves to support and propose legislation were intended to situate reproductive sexuality more within the realm of law and the state. In these engagements, sociosexual concerns were made part of the mass movement; however, this activism also attempted to bring the issue of social reconstruction under the governance of law instead of the governance of caste. While non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women did not write scientific sex, Brahmin sex reformers did not opt for legal and governmental intervention on sociosexual matters.<sup>151</sup> This is not to say that state intervention in sociosexual matters had not

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<sup>151</sup> The Brahmin sex educators, through their writings, did give selective information about laws related to sexual issues. They believed more in criticising the government on the backwardness of law than intervening through the state system.

been before; nineteenth-century Indian elites did emphasise the consent bill. However, non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women emphasising legal governance in social-reconstruction matters was a new late colonial reality. That upper-caste Marathi sex reformers did not align with caste and gender empowerment activism, and that these movements did not forge links with the sexologists, is telling.<sup>152</sup> This difference in operability was rooted in the larger worldviews of the actors; it was not a matter of reformist diversity.

To write about sexuality beyond the reproductive frame, in the realms of science and pleasure, is conventionally considered going beyond the 'traditional'. However, doing so is no guarantee of producing secular perspectives free from caste and gender discrimination, as later chapters will demonstrate. Of course, the 'sexual' was just one of the ways of thinking about social reorganisation. The Brahmin sex reformers' language of sexual modernity and the Others' agendas of self-empowerment, caste annihilation, and Brahmin rejection emerged out of their politicised thought on structural social reorganisation. Reproduction was a common subject differently deployed. Sexual-science writing and its epistemic alliance with Brahminism was one side of this reality. Non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women articulating sociosexual concerns with their own anti-caste and empowerment agendas was the other. In fact, the latter in many ways caused the former, as we will see.

Thus, masculine Marathi caste conflict, anti-caste radicalism, and the women's movement were the realities within which predominantly Brahmin-male-authored sex publishing deployed sex reformism in late colonial Maharashtra. In the midst of a conflicting ethos, it was an intervention aimed at restructuring modern Brahminism. This cultural biography of Marathi scientific sexuality is a step towards unpacking the caste and gender politics of this

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<sup>152</sup> According to my reading, Marathi sexual science literature in particular shows no signs of any association with these movements and in fact criticised them in various ways.

historical deployment. To further understand the sex-reform-based Brahminical reorganisation, I next look into the production politics of this knowledge-making.

#### **IV. The Politics of Sexual-Science Production**

Any knowledge is a political construction used to create, assert, maintain, and deconstruct power relations and structures. The intervention of scientific sexual knowledge into the Marathi literary world was a construction. At a time when knowledge was democratising and being dissemination intensely, establishing credentials was not easy for scientific sexuality. This was a complicated epistemic journey of knowledge packaging that confronted popular resistance to sex talk as well as the workings of the consumer market for sexual knowledge and products. The diplomatic restructuring of Brahminism through sex talk was integral to this dialectical march of sexual modernity, which began with the politics of Marathi sexual-science production. At the same time, the modern governance of caste was exercised through public resistance and sex-market-produced dialectics.

##### ***‘Public’ Resistance***

Opposition to explicit sexual content in print was a universal fact of modern times, and the late colonial Marathi world was no exception. Expressions of scientific sexuality evolved through resisting this opposition. *Samajswastya* was denigrated as a *kamrekhalcha masik* (कमरेखालचं मासिक, journal below the waist).<sup>153</sup> Elders did not allow youngsters to read it at home.<sup>154</sup> Wives wrote to editors requesting to stop their subscriptions, as husbands forbade them to read it.<sup>155</sup> Men, however, were reading such journals collectively and in libraries. The

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<sup>153</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (August 1934), p. 56.

<sup>154</sup> SS, year 25, issue 9 (March 1952), p. 174.

<sup>155</sup> Anant Deshmukh (ed.), *Asangrahit Ra. Dho*. [Uncompiled R.D. Karve] (Pune: Padmagandha Prakashan, 2010), p. 71.

journal *Samajswasthya* was banned from the Pune and Nasik public libraries, though they eventually re-subscribed.<sup>156</sup> Readers repeatedly complained about issues going missing from the post office.<sup>157</sup>

In their concern, the public were equating sexual-science journals with pleasure-oriented publications such as *Unmad* and *Masti* (मस्ती, *Fun*).<sup>158</sup> Sexual-knowledge publications became more available in the public sphere, as becomes evident from readers' correspondence with *Samajswasthya* and from library records.<sup>159</sup> Medical professionals were not happy about the nude imagery in scientific sexual journals, while readers expressed unhappiness over their explicit advocacy for making contraceptives easily available without compulsory consultation with medical men.<sup>160</sup> Brahmin and non-Brahmin women alike complained about sexual health journals publishing nude women's images.<sup>161</sup> Upper-caste Marathi *sahitya samellans* (साहित्य संमेलन, yearly literary gatherings) repeatedly expressed concern about and passed resolutions against the spread of sexually explicit materials in society.<sup>162</sup>

The influx of Western sexual writing in the print market was also an issue of concern for Brahmin public intellectuals.<sup>163</sup> Orthodox Brahmins strongly opposed the publication of sexual content.<sup>164</sup> Caste-bound elders, Brahmin and

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<sup>156</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (August 1934), p. 55.

<sup>157</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (August 1934), p. 54.

<sup>158</sup> *Samajswasthya* correspondence.

<sup>159</sup> SS, year 2, issue 1 (July 1928), p. 20. Readers were ubiquitously reading Marie Stopes. Also see Aldous Huxley, *Jesting Pilate: An Intellectual Holiday* (New York: George and Doran, 1926), pp. 18–19, Huxley has referred to the public library of the Taj Hotel having several books on sexual psychology and venereal disease.

<sup>160</sup> SS, year 10, issue 10 (April 1937), pp. 313–14; SS, year 2, issue 1 (July 1928), p. 19.

<sup>161</sup> SS, year 8, issue 8 (February 1935), pp. 277–81; SS, year 7, issue 12 (June 1934), p. 320.

<sup>162</sup> SS, year 8, issue 8 (February 1935), pp. 254–55.

<sup>163</sup> Marathi Brahmin intellectual S.M. Mate expressed concern in a letter to Marie Stopes: Marie Stopes India correspondence, Wellcome Trust Collection, PP/MCS/A313, Box 51.

<sup>164</sup> SS, year 14, issue 11 (May 1941), p. 355.

non-Brahmin women, and the state strongly opposed the explicit expressions of sexuality, which they perceived as obscenity. Not only was Karve legally charged several times with obscenity,<sup>165</sup> but the magazine *Sawai Jivan* was booked in 1942.<sup>166</sup> The distinct features of sexual-science literature evolved through anticipating and facing such opposition. In fact, opposition became one of the most important reasons to emphasise the scientific nature of writings on sexuality. Sex educators projected such opposition as ‘public ignorance’—a category that was not only determined but also divided by caste. With respectability politics at high tide, ‘public’ and ‘people’ were hardly secular categories. In the context of such opposition, in order to restructure Brahminism and exercise caste governmentality, packaging sexual knowledge became a necessity for Marathi sexual science. This need was also shaped by the cultural compulsion of the sex market in relation to pleasure and caste.

### *Sex, Knowledge, and the Market*

The late colonial print media was a site for articulating political contestation, social reforms, and civilising missions as well as a marketplace for cultural and material commodities. Sexual reform was part of both this civilising reformism and cultural commercialism. The media was a knowledge market that regulated and governed cultural supply and demand along with economic profit.

As part of this mechanism, sexual-knowledge publications circulated as sexual commodities in the consumer market. Erotic popular journals such as *Masti* (मस्ती, *Fun*), *Yauvan* (यौवन, *Youth*), and books that spoke of sex not as science but as art, like *Kama-kala* (काम-कला), *Taruni*, *Striyanche Gupta Bhed* (स्त्रियांचे गुप्त भेद, *The Secrets of Women*), and *Chumbanache Shambhar Parkar* (चुंबनाचे शंभर प्रकार, *One Hundred Types of Kisses*) came out. Such literary

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<sup>165</sup> SS, year 8, issue 3 (August 1934); SS, year 7, issue 11 (May 1934), pp. 281–86; SS, year 7, issue 9 (March 1934), p. 252; SS, year 7, issue 12 (July 1934), pp. 309–11.

<sup>166</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 7 (April 1942), pp. 41–44.

expressions were also advertised in journals such as *Unmad*, *Jivan*, *Sawai Jivan* and *Samajswasthya*.<sup>167</sup> Nude photographs, sex tonics, sexual-vigour enhancement pills, Ayurvedic medicines to treat impotency and infertility, beauty products, and contraceptives—all advertised through print media—were also part of this market.<sup>168</sup> The Right Agency not only published and sold sex reformist writings, it also manufactured its own contraceptive brands—including jellies, pessaries, and cervical caps—and beauty products.<sup>169</sup> Shivananda advertised this medical consultancy, endorsed Badshahi hair-removing soap, and manufactured and sold *paryachi goli* (पाय्याची गोळी, mercury pills) that he claimed would enhance sexual potency.<sup>170</sup> Scientific sexual health journals thus functioned not only as commodities in their own right but as a marketplace for all these other commodities. They were platforms of debate and discussion about contraceptive technologies and sex medicines even as they manufactured, sold, and advertised these products.<sup>171</sup>

Scientific sexual knowledge was thus a cultural as well as an economic product—part of the sexual consumer market, where sexual knowledge was

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<sup>167</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 6 (March 1942), p. 48; *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), p. 56; Deshmukh (ed.), *Samajswasthyamadhil Nivdak Lekh*, pp. 173–78; *Unmad*, 1952–53; Pune City Library catalogue.

<sup>168</sup> Douglas Haynes, ‘Selling Masculinity: Advertisements for Sex Tonics and the Making of Modern Conjugality in Western India, 1900–1945’, *Journal of South Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (April 2012), pp. 791–805; *Stree* (November 1947), p. 3; *Kesari* (26 September 1905), p. 3; SS, year 14, issue 9 (March 1941), advertisement page; *Sawai Jivan*, year 4, issue 4 (September 1945), 30; *Jivan*, year 1, issue 10 (October 1941), p. 48.

<sup>169</sup> SS, year 13, issue 4 (October 1939), advertisement page; SS, year 14, issue 1 (July 1940), advertisement page.

<sup>170</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (Lakhani Press, 1972), Marathi pages 7–9 (written in words) and p. 105.

<sup>171</sup> SS, year 2, issue 2 (August 1928), pp. 41–44; SS, year 2, issue 4 (October 1928), pp. 79–88; SS, year 16, issue 9 (March 1943), advertisement page; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 11–12; SS, year 9; issue 2 (August 1935), pp. 60–62.

derived from different competitive commodities. Writers' engagement with the market contributed to the multiplicity of relations between sexual-knowledge products and their users. However, the operational domain of the sexual-knowledge market reached beyond scientific sexual reformism into the realm of pleasure. The pleasure-oriented market did much to increase the readership of scientific sexual tracts; journals like *Samajswasthya*, *Jivan*, and *Sawai Jivan* were also read for pleasure.<sup>172</sup> This compelled sex educators to articulate pleasure. However, deciding what sexual knowledge and sources were appropriately consumable was beyond the control of scientific sexual knowledge; scientific sexuality itself was one of the commodities.

The market should not be thought of as a place where related commodities were just traded. It was a capitalist, democratic space that created demand and desire, along with the knowledge that created the desire. Furthermore, the emergence of this market challenged Brahminical notions of top-down knowledge production and distribution. Despite the moral pressure of the caste system in the domain of knowledge-making, the market was, in theory, beyond caste boundaries. Since sexual knowledge was a market commodity, explicit caste control over its distribution and consumption was not possible. Despite being a domain of knowledge, exercising absolute governance over this cultural product was beyond the limits of modern Brahminism. Rather, scientific sexual knowledge was a product regulated and governed by the market. Under that governmentality, upper-caste-authored Marathi scientific sexuality was thus compelled to construct its own version of sexual knowledge and project it for the market as scientific.

However, this does not mean the market was the dead end of Brahminical governmentality. In fact, the same conditions produced the governance of

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<sup>172</sup> Marathi scholars who study *Samajswasthya* indicate that its readership was much larger than its subscription base. For pleasure reading of *Samajswasthya* see Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra*, pp. 116–17.



Brahminism, with its language of reformism through the commodity production of sexual knowledge. If Brahminism could not control the dissemination and consumption of commoditised knowledge, it *could* control the content of the product. ‘Caste-ing’ the production content of knowledge was in fact modernity’s way to construct caste- and knowledge-based hierarchies in the era of commodity capitalism. Caste here did match with the market-generated need to distinguish scientific knowledge from other sources. Making sexual knowledge Brahminical benefited its marketability in a caste society.

Simultaneously, contemporary Marathi and Indian media were intrinsically linked with the rhetoric of reformism and were instrumental in projecting civilising agendas. Considering this, it was necessary to frame sexual knowledge as a civilising agenda, particularly during Brahminism’s crisis over dominating the articulation of reforms. Under such late colonial circumstances, having knowledge was not enough: it also had to be saleable. Given public resistance to explicit sexuality and the era of commodity capitalism, the cultural packaging of sexual knowledge was a requirement for restructuring Brahminical governance.

### ***Packaging Sexual Science***

If sexual science was a ‘commodity in the making’, even one that faced opposition, it was necessary to project it as appealing, consumable, reformist, and educational within the broader civilising role of the media. While serving these aims, scientific sexuality content was culturally packaged and projected by underlining its relevance and expertise and by focusing on the reader.

Shivananda, citing Vedic and mythological references, provoked readers to ask: if sexual matters had secured a place in the *dharmashastras*, how could such knowledge be obscene?<sup>173</sup> Shivananda and Karve explained sexual science’s importance through the Brahmin emancipatory model of *dharma* (धर्म,

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<sup>173</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 29–30.

religion), *artha* (अर्थ, materiality), *kama* (काम, sex), and *moksha* (मोक्ष, liberation), with *kama* and the body as central to human thinking.<sup>174</sup> Phadke throughout his writings appealed the readers to re-understand Vedic Hindu religion rationally while talking of sex reforms.<sup>175</sup> Bhavé's marriage manual projected the Hindu mythological couple Rama and Sita as the ideal of conjugality.<sup>176</sup> All of Shivananda's books were advertised as part of his Nationalist Book Series (राष्ट्रोद्धार ग्रंथ माला, *Rashtroddhar Grantha Mala*), with the Brahminical Hindu symbol *om* (ॐ) and Sanskrit verses from the Bhagvad Gita on the covers.<sup>177</sup> *Sawai Jivan*'s epigram was a quote about the value of 'teaching others' from the seventeenth-century Brahmin spiritualist Ramadasa.<sup>178</sup> *Jivan*'s tagline equated God's omnipresence to that of sexual desire.<sup>179</sup> The titles of books and journals suggested revealing *rahasya* (रहस्य, secrets) and of telling truth (*satya*, सत्य)—all with a concern for 'social health'.<sup>180</sup> Journal covers became notorious for depicting nude women as symbols of 'naked truth' (*nagna satya*, नग्न सत्य) and health.<sup>181</sup> Often they also included images of beacon light that intended to warn against dangers and to show the path to social health.<sup>182</sup> Titles of books and journals often included the word *watadya* (वाटड्या, pathfinder) in the title.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, titles such as 'life' and 'better life' (*Jivan*, *Sawai Jivan*) drew a direct link to sexuality. Beyond explicit Brahminical symbolism, such depictions

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<sup>174</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 1; SS, year 14, issue 2 (August 1940), pp. 36–37.

<sup>175</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 727–28, 738–39, 832–38.

<sup>176</sup> Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jivan*, dedication page.

<sup>177</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), cover.

<sup>178</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 3, issue 3 (December 1943), p. 5.

<sup>179</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 2 (February 1941), p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), cover.

<sup>181</sup> SS, year 7, issue 1 (July 1933), cover.

<sup>182</sup> SS, year 1, issue 3 (September 1927), cover.

<sup>183</sup> J.R. Naik, *Vivahitancha Vatadya* [Pathfinder for Married Couples], mentioned in the Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya library catalogue (details unavailable).

reflected civilising language and projected a desire to restructure life (social and individual) to make it better. Other titles promised life-threatening consequences of sensuality if sexual science was neglected, like *Virya Nash Hach Mrutyu* (वीर्य नाश हाच मृत्यू, *Sensuality Is Death*).<sup>184</sup> Shivananda even structured his text by *siddhantas* (सिद्धांत, theoretical dictates) rather than chapters.<sup>185</sup>

Thus dressed, Marathi sex education and its creators further tried to establish their scientific credentials by projecting expertise. The basis of this expertise was a mixture of the Indian Brahminical tradition and modern Western sexual science. Vedic, Ayurvedic, *dharmashastra*, and Brahmin moralist literature, as well as Western sexual-science texts and figures, were placed side by side in bibliographies, headlines, and quotes.<sup>186</sup> They published translations from Western journals of sexology and medicine as well as sensuous passages from classical ancient Sanskrit literature to show their erudition<sup>187</sup> and publicised special endorsements from eminent Brahmin personalities, including educators, judges, Sanskrit pundits, and foreign-language scholars.<sup>188</sup> All this made reformist sexual knowledge, as a commodity packaged in Brahminism.

However, it also had to be made friendly to its principally male audience and competitive in the market.

Towards these ends, pen names and aliases were ways of self-promotion. Many prominent sexual science authors wrote under different pen names and some among them used women's names, apparently as a strategy for capturing

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<sup>184</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), cover.

<sup>185</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 21.

<sup>186</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. ३ and 188; SS, year 14, issue 2 (August 1940), p. 33; *Sawai Jivan* year 1, issue 7 (April 1942), p. 1; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 8 (August 1941), pp. 50–51; SS, year 7, issue 12 (June 1934), pp. 311–15; SS, year 8, issue 4 (October 1934), pp. 97–103.

<sup>188</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 13–16; SS, year 3, issue 3 (September 1929), title page; Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 4–8.

the male audience. For example, Shivananda's pen name *Dnya* (ज्ञ) resembled a person having *dnyana* (knowledgeable ज्ञान). Karve used the female name Sharada (शारदा), P.J. Kulkarni's was Shobhana (शोभना), and A.B. Bhide's was Shailaja (शैलजा). Ramakant Welde wrote with his first name, Ramakant (रमाकांत).<sup>189</sup> The male identities of Shailaja and Shobhana can be established through a close reading of the early issues of *Jivan* and *Sawai Jivan*—the male sexual anxieties, fantasies, and enquiries about the female body are recognisable.<sup>190</sup> These identities are verified by the contemporary personalities who write about sex educators' pen names.<sup>191</sup> With scientific sexuality almost exclusively addressed to men, writing about sex under mysterious female pen names produced anxiety, curiosity, and vibrant discussion. Male readers wanted to know more about Sharada, while female readers expressed discomfort with such pen names.<sup>192</sup> These discussions did increase the saleability of the knowledge product.

Thus popularised, scientific sexuality was not simply a commodity for sale with a price. Between 1920 and 1950, the journals were priced between two and eight annas per copy, and sexual-science books cost an average of two and half rupees each, with the highest sellers at five rupees per book in 1956.<sup>193</sup> Sex educators also acted as consultants on sexual matters. Karve's quote for private consultation increased from five rupees in 1930 to twenty in the 1950s.<sup>194</sup> Both printed materials and private consultation were advertised for their cheapness,

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<sup>189</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 14, 19. For Karve, see Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra*, p. 116. Contemporary Marathi authors have mentioned Ramakant Welde as Shailaja: see Lele, *Marathi Vritta Patrancha Itihas*, p. 969; Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar*, p. 187.

<sup>190</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 2 (February 1941), pp. 39–46.

<sup>191</sup> Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra*, p. 116.

<sup>192</sup> Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra*, p. 116; SS, year 7, issue 12 (June 1934), p. 320.

<sup>193</sup> Shailaja and Ramakant, *Tumhala Lagna Karaichay Ka?* title page; SS, year 2, issue 1 (July 1928); *Sawai Jivan*, year 2, issue 8 (April 1949), title page.

<sup>194</sup> SS, year 1, issue 10 (April 1928), p. 18; SS, year 23, issue 9 (March 1950), p. 211; SS, year 24, issue 2 (August 1950), p. 3.

with the argument that making this knowledge available at a cheap price was a matter of public concern; sex educators claimed to publish them at a loss. However, in a period when domestic servants were paid slightly over a rupee per month and the cost of goat meat, favoured by the upper castes, was eight annas per kilo,<sup>195</sup> these prices hardly justify sexual science's claims to low costs.<sup>196</sup> Nor was everything cheap: Shivananda's famous mercury pill was advertised for a hundred rupees in the latter editions of *Dampatya Rahasya*.<sup>197</sup> Even the extreme higher price of such products helped create a mystical and extravagant air around scientific sexual knowledge.

The pretence that sex education was kept 'cheap' in the service of eradicating public ignorance was projected as a social urgency to make people national, rational, and modern. Readers were morally pressured to buy these books, even if the costs were high, for the sake of improving their lives through sexual science.<sup>198</sup> Shivananda's writings were compulsory for regular customers at his nationalist ashrama book stall, at a concessional rate.<sup>199</sup> Even other *Samajswasthya* launched concession and free-sample schemes.<sup>200</sup> Sex educators used their sales numbers to indicate the popularity of their books. On the other hand, they used the same statistics to lament public ignorance and emphasise the social necessity of such literature. Listing of agents and agencies that sold their journals and books, beyond indicating actual availability, was also a strategy to demonstrate the extent to which scientific sexuality was coveted across Marathi-speaking areas.<sup>201</sup> Similarly, Shivananda's claims to have received lakhs of

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<sup>195</sup> Shanta Hubalikar, *Ata Kashala Udyachi Bat* [Why Speak about Tomorrow?] (Pune: Shree Vidya Prakashan, 1990), p. 42.

<sup>196</sup> SS, year 1, issue 10 (April 1928), p. 18; SS, year 23, issue 9 (March 1950), p. 211.

<sup>197</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (Lakhani Press, 1972), p. ३१८.

<sup>198</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 8.

<sup>199</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), copyright page.

<sup>200</sup> SS, year 9, issue 3 (September 1935), p. 70.

<sup>201</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 4 (January 1942), back cover.

letters and Karve's complaints about lack of space and an overburdening amount of mail were indicators of demand.<sup>202</sup>

Marathi sexual knowledge was ultimately packaged with claims about the nature of its target audience: distinctly articulated in categories such as the educated (सुशिक्षित, *sushikshit*), the sensible (समंजस, *samanjas*), people of good taste (सदभिरुचीचे लोक, *sadabhiruchiche lok*), and 'Brahmins and people who understand the relevance of cleanliness' (ब्राह्मण आणि स्वच्छतेचं महत्त्व जाणणारे, *brahman ani swachatecha mahatwa jannare*).<sup>203</sup> People beyond these categories, the *bahujan samaj* (बहुजन समाज), were not thought of as eligible to understand the new science and morality.<sup>204</sup> This language of specifications and categorisations was a way of creating a caste-shaped audience without naming a caste identity. Packaging sexual knowledge for certain classes decided the caste of sexual science.

It was this Marathi sexual science that spoke of ignorance and silence around sex among the Marathi masses. This argument was consistently deployed in late colonial Maharashtra—the time of Brahmin crisis over the articulation of reformism. Sexuality and the scientifically valid openness it projected were literally mass-produced. As knowledge became governed by the market and its democratic mechanisms, caste was systematically moved into the production and packaging of sexual knowledge. Caste governance was also achieved by moulding sexual knowledge in a reformist frame while projecting the cheapness of invaluable knowledge created particularly for the so-called sensible, clean, and educated people sometimes explicitly referred to as Brahmins.

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<sup>202</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (Lakhani Press 1972), p. सात; SS, year 12, issue 2 (August 1938), p. 59. Though Karve complained of being overburdened with letters, some *Samajswasthya* issues were without correspondence. See SS, year 14, issue 9 (March 1941); SS, year 17, issue 7 (January 1944).

<sup>203</sup> Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2, 55; Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 107–108.

<sup>204</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 78–79.

Breaking silence and being vocal about sexuality was one agenda of sexual science. Addressing sexual repression and providing exact scientific knowledge of sex was another. The endeavour to accomplish these objectives produced a vast corpus of scientific sexuality. The intensity and consistency with which it was deployed over three decades, I argue, actually *constructed* the sexual silence that needed to be broken and the sexual repression it aimed to overcome. The Marathi 'repressive hypothesis' was *manufactured*.

Sexual silence and repression were existing categories already. However, Marathi sex educators *recreated* them to articulate new reforms in the late colonial era of Brahmin crisis. The idea of reform was now redefined, keeping in mind new concerns and old concerns made new. Sex and science combined were now the markers of new respectabilities related to becoming national, rational, and modern. Keeping sex at centre stage, Marathi modernity would further be constructed with three major discourses: brahmacharya, marriage, and obscenity. The remaining chapters analyse these discourses, beginning with brahmacharya.

### Chapter 3. Brahmacharya: The Sexual Anatomy of Caste

‘For our generation, panicked by reading Shivananda’s 1922 blockbuster *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan Virya Nash Hach Mrutu* [Brahmacharya Is Life, Sensuality Is Death], Karve was the only relief’, wrote the Marathi literary critic M.V. Dhond (1914–2007) reflecting on the interwar Marathi context.<sup>1</sup> This observation points towards panicked masses and the sale of brahmacharya sex literature on a massive scale. As a young man in interwar Maharashtra, Dhond pointed out the frightening reality Shivananda whipped up and cited R.D. Karve’s rationalist critique as the remedy. Around the same time, Atre’s popular movie *Brahmachari* (1938) presented a satirical critique of Shivananda’s concept of brahmacharya.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, the popular Marathi moralist and well-known celibate P.S. Sane was passionately presenting his thoughts on brahmacharya by narrating the greatness of Indian civilisation.<sup>3</sup> Brahmacharya was also part of the ideology spread by Jummadada Vyayamm Mandir gymnasium culture, led by Marathi men and popular in western India in the 1930s. They treated Shivananda’s tract on brahmacharya almost like a textbook.<sup>4</sup>

Although brahmacharya was understood as one of the four phases of the Hindu life cycle, these references were to male celibacy. Such examples suggest brahmacharya was more than a religious idea in the late colonial Marathi public sphere. It was not simply a matter of fear, anxiety, entertainment, or cultural criticism; it was a moralist and emotional enchantment and an everyday health regime. Brahmacharya rhetoric was popular. Most of the examples of Marathi sex literature cited in this chapter are by Shivananda, R.D. Karve, and N.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Dhond, *Jalyatil Chandra*, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Vinayak (dir.). *Brahmachari*.

<sup>3</sup> P.S. Sane, *Bharatiya Sanskriti* [Indian Culture] (Kolhapur: Riya Publications, [1937] 2011), pp. 149–67.

<sup>4</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), cover.



Phadke and emphasise the centrality of such rhetoric in the sex publishing industry (outlined in the previous chapter).

The early-twentieth-century Marathi socio-cultural history of brahmacharya deserves attention—not only as it was about sex but because sex publishing was intertwined with debates about modernity. These writings spelled out debates about modern subjectivity and what it was to be a modern man; in turn, they were also inseparable from debates about caste. Hence, the present chapter unpacks the simultaneously sexual and social discourse of brahmacharya.

The chapter examines the discourses that affected the debates on brahmacharya by focusing on the works of three of the most prominent Marathi sex educators writing between the 1920s and the 1950s: Shivananda, R.D. Karve, and N.S. Phadke. Through a close reading of their work, we can see that the discourse of brahmacharya was a caste-sexual issue. It was as much about maintaining the caste privileges of the modern male Marathi subject as it was about outlining appropriate sexual conduct for him. In analysing its etymology and sexual diagnostic narratives, I argue that brahmacharya was a cultural anatomy of caste. Constructed in a bio-moral language, the concept was deployed to serve the reworking of Marathi Brahminism in response to the late colonial Brahminical crisis. By situating the discursive politics of brahmacharya in the context of late colonial reformism, I will further argue that the brahmachari should be considered an ‘imagined subjectivity’ constructed to serve the biopolitical purpose of making the modern Marathi man—in the caste-sexual way.

Late colonial sex publishing, as seen in the last chapter, was a sex-educational intervention into the Marathi knowledge domain claiming to be concerned with social health. This intervention produced three dominant discourses. One was brahmacharya, which will be analysed in this chapter. The following chapters will interpret the other two: marriage and obscenity. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first critically examines nationalist brahmacharya rhetoric to make case for a particular Marathi brahmacharya narrative. The second section examines the etymological making of the modern

Marathi concept of brahmacharya in relation to three late colonial sexual narratives written in the same language. The third will analyse the bio-political nature of sexualised brahmacharya narratives; the concluding section will interpret it in the context of late colonial reformism.

In this research, Marathi brahmacharya as a bodily practice is not understood as centring linguistic identity but as a historical analysis of the brahmacharya discourse available in the Marathi language. My emphasis is more on brahmacharya than on the *Marathi*-ness of this discourse. Similar brahmacharya narratives existed in areas of late colonial India where other languages were dominant. A historical analysis of their caste-sexual logic is necessary to unpack the modern politics of the brahmacharya rhetoric. Therefore, I will start with a critical gaze at the nationalist making of brahmacharya hereto narrated, to chalk out the distinctness of the sexual brahmacharya presently under analysis.

## **I. The Colonial ‘Indian’ Brahmacharya**

*Brahmacharya* has been, in both colonial and postcolonial times, an all-India rhetoric among Hindus. Conveniently and interchangeably interpreted as sexual abstinence, celibacy, and continence by colonial Indian writers, it was a well-known term across India.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hinduism underwent a revival.<sup>5</sup> It was gradually incarnated and revived through the social-reform movements, religious revivalism of Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda, in the Gandhian

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 253–320; Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilization* (London: Hurst and Co., 1993), pp. 11–79; Mahatma Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 2005), pp. 7–72; William Radice (ed.), *Swami Vivekanand and the Modernisation of Hinduism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); P.V. Rao, *Foundations of Tilak’s Nationalism*, pp. 281–319.

political rearticulation, and in the formation of the militant Hindu nationalist organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Against this backdrop, the modern understanding of brahmacharya was inextricably linked to nationalist revivalism. This linkage was responding, in particular, to the coloniser's notion of the 'effeminate Indian man', which was also shared by the colonised.<sup>6</sup> Connecting the 'conservation of semen' to the enhancement of men's virility, courage, and energy, various nationalists understood brahmacharya to be the answer to the Indian man's mental and physical deterioration—and thereby to colonial subjugation. This meant reinventing Hindu identity. If brahmacharya rhetoric was the nationalists' answer to late-nineteenth-century concerns about Bengali effeminacy,<sup>7</sup> the RSS, founded in 1925 in western India, lauded brahmacharya as a practice that would promote an exemplary service to the nation.<sup>8</sup> Brahmacharya self-help books were ubiquitous in the colonial Hindi-speaking public sphere.<sup>9</sup> The rhetoric was also effectively used in the construction of nationalist gymnasium culture in colonial western and northern India.<sup>10</sup>

This multidimensional rhetoric was expressed through popular literature, moralist socio-religious enchantment, political talk, and sex literature. As it was a rhetoric, popular colonial images of brahmacharya were predominantly equated

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<sup>6</sup> M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>7</sup> Pradeep Bose (ed.), *Health and Society in Bengal: A Selection from Late 19th Century Bengali Periodicals* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006), pp. 157, 169–72.

<sup>8</sup> M.S. Golwalkar, *A Bunch of Thoughts*, 2nd ed. (Bangalore: Kesari Press, 1966), p. 102.

<sup>9</sup> Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity and Community*, pp. 66–83; Jagadnarayanadev Sharma, *Brahmacharya Vigyan* [The Science of Brahmacharya] (Ajmer: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1927); Suryawali Sinha, *Brahmacharya ki Mahima* (Banaras: S.B Sinha, 1931).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Alter, 'Gama the World Champion: Wrestling and Physical Culture in Colonial India', *Iron Game History* (October 1995), pp. 3–9; Namrata Ganeri, 'Debate on the Revival and the Physical Culture Movement in Western India', in Katrine Broumber, et al. (eds.) *Sports Across Asia: Politics Culture and Identities* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 121–43.

with its eminent advocates. Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, M.K. Gandhi, and Manik Rao were among the dominant proponents of brahmacharya. These personalities and their narratives were contextual to sexual concerns around brahmacharya in general and late colonial Marathi constructions of brahmacharya in particular. For them, the practice and concept were necessary to produce and regulate chaste behaviour and thus create a strong Hindu man. Saraswati saw this as the principle leading men to the path of righteousness and true happiness.<sup>11</sup> Gandhi interpreted it as sexual self-restraint, responsible for bringing energy, enthusiasm, and power to the national cause.<sup>12</sup> Vivekananda, however, considered it a wonderful way of gaining control over mankind.<sup>13</sup> Even the Hindu nationalist historian and educationist A.S. Altekar echoed similar opinions.<sup>14</sup>

Gandhi, Saraswati, and Vivekananda's interpretations were complementary and certainly not conflicting, inasmuch as they never challenged or fundamentally criticised the notion of brahmacharya. They embraced it as a means to reach their nationalist goals. However, a socio-sexual restructuring of society was not the core of their agendas; their advocacy of brahmacharya was a by-product of their nationalist thought. They also provided the context to the Marathi discourse, as they were available to the Marathi articulators of brahmacharya and helped them shaping their understandings of the concept. Marathi translations of Saraswati<sup>15</sup> and Gandhi and the Hindi translation of

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<sup>11</sup> Dayananda Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash* [The Light of Truth], 13th ed., trans. by Shripad Joshi (Mumbai: Arya Samaj, 2004), pp. 32–33.

<sup>12</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Self-Restraint versus Self-Indulgence* (Ahmadabad: Navajeevan Press, 1928), p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga* (New York: Brentanos, 1920), pp. 181–82.

<sup>14</sup> A.S. Altekar, *Education System in Ancient India*, 2nd ed. (Benares: Nand Kishore and Bros., 1944), pp. 268–82.

<sup>15</sup> *Satyartha Prakash*'s first Marathi translation was published in 1904, and five editions had been published by 1932 Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash*, p. ॠ.

Shivananda's *Brahmacharya Hi Jivan Hai*<sup>16</sup> were mutually constitutive in making the discourse of brahmacharya—a site of mutual exchange and influences.

With their distinct agendas in the service of solving the crisis of Indian masculinity, these interpretations were entrenched in the orientalist binary of the greatness of Hindu spirituality versus Western materialism. Saraswati's expression of brahmacharya that inspired the Marathis was rooted in Hindu scripture and intended to protect Vedic religion.<sup>17</sup> As Anshu Malhotra explains, Dayanand Saraswati's idea of brahmacharya, discussed in *Satyarth Prakash* (सत्यार्थ प्रकाश, *Light of Truth*, 1875), was a site of reconstructing Hinduism in the name of the nation.<sup>18</sup> Charu Gupta further suggests that brahmacharya was a site of Hindu communal constructions that shaped late colonial eugenic discussions.<sup>19</sup>

With its packaging of moralist humanism, Gandhi's brahmacharya was another narrative available to Marathi speakers.<sup>20</sup> His idea of converting sexual energy to constructive work, particularly that of nationalism, received critical treatment from anthropologists, psychoanalysts, historians, political theorists, and nationalist feminists. While they understood brahmacharya as Gandhi's political strategy to build a nationalist body politic responding to colonialism, they also interpreted it as a 'hydraulic' understanding of nationalism, based on energy transformation from the physical to the moral.<sup>21</sup> The same principle, in

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<sup>16</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hi Jivan Hai*.

<sup>17</sup> Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash*, pp. 32–40.

<sup>18</sup> Anshu Malhotra, 'Body as a Metaphor for the Nation: Caste Masculinity and Femininity in the *Satyartha Prakash* of Dayananda Saraswati', in Avril A. Powell and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and the Colonial Experience in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 125–38.

<sup>19</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Gandhi, *Self-Restraint*, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> Alter, *Gandhi's Body*, pp. 21–27; Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), pp. 191–227; Lal Vinay,

the nationalist feminist understanding, led to the creation of a space free from the fear of men, which allowed more women to participate in the Indian nationalist movement.<sup>22</sup> Even Marathi scholars appreciated Gandhi's version of brahmacharya as an emancipatory force for the development of a progressive nationalism.<sup>23</sup>

However, brahmacharya was not always glorified in colonial India. R.D. Karve heavily criticised it, pathologising it in the light of Western sexual science. He used the concept of brahmacharya to establish the contemporaneity of Indians with the Western world through combating sexual ignorance.<sup>24</sup>

With few exceptions, so far South Asian scholarship has focused on analysing the expressions of eminent colonial personalities. The dominance of colonial rhetoric is reflected in scholars' South Asian selections. This choice of frame, however, has brought about historiographic limitations on scholarship on brahmacharya. Scholars such as Bhiku Parekh, Joseph Alter, Sudhir Kakar, Vinay Lal, and Madhu Kishwar have analysed it, as have Marathi scholars Nalini Pandit and Yashwanta Sumanta in passing, but only in the context of Gandhi's life and thought. Saraswati's construction of brahmacharya remained the focus of Anshu Malhotra's analysis of communal understandings.<sup>25</sup> Douglas Haynes and I have analysed the rationalist construction of brahmacharya with a specific

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'Nakedness, Nonviolence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1/2 (January–April 2000), pp. 105–36.

<sup>22</sup> Madhu Kishwar, 'Gandhi on Women', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 41 (12 October 1985), pp. 1755–56.

<sup>23</sup> Sumanta Yashwant, *Dadasaheb Rupawate Smruti Grantha* (Mumbai: Dadasaheb Rupwate Foundation, 2000), pp. 192–96; Pandit Nalini, *Gandhi* (Mumbai: Granthali Publications, 1997), 205–19.

<sup>24</sup> Botre and Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve', pp. 178–79.

<sup>25</sup> Malhotra, 'Body as a Metaphor for the Nation', pp. 125–38; Pandit, *Gandhi*, pp. 205–19; Yashwant, *Dadasaheb Rupawate Smruti Grantha*, pp. 192–93.

focus on Karve's interpretations.<sup>26</sup> This historiographic focus, heavily leaning towards nationalist and rationalist personalities, has created an image of the 'eminent brahmachari' as the subject of analysis. The caste-influenced conception of brahmacharya and the brahmachari has rarely been at the core of historical analysis. This approach, heavily biased towards 'great men', has shown brahmacharya as context for explaining the nation and nationalism, with the nation as the text to be read. Consequently, the same works identify brahmacharya as an 'Indian' expression and a Hindu sexual practice, whereas Indian analyses do not address the connected issue of caste.<sup>27</sup>

Instead of looking at brahmacharya as 'context' for a historical narrative of the nation, this chapter analyses it as a politically constructed 'text', exploring the modern Marathi construction of brahmacharya with special reference to the works of Shivananda, Karve, and N.S. Phadke.

### ***The Marathi Brahmacharya Archives***

The idea of brahmacharya was intrinsic to the making of late colonial Marathi sex publishing. Shivananda, Karve, and N.S. Phadke spelled out their viewpoints on the matter in books, chapters, and articles. As the author of the most popular book, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan Virya Nash Hach Mrutu*, Shivananda set the terms of the discussion. Chapter-length explanations are also found in his other popular books *Manowanchhit Santati* and *Dampatya Rahasya Vidnyan*.<sup>28</sup> Though his wording shows some resemblance to that of Dayananda Saraswati, Jagadnarayandev Sharma, and Suryawali Sinha,<sup>29</sup> the Marathi men's narratives under consideration did produce a distinct understanding of their own.

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<sup>26</sup> Botre and Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve', pp. 163–81.

<sup>27</sup> Sudhir Kakar, *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 118–22; Botre and Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve'.

<sup>28</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 51–55; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya*, pp. 63–68.

<sup>29</sup> Sharma, *Brahmacharya Vigyan*, pp. 26–49; S. Sinha, *Brahmacharya ki Mahima*, pp. 50–145; Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash*, pp. 45–52.

Karve, while opposing Shivananda's thoughts, on the pages of *Samajswasthya*, devoted a series of articles to this discussion with titles such as 'Brahmacharya Che Dushparinam' ( ब्रह्मचर्य चे दुष्परिणाम, The Evil Effects of Brahmacharya), 'Bahishkarachi Purawani—Brahmacharya' (बहिष्काराची पुरवणी ब्रह्मचर्य, Supplement of Boycott [on Sexual Desire]—Brahmacharya), 'Brahmacharya Che Khul' (ब्रह्मचर्याचे खूळ, The Madness of Brahmacharya), and 'Brahmacharyawar Shastriya Drushti' (ब्रह्मचार्यावर शास्त्रीय दृष्टी, A Scientific Gaze at Brahmacharya).<sup>30</sup> A chapter-length discussion is also found in his *Adhunik Kamashastra*, and he comments on it frequently in *Klaibya Chi Mimansa*.<sup>31</sup> Karve responded to various articulations of the subject and to the general rhetoric that was popular in the interwar years. Even N.S. Phadke problematised brahmacharya in his works *Sukhache Sansar* and *The Sex Problem in India*.<sup>32</sup> L.K. Bhave's marriage manual *Vaivahik Jivan* included a chapter-length narrative, and even the sexual-health journal *Jivan* carried articles on the topic.<sup>33</sup>

In making this discourse, sexual narratives also corroborated articulations in the domain of moralist writings, cinema (Atre's *Brahmachari*), and interwar physical culture. P.S. Sane's moralist tract *Bharatiya Sanskriti* (भारतीय संस्कृती, *Indian Civilisation*, 1937), written for young boys, contained much discussion of brahmacharya.<sup>34</sup> References in writers from Gandhi to Shivananda to well-known celibates like Kuvalyananda and Manik Rao shows how effectively the post-1920 gymnasium culture (which, as noted, sponsored Shivananda's writing)

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<sup>30</sup> SS, year 21, issue 3 (September 1947), pp. 49–54; SS, year 21, issue 11 (May 1948), pp. 239–44; Karve (ed.), *Samajswasthyatil Nivdak Lekh*, p. 107; SS, year 7, issue 1 (July 1933), pp. 1–8.

<sup>31</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 4–5, 161–85; Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 116–18.

<sup>32</sup> N.S. Phadke, 'Sukhache Sansar: Suprajnana Shastra' and 'Santati Niyaman', in Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 832–38, 849–52; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 175–212.

<sup>33</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 24–34; *Jivan*, year 2, issue 3 (March 1942), pp. 46–50.

<sup>34</sup> Sane, *Bharatiya Sanskriti*, pp. 149–67.



used brahmacharya rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Even the movie *Brahmachari* (1938) commented on the relation between physical culture and brahmacharya.<sup>36</sup>

These popular references show the inspirational nature of brahmacharya in the Marathi public sphere from 1920 to 1950. Turning this dominant and fundamentally sexual rhetoric into a public concern was a distinct process influenced by larger cultural politics. To understand and decode the cultural anatomy of brahmacharya it becomes necessary to analyse this archive and unpack its rhetoric. This demands examining the implicit and explicit meanings of brahmacharya as imposed on the colonial and late colonial Marathi world; it also requires a diagnosis of the bio-political constitution of the prevalent sexual narratives around the concept. The first exercise is related to scrutinising lexicons, the second to examining narratives of brahmacharya in Marathi sex literature.

## **II. Making Modern Marathi Brahmacharya: Language, Text, and Practice**

From ancient to modern times, in different interpretations, *brahmacharya* has been understood as a principle (*brahmacharya tatva*, ब्रह्मचर्य तत्त्व). The Brahminical order across history has considered it foundational to the hierarchic Vedic philosophy and has been occupied with defining and socially circulating it.<sup>37</sup> The modern Hinduism engaged in this process was itself the product of a synthesis of dialectical interaction between colonial knowledge-making agendas and the Indian caste system. Consequently, the early-twentieth-century Marathi making of brahmacharya in sexual-science writings was shaped by contemporary

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<sup>35</sup> Namrata Ganeri, 'Debate on "Revival"', p. 135; Joseph S. Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 3 (July 2004), p. 512; Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), book dedication pages.

<sup>36</sup> Vinayak (dir.). *Brahmachari*.

<sup>37</sup> Umesh Mishra and Ganganath Jha (eds.), *Chanddogya Upanishad* (Pune: Oriental Book Agency, 1942), pp. 433–38; Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, pp.66–72.

etymological, textual, and pedagogical narratives and the socio-political conditions within which it was constructed and circulated.

This nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century synthetic Hinduism was a matter of reconsidering what was Hindu and what was Indian, while remaking both. It was a modern rearrangement of caste society in the high time of colonial power. Colonisers and colonised caste elites not only reinterpreted but re-inscribed concepts, ideas, notions, beliefs, and practices to play the new power politics with their own strategies of dominance. Defining and redefining elementary principles of Hinduism was a predominant strategy and thus a continuous activity. Lexicons and gazetteers, consequently, were the most crucial locations of this knowledge politics.<sup>38</sup>

Lexicons were particularly crucial for operationalising concepts on an everyday level in the knowledge-making domain. Their multiple and simultaneous presence in governmental and social arenas was similarly crucial. Defining words, phrases, and concepts was not a naively grammatical act but an intensely political one, performed by colonisers and the colonised caste elites. It was geared towards not only making sense of society but making society itself. Lexicons were not simply devices explaining the usage of a specific word, phrase, or concept, but also an authoritative medium insisting on fixing their particular social meaning for the reader. It was an apparatus to create command over language and to speak the language of command.<sup>39</sup> Even dictionaries edited by colonisers had significant contributions from caste elites in terms of making the words and concepts politically ‘meaningful’. Brahmacharya, projected as the foundational principle of modern synthetic Hinduism and circulated in Marathi sexual narratives, was a part of this epistemological politics. In its etymological making and social circulation, brahmacharya and socio-sexual understandings of

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<sup>38</sup> For caste politics of gazetteers and archives, see Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 81–123.

<sup>39</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.16–57.

it were mutually constitutive. To unpack brahmacharya with the colonial lexicons used by Marathi speakers, then, is crucial to understanding the modern sexual politics around it.

Although brahmacharya was secularly interpreted as the first phase of the Hindu life cycle and was said to have connotations beyond sexual abstinence, it is impossible to separate the caste-sexual meaning from its modern usage. T.J. Molesworth's nineteenth-century milestone Marathi–English dictionary, in an attempt to understand the Marathi sociolinguistic world, defines *brahmacharya* as 'one of the four *ashrams* or states of life through which the Brahmun passes; that from the investiture with the sacrificial thread till marriage'. With this Brahmin-centric understanding, it further describes brahmacharya as 'abstinence from sexual commerce with women; ... for a time, as of those who are about to engage in some extraordinary religious duty'.<sup>40</sup> *Brahmacharya* is originally a Sanskrit word, circulated with the same sense in other Indian languages, so the well-circulated contemporary Sanskrit–English dictionaries much appreciated by Sanskrit learners, teachers, and publishers also help us in decoding its meaning. Monier Williams's Oxford-published Sanskrit–English dictionary, popular among colonial and late colonial Marathi lexicographers,<sup>41</sup> defines *brahmacharya* as the 'sacred study and religious studentship; the condition of a young Brahmin or student in the first phase of life' and 'religious self-restraint, pious austerity, the controlling of the senses, abstinence, chastity and sanctity'. Williams defines *brahmachari* as 'a Brahmin who practices chastity, especially a religious student or young Brahmin in the first *ashrama* or period of his life from the time of his investiture with the sacrificial thread till he marries and

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<sup>40</sup> T.J. Molesworth, *A Dictionary: Marathi and English* (Pune: Shubhada Saraswat Prakashan, [1831] 2005), p. 596.

<sup>41</sup> Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), p. 689; Vaman Shivram Apte, *Sanskrit-English Practical Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, [1912] 1965), pp. iii, iv, viii.

becomes the householder'.<sup>42</sup> English lexicographers were also scholars to be relied on in the world of Marathi sex education. Shivananda cited Williams as an authority who understood Indian culture in his argument about the need for sexual reforms.<sup>43</sup>

These specifically Brahmin- and sexual-abstinence-centric definitions of *brahmacharya* and *brahmachari* were equally dominant in Marathi lexicons. Colonial Marathi men, many of whom commented on and translated Sanskrit texts, also produced their own Sanskrit–English dictionaries. Vaman Shivaram Apte, a well-known nationalist lexicographer and college principal, wrote Sanskrit–English and English–Sanskrit student dictionaries between 1880 and 1890 that were reprinted throughout late colonial times.<sup>44</sup> Using Williams's work for his entries on *brahmacharya*, Apte, in his much-appreciated *Practical Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (1890) defined *brahmacharya* as a 'religious studentship, the life of celibacy passed by a Brahmana boy in studying the Vedas'.<sup>45</sup> It defined *brahmachari* as 'practising continence of chastity' and a 'religious student, a Brahmana in the first order of his life, who continuous to live with his spiritual guide from the investiture with sacred thread and performs the duties pertaining to his order till he settles in life'.<sup>46</sup> Along with this, Laxman Ramchandra Vaidya's *Standard Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (1889) compiled for school and college boys said *brahmacharya* was a Brahmin's first phase of life; Shridhar Ganesh Vaze's *Aryabhushan Marathi–English Dictionary* (1911)

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<sup>42</sup> Williams, *Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, s.v. 'brahmacharya'. P.689

<sup>43</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 66–7.

<sup>44</sup> Apte, *Sanskrit-English Practical Dictionary*; Vaman Shivaram Apte, *The Student's English-Sanskrit Dictionary* (Bombay: Mrs Radhabai Atmaram Sagoon Publishers [1884] 1893), copyright page.

<sup>45</sup> Apte, *Sanskrit-English Practical Dictionary*, p. 705.

<sup>46</sup> Apte, *Sanskrit-English Practical Dictionary*, p. 705.

for schools defined *brahmachari* as a Brahmin from *upanayana* ceremony to marriage.<sup>47</sup>

The word *brahmacharya* is derived from a combination of *brahman* (ब्रह्म, Brahman) + *charya* (चर्य, conduct).<sup>48</sup> As most modern dictionaries spelled *brahma* and *brahman* (ब्रह्म and ब्रह्मन्) with a Brahmin caste context, the combined noun's definition as 'Brahmin's code of conduct' was an obvious extension in its early-twentieth-century meaning. Spelling out and writing *charya* as an 'everyday routine' has always been an upper-caste activity in Hindu society. The terms *dina charya* (दिन चर्या, daily routine) and *rutu charya* (ऋतू चर्या, seasonal routine), from the fourth-century text *Charak Samhita* (चरक संहिता, Charaka's code of conduct), were well circulated in late colonial Ayurvedic discourse as known upper-caste routines. Such routines spelled out the boundaries and markers of the varna and caste-cultural spheres, either to be followed or not to be transgressed, confirming *brahmacharya*'s position in the Brahmin cultural sphere.

Furthermore, *brahmacharya* also meant the oath of sexual abstinence (*shapatha*, शपथ) taken by the Brahmin religious student, to be followed as a rule (*vrata*, व्रत). Even *brahmaskhalan* (ब्रह्मस्खलन), the antonym of *brahmacharya*, was defined in these popular lexicons as 'breach of the observance (whether as a vow or as an appertaining personal duty) of perpetual abstinence from woman; —used esp. of the Brahman'.<sup>49</sup> Beyond this, the lexicons explained the root of the word *brahman* (ब्रह्म or ब्रह्मन्), with its dominant Brahmin meaning in theory and

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<sup>47</sup> Lakshman Ramchandra Vaidya, *The Standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary: For the Use of Schools and Colleges* (Bombay: Mrs Radhabai Atmaram Sagoon Publishers, 1889), p. 513; S.G. Vaze, *The Aryabhushan School Dictionary: Marathi-English* (Pune: Aryabhushan Press, 1911), p. 427.

<sup>48</sup> Apte, *Sanskrit-English Practical Dictionary*, p. 429.

<sup>49</sup> Molesworth, *Dictionary*, p. 596.

practice.<sup>50</sup> Most dictionaries made by Marathi speakers were for students.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, Sanskrit–English and Marathi–English dictionaries frequently used sexually charged words like *self-restraint*, *celibacy*, *chastity*, *abstinence*, and *continence* to explain the meaning of *brahmacharya* beyond religion. Yet in the English–Sanskrit or English–Marathi dictionaries made by the Marathis, none of these sexually charged English terms had *brahmacharya* in their definitions.<sup>52</sup> English was used to explain *brahmacharya* but was not seen potent enough to conceive the essence of Brahmin *brahmacharya*. The late colonial Marathi student learning Sanskrit, English, and Marathi together was most likely an upper-caste male<sup>53</sup> whose subjectivity with these political makings, was an important link connecting the dictionary as knowledge device to *brahmacharya*, the phase of learning and sexual abstinence of a Brahmin.

This is not to say that modern Brahmins were following the principle of *brahmacharya*, but that it was spelled out and understood as a Brahmin category. Sexual abstinence was a caste- and gender-influenced idea that speculated about morality. Even though *brahmacharya*’s definition in the *dharmashastras* was applicable to the upper three varnas, it was not to the fourth—the Shudras. (At the same time, as noted in chapter 1, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Maharashtra witnessed a debate about whether any upper varna but the Brahmins even existed.) Nineteenth-century English and Brahmin lexicographers were thus unanimous in identifying *brahmacharya* with Brahmin practices.

Beyond explicit caste references, the Brahmin etymology of *brahmacharya* also lies in its definition as religious study and its exclusive association of learning with the Vedas. These non-secular definitions were epistemically part of early-twentieth-century Maharashtra, where more than 60

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<sup>50</sup> Molesworth, *Dictionary*, p. 596.

<sup>51</sup> Apte, *English-Sanskrit Practical Dictionary*, p. iii.

<sup>52</sup> Apte, *English-Sanskrit Practical Dictionary*, pp. 2–3, 48, 71, 72, 364.

<sup>53</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 78.

per cent of school children and 80 per cent of college students were Brahmin.<sup>54</sup> Classical religious education, too, was a Brahmin monopoly in colonial times. Sanskrit was practically inaccessible to the lower castes.<sup>55</sup> The brahmachari was part of a society in which, despite social reformers' and anti-caste movements' efforts, lower-caste students were denied entry into schools or made unwelcome.<sup>56</sup> For Marathi, Sanskrit, and English lexicographers, the straightforward linking of Brahminism with brahmacharya was an obvious act. In turn they also drew connections with morality, education, and sexuality at the conceptual level—which was an attempt to regulate all three domains with the force of caste. With this lexuality, ubiquitous in colonial and late colonial Maharashtra, brahmacharya was further defined and deployed sexually.

### ***The Sexual Making of Brahmacharya***

If the lexical exercise of defining brahmacharya points towards caste and sexual concerns in the everyday circulation of language, constructing the sexual core of its meaning was central to the late colonial sex narratives. The narratives of its Marathi architects, Shivananda, N.S. Phadke, and R.D. Karve, revolved around semen conservation. In contrast to Indian nationalist formulations, these writings sought to rationalise the sexual sensibilities of Marathi men. Their agendas at times were perceived to conflict; their claims to modernity, based on rationalising sexuality, were explicit and sharp. Shivananda and Phadke believed in the relevance of brahmacharya to modern Marathi men's lives, whereas Karve dismissed it as irrational and unscientific.

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<sup>54</sup> Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>55</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Arvind Ganachari, *Nationalism and Social Reform in Colonial Situation* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2005) pp. 235–36; Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar*, p. 13.

Shivananda was obsessed by the thought of seminal conservation; as his book title suggests, for him brahmacharya was life and seminal wastage was equivalent to death.<sup>57</sup> He insisted on this throughout his writings. For example:

[A] brahmachari is one whose conduct is studious according to the Vedas or it [brahmacharya] is an unmarried studentship for the studies of the Vedas. One who practice this is a brahmachari. These are some other high classical definitions of brahmacharya and brahmachari . . . but *viryadharanam brahmacharyam!* [which means] Conservation of semen is ‘the’ [real] meaning of brahmacharya . . . without this, worldly as well as otherworldly deeds are difficult and futile. Brahmacharya is the original cause of all truths and sorrows.<sup>58</sup>

वेदांजे नुसार ज्याचे स्वाध्याययुक्त पवित्र आचरण तो ब्रह्मचारी किंवा वेद विद्या अध्ययनार्थ जे अविवाहित विद्यार्थी व्रत, ते जो आचरतो तो ब्रह्मचारी. ह्या दुसऱ्याही ब्रह्मचर्य व ब्रह्मचारी यांच्या उच्च व्याख्या आहेत . . . हे तर खरेच तथापि सामान्यतः वीर्यधारणं ब्रह्मचर्यम्! वीर्यधारण हेच ब्रह्मचर्य होय. ब्रह्मचर्यावाचून प्रपंच व परमार्थ दोन्ही कष्टप्रद व व्यर्थ आहेत. ब्रह्मचर्याचे सर्व सुखदुःखाचे आदी कारण आहे.

Without denying the importance of the prevalent Vedic education and the Brahmin-centric definitions, Shivananda tried to entrench the sexual and particularly seminal conservation as the real core of brahmacharya’s everyday meaning. This totalising focus on semen necessarily came with legitimisation. As the most versatile of all sex educators, Shivananda referenced ancient, medieval, and modern Brahminical literature to express his thoughts. He invoked the ancient *smritis*, Upanishads, Brahman-Granthas, Mahabharata, Bhagvad Gita, and Angushtha Gita to make semen sacred. Yet he invoked the seventeenth-century Brahmin moralist Ramadasa, the early-twentieth-century *vedanti*

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<sup>57</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), cover.

<sup>58</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 20.



spiritualist Gulabrao Maharaj, and the gymnasium-culture propagator Manik Rao to condemn sensuality and emphasise seminal conservation.<sup>59</sup> The *smritis* were particularly important to his definition of brahmacharya. To construct the central problematic of *virya nasha* (वीर्य नाश, seminal loss), he used Yajnyavalkya, Manu, and Daksha's *smritis*:

कार्येन मनसा वाचा सर्वावस्थाषु सर्वदा!  
सर्वत्र मैथुन त्यागो ब्रह्मचर्यम प्रचक्षते!!<sup>60</sup>

Invoking the above lines from Yajnyavalkya, he defined brahmacharya as the avoidance of sexual engagement in all possible places and at all possible times, not only in action but also in imagination and speech.

He made this sexual meaning even more explicit by citing the *ashta maithun tyaga* (अष्ट मैथुन त्याग, avoiding eight sources of sexual arousal) from *Dakshasmriti*:

स्मरणं कीर्तनं केलिः प्रेक्षणम् गुह्यं भाषणं! संकल्पोऽध्यवसायायश्च क्रिया नीरवृत्तीरेवा!!  
एतन्मैथुनामष्टांगनं प्रवदन्ति मनीषीणः ! विपरितां ब्रह्मचर्यम् एतदेवाऽष्टलक्षणं!!<sup>61</sup>

Shivananda included this text to condemn of male sexual desire for women through actions such as remembrance, chanting, performance, staring, confidential gossiping, occupying the same seat, sinful determination and attempt. He particularly invoked Manu in warning against solitary conversations with women:

Shri Manu Maharaj says conversations in solitude should be possibly avoided even if it is with your own mother, sister or daughter. This is because [sexual] organs are powerful enough to

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<sup>59</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 22–23.

<sup>61</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 23.

let down even the wise men and the rishi-munis [Hindu sacred men].<sup>62</sup>

श्री मनू महाराज म्हणतात स्वतः ची प्रत्यक्ष माता बहीण व मुलगी असली तरी त्यांच्याशी देखील एकांतात सहसा कधी गोष्टी करू नये कारण मोठमोठ्या शहाण्यांना आणि ऋषीमुनींना देखील तोंडघशी पडण्यास हि इंद्रिये समर्थ आहेत.

Invoking Sanskrit texts worked to construct and legitimise the concept's modern relevance.

N.S. Phadke's eugenic writing was another site of seminal concern in late colonial Maharashtra. While elaborating brahmacharya's suitability for eugenic birth control, Phadke also went back to the ancient *smritis*. In appreciating the progressive nature and eugenic concerns of the Brahmin scriptures, he particularly eulogised Manu and Yajnyavalkya for understanding the importance of semen conservation:

Physical strength, knowledge, life expectancy, and charm grow only due to seminal enhancement. And seminal enhancement does not happen without brahmacharya. It is because of this reason that brahmacharya has been praised in the Chandogya Upanishada, Manu *smriti* and Yajnyavalkya *smriti*. The creators of the *smritis* were of the opinion that a person can and should follow *brahmacharya vrata* not only before but even after marriage.<sup>63</sup>

शरीर सामर्थ्य, ज्ञान, आयुष्य आणि ओज हि सर्व वीर्य वृद्धीनेच वाढतात आणि वीर्य वृद्धी ब्रह्मचर्या वाचून होत नाही. या कारणासाठी ब्रह्मचर्याची प्रशंसा छांदोग्यादि उपनिषदात व मनू याज्ञवल्क्य इत्यादी स्मृतीत सापडते. विवाहापूर्वी मनुष्याने ब्रह्मचारी राहिले पाहिजे इतकेच नव्हे तर विवाह नंतरही ब्रह्मचर्य व्रताचे आचरण शक्य व आवश्यक आहे असे स्मृतिकारांचे मत होते.

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<sup>62</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 23.

<sup>63</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 833.

Both Shivananda and Phadke's drawing on Yadnyavalkya, Manu and Daksha's *Smritis* signifies the importance not only of the scriptures in general but also the *smriti* literature in particular to the Marathi public sphere—this was a political remaking of sexuality, connecting it with modern Brahmin textuality. It was also fundamentally related to sex educators' attempts to rationalise these texts for the late colonial times.

*Smriti* literature and the Manu *smritis* in particular, not just in ancient but also in modern Hinduism, fundamentally detail the caste-based regulation of sexual behaviour, among many other things. Written as instructions to Brahmins and Kshatriyas, they elaborate on and emphasise endo-caste sexual relations to defend and re-enforce varna divisions by maintaining caste boundaries through the policing of sexual relations. Condemning and penalising inter-caste exchanges, particularly *pratiloma* (प्रतिलोम, union of lower-caste man and upper-caste woman) inter-caste sexual interactions was an important aspect.<sup>64</sup> Manu argued that if a *shudra* man was found involved in sexual interaction with a Brahmin woman, he deserved to be castrated and killed.<sup>65</sup> The *smritis* insisted on the strict division of an upper-caste men and women's life into four *ashramas*; this was also part of the same regulation against transgressing caste. The phrase combining *varna* and *ashrama* makes *varna ashrama dharma* (वर्णाश्रम धर्म), which is commonly used in Hinduism to denote the caste-bound duty of an individual. In this worldview, brahmacharya was a regulated phase of life, idealised for the upper castes in general and Brahmins in particular as a method of maintaining varna and caste divisions. Brahmacharya's scriptural applicability to three upper varnas in colonial and late colonial times was a contemporary political fact rather than a classical religious idea as we will see below.

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<sup>64</sup> Pandit Girijaprasad Dwiwedi (ed.), *Manusmriti: Manava Dharma Shastra* (Hindi) (Lucknow: Naval Kishor Press, 1917), pp. 72–73.

<sup>65</sup> Dwiwedi (ed.), *Manusmriti*, pp. 306, 309.

However, Marathi sex educators were citing the *smritis* not only to illuminate individual sexual abstinence, but to understand the Hindu life cycle and society. Shivananda and Phadke, in their efforts to articulate brahmacharya, demonstrated their belief in the social structure explained in the *smritis*—one divided along the lines of *varna* and *ashrama*.<sup>66</sup> The protection and practice of *varna* and *ashrama* were fundamental to Shivananda's conceptions of both brahmacharya and marriage as two life phases or *ashramas*, the former of which was the basis of all four ashramas.<sup>67</sup> To explain this link, citing Manu, he said,

After learning respectively three, two, or one veda . . . and only after acquiring the strength to bear the burden of domesticity the 'complete brahmachari' with his guru's order and sanction should enter the married phase. In other words [he] should aim for reproduction the ritualistic way, by accepting a suitable young wife as per the rules of *shastra*.<sup>68</sup>

क्रमशः तीन दोन अथवा एक वेद पूर्णपणे प्राप्त करून घेतल्या नंतरच अविलुप्त म्हणजे अखंड ब्रह्मचाऱ्याने गुरु ची आज्ञा घेऊन नंतर गृहस्थाश्रमाचा स्वीकार करावा म्हणजे विवाहबद्ध होऊन यथा शास्त्र यथाविधी प्रजोत्पादन करावे.

In revised versions of the same narrative he added the phrase *supraja nirman* (सुप्रजा निर्माण, quality reproduction), generally used to denote eugenics in twentieth-century Marathi.<sup>69</sup> Such instructions also came with the categorical mention of the appropriate age for religious learning in the life of a Brahmin

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<sup>66</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, 833; Shivananda, *Brahmacharya* (1922), p. 10; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 51–55.

<sup>67</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), pp. 31–32; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 53.

<sup>68</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 28–29.

<sup>69</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), p. 34.

boy.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, he converted this explanation into a warning by using Manu in the latter editions of his book on brahmacharya:

Those who destroy this *ashrama dharma* in reverse are destroyed by the *dharma*. As against this, one who loyally protects the *ashrama dharma* in all possible ways and in all times is protected by the *dharma*. This is Shri Manu's firm conviction.<sup>71</sup>

जो या आश्रम धर्माचा नाश करतो त्याचा तो धर्म देखील उलट नाश करतो. आणि जो या आश्रम धर्माचे निष्ठेने रक्षण करतो त्याचे तो धर्मही सर्व प्रकारे व सर्वकाळी पूर्णपणे रक्षण करतो. असा श्री मनु चा सिद्धांत आहे.

Similarly, for N.S. Phadke, *smriti* literature was a reference to the ancient Aryan peoples' understanding of eugenic low productivity. In his opinion, such references reflect the ancients' eugenic intentions, which is what made brahmacharya the basis for all ashramas:

The authors of the *smritis* were convinced of brahmacharya's strength and wisdom-giving and life-enhancing potential. They therefore have ordered [us] to spend the first phase of life in practising brahmacharya. [Beyond this] *grihastha* and the further *ashramas* are optional; but brahmacharya is not optional in that sense. Our *shastras* clearly mention that without practising it [brahmacharya], the further *ashramas* cannot be opted for.<sup>72</sup>

ब्रह्मचर्य हे बळ व बुद्धी देणारे असून आयुष्याची वृद्धी करणारे आहे अशी स्मृतिकारांची खात्री होती म्हणूनच आयुष्याचा पहिला भाग ब्रह्मचर्यपालनात घालवावा अशी त्यांची आज्ञा आहे. गृहस्थादी पुढचे आश्रम ऐच्छिक आहेत पण ब्रह्मचर्य तसा ऐच्छिक नाही.

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<sup>70</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 28–29.

<sup>71</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, p. 833.

तो केल्या शिवाय पुढील आश्रम स्वीकारताच येत नाहीत अशी आमची शास्त्रे स्पष्टपणे सांगतात.

While Shivananda and Phadke were trying to make brahmacharya ‘meaningful’, R.D. Karve dismissed it as meaningless. As he projected himself as a nonreligious rationalist, establishing the relevance of religious ideas and concepts was not a concern for him. On the contrary, he defined *brahmacharya* as a ‘boycott on sexual desire’ (*kamawasane vril bahishkar*, कामवासने वरील बहिष्कार);<sup>73</sup> for him it simply meant sexual abstinence. Despite criticising other sex educators, brahmacharya believers, and Hindu mythology for this ‘boycott on sexuality’, Karve primarily blamed Western (Victorian) morality for its modern construction:

Many orthodox and so-called experts based on their religiosity and moralism have emphasised this issue while writing on brahmacharya. After impotent European morality came to India, it is not surprising to see such books overflowing.

कित्येक जुनाट मतांच्या तथाकथित विद्वानांनी धर्मबाजी च्या आणि नितीबाजी च्या जोरावर या विषयावर ग्रंथ लिहून ब्रह्मचार्यावर जोर दिलेले आढळतो आणि युरोपातून क्लीबनीती इकडे पसरल्यावर अशा ग्रंथांना ऊत आल्यास नवल नाही.<sup>74</sup>

Karve analysed the modern trajectory of ‘the boycott on sexual desire’ and considered Christianity as the world leader in propagating and supporting it.<sup>75</sup> In his criticism of medieval and modern Christianity followed by other religions, including Hinduism, Karve declared brahmacharya to be religious foolishness. He interpreted it as the result of ignorance and called it *brahmacharyache khul*

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<sup>73</sup> SS, year 21, issue 6 (December 1947), pp. 119–24.

<sup>74</sup> SS, year 21, issue 4 (October 1947), pp. 71–75; SS, year 21, issue 5 (November 1947), pp. 95–99; Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>75</sup> SS, year 21, issue 11 (May 1948), p. 239.

(ब्रह्मचर्याचे खूळ, the madness of brahmacharya).<sup>76</sup> In espousing this understanding, Karve ignored the caste-scriptural politics of its making, ubiquitous around him through the writings of his contemporaries Shivananda and Phadke. Doing so was not a matter of secularisation but of political silence, as discussed later in this chapter.

Karve stayed silent on Brahminical legitimacy as Shivananda and Phadke's narratives circulated, and the Brahmin scriptures remained central to modern Marathi understandings of brahmacharya. Beyond the dominant sexual versions, Bhave's *Vaivahik Jivan* connected brahmacharya to a modern understanding of Manu and *varna ashrama*,<sup>77</sup> while P.S. Sane's moralist narrative was showered with references from the *dharmashastras* describing brahmacharya as fundamental to the Hindu social structure.<sup>78</sup> Even Gandhi's much-discussed conception of brahmacharya remained within the Brahminical scriptural *varna ashrama* fold. *Varna ashrama* hence was not just a reference to reviving the *smriti* but a frame for understanding the late colonial social structure.

The sexual narratives of brahmacharya, thus lexically defined and scripturally legitimised, stressed the importance of Brahmin textuality in the making of its modern anatomy. In early-twentieth-century Maharashtra, Brahminical texts and scriptures became the locations of social conflict—and brahmacharya writings were not removed from this politics. Denouncing the Brahmin scriptures was a consistent characteristic of non-Brahmin and so-called untouchables' resistance against Brahmins in Maharashtra.<sup>79</sup> Scriptures were

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<sup>76</sup> Karve, *Samajswasthyatil Nivdak Lekh*, pp. 107–13.

<sup>77</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> Sane, *Bharatiya Sanskriti*, pp. 149–57.

<sup>79</sup> Dhananjay Keer and S.G. Malshe (eds.), *Mahatma Phule Samagra Wangmay* [Collected Works of Jotirao Phule] (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, [1969] 2006), pp. 139, 149; Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Yanche Bahishkrut Bharat ani Mook Nayak* [Ambedkar's *Bahishkrut Bharat* and *Mook Nayak*] (Mumbai: Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra Publication, 1990), pp. 157–59.

central to the Brahmin/non-Brahmin caste conflict popularly known as the ‘*vedokta* controversy’ (वेदोक्त प्रकरण), in which Brahmins denied Kshatriya status to the Marathas and called all non-Brahmins Shudras. The controversy, one of the most crucial points in the Brahmin–non-Brahmin debate, periodically flared up between 1834 and 1930,<sup>80</sup> reaching its peaks in 1902 and 1922. Since modern Marathi Brahminism was known for its archival missions to construct histories,<sup>81</sup> texts and scriptures were contested sites for creating Brahmin and non-Brahmin legacies of the ‘medieval Marathi royalty’ crucial to the making and breaking of modern caste in Maharashtra. The understanding that only the upper three varnas, but not the Shudras, were allowed to practice brahmacharya was coupled with the colonial Brahmin rhetoric that only two varnas existed in the modern times of *kaliyuga*—Brahmins and Shudras. The point here is not to lament Shudras not being theoretically allowed access to this practice, but to emphasise the caste politics involved in making modern concepts and in making the concepts modern.

However, the scriptures, in particular the *smritis*, were not just a dormant Brahmin code of conduct but part of everyday practice in terms of prescribing penalties to Dalits for overruling *smriti* orders in Maharashtra. B.R. Ambedkar, defending the 1927 burning of the *Manusmriti*, explained in *Bahishkrut Bharata* (बहिष्कृत भारत) that the atrocious social practice of untouchability prevalent in coastal Maharashtra districts was a sign of the *Manusmriti*’s vibrant everyday presence.<sup>82</sup> From *Manusmriti* burning to the temple-entry movement, the Dalit challenge to Brahminism raised a crisis for Brahmin textuality and scriptural

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<sup>80</sup> Rosalind O’Hanlon, ‘The Social Worth of Scribes: Brahmins, Kayasthas and the Social Order in Early Modern India’, *Economic and Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (December 2010), p. 572; Y.D. Phadke, *Shahu Chatrapati ani Lokmanya* [Shahu Chatrapati and Lokmanya (Tilak)] (Pune: Shree Vidya Prakashan, 1986), pp. 39–60.

<sup>81</sup> Marathi historian V.K. Rajwade published his work on the ‘Sources of Maratha History’ before 1926. V.K. Rajwade, *Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane* [Sources of Maratha History] (Pune: Chitrashala Press, [1889] 1909).

<sup>82</sup> Moon, *Ambedkar Yanche Bahishkrut Bharat*, pp. 158–59.



superiority. The sexual narratives of brahmacharya, written, revised and reprinted between 1920 and late 1950s with a scriptural emphasis on the *smritis* were simultaneous with this crisis of Brahmin textuality. This simultaneity was not an accident.

In the late colonial crisis of Brahminism in general and of Brahmin textuality in particular, defining brahmacharya, I argue, was a double move of political legitimisation. Scriptural legitimacy provided the Brahminical validity needed to transform seminal sexual imaginations into a social concern. In reverse, sexual constructions of brahmacharya legitimised Brahmin textuality while giving it a scientific veneer and a sacred status—through sexual writings on brahmacharya.

Seminal understandings shaped by caste and sexuality were thus implicit and explicit in lexical and sexual brahmacharya narratives. Even though individual writers understood and explained the scriptural legitimacy of seminal imaginations in different ways, this concern with semen was core to all of them. Beyond defining the concept, these sexual narratives engaged in converting brahmacharya from a defining religious principle into a bio-moral argument. Sexual writings on brahmacharya were not just individual literary endeavours: their dissemination was a political deployment in late colonial times.

### **III. Argumentative Brahmacharyas**

Interwar Maharashtra saw three different constructions of brahmacharya: nationalist, rationalist, and utilitarian. Through these constructions, brahmacharya was made into a social subject of sexual reforms. Shivananda's model demanded following brahmacharya as an urgent national requirement. R.D. Karve dismissed its relevance through his claimed rationalist approach to sexual science. Phadke neither accepted it or nor condemned it, instead proposing to place brahmacharya in relation to the modern 'scientific' eugenic thought. Thus, the different formulations of brahmacharya were not simple moralist enchantments with the greatness of Hinduism; they laid the foundation of late colonial Marathi sexual modernity.

### *Shivananda's Nationalist Solution*

The most popular thought on brahmacharya available to Marathi speakers was that of Shivananda, as we saw in chapter 2. The still-popular *Brahmacharya* tract was even published in north India—translated into Hindi—at its peak.<sup>83</sup> Legitimised by Brahmin Hinduism, Shivananda's brahmacharya projected nationalism and addressing the total decline of the Indian man as its top priority. His tract began and ended with appeals for nationalism, arguing that 'seeking pleasure or wasting semen is slavery, whereas being full of semen is independence' (*bhogwilas kinwa veerya heenata hich gulami ani veeryavatta hech swatantrya*, भोगविलास किंवा वीर्यहीनता हीच गुलामी आणि वीर्यवत्ता हेच स्वातंत्र्य).<sup>84</sup> While presenting his thoughts as an appeal from a Hindu ascetic, his narrative invoked nationalist concern with semen to draw attention to the decline of masculinity:

Other countries today are enjoying independence and ruling over us [literally, 'as per their whims'] because of the power of brahmacharya that they have. This is also totally our fault . . . power, glory, happiness, health, strength, independence and religion are all based on brahmacharya . . . all other remedies than brahmacharya are meaningless.<sup>85</sup>

दुसरे देश मात्र ब्रह्मचर्याचे बळावर आज स्वातंत्र्य भोगीत आहेत व आपल्यावर वाटेल तसे राज्य चालवत आहेत. हा देखील अपराध सर्वस्वी आपलाच आहे. बळ, तेज, आरोग्य, सुख, सामर्थ्य, स्वातंत्र्य व धर्म संपूर्ण ब्रह्मचार्यावरच स्थित आहेत . . . ब्रह्मचर्य शिवाय इतर सर्व उपाय व्यर्थ आहेत.

Shivananda guaranteed independence 'if the male remains as a semen-conserving bachelor till twenty-five'<sup>86</sup> and made brahmacharya the source of all power by

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<sup>83</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hi Jivan Hai*.

<sup>84</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 9–10.

<sup>86</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 4.

quoting the English line ‘Victory goes to the strong and only the strong lives long’.<sup>87</sup>

In his social-Darwinist zeal, the thirty-year-old sex educator was concerned about the decline of the young Indian male in his prime (between the ages of thirteen and forty-eight) —unmarried, desiring to marry, and married.<sup>88</sup> He chalked out fifty-two symptoms that he said resulted from the loss of semen and defined it *virya nshachi lakshane* (वीर्य नाशची लक्षणे, symptoms of seminal loss).<sup>89</sup>

The symptoms of decline included bodily reactions such as sweating, breathlessness, coughing, trembling, dark circles around the eyes, and pimples.<sup>90</sup> Ways semen could be wasted included masturbation, wet dreams, thinning of semen, frequent urination, syphilis, and gonorrhoea, as well as behavioural expressions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, stress, and memory loss.<sup>91</sup> Shivananda underlined the situations he perceived to cause sensuous feelings and sexual arousal, which included watching cinema or *tamasha* (तमाशा, a type of folk dance performed by low-caste women), reading sensuous novels, listening to songs, lingering around women, enjoying loneliness, and looking at or talking to women. Linking all these, he wrote,

Today we can see lakhs and crores of household men, women, and children in society who are destroying the life-giving house of brahmacharya with the dynamite of lust. . . . We can see tremendous dullness on the youngsters’ faces. . . There are family men and youths of twenty to twenty-five years—looking like semen-less old men ubiquitously seen everywhere, having grown

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<sup>87</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 29.

<sup>89</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 11–92.

<sup>90</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 12, 14, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 12–13.

white hair, wearing spectacles, whose waist has no strength, whose chest has gone in, faces wrinkled, who have become lusty dogs, those who have turned themselves into skeletons thanks to seminal waste, and those who have become slaves of the foreigners . . . Ah! This seems to be a really horrifying and sad picture.<sup>92</sup>

सर्व जीवनाधारभूत अशा ब्रह्मचर्यरूपी घराला विषयरूपी सुरंगाने उडवणारे व आग लावणारे आज लाखो करोडो स्त्री पुरुष व बालकबालिका समाज मध्ये सर्वत्र दिसत आहेत. . . . तरुणांच्या चेहऱ्यावर भयंकर उदासीनता व प्रेतकळा दिसत आहे. . . . केस पिकलेले, चष्मे लागलेले, कमर तुटलेले, छातीत गेलेले . . . तोंडावर सुरकुत्या पडलेले, विषयांचे कुत्रे होऊन बसलेले, . . . परकीयांचे गुलाम बनलेले, भयंकर वीर्य नाशामुळे हाडांचा सापळा बनलेले २०-२५ वर्षांचे निर्वीर्य बुड्डे व ग्रिहस्थाश्रमीच आज जिकडे पाहावे तिकडे दिसत आहेत! अरेरे! हे दृश्य फारच भयंकर व खेदजनक दिसत आहे.

Later editions of *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* also called sex with animals and same-sex relations *atinindya maithun prakar* (अतिनिन्द्य मैथुन प्रकार, the most condemnable sexual acts).<sup>93</sup>

Theorising *virya nasha* and *virya vatta* (वीर्यवत्ता, seminal conservation) ultimately spoke of loss of confidence in a man. *Virya hinata* (वीर्य हीनता)<sup>94</sup> means the condition of ‘seminal loss’, and also expressed in the language of *purushartha hinata* (पुरुषार्थ हीनता, lacking manliness) and *kartutwa heenata* (कर्तृत्व हीनता, decline in social performance).<sup>95</sup> While he considered people with weak and low-quality semen (*hina virya*, हीन वीर्य) unfit to perform in the world, Shivananda connected men’s sexual performance in the conjugal space with their value to domesticity

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<sup>92</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 10–11.

<sup>93</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), pp. 37–44.

<sup>94</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 26.

<sup>95</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 2.

and to the outer world.<sup>96</sup> He also linked this to nationalism: people with destroyed bodies were thus declared unfit to serve the nation.<sup>97</sup> Such narrative of decline underlining brahmacharya challenges Partha Chatterjee's idea of segregated public and private spheres in colonial India, as it connects them with seminal concerns.<sup>98</sup>

Shivananda's bestseller created an image of the Indian male and his psychosomatic decline to lay down the foundations of brahmacharya, legitimised by Brahminism. This perceived socio-political decline was sexually mapped onto the young male body through the idea of seminal loss. Sensuality was thus pathologised to anatomise the socio-political decline in the male body.

If sensuality was the psycho-sexual diagnosis—or problem—brahmacharya was the somato-sexual remedy—or answer—to the decline. In response to the wastage of semen, Shivananda proposed *virya rakshanache ramabana upaya* (वीर्य रक्षणाचे रामबाण उपाय, perfect solutions for semen conservation).<sup>99</sup> This was a systematic code of conduct and 'dos and don'ts' in the form of thirty *niyama* (नियम, regulations) that served allegedly declining male corporeality in two ways: first, the principles of ideal moral behaviour would purify the mind and thereby the body; second, the solutions insisted on reforming a man's everyday engagements with his body. Moral behaviour included striving for true and righteous goals, uncorrupted vision, and inculcating the wish to live a simple, sacred, religious, and uncorrupted life.<sup>100</sup> Coupled with these were measures such as confidence-building, oaths of determination, exercise, and meditation.<sup>101</sup> Shivananda's methods of shaping everyday bodily practices also

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<sup>96</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 26.

<sup>97</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 120.

<sup>99</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 37–92.

<sup>100</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 37–52.

<sup>101</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 73–87.

included instructions on vegetarianism, non-addiction, bedtime, bodily discharges, bathing, genital hygiene, avoiding solitude, and wearing wooden shoes (*khadau*, खाडाऊ) instead of leather.<sup>102</sup>

He elaborated on each *ramabana upaya*, each particular rule, with detailed instructions. The instructions for bathing and cleaning genitals or using a loin cloth<sup>103</sup> were accompanied by other important rules that spelled out not only what was ideal but warned against the evil side effects of ‘non-ideal’ behaviour. He also recommended ‘sacred reading’ and ‘pious vision’, not only recommending what to read and watch but criticising sensuous novels, drama, and cinema.<sup>104</sup> Bedtime instructions detailed the ideal place, atmosphere, positions, and amount of light for sleep, along with what material to use as bedding and how hard it should be. The text then went into sacred thoughts to have before and after sleep.<sup>105</sup> These somato-sexual instructions inseparably blended morality and religion.

Thus constructed, Shivananda’s code attempted to control and regulate both macro and micro conditions of men’s everyday operational spaces and mechanisms. They were also locations for understanding the caste-sexual making of brahmacharya. In the process of construction, caste was sometimes mentioned directly; in most places, it was expressed by other means.<sup>106</sup> A regulation about good character suggested avoiding *vishaya drushti dosha* (विषय दृष्टी दोष, corrupt vision): i.e., not to be impressed by the fair skin of a woman. Shivananda says, ‘Such people are like the Chambhars [leather-working caste], who are lusty for

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<sup>102</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 57–58, 66–70, 72, 74.

<sup>103</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 56, 66–67, 70.

<sup>104</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 55–56.

<sup>105</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 69–70.

<sup>106</sup> M.S.S. Pandian, ‘One Step Outside Modernity’, in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Caste in Modern India: A Reader* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2014), pp. 362–64.

leather'<sup>107</sup> (चामड्यावर आसक्त होणारा चांभारच होय). In the metaphorical mention of a so-called untouchable Chambhar, highlighted in the original text with Marathi expressions of disgust like *chhi, chhi*, the author clearly uses the 'otherness' of the lower castes for the purpose of constructing the upper-caste sexual self. Shivananda's narrative often uses references indicating caste, such as Chandal (चांडाळ), Chambhar (चांभार), Khatik (खाटीक), and Kasai (कसाई),<sup>108</sup> to point out the sexual indecency of the 'Other'—the one who does not practice brahmacharya and who is not a brahmachari.

Beyond these direct references, caste appeared by other means in Shivananda's discussions of regulations and rhetoric of cleanliness, sacredness, and purity. Cleanliness was a public issue connected to caste hierarchies in Maharashtra, just as in the rest of India. Not only were manual scavengers considered unclean, even their sight was believed to pollute 'respectable' citizens. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Nasik municipality in Maharashtra even regulated scavengers' work schedules to minimise this inauspiciousness.<sup>109</sup> On a related note, Shivananda's rules on cleaning the body instruct the brahmachari, 'While defecating, one should not even look at the excreta. Even the sight of it pollutes the mind' (शौचाकडे मुळी पाहू देखील नाही. त्याच्या दर्शनाने देखील मन मालिन होते).<sup>110</sup> Purity, caste, and cleanliness were inseparable public and private issues. For example, 'well water' was mostly an upper-caste privilege in colonial Maharashtra. Despite mentioning river and sea bathing as good sources of cleanliness, the instructions mentioned, 'well water is the best for bathing in all seasons' (सर्व ऋतूत स्नानाकरिता विहिरीचे पाणी सर्वोत्तम).<sup>111</sup> The prescribed

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<sup>107</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 79.

<sup>108</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchit Santati*, pp. 152–53.

<sup>109</sup> Omprakash Valmiki, *Safai Devta* [Goddess of Cleanliness], trans. by Satappa Sawant (Pune: Sion Publications, 2011), p. 62.

<sup>110</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 66.

<sup>111</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 66.

bath in well water was a necessary ritual, emphasised with recitations from *Manusmriti*.<sup>112</sup> Even the mentions of water storage and consumption using copper pots, the accessories of religious rituals, can be read as caste references shaping the sexual notion of brahmacharya.<sup>113</sup>

Semen conservation was a way of talking about caste that appeared most evidently in Shivananda's regulations on food, considered crucial to semen creation and enhancement. He begins by citing Manu.<sup>114</sup> He added further categories, originating in the Bhagvad Gita (भगवद्गीता), of *satwik* (सात्त्विक, holy), *rajasi* (राजसी, royal), and *tamasi* (तामसी, evil) food.<sup>115</sup> Vegetarianism was *satwik*, nonvegetarian *rajasi*, and food that was nonvegetarian, stale, mouldy, and spoiled was *tamasi*. Such categorised food consumption was then linked with semen creation and with the consuming man's nature and mentality (मनुष्य जसा भोजन करतो तास तो बनतो).<sup>116</sup> The narrative of brahmacharya not only classified foods hierarchically, but also the people eating them. Linking food to intelligence, Shivananda also mentions that 'holy and less food consumption makes the intellect holy. Such a person can easily practice brahmacharya' (सात्त्विक अल्पाहाराने मनुष्याची बुद्धी आपोआप सात्त्विक बनते आणि मनुष्य सहज ब्रह्मचर्याचे पालन करू शकतो).<sup>117</sup> His descriptions of bad, lazy, dull, and unintelligent people linked these traits to eating stale, fermented, spoiled, and leftover food.<sup>118</sup> He described such consumers as sinful (*papatma*, पापात्मा), cruel (*krur*, क्रूर) and demonic (*rakshasa*,

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<sup>112</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 57.

<sup>113</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 64–65.

<sup>114</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 58.

<sup>115</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 61.

<sup>116</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 60.

<sup>117</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 60.

<sup>118</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 61.



राक्षस). *Tamasi* food was seen as destroying *dharma buddhi* (धर्म बुद्धी, religious wisdom).<sup>119</sup>

Popular thought in the twentieth century identified Brahmins with vegetarianism, non- Brahmins with nonvegetarians, and so-called untouchables with consuming stale, spoiled, and leftover food.<sup>120</sup> Given this, Shivananda's brahmachari was a strict vegetarian. Also, as religious wisdom was understood to protect *varna ashrama*, Shivananda's ideal was the *satwik* brahmachari and his 'Other' the consumer of *tamasi* leftovers. This caste-shaped understanding was at the root of linking semen and food. Consuming different types of food was believed to produce different types of semen, and the brahmachari was the sacred food consumer. This food-based essentialisation of good and bad people, producing different qualities of semen, was deployed in a caste society where consumption-based hierarchies were already accepted as conventional and well circulated. This was not just a talk of a link between semen and food, but also about seminally hierarchised people produced by the differential consumption of food. If caste is 'not a division of labour, but a division of labourers', as Ambedkar wrote, the food-based seminal hierarchy among people was not 'about' caste—food *was* caste. Food as the maker of distinction thus located caste within seminal fluid. Compare this to the well-known late colonial Marathi Brahmin historian V.K. Rajwade, who, while writing about marriage, defined caste as a birth-based identity by calling it *vrutti* (वृत्ती, the group of endogamous people), which in everyday language meant the essence or quality of a person's mind.<sup>121</sup> In an era of representational politics, Shivananda and Rajwade proposed

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<sup>119</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 58, 61.

<sup>120</sup> Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, p. 174–76; Moon, *Ambedkar Yanche Bahishkrut Bharat*, pp. 20.23–24

<sup>121</sup> V.K. Rajwade, *Bharatiya Vivaha Sansthecha Itihasa* [History of the Indian Marriage System] (Mumbai: Lokwangmay Griha, [1922] 2001), pp. 25–26 (preface) and 1 (main text).

two different ways of essentialising birth and caste while talking about body and mind.

Sacredness (*pavitrya*, पवित्र्य) was another serious engagement of brahmacharya. The ‘sacred’ (पवित्र) was an essential prefix to Shivananda’s code of conduct that was used to define the ideal nature of a person’s aims, visions, simple living, peer-group associations, bedtime mantras, and reading.<sup>122</sup> Their association with Brahminism was not random. A brahmachari was made sacred through reading Brahmin moralist tracts such as *Dasa Bodha*, *Manache Shloka* (दास बोध, मनाचे श्लोक *Preaching of [Rama] Dasa and Songs of Mind*) and Vedanti texts like *Dnyana Vairagya Prakkasha* (ज्ञान वैराग्य प्रकाश, *The Knowledge of Renunciation*), *Awadhuta Gita* (अवधूत गीता, *Songs of the Free*), and *Yoga Vashishtha* (योग वसिष्ठ, *Preaching of Vashishtha*) as well as the Brahmin saint poets such as Eknath, Dnyaneshwar and even Tukaram, who was a non-Brahmin saint appropriated by modern Brahminism.<sup>123</sup> Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, B.G. Tilak, and Gandhi were also cited among the sacred practitioners of brahmacharya.<sup>124</sup>

The minute detailing of male bodily processes interpreted so far was not only a strategy aimed at narrating the decline and restoration of the Indian male body under colonialism. Instead, it was a more totalising attempt at the cultural remaking of the male body within the frame of modern Brahminism. The physiological and behavioural narratives were unhesitatingly showered with Sanskrit and Brahminical references to make them culturally accessible and acceptable to upper-caste readers familiar with Sanskrit. Such narratives were not

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<sup>122</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 37–56, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 55–56. Although Tukaram was a non-Brahmin saint poet much referred to by the Marathi anti-caste movement, he was appropriated by Marathi Brahmin scholars beginning in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>124</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 45, 74.

secularly biological and psychological but were deeply embedded in Brahmin cultural bias.

The cultural anatomy of brahmacharya in Shivananda's narrative was not just descriptive and prescriptive, as we have discussed it to this point. It was linguistically performative as well. Resembling medieval *bhakti* literature, it was morally instructive like the *nirupanas* (निरूपण, devotional deliverances). If such a narrative combined with Brahminism and moralism demanded faith, devotion, and doubtlessness, it also came with a language of warning.<sup>125</sup> Sanskrit references were used to make the narrative look serious, but to make the narrative deterministic and dramatic, colloquial phrases in Marathi were deployed, such as *Sawadh va!* (Be alert! सावध व्हा!); *Sakta adnya* (Strict order! सक्त आज्ञा!); *Bajawun sangat ahe!* (Warning you! बजावून सांगत आहे!); or *Nashach pawal!* (You will definitely be destroyed! नाशच पावाल!). Transforming diagnostic narratives into performative ones to get hold of the reader's mind also involved deliberate exclamatory usages such as *Are re!* (Oh no! अरे..रे!); *Ahaha!* (Wow! आहाहा!); *Chhi, chhi!* (Disgusting! छी: छी:); *Ba mana!* (Oh dear mind! बा मना!); and *Hay, hay!* (Oh no, oh no! हाय.. हाय!).<sup>126</sup> Through such intense diagnostic and performative detailing of the male body along with Brahminical references, brahmacharya was constructed as a bio-moral regulatory regime in interwar Maharashtra. While intended to serve the late colonial crisis of Marathi Brahminism, Shivananda's ideal brahmachari was constructed in a nationalist language—only to be countered in a rationalist language.

### ***R.D. Karve's Rationalist Dismissal***

Confronting Shivananda's understanding of sexuality, R.D Karve turned the 'life-saving' argument for brahmacharya on its head. Though Karve did not write

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<sup>125</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 87–90.

<sup>126</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 8, 11, 17, 20, 28, 32, 47, 79.

a separate book, his *Adhunik Kamashastra* (Modern Sexual Science) began with comments on brahmacharya and ended with a long chapter on the topic.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, several chapters of his other work *Klaibya chi Mimansa* framed brahmacharya in the context of impotency.<sup>128</sup> In a series of articles titled ‘Kamawasanewaril Bahishkar’ (Boycott on Sexual Desire, 1947) he interpreted the principle as a boycott on sexual desire.<sup>129</sup> Karve also wrote two other series, titled ‘Bahishkarachi Purawani—Brahmacharya’ (Supplement of Boycott [on Sexual Desire]—Brahmacharya)<sup>130</sup> and ‘Brahmacharya Che Dushparinam’ (The Evil Effects of Brahmacharya)<sup>131</sup> along with individual articles such as ‘Brahmacharyawar Shastriya Drushti’ (A Scientific Gaze at Brahmacharya).<sup>132</sup> Comments on brahmacharya were also integral to many of his articles on other topics, such as ‘Napunsaktva’ (नपुंसकत्व ‘Impotency’ 1935)<sup>133</sup> and ‘Amche Tikakar’ (आमचे टीकाकार, Our Critics, 1934).<sup>134</sup> Even the letters section of *Samajswasthya* was a medium for exchanging thoughts on this topic.<sup>135</sup> His critique was part of his ‘rationalist’ sexual agenda and driven by anxiety about sexual abstinence.

Although he countered Shivananda directly on very few occasions, Karve’s critique was a confrontation not with a person but with the imagery of brahmacharya dominant in the public domain, which was created by

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<sup>127</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashasthra*, pp. 4–5, 161–85.

<sup>128</sup> Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 117–18, 163–97.

<sup>129</sup> Karve wrote a series of seven articles on the boycott on sexual desire in *Samajswasthya* that was published in SS, year 21, issues 5–10 (November 1947–April 1948).

<sup>130</sup> SS, year 21, issue 11 (May 1948), pp. 239–44; SS, year 21, issue 12 (May 1948), pp. 263–68.

<sup>131</sup> SS, year 21, issue 3 (October 1947), 49–54; SS, year 21, issue 4 (October 1947), 73–77.

<sup>132</sup> SS, year 7, issue 1 (July 1933), pp. 1–9.

<sup>133</sup> SS, year 9, issue 6 (December 1935), pp. 164–65.

<sup>134</sup> SS, year 8, issue 3 (September 1934), pp. 67–69.

<sup>135</sup> SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), pp. 150–51.

Shivananda's literature.<sup>136</sup> Karve mostly cited 'Victorian morality' and 'Indian ignorance about sex' while criticising the popular belief in brahmacharya. If seminal loss and strength were core to Shivananda's framing of brahmacharya, theoretical and practical concerns with impotency were Karve's domain. Karve, similar to Shivanand, defined brahmacharya as sexual abstinence. To systematically deconstruct this notion based on his understanding of modern scientific sexuality, Karve tried to delink semen conservation from the mystic aura associated with it. Discarding the idea that there is a benefit to conserving and storing semen, he wrote,

After sexual arousal, fluids created in the various glands are mixed with semen . . . hence what is ejaculated as semen is the mixture of semen and the other fluids. This mixture is produced after sexual arousal. It is not readily available in the body. This clearly shows that semen does not help the body in any way if we practice brahmacharya. . . . In case of abstaining from sexual intercourse, sperms are ejaculated during wet dreams. In any case, not being liquid, their absorption in the body in any form is not possible. Brahmacharya cannot be valued at all on modern scientific grounds, because the principle on which brahmacharya's benefits are constructed is totally false.<sup>137</sup>

इंद्रियाचे उत्थापन झाल्या बरोबर हा स्त्राव होऊ लागतो . . . शेवटी रेत म्हणून जे बाहेर पडते त्यात रेत जंतूशिवाय हे सर्व स्त्राव हि असतात. व हे मिश्रण शरीरात आगोदर तयार नसून आयत्या वेळी बनते. यावरून स्पष्ट दिसते कि ब्रह्मचर्य पाळल्याने या रेंताचा शरीरास कोणत्याही प्रकारचा उपयोग होणे शक्य नसते. बहुदा समागमाचे अभावी रेत तंतू स्वप्नावस्थेत बाहेर पडतात. परंतु काही झाले तरी ते पातळ नसल्या मुळे पुन्हा शरीरात शोषले जाणे अशक्य आहे व ब्रह्मचर्या ची उभारणी लोक ज्या तत्वावर करतात

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<sup>136</sup> This opinion is based on my reading of Shivananda and Karve's writings on brahmacharya.

<sup>137</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 20.

तेच मूलतः खोटे असल्या मुळे आधुनिक शास्त्रीय दृष्टीने ब्रह्मचार्यास बिलकुल किंमत देता येत नाही.

Karve deconstructed the sexual foundation of brahmacharya Shivananda had built by bringing the discussion down to the level of the physical-sexual fact of not performing the sexual act:

A person's nature is essentially chemical. These chemicals develop in the endocrine glands. There are various glands in the body and poor functioning—of even one of them—affects the others, leading to the dysfunction of the total body machine. Giving hollow lectures on morality without understanding or knowing the importance of the endocrine glands produced human nature is stupidity. The mind has no separate existence outside the body. It is a consequential product of bodily properties. Asking a person to calm down after that person has developed strong sexual urges due to the secretion of the glands is like asking a person with a temperature to cool down.<sup>138</sup>

स्वभाव हा रासायनिक आहे. व हे रसायन अंतःस्राव ग्रंथीत तयार होते. अशा अंतःस्राव ग्रंथी शरीरात बऱ्याच आहेत. व या पैकी कोणत्याही एकी चे काम बरोबर न चालल्यास त्याचा इतर ग्रंथींवरही परिणाम होऊन सर्वच यंत्र बिघडते. या ग्रंथींनी बनलेल्या देह स्वभावाचे महत्त्व विसरून किंवा माहीतच नसून नीती वर पोकळ व्याख्याने देत सुटणे हा मूर्खपणा आहे. मन हे शरीरापासून वेगळे नसून शरीराच्याच गुणधर्माचा परिणाम आहे. हे लक्षात ठेवले पाहिजे. ग्रंथींच्या स्त्राव मुळे कामवासना प्रबळ झाल्यावर त्या मनुष्यास शांत होण्याचा उपदेश करणे म्हणजे ताप आलेल्यास थंड होण्याचा उपदेश करण्यासारखे आहे.

This 'endocrinological' journey dismissing brahmacharya also gave an opportunity to Karve to ridicule the idea of 'semen conservation within the body'

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<sup>138</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 6.

as the grand ignorance of the ancestors.<sup>139</sup> Referring to the mythological stories of the Vedic Hindu rishi Gautama and Krishna, he repudiated the notion that semen could be converted into higher spiritual energy. Similarly, the *bhogi brahmachari* (भोगी ब्रह्मचारी, pleasure-seeking brahmachari)<sup>140</sup> was a popular myth about Krishna. As understood by *Samajswasthya* readers, this myth was about Krishna increasing his power and strength by extracting the menses from women's genitals without ejaculating semen. Responding to a reader's question about the validity of the myth, Karve replied

Do you think such particles of menses are always present in the female genitals? This itself is a flawed idea. There is no quality found in the menses that can strengthen the man. . . . Beyond this, [saying that] Shri Krishna did not have enough strength and glow and that it had to be increased in such a way—this itself is a ridiculous idea.<sup>141</sup>

या सावाचे कण स्त्री च्या जननेन्द्रियाच्या नेहमी हजर असतात अशी आपली कल्पना आहे काय? हि कल्पनाच खोटी आहे. पुरुषाला शक्ती देण्या सारखा कोणताही गुण स्त्री च्या रजःकणात नसतो . . . शिवाय श्रीकृष्ण जवळ पुरेसे तेज आणि शक्ती नव्हती आणि ती अशा रीतीने वाढवावी लागत असे हि कल्पनाच हास्यास्पद आहे

Karve challenged brahmacharya rhetoric and Hindu mythology, sarcastically ridiculing the story of a child being conceived due to the Sun, the Moon and the Wind, as well as others that claimed a mystic greatness for semen.<sup>142</sup> Commenting on Shantanu Rishi ordering his beautiful wife to accept the semen of Brahmadeva—who ejaculated just by staring at her—Karve sarcastically remarked, 'Since gods are created by human beings, it is not surprising that they

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<sup>139</sup> SS, year 21, issue 10 (April 1948), pp. 228–29; SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), p. 151.

<sup>140</sup> SS, year 14, issue 3 (September 1940), pp. 85–86; Molesworth, *Dictionary*, p. 349.

<sup>141</sup> SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), pp. 150–51.

<sup>142</sup> SS, year 21, issue 7 (January 1948), pp. 148–49.

carry all the vices of human beings' (देव हे माणसानेच निर्माण केले ले असल्या मुळे माणसांचे सर्व दोष देवांचे हि अंगी सापडल्यास नवल नाही).<sup>143</sup>

In a similar vein, Karve rejected the use of brahmacharya as a birth-control method when his readers enquired.<sup>144</sup> He constructed brahmacharya as epitomising 'people's ignorance' and 'religious foolishness' and criticised stories from the Upanishads, the Puranas (पुराण), the Mahabharata, and other sources.<sup>145</sup> However, Karve was completely silent on the *smṛiti* literature. At the same time, Krishna's message to Arjuna in the Bhagvad Gita to leave impotent thoughts behind and get ready for war—'Klaibyam ma sma gamah!' (क्लैब्यम मा स्म गमः! Do not yield to this degrading impotence [unmanliness]; be courageous!)—was central to his anti-impotency arguments.<sup>146</sup> He used this to dismiss brahmacharya while proposing the idea of *kliba niti* (क्लीब नीती, impotent morality).

Speculating about *kliba niti* was another way for Karve to engage with the politics of brahmacharya. This idea combined the concepts of sexual impotence and cowardice with the Sanskrit word *klaibya* (क्लैब्य impotence), philologically derived from the Bhagvad Gita. For him, brahmacharya originated from impotent morality. The same impotent behaviour was further mapped onto European and Victorian morality.<sup>147</sup> In doing so, he understood European and Victorian morality within the frame of brahmacharya. In this process, Karve tried to universalise brahmacharya for his readers. He saw the boycott on sexual desire as a universal religious idea in the West, especially in Christianity and in

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<sup>143</sup> SS, year 21, issue 7 (January 1948), pp. 148–49; SS year 21, issue 10 (April 1948), pp. 228–29.

<sup>144</sup> SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), pp. 150–51.

<sup>145</sup> SS, year 21, issue 7 (January 1948), pp. 148–51.

<sup>146</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (August 1934), pp. 33–40; *The Bhagvad Gita* (Gorakhpur: Geeta Press, 2007), chapter 2, verse 3, p. 32.

<sup>147</sup> Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 1–2.



England.<sup>148</sup> Speaking at length about sacredness (*pavitrya*, पावित्र्य), sin and virtue (*pap-punya*, पाप-पुण्य), and hell and heaven (*swarg-narak*, स्वर्ग-नरक) in this context, he held religious authorities responsible for suppressing pleasure in general and sexual pleasure in particular.<sup>149</sup> Though he criticised all religious authorities, Karve's main target was Western Christian morality, which he held responsible for making people afraid of their actions and thoughts. Fear and impotency were connected, fundamental to sexual repression, and therefore a religious conspiracy. The arrival of impotent European Christian morality to India with colonialism, in his opinion, was responsible for encouraging foolish Hindu ideas such as brahmacharya.<sup>150</sup> Krishna's message 'Do not yield to this degrading impotence' was not just a metaphor for Karve. Legitimised by the Brahminical source, it was an inspiration to combat brahmacharya. Thus brahmacharya, constructed as ignorance and foolishness along with sexual repression blamed on Victorian culture, became the subject of sexual reform.

Karve's reformist agenda, beyond proving the irrationality of semen conservation to Marathi speakers, was also a means to introduce modern Western sexological thought. For criticizing brahmacharya Karve put faith in few doctors who were also sexologists while projecting traditional doctors' inability to go beyond conventional wisdom.<sup>151</sup> To strengthen his anti-brahmacharya argument, he constantly referred to a list of experts including Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, Alfred Blaschko, Norman Haire, Magnus Hirschfield, and William J. Robinson. Their writings on impotency and sexual abstinence constituted modern thought on brahmacharya (*brahmacharya cha adhunik wichar*, ब्रह्मचार्याचा आधुनिक

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<sup>148</sup> SS, year 21, issue 7 (January 1948), pp. 145–48; SS, year 21, issue 8 (February 1948), pp. 167–68.

<sup>149</sup> SS, year 21, issue 8 (February 1948), pp. 267–71.

<sup>150</sup> Karve, *Klaibyachi Mimansa*, p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 162.

विचार) for Karve.<sup>152</sup> Through his own sexology-influenced writings and by translating Western sexologists' thoughts, Karve tried to invert Shivananda's brahmacharya logic of pathologising sensuality. He assigned physiological and psychological problems such as stress, short-temperedness, strong headaches, anxiety, emotional disturbance, inability to think beyond sex, and loss of confidence not to sensuality but to the practice of brahmacharya.<sup>153</sup> In turn, throughout his career as a sex educator, Karve pathologised brahmacharya.<sup>154</sup> By inverting its imagery, Karve turned brahmacharya from a solution to all psychosexual, social, and political problems into a severe psychosexual and social problem—and an obstacle to free sexual thought and desire.

Karve's reverse pathology countered the notion but not the logic of brahmacharya. He presented what he thought was correct, modern sexual thought to Marathi speakers, but he stayed within the Brahminical frame of brahmacharya. Despite his scientific dismissal, the Brahminical principle was universalised by Western thought and history, which both legitimised and criticised it. This was Karve's attempt to establish Indians' coevalness with the modern West in sexual matters.<sup>155</sup> Yet his taking for granted the equivalence between sexual abstinence and brahmacharya displays the caste limit of Karve's modern sexual thought and his agenda of sexual modernity. Furthermore, pathologising brahmacharya by highlighting the physiological and psychological problems related to it inverted Shivananda's bio-morality but did not dismiss the logic that connected 'decline' and 'sex', which was a problem of the Brahminical crisis in India. Instead, the inversion espoused the same bio-moral language, though coupled with a rhetoric of rationalism. As a result, talk of impotent morality served the double purpose of propagating moralism and sexual

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<sup>152</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 161–85.

<sup>153</sup> Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, 117–18; Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 142.

<sup>154</sup> Botre and Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve', p. 16.

<sup>155</sup> Botre and Haynes, 'Understanding R.D. Karve', p. 10.

rationality simultaneously. Karve talked of sexual impotency within the frame he borrowed from the Bhagvad Gita's imploration not to fear impotence and appealed to his readers to analyse it. However, his article 'Klaibyam Ma Sma Gamah' (Don't Surrender to Fear), which did not mention brahmacharya, was an example of preaching rationalism in a moralistic way.<sup>156</sup> In this ultimate reversal of brahmacharya's bio-morality, he universalised the scope of caste-based sexual logic. Sexual abstinence in the world was thus still framed within the caste-influenced sexual notion of brahmacharya, even if the purpose was to defeat it with its own logic.

### ***N.S. Phadke's Strategic Deployment***

Despite Karve's radical critique, the grand, mysterious rhetoric of brahmacharya did not lose its impact on sex reformers and their agendas. Amidst Shivananda's glorifying nationalist writings and Karve's demystifying deconstructions, the version of brahmacharya proposed by N.S. Phadke was the strategically deployed middle path. As a Galtonian eugenicist, Phadke spelled out his views on the topic in two chapters titled 'Santati Niyamanartha Brahmacharya' (संतती नियमनार्थ ब्रह्मचर्य, Continence for Birth Control) and 'Sonyachi Kurhad' (सोन्याची कुऱ्हाड, The Axe of Gold) in his 1926 Marathi book *Sukhache Sansar (Happy Conjugal Life)*. The same chapters were also part of his 1927 English-language work, *The Sex Problem in India*.<sup>157</sup> Phadke articulated brahmacharya as a fundamental element in the overall reconstruction of the Hindu marriage system. His path of sexual reform equated heterosexual relations with reconstructing the marriage system and argued for Galtonian eugenics combined with a Malthusian principle of population control. Brahmacharya, for Phadke, was a sign that the Hindu ancestors were concerned with how to achieve the eugenic goal.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (August 1934), pp. 33–40; SS, year 8, issue 3 (September 1934), pp. 71–6.

<sup>157</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 175–212; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 833–86.

<sup>158</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 832.

Phadke's understanding of brahmacharya suggested two complementary arguments. The first assigned a moral value to this concept, while the second questioned its utility on scientific grounds. As a result, Phadke defined brahmacharya as *sambhog niyamana* (संभोग नियमन, a regulatory mechanism of sexual intercourse) rather than calling it a boycott on sexual desire, as Karve did.<sup>159</sup> He considered brahmacharya a nonharmful and respectful principle of Hindu society given by the forefathers. While making it a principle of sexual regulation, Phadke evaluated brahmacharya as a population-control method, by invoking Malthus and Gandhi.<sup>160</sup> To establish brahmacharya's relevance to contemporary times, Phadke argued that it was originally intended as population control, for it responded to Malthus's low-reproductivity principle.<sup>161</sup> He wrote,

It is natural for the husband and wife to desire sexual intercourse, but they should not forget that this comes with a social responsibility and to fulfil that in an appropriate manner they should follow brahmacharya in a major way. This is what Malthus was preaching. . . . It can be observed that our Aryan ancestors had similar ideas.<sup>162</sup>

पती पत्नीस संभोगसुखाची लालसा असणे साहजिक आहे परंतु त्या सुखा बरोबर एक प्रकार ची सामाजिक जबाबदारी येते हे विसरता काम नये. व ती जबाबदारी योग्य तऱ्हेने पार पाडण्यासाठी त्यांनी बऱ्याच प्रमाणात ब्रह्मचर्य व्रताने राहिले पाहिजे असा माल्थस चा सर्वास उपदेश होता.. आपल्या प्राचीन आर्यांच्या कल्पना पहिल्या तर तरी त्या याच स्वरूपाच्या होत्या असे आढळून येते.

While praising brahmacharya and emphasising its relevance, he also wrote,

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<sup>159</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 833.

<sup>160</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 836; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, p. 183.

<sup>161</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 832–33.

<sup>162</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 833.

No one would dare to question the positive effects of brahmacharya. Our *shastras* say that . . . it enhances intellect, charm and [sexual] strength, leading to an increase in a man's life expectancy. Society will become brave in proportion to the extent that the importance of brahmacharya is imbibed on the social mind and the extent to which people follow it. No sensible person will doubt this.<sup>163</sup>

ब्रह्मचर्याच्या सुपरिणामांविषयी कोणीच शंका घ्यायचे धाडस करणार नाही. ब्रह्मचर्या मुळे बुद्धी, ओज आणि तेज हि वाढून आयुष्याचीही वाढ होते, असे जे आपल्या शास्त्रकारांनी सांगितले आहे ते सर्वस्वी खरे आहे. ब्रह्मचर्याचे महत्त्व ज्या मानाने समाजाच्या मनावर बिंबेल व त्याचे परिपालन त्या समाजातील व्यक्ती ज्या मानाने करीत असतील त्या मानाने तो समाज पराक्रमी होईल या विषयी कोणताही सुज्ञ मनुष्य साशंक असेल असे वाटत नाही.

Phadke followed Shivananda's nationalist line by accepting the sexual-excess-versus-semen-conservation binary, but he also emphasised the necessity of nonreproductive seminal expenditure for better social functioning.<sup>164</sup> Even after acknowledging the benefit of nonreproductive sexual intercourse, Phadke still believed that excessive expenditure of semen was responsible for man's physical, mental, and reproductive decline.<sup>165</sup> All three sex educators understood brahmacharya through the bio-moral language of decline, irrespective of their ideological differences. By making brahmacharya the ancestrally sanctioned regulatory mechanism of sex, Phadke could claim Gandhian legitimacy for his thoughts on birth control.<sup>166</sup> As a regulatory practice, he believed, self-control

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<sup>163</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 836.

<sup>164</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 836.

<sup>165</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 836.

<sup>166</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, p. 183.

would show married couples the path to eugenic welfare.<sup>167</sup> Carefully crafted, brahmacharya was elevated to the status of indispensable knowledge for bachelors of a marriageable age, the brahmacharis. Similarly, it was posed as a guiding principle for the modern married man—*grihastha brahmachari* (गृहस्थ ब्रह्मचारी). While rescuing brahmacharya from its extreme nationalist and rationalist interpretations, Phadke converted it into the sacred intention of ‘low reproductivity’—thus achieving both.

His other take on brahmacharya showed the limits of its practical applicability. Being a staunch advocate of eugenics and birth control, Phadke was assertive in his opinions about the practical implementation of eugenics in the Indian context.<sup>168</sup> He did not accept brahmacharya as a practical birth control method. He appreciated Manu and the ancient Ayurvedic expert Sushrut for writing about suitable periods for sexual intercourse that would lead to conception<sup>169</sup> and compared it with the idea of a ‘safe period’ (rhythm method) for sexual intercourse, popular in the early twentieth century.<sup>170</sup> Connecting these different concepts, he rejected the applicability of the ‘safe period’ and brahmacharya as birth-control methods in the way they were spelled out by the ancestors,

On the contrary, what if the safe period proved to be just imaginary? What if it is not supported by medical science and anatomy? Preaching brahmacharya to people, then, would mean that they should have sexual intercourse for a maximum of three times in their life. Would suggesting this be practical? Is it

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<sup>167</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 837.

<sup>168</sup> .S. Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 702–5. Phadke did not just write on birth control and eugenics but also was the founder of the Eugenic Society of Bombay. Wellcome Trust Library collection SA/Eug/E.9; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 79–81.

<sup>169</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol 5, p. 835.

<sup>170</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 838, 849–50.

possible for ordinary men and women to follow this *asidhara vrata* (impossible oath)?<sup>171</sup>

सुरक्षित काळाची हि कल्पना केवळ कल्पनाच ठरली तर? आधुनिक वैद्यक आणि शरीर शास्त्राचा तिला आधार नसला तर? मग लोकांना ब्रह्मचर्या चा उपदेश करण्याचा अर्थ असा होईल कि त्यांनी संबंध आयुष्यात संभोग सुखाचा उपभोग फारफारतर तीन वेळा घ्यावा. पण हा उपदेश व्यावहारिक आहे का? सामान्य स्त्री पुरुषास असल्या असिधारा व्रताचे आचरण करणे शक्य आहे काय?

A careful reading of Phadke illuminates his opposition to brahmacharya. It becomes apparent that he did not consider it an invalid principle but found it impracticable as a birth-control method.<sup>172</sup> His objections are best understood in the context of his appreciation for brahmacharya. Phadke imagined brahmacharya as a ‘golden axe’<sup>173</sup>—not useful in everyday life, but still precious, for it was made of gold—a valuable, precious, and morally respectable ideal, though a nonviable option.

Though not applicable in everyday life, brahmacharya, for Phadke was part of the sex reform discourse. In practice, it was the well-respected ‘Other’ of the contraceptive movement. In his understanding, brahmacharya was not against birth control in the Gandhian vein (self-restraint versus contraception), nor was it a definite tool to produce desired children as Shivananda argued. Rather, it was a ‘moral tool’ in the making of a powerful society. If this was not irrational foolishness to be dismissed as Karve did, it was also not a practical concept that could pass the tests of rational, contraceptive eugenics. Instead, Phadke’s position was to co-opt and situate brahmacharya as the ‘ancient predecessor of birth control’ in India. For the Galtonian eugenicist, though not at all scientific,

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<sup>171</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 838. *Asidhara vrata* literally means an oath of walking on the sword.

<sup>172</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 836, 852.

<sup>173</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 852.

brahmacharya was a sign that there was a moral, rational, and psychologically engaged tradition concerned with reproductive biology in India that could be built upon to make birth control meaningful in a modern caste society. Phadke's brahmacharya was thus a sacred knowledge device which rooted biology psychologically in Brahminism for the making of modernity.

Phadke was also keen on drawing the scientific boundaries of Galtonian eugenics. He differentiated between Malthusian thought and the neo-Malthusian birth-control agenda with the goal of further emphasising the distinction between brahmacharya, as a principle of low productivity, and actual birth control.<sup>174</sup> Situating brahmacharya within a Malthusian framework—classical or neo—was in fact framing Malthus within brahmacharya. This nexus between Malthus and brahmacharya, I argue, was a mutually constitutive move of neo-Malthusianism and modern Brahminism, aimed at a bio-political shaping of interwar Maharashtra.

To discuss and redefine heterosexual relations within marriage was Phadke's way of engaging with a question—how to sexually modernise the unmarried and the married man—the brahmachari? Connecting Malthus and neo-Malthusianism to brahmacharya was one of the answers. Brahmacharya here was a Brahminical moral regulatory mechanism of heteronormative sexuality; understood as *sambhog niyamana*, in this sense, it was the caste morality of biological reproduction. Invoking the *Manusmriti* and *Yajnyawalkya Smriti* in the construction of the modern brahmachari and invoking brahmacharya to make Malthus anew, I further argue, was an act of making the bio-moral anatomy of caste in late colonial Maharashtra. Applying Galton to caste reproduction in India to create a new, Malthusian brahmachari was the 'real sexual reform' for N.S. Phadke.

All three bio-moral anatomies of brahmacharya, speaking sexual reform in their own ways and responding to each other to make rational claims, created

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<sup>174</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p., 851.



the contemporary cultural context of late colonial Maharashtra. It is therefore necessary to analyse the reformist implications of the bio-moralism of brahmacharya in the making of Marathi modernity.

#### **IV. Brahmacharya's Discursive Politics of Reform**

All three dominant versions of brahmacharya discussed above were agendas to rationalise male sexual interactions, even if only Karve was vocal about his rationalist credentials. As part of sexual reform amid the introspective Brahmin reformism of the nineteenth century and the representational reforms of the early twentieth century, the discursive deployment of brahmacharya was a significant move in late colonial Maharashtra. In the Brahmin crisis of dominance, as we have seen, advancing the idea that brahmacharya was the 'real reform' or even making it a part of sex reform was an attempt to redefine the very idea of 'reform'. For Shivananda, *viryaavatta* (वीर्यवत्ता, being full of semen) was the secret of self-advancement, the uplifting of the nation and the root of all reforms.<sup>175</sup> Phadke and Karve also spoke of eugenics and sexual reforms as 'real reforms' in their own ways. For the former, the assessment of brahmacharya was part of his engagement with eugenic reforms, whereas the latter's criticism was aimed at becoming modern through scientific sexuality.<sup>176</sup> Brahmacharya as a reformist discourse, despite its apparently different understandings, was based on three common assumptions—male sexual, mental, and moral decline; the need for introspection; and naturalised endo-caste heteronormativity.

Although their articulations of brahmacharya appeared contradictory, all writers on the topic firmly perceived Indian men's mental and sexual decline as a reality. The conflict was about the nature of brahmacharya—whether it meant decline or a remedy to it, and to what extent. The notion of 'real reform' addressed the decline in the name of brahmacharya. The discourse also

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<sup>175</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 4.

<sup>176</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 23–25; Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 5.

converged on another assumption: brahmacharya was projected as a concern of self-introspection. Brahmacharya reform was not asking a person to be competitive, like demands for caste-representational reform did. Instead, it was asking the individual to be introspective in a way that could be identified more with the nineteenth-century Brahmin notion of introspective reformism, but with its own political intentions. It insisted on focusing on the body, looking ‘inward’ at the self, rather than looking at the outward world for the representational reforms prevalent in late colonial society. Instead of engaging in social-political confrontations, it was suggesting an engagement with the corporeal self as the ‘real’ or the ‘fundamental’ concern. Against the background of twentieth-century ‘rights-based’ representational reformism, brahmacharya was redefining the rights and duties of a sexed man. For Shivananda’s unmarried brahmachari, sexual abstinence was a duty in the service of better reproduction in the future, whereas sex for the married man was strictly a reproductive responsibility.<sup>177</sup> At the same time, Karve was speaking an apparently radical language of ‘everybody’s right to sex’ in his *Modern Sexual Science*, while rejecting the validity of the brahmacharya principle.<sup>178</sup> Phadke was asking the reader to pay attention to eugenic concerns as a duty, while explaining the relevance of brahmacharya.<sup>179</sup> Introspective brahmacharya was defining the ‘rights and duties’ of a person in individual rather than social terms. In this process, the epistemic basis for the notion of ‘reform’ was shifted from the ‘social body’ to the ‘individual sexed body’, to the extent that the individual body came to stand in for the social body.<sup>180</sup> Brahmacharya operated at the intersection of individual

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<sup>177</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 209–37; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 66–67.

<sup>178</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 5.

<sup>179</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 832–33.

<sup>180</sup> Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, p. 4.

body and the social body, while making itself into a Brahmin reformist apparatus of governmentality.

Consequent to the diagnostic assumptions of decline and introspection, the brahmacharya discourse was based upon a remedial assumption of 'naturalising sex'. While framing the discourse around heterosexual bodily engagements, brahmacharya reformism was rooted in the assumption that 'natural sex is rational sex'. Only heterosexuality was considered natural, even though same-sex desire was accepted as a possibility, even if with warnings, in Karve's work.<sup>181</sup> This position projected 'heteronormativity' and 'naturalisation' as the new rationales behind reformism. Shivananda tried to naturalise his idea of brahmacharya oriented towards endo-caste reproduction with examples from the natural world of plants, birds, animals, and their seasonal breeding.<sup>182</sup> At the same time, writing disparagingly of brahmacharya without discussing caste, R.D. Karve's sexual science defined heterosexual intercourse as the most natural act.<sup>183</sup> N.S. Phadke considered the respectable principle of brahmacharya an 'obvious' response of his ancient Aryan ancestors to the ageless question of birth control.<sup>184</sup> *Natural* in such articulations was defined by referring both to nonhuman species' behaviour in the natural world and to 'obviousness' in the logic of heterosexual assumptions. With these different interpretations, brahmacharya tried to define *natural* as the 'rational' of sex reformism. If politicisation was the key aspect of early-twentieth-century representational reformism, naturalising endo-caste heterosexuality was foundational to brahmacharya sex reform. Such 'naturalising' in principle was ideologically close to the nineteenth-century Brahmin reformism that tried to naturalise caste-sexuality by restructuring the Brahmin self. Based on these assumptions, the

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<sup>181</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 86.

<sup>182</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 30, 32–33.

<sup>183</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 86.

<sup>184</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 834–35.

discourse created the rhetoric of brahmacharya instead of the word *reform*. Discursive reformist politics thus did not just deal with the concepts brahmacharya and brahmachari—it *created* them.

### ***The Imagined Community of Brahmacharis***

Brahmacharya, as a sexual-reform discourse, was constructed around the idea of men in sexual decline. Despite the brahmachari's apparent subjective centrality, this discourse cannot be viewed in the same way as other subjects of colonial social reform, such as sati or widow remarriage. It is important to remind ourselves that this was not a reform around an existing social problem with a law-and-order angle.<sup>185</sup> Neither was it associated with the coloniser-initiated civilising mission for the colonised or the caste- and gender-related questions discussed by nineteenth-century reformers. It was an argument about sexual potency and strength, with the colonial state and the growing power of non-Brahmin castes and others, through representational politics, as its explicit and implicit 'Others'. While Shivananda was explicit in his anti-colonial stance, Karve and Phadke's versions of brahmacharya fed into an anti-colonial argument implicitly. This implicit gesture, in Karve, became more obvious due to his critique of Victorian morality, which originated and thrived in England. The anti-colonial stance in Phadke originated in his subscription to the language of developing national strength and his rejection of the colonial state's intervention as a possible solution to the population problem.<sup>186</sup> In spite of this, neither brahmacharya as a rhetoric nor brahmachari as a personified reality meant a direct confrontation with the colonial state in terms of seeking a resolution. While Shivananda considered any other reforms futile, Phadke was also explicit in his

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<sup>185</sup> Lata Mani, 'Production of an Official Discourse on 'Sati' in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly* 21 (17) (26 April 1986), pp. WS32–WS40.

<sup>186</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 778.

view that caste-based representational reform was a vulgar idea.<sup>187</sup> Neither the vibrant non-Brahmin nor the Dalit anti-caste public discourses ever raised brahmacharya as a key issue in their struggles. Late colonial Marathi print networks run by anti-caste activists and women hardly showed any signs of considering brahmacharya as a social concern.<sup>188</sup> Similarly, for those who did not subscribe to anti-imperialism at all, brahmacharya was not a social problem.

Brahmacharya, then, predominantly circulated in the Marathi nationalist and Brahmin male public spheres; that was also its operational limit. This confinement was not only due to the birth-based caste boundary of its Brahmin authors; it was a political move to project brahmacharya as a primary contradiction to fight with. This was not simply an issue of articulating a psychosexual code of conduct as sexual reform; it was a bio-morally deployed discourse that aimed at constructing a ‘primary social concern’ to engage with on a priority basis. Brahmacharya was a manufactured fact.

It is not as if people who abstained from sexual interaction or had problems with impotence were not already present in society. Yet various colonial historical narratives suggest that, though marginally, the concept of brahmacharya circulated within nationalist discourse from the late nineteenth century onwards. Also, both cinema and people’s sex correspondence from the time reveal comments such as ‘I incidentally remained brahmachari last week, as my wife went to my in-laws’ (बायको माहेरी गेल्याने गेला आठवडा ब्रह्मचारी राहण्या चा योग आला),<sup>189</sup> indicating that men had their own ideas about brahmacharya as the temporary unavailability of sex or sexual depravity. Brahmacharya and

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<sup>187</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>188</sup> B.R. Ambedkar’s Birth Control Bill, proposed in 1938, briefly discussed brahmacharya to criticise Gandhi on the issue of self-restraint and population control, but neither Ambedkar nor the Dalit movement was engaged with the Marathi brahmacharya discourse. For the Bill, see Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings*, vol 2, pp. 265–66.

<sup>189</sup> Vinayak (dir.), *Brahmachari*.

brahmachari as ideas were already part of society, with people making their own meanings of it, irrespective of sex educators' interpretations.

Before the sexualised brahmacharya discourse, even if there were brahmacharis in society, they were not a social concern. Similarly, the idea of brahmacharya was not a modern social problem. In any way, actually following brahmacharya as sexual abstinence was neither an explicitly decodable social fact nor a visible individual bodily practice. It can be logically inferred that a brahmachari's sexual abstinence would have become a social concern only if an unmarried self-proclaimed brahmachari man sexually engaged and impregnated a woman, or if a married one failed to reproduce. Beyond this, sexual abstinence and its good or evil effects on the mind and the physique were a privately perceived and settled matter. Also, impotency was a medical issue, occasionally discussed in medical journals without any discursive connection to the brahmacharya rhetoric.<sup>190</sup>

In contrast, the early-twentieth-century sexualised narrative of brahmacharya converted it into a conscious social act of reform, while trying to imagine it as a knowable sexual reality. For Shivananda, the discourse demanded consciously following a code of conduct. Similarly, Karve consciously dismissed brahmacharya while pathologising it in reverse bio-moral language. Following them, Phadke too relied on the consciousness of the reader to understand the brahmacharya principle.

Conscious modern brahmacharya, idealised or pathologised, was a picture of sexual abstinence created by sex educators to serve their own sexualising agendas. The circulation of global and local popular sex literature, male sexual anxieties, feelings of sexual deprivation, and fears of venereal disease were the contributing factors to this concern. Authored by Brahmins, these concerns with brahmacharya were articulated in the context of the Western

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<sup>190</sup> *Arya Bhishak* [Doctor of Ayurveda], year 20, issues 1–6 (July–December 1908), p. 2.

sexology, naturalism, and Ayurvedic literature available to the authors in late colonial Maharashtra. Brahmacharya was thus manufactured as a problem.

However, with all this, converting sexual anxieties, fears, and issues of sexual potency into the brahmacharya discourse was a new reality. The discourse was, in effect, Marathi sex educators' rationalising and positioning themselves about the extent to which sexual abstinence should be considered respectable or problematic. They were associating a set of political and cultural meanings with their act of combining sexual abstinence and male impotency.

Such idealised and pathologised constructions were mapped onto the sexualised male body to make him into a brahmachari. Through reading scientific sexual literature and observing and interpreting the surrounding social situation, they associated large sets of biological, behavioural, and psychological problems with sexual abstinence. Thus made, sexual abstinence was intrinsically linked with reproductive sexual potency in a caste-shaped modern Hindu society to create the modern sexual concern for brahmacharya. Problems of uncontrolled sensuality and coercive sexual repression could now be seen as the consequences of following or not following brahmacharya. The brahmachari, in these narratives, was the medium of sex educators' agendas. Thus nationalised, pathologised, and strategised according to these agendas, the brahmachari was an imagined man of the Brahmin public sphere through whom the discourse of brahmacharya was enacted. To govern oneself was to govern the 'Others'. Brahmachari thus was a medium to re-establish Brahmin governmentality through reformism. More than a subjective reality, brahmachari was a perception, and the brahmacharya discourse was an attempt to project it as a reality. It was an endeavour to establish the primacy of the brahmachari in late colonial caste society.

For the manufactured brahmachari, the actual man with sexual problems was not a candidate to become the subject matter of a discourse. He was not consulted—but through the construction of the brahmachari, the real man was told what was 'appropriately' and 'rationally' expected from his sexual behaviour in a caste society. The brahmachari and brahmacharya, sexually defined, were

perceptions and projections idealised according to sex educators' agendas. Of course, this projection of the brahmachari became a printed reality without no real man as the subject. Instead, subjectivity was assigned to a biopolitical imagination and sketched bio-morally. The brahmachari, in fact, became part of an imagined community of the 'brahmacharya world' constructed through the print capitalism of modern Marathi sex publishing and the Brahmin public sphere. Through such imagination, the male body was created to explain the anatomy of caste in a bio-moral language. This anatomy of caste was crucial in shaping the simultaneous interwar Marathi discourse on marriage and reproduction, discussed in the next chapters.



## Chapter 4. In the Name of Marriage

Every heart desires a mate. For some reason beyond our comprehension nature has so created us that we are incomplete in ourselves.

—Marie Stopes<sup>1</sup>

Marriage in late colonial Maharashtra, as everywhere else, was a performative mechanism of legitimate sexual engagement through which social and cultural conventions were reproduced and challenged. Concern for intimacy within marriage was a political question that shaped the inter-war period beyond imperial and colonial boundaries. This period brought changes in the family structure and the public spheres of both the imperial and colonial worlds, and debated them in bringing marriage to the forefront of modernity. Within the early-twentieth-century drive of internationalism, reflected locally, marriage was a device to project the ‘being-with-the-world’ spirit of modernity.

Sex reformism was an important medium through which this spirit of modernity was spread. Considering the direct relation between marriage, sexuality, and modernity, sexual knowledge literature was a crucial space in which modernity and marriage were constituted. In the inter-war times, becoming modern was a political and social concern—and while heterosexuality was the dominant social and sexual reality, marriage was at the heart of this concern. Sexual-science literature discussing marriage was an example of this mutually constitutive process.

However, the discourse of modern marriage had its own logic and politics in its particular context. The late colonial Marathi sex-education world that discussed the sexual logic of brahmacharya so vociferously also spoke much

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Stopes, *Married Love*, 26th ed. (London: Hogarth Press, [1918] 1952), p. 19.

about making marriage modern. This chapter and the subsequent one analyse these sexual discussions of marriage and examine the making of Marathi conjugal modernity. While situating the period's Marathi sexual-marriage writings within the larger cultural politics of Maharashtra, this chapter in particular unpacks the process of making marriage a social problem.

The first move to create conjugal happiness was the invention of unhappy marriage. In this construction, happy marriage was made into an upper-caste phenomenon. I will further argue that, as Marathi conjugal modernism revolved around the axis of caste, it used lower castes as counter-examples, thus making them into the 'Other'. Through this process, endo-caste (within-caste) sexual marriage became the foundation of Brahminical eugenics. In other words, these discussions led to the development of Brahminical eugenics through the sexual reformulation of the idea of endo-caste marriage, while constructing its lower caste 'Other'. Sexual marriage reform served as a caste-sexual catalyst in creating the ideal upper-caste heterosexual couple as a legitimate modern sexual subject. Finally, I argue that the subject of Marathi conjugal modernity emerged in two ways. The writings that treated marriage sexually shaped it by strengthening Brahminism; however, modern conjugal subjectivity also emerged by trivialising the issue of caste rather than confronting it. Modernity, in this process, was understood as being in agreement with the principles of Brahminism rather than against them.

Discussing marriage after treating brahmacharya in the previous chapter may appear as if the present research is following the life trajectory charted out by Brahminism, from celibacy through married life to renunciation. At the risk of appearing Brahminical, following this sequence is a deliberate move to analyse the inherent logic of modern caste Hinduism and its influence on sexual sensibilities and subjectivities. To follow this sequence is also important for comprehending brahmacharya's culturally strategic position. Brahmacharya was not only concerned with the unmarried man; married men were expected to follow its principles. The concept of *garhastha brahmacharya* (गार्हस्थ ब्रह्मचर्य,

brahmacharya as sexual self-control within marriage) indicates this overlap.<sup>2</sup> Considering this Brahmin cultural positioning—particularly in the context of the colonial Marathi public sphere—I thus analyse marriage discussions after those on brahmacharya. In addressing modern Marathi subjectivities of marriage in relation to caste and sexuality, this chapter analyses the marriage-related writings of Shivananda, N.S. Phadke, R.D. Karve, L.K. Bhave, and K.P. Bhagwat. The first section reviews colonial marriage writings and the invention of the Marathi marriage manual. The subsequent section analyses the scripted journey of marriage, which first defined it as ‘unhappy’ and then discussed ‘undesirable’ (dysgenic) marriage practices to make a case for ‘desirable’ (eugenic) ones. The last section examines discussions around social sanctions to create ideal and workable marriages. The wealth of academic work published so far on the colonial history of marriage demonstrates its political nature. A brief review of these historical works is necessary to chalk out the relevance of the present work.

### **I. The Colonial Trajectory of Marriage**

The concept of marriage is inextricably linked to conjugality and patriarchy in its historical making. The performativity of this nexus—crucial to thinking about modernity—has made rereading marriage a compulsory and ongoing activity for unpacking conjugal politics. Colonialism, inseparable from any historical approach to Indian modernity, shaped marriage fundamentally in terms of its modern meaning, structure, and function. For South Asian scholarship, marriage under colonialism has remained the subject of analysis, but the marriage-related discussions of colonial times have also served as the historical background to theorising related social issues.

In academic histories of colonial Indian marriage, conjugality, sexuality and family are the context for understanding imperialism, the nation, caste, and

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<sup>2</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchit Santati*, pp. 19, 237–42; Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), pp. 198–99.

eugenics. Ronald Hyam, for example, uses marriage and family to justify the imperial masculine authority, with reference to the categories of *bibi* and *memsahib*.<sup>3</sup> While using the same frame, for Durba Ghosh marriage politics between the imperial man and Indian woman were a site of racial and gender differences between coloniser and colonised.<sup>4</sup> However, colonised people were not a homogeneous category but were hierarchically divided across caste and class lines. Also, imperial or colonial rule—beyond being crucial to shaping sexual engagements between the colonial master and Indian women—was also a governing authority which regulated Indians' sexual lives through policy within and outside the marital bond.

When thinking side by side of colonial policies and India's nation-making modernity, sexuality appears as an important aspect—for example, around child marriage. Colonial Indian women's resistance to child marriage, Judy Whitehead argues, was a marker of middle-class feminist achievements<sup>5</sup>; in Mrinalini Sinha's analysis, it was a site of producing a liberal feminist agenda that erased the caste and class hierarchies inscribed on the girl child.<sup>6</sup> Tanika Sarkar, going beyond middle-class frames, sees the child-marriage and the 19<sup>th</sup> century age-of-consent discourses as crucial to exposing the extent and limit of extremist Hindu nationalists' brutality as reflected through their child-marriage advocacy.<sup>7</sup> Neeraj Hatekar points out that colonial regulations were already outdated by the time Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 passed, as the age of marriage had

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<sup>3</sup> Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, pp. 115–21.

<sup>4</sup> D. Ghosh, *Sex and Family*, pp. 69–106.

<sup>5</sup> Judy Whitehead, 'Modernizing the Motherhood Archetype: Public Health Models and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929', in Patricia Oberoi, ed., *Sexuality, Social Reform and the State* (Delhi: Sage, 1996), pp. 190–91.

<sup>6</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, 'The Lineage of the Indian Modern: Rhetoric Agency and the Sharada Act in Late Colonial India', in Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 211, 218–19.

<sup>7</sup> Sarkar, *Hindu Wife*, p. 51.

already increased among Chitpavan Brahmin families.<sup>8</sup> Sexuality and caste, as invoked in these historical narratives, are contextual elements of the analysis of marriage rather than part of its core.

If marriage was a means to understand the nation-making process, it was also a medium to articulate the differential logic of nation espoused through anti-caste Tamil self-respect marriages. Mytheli Sreenivas contrasts nationalist child-marriage discussions to those around the radical Dravidian self-respect marriages, which dismissed Brahmins from the wedding ceremony. Such radicalism was also perceived in the self-respect movement's explicitly understanding *consent* as the key issue around sexuality.<sup>9</sup> However, despite acknowledging the crucial difference, this does not illuminate why modernist Brahmins found it possible to do away with horoscopes and inviting a Brahmin priest, even while retaining Brahminism in various other ways. Marathi sex-education literature's treatment of marriage in this regard is a site to understand how deceptive overlaps in Brahmin and non-Brahmin argumentation operated. Examining of such narratives can help us understand anti-caste radicalism.

Though child marriage was legally prohibited in 1929, the rhetoric of marriage reform and child marriage continued into inter-war times and became a part of discussions on sexual relations. Marriage became the subject of discussing conjugal sensibilities in the context of eugenics. Francis Galton's eugenic writings were widely disseminated in India during this period, making marriage a topic through which neo-Malthusian thoughts and modern contraceptive technologies could be discussed, understood and applied within caste society. Moving between the worlds of upper-caste concern with population control and anti-caste politics, Sarah Hodges argues that marriage in the late colonial Tamil

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<sup>8</sup> Neeraj Hatekar, Abodh Kumar and Rajani Mathur, 'The Making of the Middle Class in Western India: Age at Marriage for Brahmin Women (1900–50)', *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 21 (23–29 May 2009), pp. 40–47, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Sreenivas, *Wives, Widows and Concubines*, pp. 85–86.

south was a site of contraceptive biopolitics,<sup>10</sup> with Indian eugenic thought and marriage modernism as mutually constituted phenomena mediated by caste.<sup>11</sup> While drawing upon Hodges's work, the present chapter considers the Marathi rhetoric of eugenics beyond late colonial scientific understandings in its shaping of marriage modernism through caste.

The inter-war Marathi sex-education narrative holds a distinct position in writing marriage modernism. Such sexualised marriage writing talked about colonial authority, but not in the context of the sexual exploitation of Indian women. It mentioned child marriage but did not get bogged down by colonial legislation. It addressed caste as well as the nation. It went beyond Galtonian scientific discourse and into the realm of eugenic rhetoric. A brief introduction to this literature will help to frame it as a sexual-political site.

### ***The Invention of the Marathi Marriage Manual***

The upper-caste subjectivity in marriage for which this chapter argues was constructed through late colonial Marathi sexual writings on marriage. What was the nature of this writing? What was the larger context of its emergence?

Marriage manuals, in a definitional sense, are aimed at providing expert advice on marriage and related issues. Marathi writings on marriage in this context provide a slightly different picture. Marathi marriage writing was a part of the sexual-science writings on birth control and eugenics, but distinct marriage manuals were also produced. In fact, marriage was constructed at the intersection of writing sexual science and marriage manuals. However, almost all Marathi sexual literature served the purpose of providing advice to those of marriageable age and the married. Considering this overlap, the following review might appear to be a repetition of Shivananda, Phadke and Karve's writings, mentioned in the

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<sup>10</sup> Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, pp. 6–16, 77–103.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Hodges, 'Indian Eugenics in an Age of Reforms', in *Reproductive Health in India: History, Politics, Controversies* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006), pp. 116–17.

previous chapter. Nevertheless, the same sources will be now mentioned in the context of the marriage discourse.

Shivananda, apart from marginally treating the subject in his bestseller on brahmacharya, also wrote two major books concerning marriage and reproduction: 1924's *Manowanchhit Santati* (*Desired Children*) and 1929's *Dampatya Rahasya* (*Conjugal Secrets*).<sup>12</sup> Though 'conjugal secrets' is the literal English translation of *Dampatya Rahasya*, Shivananda preferred the English subtitle 'Sexual Science'.<sup>13</sup> The 'secret' of conjugality was made more intriguing by the English word 'science' in a Marathi book for Marathi readers. While it begins with a chapter on the importance of sexual science, the book travels from emphasising brahmacharya for a successful marriage to ways of love-making and sexual satisfaction—only to finally arrive at the topic of conception.<sup>14</sup> *Manowanchhit Santati*, with a eugenic texture and an emphasis on reproduction, showcases Shivananda's ideas on marriage reforms. Consequently, it also prescribed a sexual 'code of conduct' for married couples that treated everything from conception to pregnancy. In its position on marriage reforms, the book was situated between the two extremes of protecting *varna ashrama* and Brahminism and of critiquing Western marriage. A title in great demand, the first edition of *Manowanchhit Santati* of five thousand copies was sold within one and half years. The subsequent edition (1928) doubled its print run to ten thousand copies and extended its material with substantial additional matter and attractive sketches. In total, eight editions were published up to 2009, with every edition advertising its uniqueness.<sup>15</sup> With Brahmins heavily dominating and topping early-twentieth-century caste-based literacy charts, Shivananda's print statistics reflected his work's appeal among the colonial Marathi Brahmin readership.

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<sup>12</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), cover.

<sup>14</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 63–206.

<sup>15</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p.10; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati* (2009), p. 4.

Such an unprecedented scale of dissemination indicated not only Shivananda's popularity but Marathi eagerness to read 'sexual' and 'marital' material.

N.S. Phadke, around the same time, also articulated his eugenic thoughts on marriage, initially in Marathi as *Sukhache Sansar (Happy Conjugal Life)* and *Santati Niyamana (Birth Control)*, both published in 1926.<sup>16</sup> These works were combined and translated into English as *The Sex Problem in India* (1927).<sup>17</sup> Phadke's eugenic thought, as evident from his writings and highlighted by Hodges, was articulated around the axis of marriage.<sup>18</sup> More than half a dozen chapters of *The Sex Problem in India* were allotted to understanding the past and present of the Indian marriage system and how to make it comply with Galtonian eugenics.<sup>19</sup> Phadke argued with his English publisher about its decision to title the book *The Sex Problem in India* instead of his suggested title, *Eugenics in India*.<sup>20</sup> Phadke's focus on reforming conjugality was also evident from his work as a pioneer and formative writer of seventy-two Marathi romantic novels. Titles such as *Kulyabyachi Dandi* (कुलाब्याची दांडी, *The Colaba Strip*), *Daulat* (दौलत, *Wealth*), *Atkepar* (अटकेपार, *Beyond Attack*), and *Asha* (आशा, *Hope*), as well as countless short stories written between 1920 and 1950, exhibit Phadke's ardent desire to construct modern urban conjugality. However, his writings on population control also reflect that his idea of conjugality and romantic love was shaped by eugenics.<sup>21</sup>

R.D. Karve, the third major contributor to sexual-science literature, wrote about marriage from an unusual perspective. Karve did not write a distinct book-length narrative on marriage and sex. In fact he presented himself as a strongly

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<sup>16</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 103–104.

<sup>17</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 103–104; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*.

<sup>18</sup> Hodges, *Reproductive Health*, pp. 123–24.

<sup>19</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. xiii–xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 14, pp. 104–05.

<sup>21</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 756.



anti-marriage sex educator.<sup>22</sup> He articulated his thoughts in articles and correspondence published in *Samajswasthya* and through his books, 1932's *Adhunik Kamashastra* (Modern Sexual Science) and 1949's *Klaibya chi Mimansa* (Analysis of Impotence).<sup>23</sup> He wrote articles in his own journal and in other literary magazines and journals in the Marathi Brahmin literary world, such as 'Ajchi Vivaha Sanstha' (आजची विवाह संस्था, The Present Marriage System, 1933),<sup>24</sup> 'Vivaha Sambandhi Adhunik Kalpana' (विवाह संबंधी आधुनिक कल्पना, Modern Ideas about Marriage, 1926), 'Vivaha Yashaswi Kase Hotil?' (विवाह यशस्वी कसे होतील? How Can Marriages Be Successful? 1948), 'Ek Bayco Ka Purat Nahi?' (एक बायको का पुरत नाही? Why Is One Wife Not Enough? 1938), and 'Veshya ani Vivaha' (विवाह आणि वेश्या, Prostitutes and Marriage, 1953).<sup>25</sup> Despite Karve's opposition to marriage (analysed later in this chapter), his narrative did remain faithful to the marital structure in his replies to his readers,<sup>26</sup> and *Adhunik Kamashastra* had a chapter titled 'Choosing [Sexual] Partners in Marriage' (Vadhu Varanchi Niwad, वधू-वरांची निवड).<sup>27</sup> At the same time, his articulation of 'rationality' in sexual matters was based on the theories of Euro-American sexual scientists, some of whom were not just pro-marriage but also promoters and defenders of happy eugenic marriages. He referred substantially to sexologists and eugenicists like Norman Haire, William J. Robinson and Theodoor Hendrik

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<sup>22</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 89–97; R.D. Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 152–55.

<sup>24</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), p. 141.

<sup>25</sup> These articles were respectively published in the Marathi literary journals *Yashawanta*, *Pratibha*, *Hansa*, and *Alka* between 1926 and 1953. Anant Deshmukh, *Asangrahit Ra Dho* [Uncompiled Writings of R.D. (Karve)] (Pune: Padmagandha Publications, 2010), pp. 142, 153, 217, 235.

<sup>26</sup> SS, year 3, issue 3 (September 1929), pp. 68–69.

<sup>27</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 89–97.

van de Velde, author of the popular twentieth-century self-help book *Ideal Marriage*, and Marie Stopes.<sup>28</sup>

Other marriage manuals also appeared in the public sphere by the late 1930s. L.K. Bhave's *Vaivahik Jivan (Married Life)*, published in 1938, was followed by an enlarged edition in 1950.<sup>29</sup> Inspired by Marie Stopes's *Married Love*, Bhave hoped to make marriages a 'happy fact'.<sup>30</sup> The book begins with accounts of mismatched marriages, then explores matchmaking, brahmacharya, horoscope matching, the role of the *dharmashastras* in marriage, contraceptive devices, divorce, and mixed marriages.<sup>31</sup> K.P. Bhagwat's marriage manual of the same title, *Vaivahik Jivan (Married Life)* was first published in 1946; new editions were published every year till 1950, and a ninth edition was published in 1999.<sup>32</sup> The book discusses modern Western historical thought on marriage, partner selection, sexual anatomy, sexual desire, birth control, and sexual perversions. Bhagwat also attempted to sound like a Marxist, decorating the book with the terminology of production relations, material life, and family, claiming to impart a holistic understanding of married life for the *sadabhiruchiche lok* and *vichari manus* (people of good taste and thinking people).<sup>33</sup>

Ramakant Welde's 1942 marriage manual *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka? (Would You Like to Get Married?)* was modelled on the *Marriage Manual* by the American population-management experts Abraham and Hanna Stone.<sup>34</sup> Intended as a guide for desirable and happy couples, the book was written in the form of questions and answers between the male expert and his interrogators. While this narrative echoes earlier writings on partner selection, anatomy, and

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<sup>28</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), pp. 145–46; Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 152–55.

<sup>29</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, 2nd ed., preface page and p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>31</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, table of contents.

<sup>32</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2, 33.

<sup>33</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 55, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Shailaja and Ramakant, *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka?* preface page.

reproduction, it also discusses Darwinian and eugenic scientific narratives and considers marriage as an art.<sup>35</sup> The sexual-knowledge journals *Jivan* and *Sawai Jivan* exhibited similar enthusiasm in publishing articles on marriage and sex during this period (1941–1950).<sup>36</sup>

Writing modern marriage as part of sex education, sexual science, and eugenics and publishing marriage guides and sexual-hygiene journals set the process of sexualising marriage into motion. For post-1920 Marathi modernity, this was a distinct reality. Of course, marriage had not been asexual before, but these narratives highlighted its sexual side. This deliberate re-conception of marriage with a sexual focus happened in the context of two parallel cultural processes in to modern Marathi history. One was the Marathi cultural politicisation of marriage. The other was the modern West's eroticisation of marriage with eugenic concerns. The latter was known to late colonial Marathi speakers through global sexual-science and eugenics networks.

Against the background of nineteenth-century Marathi social reform and the transformed rhetoric of reformism thereafter, discussions around marriage were already in the air. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, reformed ideas of marriage were newly brought into cultural politics. Marriage was also a matter of concern for the orthodox Brahmin historian V.K. Rajwade, in writing his history of Indian marriage and the caste system.<sup>37</sup> Along with this, educated women, mostly from among the upper castes, were politicising marriage and conjugal relations. Beyond child and widow remarriage, these was also speculation about patriarchal politics in marriage, women's inheritance laws, long-distance relationships, obscenity, and inter-religious marriages. Such

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<sup>35</sup> Shailaja and Ramakant, *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka?* pp. 17–21, 166–219.

<sup>36</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 10 (Oct 1941), p. 43; *Sawai Jivan*, year 3, issue 3 (December 1943), p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Rajwade, *Bharatiya Vivaha Sansthecha Itihas*.

questioning, though within a Brahminical frame, was critical of marriage while asserting a gendered subjectivity.<sup>38</sup>

Simultaneously, marriage was a cultural battlefield for Brahmin/non-Brahmin caste politics. It was a site to confront Brahminism, including counter-ritualism.<sup>39</sup> Marriage was the carrier of an anti-Brahmin agenda of unpacking the caste-sexual exploitative nature of Brahmin ritualism through alternative print networks and public performances.

Modern marriage was also a site of confrontation for the Dalit/Brahmin conflict in Maharashtra. B.R. Ambedkar's essay 'Castes in India' (1917) launched a sociological critique of Brahminical endo-caste marriage arrangements.<sup>40</sup> In his *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), Ambedkar speculated about inter-caste marriages as an argumentative tool to theoretically and practically challenge Brahminism at its core.<sup>41</sup> Even the iconoclastic burning of the *Manusmriti* in 1927 was a Dalit challenge to Brahmins' hierarchical and oppressive understanding of the caste-sexual nexus in reproducing caste. Marriage as a caste-sexually gendered fact was thus key to cultural politicisation in late colonial Maharashtra.

That it was Brahmin male sex educators writing about marriage at this time was not a coincidence. Although the sexual act within marriage was not unknown, emphasising it in a scientific way was a political act. Sexualisation was a distinct activity from the politicisation of marriage already in place. Nevertheless, it was not a reiteration of sexual engagement as a reality, but a political reinterpretation projected as new. Its political distinctness was the explicit label of sexuality and reform.

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<sup>38</sup> S. Karve, ed., *Stree Vicasachya Paul Khuna*, pp. 108, 133, 145, 176, 244; S. Karve, ed., *Striyanchi Shatpatre*, pp. 57–58, 75, 79–83, 92–93, 128–30, 142.

<sup>39</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol. 1, pp. 344–45.

<sup>40</sup> Moon, ed., *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 9–22.

<sup>41</sup> Moon, ed., *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 66–69.

The second context of Marathi sexual-marriage writing was related to the explicit label of sexuality. Marathi sexual literature claimed to make marriage and sex scientific. Considering the development of global scientific sexuality in the twentieth century, this was not a novel activity. Marriage reformism was well connected to global sexual science and eugenic discourse, as previously discussed. Marathi sex educators were not only intense readers but also enthusiastic participants in the global sexual agenda.<sup>42</sup> The nineteenth- and twentieth-century eroticisation of marriage in the Western sexual science world was one of the political processes making modern sexual sensibilities.<sup>43</sup> This process was related to post-Industrial-Revolution social reconstructions<sup>44</sup> as well as to the women's movement.<sup>45</sup>

Western marriage manuals saw sexual problems as the main cause of marital unhappiness. Matrimonial disturbance was a discourse set in the context of the women's movement and divorce laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While elucidating on the moral panic about increased juvenile delinquency and disturbances in the family, the marriage manuals posited a scientific handling of the sexual aspects of marriage as an answer to divorce.<sup>46</sup> Defining marriage and teaching conjugality, hence, was a central concern of Western marriage manuals. Such manuals tried to frame 'unhappiness' around the issue of 'sexual ignorance', particularly ignorance of

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<sup>42</sup> Phadke was the founder of the Bombay Eugenic Society and was in communication with Marie Stopes. See Stopes's letter to Phadke, 3 March 1924, Marie Stopes India Correspondence, and Eugenic Society Bombay Papers, SA/Eug/E.9, Wellcome Trust Collection.

<sup>43</sup> McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, pp. 46–63.

<sup>44</sup> Waters, 'Sexology', in Houlbrook and Cocks, eds., *Modern History of Sexuality*, p. 43.

<sup>45</sup> Jackson, 'Sexology and the Social Construction of Male Sexuality', in L. Coveney et al., eds., *Sexuality Papers*, pp. 49–53.

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Jackson, *Real Facts of Life: Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality, c1850–1940* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), pp. 157–58.

the husband, which affected the wife.<sup>47</sup> Marriage in the early-twentieth-century West became an issue of sexual dissatisfaction as part of this political process. The sexual narrative of what happens ‘behind closed bedroom doors’ became a matter of inquiry for the new marriage experts and sexual storytellers.<sup>48</sup> The Victorian sexual restriction of ‘not talking about the conjugal’, only the constructed ‘abnormal’, was overthrown by explicitly addressing ‘marital sex’.<sup>49</sup> The ‘unconcerned husband’ and ‘ignorant wife’ were the new protagonists cast in this story. ‘These frames made the new marriage performative.

With the availability and influence of such erotising narratives of marriage and eugenic formulations, the modern Western discourse on marriage, sexology, and birth control that was sexualising marriage informed the cultural context of Marathi upper-caste elites in two ways. One was to present Western knowledge as expert knowledge. Despite criticism, Western thought on marriage and sex was seen as the valid history of conjugal modernity.<sup>50</sup> Authors such as Ellis, Haire, Robinson, Edvard Westermarck, van de Velde, Stopes, Sanger, and the Stones were invoked as experts, along with Indian erotic traditions. Understanding cultural and socio-political reality in the light of these experts’ writings to make their own modernity was another way Western marriage discourse affected Marathi sex educators. In this newly understood concept of marriage, *eroticisation*, *sexualisation*, and *eugenisation* were terms conveniently used and understood as interchangeable, serving the specific agendas of sex reformers.

Influenced and shaped by these forces, Marathi sex educators discussed the meaning, practices, and socioreligious sanctions of marriage. While doing so, they introduced the idea that the prevalent marriage system was a problem by

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<sup>47</sup> George Robb, ‘Marriage and Reproduction’, in *Modern History of Sexuality*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>48</sup> McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, p. 48.

<sup>50</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 1–30.

emphasising and analysing its unhappy sides. Subsequently, by legitimising it with direct and indirect language of caste as well as Western sexual science, they made the ideal sexual marriage into an answer through remaking the sexual body, sexual selection, and sexual engagement. The latter aspect is part of the next chapter; the former is discussed below.

## II. Marriage Made Unhappy

The late colonial political journey of making conjugality happy led through the construction of marital unhappiness. Marathi sex educators, in this diagnostic construction, explored the wrongs of marriage; some even went to the extent of projecting marriage as the problem. Since unhappiness was the cornerstone of this discourse, marriage became defined in terms of its purpose and success and reformers responded by asking what could be done against sexual ignorance. Conveniently speaking the language of pleasure, reproduction, and eugenics, sex educators spoke of marriage reform in terms of social well-being. Shivananda started his *Dampatya Rahasya* with a list of English-language experts in addition to the Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Bengali sources he used. He discussed the unhappy couple as a ubiquitous problem rooted in the sexual ignorance of married couples:

In fact, most people have not been able to understand the real essence of the word *marriage*. Marriage means association, union, and blending. Of course, at any time it is better, appropriate, and essential that married couples, in the present age just as in the past, should have information about the physical and psychological union of the husband and wife.<sup>51</sup>

वस्तुतः पुष्कळांना 'लग्न' या शब्दाचे खरे मर्मच मुळी समजलेले नसते. लग्न म्हणजे संलग्नता संयोग किंवा मीलन. अर्थात पती पत्नीच्या कायिक आत्मिक मिलानसंबंधांची

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<sup>51</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 6–7.

सर्व रहस्यपूर्ण माहिती पूर्वकालाप्रमाणेच साम्प्रतही प्रत्येक तरुण विवाहित जोडप्याला  
असणे हे केव्हा हि इष्ट, आवश्यक आणि योग्यच आहे.

While advocating openness in talking about the sexuality within marriage, Shivananda argued that ‘secretive tendencies’ (*lapwa chapwiche che satra*, लपवा छपवीचेच सत्र) were the root cause of the phase of married life (*grihasthasrama*, गृहस्थाश्रम) turning into an adulterous phase (*vyabhichar ashrama*, व्याभिचाराश्रम) and for turning the ‘wife legitimised by religion’ (*dharma patni*, धर्म पत्नी) into a slave and a religious prostitute (*dharma veshya*, धर्म वेश्या).<sup>52</sup>

While invoking the American judge Ben Lindsey (1869–1943) for associating sexual science with marital happiness, Shivananda further linked the subject of marriage to the *dharmashastras* and indigenous medicine (*vaidyakashastra* वैद्यकशास्त्र).<sup>53</sup> By comparing the educated but sexually ignorant person to one who has fallen into the water with no knowledge of swimming, Shivananda made marriage an issue of life and death—much like his brahmacharya narrative.<sup>54</sup>

Shivananda also praised Brahminical religious and medical scriptures for their understanding of the marriage and sexual-science nexus:

We too, like our great righteous ancestors, with a confident and unhesitant mind, should give knowledge of this fundamental subject to our married young children, brothers and sisters. [By] saving them from further danger [we] should do ‘real’ good to them and their progeny’s life. And by this we should appropriately emancipate ourselves from the fatherly debt.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 9.



आपण हि आपल्या थोर पुण्यवान पूर्वजांप्रमाणे निर्भय व निःशंक मानाने या मूलभूत विषयाचे ज्ञान आपल्या सर्व विवाहित तरुण मुलामुलींना व भगिनीबांधवांना वेळीच करून दिले पाहिजे आणि भावी संकट पासून वाचवून त्यांचे व त्यांच्या संतती चे खरे कल्याण केले पाहिजे आणि अशा प्रकारे स्वतः पितृऋणातून यथार्थ मुक्त झाले पाहिजे.

In other words, the sexual science of a happy marriage should be conveyed to parents and elders so that they could pass it onto their descendants and siblings. This was framed as *pitru runa* (पितृ ऋण, parental debt). The *pitru runa*, in a classical Vedic understanding, was the social duty of begetting and raising a son, to be fulfilled by every high-caste man (married *brahmachari*) according to the *dharmashastra*. The reproductive duty was to be performed along with *deva runa* (देव ऋण, offering sacrifices to gods) and *rishi runa* (ऋषी ऋण, acquiring Vedic knowledge) before the phase of renunciation.<sup>56</sup> *Pitru runa* here was converted into ensuring that biological descendants were aware of sexual science so that they would be happier while performing their caste-sexual reproductive duties. Modern Marathi sexual science, made of Western sexology and colonial interpretations of Brahmin scriptures in this construction, was converted into an upper-caste man's duty. Shivananda further saw following this duty as the way to travel the Brahminical path of appropriate emancipation (*yathartha mukti*, यथार्थ मुक्ती).<sup>57</sup> The meaning of emancipation was defined through the principles of caste-sexual reproduction standing in for modern marriage.

If ignorance of sexual science was one reason for marital unhappiness, ignorance of eugenics was another. N.S. Phadke's English and Marathi eugenics writings (*suprajanana shastra*, सुप्रजनन शास्त्र) held the prevalent idea of marriage responsible for disproportionate and unhealthy reproduction, leading to high

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<sup>56</sup> Patrick Olivelle (ed.), *The Law Code of Manu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 100–101.

<sup>57</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 9.

infant-mortality rates.<sup>58</sup> Phadke considered marriage the origin of all citizens.<sup>59</sup>

He further explains the relation between sexual union and marriage:

Men and women, those whom we call married, [they] not only take pleasure in mutually experiencing sexual intercourse but spend life with each other by putting restriction on non-adulterous behaviour and sexual desire. . . . Marriage is not sexual intercourse, but a regulation put on sexual intercourse.<sup>60</sup>

ज्यांना आपण विवाहबद्ध म्हणतो असे स्त्री पुरुष एकमेकांपासून संभोग सुखाचा आनंद घेतात एवढेच नव्हे तर स्वतः च्या संभोगलालसेवर अव्याभिचाराचे बंधन घालून एकमेकांच्या संगत आयुष्य घालवतात.... विवाह म्हणजे संभोग नसून संभोगावर घातलेला निर्बंध.

This sexual definition of marriage was conceived to keep society from being adulterous, where adultery was not simply the danger of illegitimately transgressing monogamy but also of transgressing caste boundaries. Similarly tracing the evolution of marriage, for Phadke the emergence of *jatyabhiman* (जात्याभिमान, caste and communal pride) was fundamental to marriage that helps uniting people.<sup>61</sup> He used the phrases *communal pride* in his English writing<sup>62</sup> and *caste pride* in Marathi<sup>63</sup> to denote the same idea. This usage was a political choice for the language expert Phadke. *Community* in English was *caste* in Marathi, for the making of his caste-shaped eugenic marriage. The alternative usage of overlapping but different words, while framing sexual marriage, was a

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<sup>58</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 715–20; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 1–10, 58–9.

<sup>59</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 720.

<sup>60</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 721.

<sup>61</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 722; N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, pp. 61–2.

<sup>62</sup> N.S. Phadke, *Sex Problem in India*, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 722.

matter of thoroughly understanding what social concepts to use for his readers.

Phadke further narrates,

All those thinking people who are really concerned about how to make marriages happy in this country and what should be done for that, as a first priority, should only discuss whether our marriage system has any faults [and] if there are any, how they can be eradicated with the minimum possible damage to the ancestral tradition.

आपल्या देशातील लोकांचे संसार सुखाचे व्हावेत या साठी काय केले पाहिजे अशी ज्यास तळमळ लागली असेल अशा सर्व विचारवंत लोकांनी आल्या समाजात रूढ असलेली विवाह संस्था दोषयुक्त आहे किंवा काय आणि तिच्यात काही दोष असतील तर पूर्व परंपरेला शक्य तितका कमी धक्का लावून त्याे कसे काढून टाकता येतील या गोष्टीचीच चर्चा प्रथम केली पाहिजे.

Protecting the sexual relationship from adultery, eugenic concern for mortality rates, and increasing caste/communal strength without damaging the Hindu tradition: this was Phadke's solution for a happy marriage. Of course, not subscribing to this frame, in his opinion, was the cause of unhappiness.

Meanwhile, K.P. Bhagwat's eugenics writing connected marital unhappiness to the confusion created by the early-twentieth-century social transformations.<sup>64</sup> Bhagwat's talk of marriage as the maker of an individual's corporeal, economic, and social relations was also about deciding social morality of children.<sup>65</sup> While talking of marriage as a responsibility, Bhagwat wrote for the confused but thinking man, meaning the educated 'white-collar man' (*pandharpesha vichari manus*, पांढरपेशा... विचारी माणूस)<sup>66</sup>—a term that ubiquitously

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<sup>64</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>65</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2–3.

referred to educated Brahmins in late colonial Maharashtra.<sup>67</sup> Similar rhetoric about eugenics and ignorance of reproductive corporeality was also part of Ramakant Welde's marriage manual.<sup>68</sup>

The idea of the unhappy marriage did not only revolve around eugenics: its rhetoric was also a matter of 'personal' coupled with 'social' dissatisfaction in L.K. Bhave's marriage manual *Vaivahik Jeevan*. Bhave emphasises the personal dissatisfaction at the heart of unhappiness.<sup>69</sup> Connecting this personal unhappiness to the 'social', he explains:

The bond of marriage is essential for sexual social hygiene. And any extramarital man-woman relation is morally, socially, and religiously condemnable as well as punishable. Assuming these two postulations, marriage, despite being binding, should not appear as constraining. Instead, one should desire its lifelong sustenance. Therefore, how should this marriage bond become more and more happy for both and how married life should function? The intention of the book is to narrate this.<sup>70</sup>

लैंगिक समाज स्वास्थ्यास विवाह बंधन आवश्यक आहे. व कोणताही विवाहबाह्य स्त्री पुरुष संबंध धार्मिक, सामाजिक आणि नैतिक दृष्ट्या दूषणीय व दंडनिय होय हि दोन प्रमेये ग्राह्य मानून व विवाह बंधनकारक असूनही बंधनकारक न भासवा इतकेच नव्हे तर हे विवाह बंधन आमरण टिकवावे असेच वाटावे; एवढ्याकरता हे विवाह बंधन उभय पक्षी जास्तीत जास्त सुखावह होण्या करता वैवाहिक जीवन कसे चालावे याचे विवेचन करण्याच्या हेतूने हे पुस्तक लिहिले आहे.

His understanding, trying to echo Stopes but bound to Hindu religious-social morality, focussed on the production of pleasure and progeny (*sukhotpatti ani*

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<sup>67</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Shailaja and Ramakant, *Tumhala Lagna Karaychay Ka?* p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 2.

*santanotpatti*, सुखोत्पत्ति आणि सान्तानोत्पत्ती). Bhave further explained the satisfaction of sexual desire as the original and natural intention of marriage since the time of its evolution.<sup>71</sup> While blaming Christianity and Buddhism for not understanding the importance of conjugality and thereby happiness, Bhave saw the legacy of the *Manusmriti* and the Mahabharata as sensitive to the relationship between sex, marriage, and happiness.<sup>72</sup> Further placing unhappiness in the context of the hectic, ever-changing late colonial world, Bhave saw the wife as the subordinate ally of the husband. While conceiving of modern marriage within the Brahminical frame if hectic modern life was an inevitability for Bhave's constructed husband, his constructed wife was responsible for the husband's success or failure.<sup>73</sup>

R.D. Karve thought that the contemporary marriage system was the cause of the unhappiness his contemporaries discussed, in particular the absence of divorce laws:

Marriage is a mutual contract between two persons. Of course, like other contracts, this also should be made between two mature people. Parents have no right whatsoever to make such a contract on behalf of their ignorant children . . . as any contract can be terminated with the consent of the concerned parties, this also should get similar treatment. The present marriage system is like a mousetrap—very easy to get in, but extremely difficult or impossible to get out. . . . How can happiness be achieved in such a mousetrap?<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 35.

<sup>72</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>73</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>74</sup> R.D. Karve, 'Vivaha Sambandhi Adhunik Kalpana' [Modern Ideas about Marriage] (March 1926), in A. Deshmukh, ed., *Asangrahit Ra. Dho.*, p. 143.

विवाह हा दोन माणसांचा परस्पर करार आहे. अर्थातच इतर कराराप्रमाणे हा दोन जाणत्या माणसांनी केला पाहिजे. अज्ञान पोरान्या वतीने असा परस्पर करार करण्याचा आईबापांस बिलकुल हक्क पोचत नाही.... कोणताही करार उभय पक्षांच्या संमतीने मोडता येतो तसाच हाही मोडता आला पाहिजे. हल्लीचा विवाह म्हणजे उंदराचा सापळा आहे. आत शिरण्यास अत्यंत सोपा पण बाहेर निघणे मात्र अत्यंत कठीण किंवा अशक्य... उंदराच्या सापळ्याने सुख कसे होणार?

Karve further targeted the institution of marriage for its systemic assumption that the wife is the personal property of the husband (*vivahit stri navryachi malmatta manli aahe*, विवाहित स्त्री हि नवऱ्याची मालमत्ता मानली आहे).<sup>75</sup> Such postulations, though resembling feminist thought, actually echo Karve's favourite patriarchal eugenicist, William J. Robinson.<sup>76</sup>

This position, although it appeared radical, located unhappiness in the question of consent between the couple and the difficulties of divorce; Karve criticised marriage but underlined the requirement of having a family.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, while targeting marriage as a system and appealing a contract-based marriage, he remained silent on the Indian reality of endo-caste marriages. Not making this part of his criticism shows Karve's Brahminical position in comprehending marriage, conjugal happiness, and social hygiene. Indeed, this ostensible opponent of marriage system simultaneously wrote about how marriages become happy. A careful reading suggests that, though Karve projected marriage itself as a problem, for him, real unhappiness was caused by the evils then prevalent in the marriage system.

However they defined unhappiness, marital reformers ubiquitously saw sex as the answer to the perceived problems of marriage. Nevertheless, Western

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<sup>75</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), p. 144.

<sup>76</sup> William J. Robinson, *Woman: Her Sex and Love Life* (New York: Critic and Guide Co., 1917), p. 352.

<sup>77</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), p. 141.

sex educators constructing marital unhappiness was not simply an activity of 'neo-sexual enthusiasm', as Angus McLaren interprets.<sup>78</sup> Neither was that the case with their Indian counterparts. Sexualisation was a systematically developed eugenic solution. This argumentation, beyond defining marriage, was also deployed in Maharashtrian discourse at two levels: it problematised the 'making of marriage' and produced narratives of sexual success in marriage. The latter is a concern of the subsequent chapter. The former is discussed next.

### ***Marriages: Dysgenic to Eugenic***

As the type of unhappiness defined what kind of happiness was to be achieved, the practices of nonideal marriage had to be discussed to spell out what would be ideal. With the sexual frame and child marriage dominating the discussion leading up to the 1929 passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, for sex educators and other Marathi writers, 'adult marriage' was the key issue for discussion. The child-marriage debate continued to have a distinct effect on Marathi eugenic-sexual marriage agendas long after 1929.

Feeding into the nationalist-reformist discourse, all sex educators, despite their differences in making modern sexual sensibilities, were unanimous in advocating adult marriage. Similarly to liberal nationalists, they argued that the nation's decline was caused by child marriage, which led to political slavery and loss of male valour and scientific and creative temperament, impeded girls' education, and damaged mothers' and infants' health.<sup>79</sup> Despite admiring the child-marriage supporter B.G. Tilak, Shivananda and Phadke echoed the rational talk that married couples need to reach sexual and physical maturity. Shivananda strongly condemned deliberate attempts to making girls menstruate earlier.<sup>80</sup> Even if this meant projecting rational nationalism, reproduction was still the

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<sup>78</sup> McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>79</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 90; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 729–30.

<sup>80</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 90.

raison d'être of most discussion, focused on the particular desire to beget brave male children.<sup>81</sup> Discussions of sexual maturity (considered to be reached at age sixteen for women and twenty-five for men) referred assiduously to the Brahminical scriptures, much like the nationalists did.<sup>82</sup> If Manu appeared in most discussions,<sup>83</sup> so did the Parashar, Atri, and other *smritis*, along with references from the Vedic *sutras*, *puranas*,<sup>84</sup> and ancient Ayurvedic texts.<sup>85</sup> Child marriage was one of the most important national issues discussed in late colonialism. Nevertheless, contemporary eminent Marathi Brahmin interpreters of the *dharmashastras* like P.V. Kane were equally emphasising that, beyond being a social issue, it was a scriptural debate amongst Brahmins.<sup>86</sup> Child marriage was also a medium through which to assert that the 'national' was Brahmin and that the 'Brahmin' was national. Marathi sex education was no exception. Beyond making this equation, the scriptural defence of maturity in marriage also countered the late colonial critique of Brahminism.

The focus on adult marriage, though feeding into the nationalist discourse, was not oriented towards the logical end of passing an act but towards making a eugenic society with caste. Eugenics was not part of the child-marriage discussion, but child marriage was part of the eugenics discussion. The debate was one of the principal sites for standardising sexual relations while shaping the modern sexual self. Child marriage and the future reproductive potential of girl was a major concern in Phadke and Shivananda's eugenic agendas before 1940.

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<sup>81</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 90.

<sup>82</sup> Sreenivas, *Wives, Widows and Concubines*, pp. 75–77.

<sup>83</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 46; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p.55; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 734.

<sup>84</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 731.

<sup>85</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 46; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 91; Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), p. 165.

<sup>86</sup> P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmashastra* (Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), pp. 446–47.



Bhave, Bhagwat, and Welde, however, made comparatively marginal references to child marriage in this period. When talking about adult marriage, Phadke tried to apply the Galtonian eugenic model to Indian society. Shivananda—followed by Bhave, Bhagwat, and Welde—rather than applying a particular ‘scientific’ model, effectively used the rhetoric of eugenics (*supraja nirmana shastra*, सुप्रजा निर्माण शास्त्र). While marriage practices were evaluated to draw up a eugenic ideal, eugenics was used to construct problems in marriage practices.

Phadke talked generically about the evolution of marriage patterns to contextualise the Brahminical marriage classifications in the *dharmashastras*. He argued that periods of war in olden times created types of marriage that brought slavery to women, whereas post-war periods brought liberation.<sup>87</sup> As this analysis came in the middle of the inter-war period, it can be sensed that Phadke almost saw himself as a eugenic liberator of marriage in troubled times. This vague talk of atrocious marriage practices was Phadke’s way of eugenically situating the five sanctioned and three non-sanctioned marriages, as classified by the Brahmin *smriti* literature. Describing the trajectory of Indian marriage as moving from bad to good, he said,

The *smritis* describe *brahma*, *daiva*, *aarsha*, *prajapatya*, *gandharva*, *asura*, *rakshasa* and *paishacha* marriage practices—if understood in reverse sequence, they are a series that indicate how marriages went on reforming in India. *Paishacha* means unregulated sexual relations between man and woman; *rakshasa* is marriage by abduction, and this is an example of women’s slavery; *asura* means the purchase of the wife; and *gandharva* is to marry each other with consent. The other four marriage types

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<sup>87</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 724.

indicate to times when religion dominated the marriage institution.<sup>88</sup>

स्मृती मध्ये वर्णिलेले ब्राह्म, दैव, आर्ष, प्राजापत्य, गंधर्व, आसुर, राक्षस आणि पैशाच यांचा उलट्या क्रमाने विचार केला तर हिंदुस्थानात विवाह कसे कसे सुधारत गेले याचे हि मालिका दर्शक आहे. पैशाच विवाह म्हणजे अनियंत्रित स्त्री पुरुष समागम राक्षस म्हणजे बायको पकडून आणणे व हे स्त्रियांच्या दास्यत्वाचे निदर्शक आहे; आसुर म्हणजे बायको विकत घेणे; गंधर्व म्हणजे स्त्री पुरुषांनी एकमेकांच्या अनुमतीने एकमेकांस वरणे. बाकी राहिलेले चार विवाह संप्रदाय धर्म प्राबल्य चा काळ दर्शवितात.

Although Phadke criticised the dominance of religion in marriage, these classifications in his writing meant that he accepted the sanctioning parameters of the *dharmashastras* and *smritis*. Considering the first four marriage types religious and condemning and demonising last three as barbaric and uncivilised was to delegitimise subaltern marriage practices outside the upper-caste Hindu *varna ashrama* fold. Even while criticising their religious dominance, he kept his high-caste readers in mind, saying, ‘The readers should not assume that I consider the association of religion and marriage an evil match’ (धर्म आणि विवाह संस्थेची सांगड असणे वाईट आहे असे आमचे म्हणणे आहे असे वाचकांनी समजू नये).<sup>89</sup> With this rationality, Phadke assumed the philologically and ritually Brahminised and Brahmin-mediated *brahma* (ब्राह्म, ritualistic Brahmin priest-mediated marriage) to be the most prevalent Indian marriage.<sup>90</sup> Logically, therefore, this marriage type became, for Phadke, the candidate for eugenic reform. In emphasising the standards of Brahmin marriage, he condemned subaltern practices and associated the evil practice of dowry-giving, then prevalent in upper-caste marriages, with subaltern practices like *asura* and *paishacha*.<sup>91</sup> Discussing marriage types was a method to

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<sup>88</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 725.

<sup>89</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 727.

<sup>90</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 751.

<sup>91</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 751.

discard and demonise subaltern practices while improving defective upper-caste practices by defining their defects as subaltern.

Shivananda, around the same time, attempted to standardise the *Manusmriti*- and *dharmashastra*-legitimised marriage types for the upper castes. The non-ideal marriage in his definition were classified into eleven types. Dominated by eugenic and reproductive concerns, his ‘unfit for marriage’ category includes minor girls (*balika*, बालिका), boys (*balak*, बालक), students (*vidyarthi*, विद्यार्थी), old men (*vriddha*, वृद्ध), the weak (*durbala*, दुर्बल), the diseased (*rogi*, रोगी), fools (*murkha*, मूर्ख), the bankrupt (*daridri*, दरिद्री), and cheats (*shatha*, शठ). Polygamous men (*bahu patni*, बहुपत्नी), and marrying girls to old men (*jaratha-kumari vivaha*, जरठ-कुमारी विवाह) were severely condemned.<sup>92</sup> Along with this, Shivananda supported remarriage only for childless widows.<sup>93</sup>

Shivananda expressed concern over the sexual health of girls and women and argued that evil practices were defeating the eugenic purpose of marriage.<sup>94</sup> Their danger, for him, was rooted in the danger of women gaining dominance, losing chastity, and committing adultery—all owing to a fear of caste transgression and the hybridisation of varnas (*varnasankara*, वर्ण-संकर).<sup>95</sup>

If Phadke used *dharmashastra*-demonised subaltern marriages as a parameter of evil, Shivananda effectively used lower castes as the marker of evil practices. Criticising child marriage, he said,

Since the beginning of child marriage and other evil and nonreligious marriages, India has stepped on a path of decline. And as we progress more towards making early marriages, this country will certainly decline more and more. The caste in which

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<sup>92</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 84–145.

<sup>93</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 125–47.

<sup>94</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 85.

<sup>95</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 97, 111–12, 116, 143.

early marriages prevail is considered much lower [than the others] and backward. High castes do not marry early. The caste that couples their children by putting marriage chains in their hands—according to the laws of nature—definitely remains on this planet as a slave and a fallen one. This is the truth of all times.<sup>96</sup>

बालविवाह, बालिका विवाह आणि असेच दुसरे दुष्ट आणि अधार्मिक विवाह सुरु झाल्या पासून या देशाला उतरती कळा लागली आहे आणि जो जो अधिक लवकर लग्ने होतील तो तो या देशाचा अधिकाधिकच अद्धपात होईल हे हि निश्चित आहे. ज्या जातीत लवकर लग्ने होतात ती जात अधिक हलकी व मागासलेली समजण्यात येते. उच्च जातीत लवकर लग्ने होत नाहीत. जी जात लहानपणीच आपापल्या मुलामुलींच्या हातात विवाह शृंखला अडकवून त्यांना चतुर्भुज करते, ती जात सृष्टीच्या कायद्या प्रमाणे या भूतलावर अवश्य गुलाम व पतित बनून राहते हे त्रिकालाबाधित सत्य आहे.

As child marriage was a reality amongst the upper castes at this time, Shivananda's statement can only be taken as metaphorically equating the inferiority of the practice of child marriage with the inferior sexual sensibilities of the lower castes in order to scare away potential practitioners. Its evil nature was 'casted' to construct Indian nationalism in caste language through eugenic marriage reforms. Shivananda accomplished similar caste demonisation through criticising the practice of 'dowry-giving' while metaphorically associating it with lower castes; the same was done when condemning the divorce practices prevalent among lower castes.<sup>97</sup>

Religion also illuminates how the demonisation of marriage practices was politicised. The Muslim man was a ubiquitously projected potential for conversion in Shivananda's writings.<sup>98</sup> Sex educators commonly cited Muslim

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<sup>96</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 90.

<sup>97</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 104–106.

<sup>98</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 116; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 728.

invasion as a reason for the emergence of child marriage.<sup>99</sup> Hindu-Muslim riots in inter-war times gave an immediate context to communal definitions in the literature of sexual modernity.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, fear of conversion was not particular to this period. It distinctly shaped modern Hinduism in colonial times and afterwards. Though conversion is seen as religious, in Indian society it was also a journey from caste to religion.<sup>101</sup> Transgression of caste (*varnasankara*) was fundamental to the fear of conversion, more than *dharmasankara* (the transgression of religion). (Charu Gupta has analysed the fear of Muslim conversion in the context of late colonial north Indian sex literature, but with a frame of communalism.<sup>102</sup>) Though not mentioning conversions, other sex educators did complement Shivananda's anti-Muslim position by considering Muslims to be atrocious invaders.

Thus discussions of marriage practices, in treating the topics of women's slavery, political indignity, sexual savagery, and religious transcendence, made lower castes the actual and metaphoric locations of evil and the exact opposite of ideal conjugality. Coupled with the rhetoric of Indian nationalism, these lists of evil practices designated ideal eugenic practices to construct the marriageable male and female sexual ideals, while fixing the age of adulthood. Galton was the reference point for Phadke, and the rhetoric of eugenics was the same for the others, but the centrality of the *dharmashastras* and *smritis* cannot be denied for most of them.<sup>103</sup> If choosing a Brahminical method was one step in the direction of eugenics, reforming the chosen method by debating social sanctions was the other.

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<sup>99</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 728–29.

<sup>100</sup> Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 8, pp. 163–84.

<sup>101</sup> Suhas Palshikar, 'Uthal Adhunikte Mage Dadlela Sanatanwad' [Orthodoxy Hidden behind Shallow Modernism] in Rajendra Vora, ed., *Adhunikta ani Parampara* [Modernity and Tradition] (Pune: Pratima Prakashan), p. 159.

<sup>102</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, pp. 243–50.

<sup>103</sup> Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jivan*, 46; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 55–56.

### III. Debating Sanctions

Since marriage itself was a matter of social sanction, made within socially acceptable frameworks, sex educators found it important to evaluate acceptable social criteria for modernising marriage. The very idea of social sanction was an issue of establishing hegemony through consent. To make marriage perform caste and gender politics, sanctions had to be discussed. Socio-religious sanctions were an apparatus through which the marriageable caste-sexual populace was governed. Evaluating sanctions was therefore an activity of remaking power. As these sanctions were behind making conventions, debating them was the politicisation of the obvious. This section sequentially analyses arranged-marriage sanctions, starting with horoscopes and followed by parental consent and the issues of caste and the involvement of Brahmin priests in rituals, thus tracing the governing sequence of the caste-sexuality nexus in making marriages.

#### *The (Mis)Match of Horoscopes*

Though they appear marginal to marriage discussions, horoscopes (*patrika*, पत्रिका, or *falajyotish*, फलज्योतिष) were a crucial topic through which Marathi sexual modernity was debated. While discussions of horoscopes marked sex educators' desire to modernise sex, their marginality was a sign of assumed inseparability from the social context of endo-caste arranged marriages. Horoscope discussions raised issues of predictability, eugenics, and tradition, as well as addressing the tension between the desirability of love and arranged marriages in a caste society. This was elaborated by Bhave and Phadke, but also receives a marginal but important mention in Shivananda.<sup>104</sup>

Bhave, while considering 'married love' central to a successful marriage, insisted on horoscopes to match the qualities of prospective couples. His arguments for marriage based on astrology were showered with quotations from

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<sup>104</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 61–63; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 727–28; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 147–48.

the writings of George Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare, and the nineteenth-century American nutritionist Bernarr McFadden. It also included expressing reservations about love before marriage and love at first sight; and his criticism of marital discord and divorce.<sup>105</sup> He explained:

Marriage, to become happy, needs the support of love . . . similarities in the [couple's] 'nature' are necessary for developing love. . . . Since two totally unknown people come together in marriage, verifying the similarities of their nature becomes an absolutely important issue in marriage . . . these similarities can be known through horoscopes.<sup>106</sup>

विवाह सुखकर होण्याकरिता त्याला प्रेमाचा आधार पाहिजे... प्रेम उत्पन्न होण्यास स्वभाव साम्य पाहिजे... विवाहात अगदी परक्या व्यक्ती एकत्र यावयाच्या असतात म्हणून स्वभाव साम्य आहे कि नाही हे पाहणे हा अत्यंत महत्वाचा प्रश्न विवाहाच्या बाबतीत उपस्थित होतो... फल ज्योतिषाने माणसांचे स्वभाव जाणता येतात.

The importance of horoscopes for Bhave is evident from the chapter-length discussion in his marriage manual.

While Bhave's narrative projected the importance of horoscope matching, Shivananda assumed it in his discussion of sexuality in marriage. Although it appears marginal to his main argument, he was more specific about the need for horoscope matching. While explaining the astrological parallel between the moon and the marriageable couple, he wrote,

In the Vedas and astrology, the moon is imagined as the mind.  
'The moon is born from the Creator's mind' is actually a *shruti*.  
In the process of arranging marriages, the position of the moon in the couple's horoscopes is always given much importance. This

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<sup>105</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 61–63.

<sup>106</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 65.

should always be remembered. The man having more moon power (or mental strength) than the woman is always preferred.<sup>107</sup>

वेदात आणि ज्योतिष शास्त्रात हि चंद्राला मनाच्या ठायी कल्पिलेले आहे. चंद्रमा मनसो जातः अशी प्रत्यक्ष श्रुती आहे. विवाह जुळवताना वधूवरांच्या कुंडलीतील चंद्रालाच विशेष महत्त्व देण्यात येते हे विशेष लक्षात ठेवण्या जोगे आहे. पुरुषाचे चंद्रबल (मनोबल) स्त्री च्या चंद्र (मनो) बला पेक्षा अधिक असणे विशेष श्रेयस्कर समजले जाते.

While drawing upon the *purusha sukta* of the Rigveda, Shivananda firmly emphasised the requirement for horoscopic matching by situating it both in the Brahminical scriptures and in the marriageable couple's bodies and minds. This interpretation was made in the context of sex life in marriage, which will be analysed in the subsequent chapter.

Phadke, by contrast, dismissed horoscopes along with dowries as unconnected to religion and called them 'uninvited guests at the doorstep of marriage' (*dharma barobar jyamcha vivahashi artarthi kahi sambandha nahi ... ase albategalbate pahune*, धर्मा बरोबर ज्यांचा विवाहाशी अर्थार्थी काही संबंध नाही असे... अलबतेगलबते पाहुणे).<sup>108</sup> Though criticising horoscopes, he emphasised matching high qualities as essential for eugenic reproduction. In his obsession with strong and intelligent progeny, Phadke stated,

Even though there is enough evidence of the existence of the best qualities in the bride and the bridegroom, their marriage becomes impossible just because their horoscopes do not match. Then that girl is married to some other boy with low qualities and the boy is married to some girl with no qualities at all . . . their marriages only produces lower-quality progeny. Hence, instead of uniting the quality breeding seeds available in society, they are randomly

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<sup>107</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 147–48.

<sup>108</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 727–28.



thrown into improper and wasteful places. Instead of breeding good progeny, this produces bad progeny and makes conjugality unhappy.<sup>109</sup>

वधू आणि वर भरपूर गुणसंपन्न असल्याचे भरपूर प्रमाण असूनही केवळ त्यांच्या पत्रिका जुळत नाहीत एवढ्याच कारणाने त्यांचा विवाह अशक्य होतो आणि आणि मग त्या मुली चा कुठल्या तरी एका निकृष्ट प्रति च्या मुलाशी आणि त्या मुलाचा कोठल्यातरी एखाद्या गुणविहीन मुलीशी विवाह होतो [...] हीन प्रतीच्याच प्रजेची उत्पत्ती त्या दोघांच्या वेगवेगळ्या विवाह पासून होते यामुळे समाजात सुप्रजादायी अशी जी बीजे असतात ती संलग्न होण्या ऐवजी इतस्तः फेकली जातात. आणि सुप्रजे ऐवजी कुप्रजा निर्माण होऊन संसार दुःखाचे होतात.

In his condemnation of horoscopes, Phadke was neither concerned for the couple nor worried about gender injustice, but about the possibility of inferior reproduction. Also, this was a concern about maintaining the purity of religion while rejecting horoscopes as a malpractice of religion. Similarly, his thoughts on dowry (*hunda*, हुंडा) stemmed from his eugenic views, which in his opinion resulted in tying an intelligent and handsome boy to an ugly girl lacking in virtue.<sup>110</sup>

Since arranged marriage was the on-the-ground reality in late colonial times, the role of horoscope matching in upper-caste marriages went beyond examining individual qualities to make sure that marriages remained within endo-caste restrictions. Horoscopes were not just about the numerical measurement of matched or unmatched qualities or determining an auspicious time for marriage, as is commonly understood. More fundamentally, it was a judgmental text commenting on the person's licit and illicit sexual relations, male-female sexual dominance, reproductive possibilities, polygamous

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<sup>109</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 743.

<sup>110</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 744.

behaviour, extramarital relations, and the failure of marriage arrangements.<sup>111</sup> This practice was not limited to Brahmins; several upper- and lower-caste non-Brahmin communities, nearly all except the lowest ‘untouchables’ and the tribes, were influenced by horoscope-based marriage arrangements. However, the Brahmin man was its creator as well as dominant interpreter, and hence he was the arbiter of knowledge on these matters. This political and manipulative role was crucial to regulating the arranged-marriage market, including the financial exchange of dowries. In this context, horoscopes contributed to the Brahminical governance of the caste-sexual nexus with the aim to reproduce endogamy. Even Phadke’s criticism did not include the Brahminical oppression engendered by horoscopic evaluation, as it was systematically disconnected from religion. The endo-caste interplay of sanctions was further explicated through the necessity of parental assent, caste sanctions, and rituals.

### ***To Disobey or Not to Disobey the Parents?***

In process of arranging marriages, after astrology, the question of parental consent inevitably followed. The opinions of parents was a discussion common to the entire proliferation of late colonial sex education.<sup>112</sup> In the norms of arranged marriages, parental consent was a link between family and society. Beyond the generic understanding that parental permission was a moral requirement of marriage, family was a fundamental unit through which the norms of caste were channelled; hence it was an agency of caste sanction. Most sex-education narratives, aware of this nexus, discussed both issues inseparably.

With the emergence of the early-twentieth-century rhetoric of modernity, with love marriage as one of its universal markers, parental sanction was a

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<sup>111</sup> Vasant Bhatt, *Graha Yoga ani Vaivahik Jivan* [The Stars, Fortunes, and Married Life] (Pune: Pragat Printers, 1968), pp. 1–30, 55–72, 117–27.

<sup>112</sup> Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 45–48; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 110; R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 96–97; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 747–49.

conflicting site in the making of conjugal sexual modernity. Shivananda, who repeatedly condemned caste hybridisation in his writings, was not only in favour of arranged marriage but insistent on the importance of parental consent. Seeing love marriage as Western influence, Shivananda explained the issue in eugenic terms:

The vision of modern young men and women, instead of being thoughtful, is always influenced by lust and sensuality. Marriages with such lusty thoughts can never be good for them and their progeny. . . . Love marriages of beauty-blinded couples, like in the West, ultimately turn out to be a complete mismatch [like the symmetrically opposite design of the Marathi number 36, ३६] and nothing else; therefore . . . marriages with parental consent are always better. But wherever children think that marrying in a particular way is possibly going to ruin their life, there and then conveying that clearly but modestly to their parents [father] is the first and the biggest duty of daughters and sons.<sup>113</sup>

तरुण स्त्री पुरुषांची दृष्टी विचारी असण्या ऐवजी प्रायः विकारी अर्थात कामुक असते आणि अशा कामुक दृष्टीने झालेले विवाह केव्हाही त्यांना आणि त्यांच्या संततीला कल्याणकारी नाही... पाश्चात्यांप्रमाणे सौन्दर्यलुब्ध प्रेम विवाह बद्ध जोडप्यात ३६ चाच आकडा दिसून येतो... विवाह माता पितारांद्वारेच होणे इष्ट आहे... परंतु जेथे कन्या पुत्रांना असे वाटते कि अमुक रीतीने विवाह झाल्यास स्वतःच्या सुखाची माती होण्या चा संभव आहे तेथे वडिलांना स्पष्टपणे पण नम्र पणे आपला विचार कळविणे हे कन्या पुत्रांचे मोठ्यातले मोठे पहिले कर्तव्य आहे.

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<sup>113</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 110. Shivananda uses the sarcastic Marathi numerical metaphor *chattis cha akda* (opposition like the number 36)—written in Marathi as ३६, where the numerical design shows complete opposition.

This can be read as a balancing act to cope with late colonial and inter-war modernity, although heavily tilted in the favour of parental consent to sustain the traditional Brahminical patriarchal position.

The simultaneous talk of unsuccessful love marriages and parental sanction continued in Bhave's work into the late 1930s and Bhagwat's into the late 1940s.<sup>114</sup> Couples autonomously deciding on their marriages was not acceptable even to the Marxist-appearing Bhagwat, who was writing two decades after Shivananda. Nevertheless, he tried to offer a compromised solution. Bhagwat was insistent on parents' primary role in enquiring after the age, financial status, caste, and heredity of the person in question, but allowed their children of marriageable age to help them in this task.<sup>115</sup>

Even Phadke, an ardent supporter of love marriages and author of scores of romantic novels and short stories, was no different. Entrapped in the twofold puzzle of modernity and tradition, Phadke elucidated on the topic of parental sanctions and early marriages,

There are only two ways. Either turning down the elders' [father's] wishes, for the sake of the ultimate social good, youngsters should insist on their own decision; or by accepting the rightfulness of adult marriage, parents should leave behind their enthusiasm for child marriage. Of these, the first way, though possible to go along with, is not a fair one . . . parents, as early as possible, should leave behind the very idea of marrying their children of their own initiative.<sup>116</sup>

दोनच मार्ग आहेत. एक तर मुलांनी वडिलांच्या इच्छांचा अवमान करूनहि समाजहिताच्या अंतिम हितासाठी स्वतःचा हट्ट चालवला पाहिजे; किंवा प्रौढ विवाहाची इष्टता लक्षात

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<sup>114</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 3–4, 12–13; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>115</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 46.

<sup>116</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 747–48.

घेऊन आईबापांनी बालविवाहाची भलती हौस सोडून दिली पाहिजे. या पैकी पहिला मार्ग शक्य असला तरी तो श्रेयस्कर नव्हे... आपल्या मुलांचे विवाह आपण आपल्या हाताने लाऊन दिले पाहिजेत हि कल्पनाच आता वडील माणसांनी शक्य तितक्या लवकर सोडली पाहिजे.

Even if Phadke did not insist on parental authority, he was not in favour of overruling it, either. Rather, he thought it more fruitful to appeal to parental consciousness; even better, if parents brought up a virtuous son, he would choose the right bride without transcending the parental frame.<sup>117</sup> This was another way of policing the parental boundaries of caste in the name of eugenic modernism.

Karve's apparently radical perspective, projecting marriage as the fundamental problem, simultaneously commented on how to make both love and arranged marriages successful, as well as on parental sanctions. He deliberately chose the phrase 'marriage due to love' (*prematmak vivaha*, प्रेमात्मक विवाह) instead of 'love marriage' (*prem vivaha*, प्रेम विवाह) to underline the necessity of love in marriage, along with the possibility that love may not be sustained in married life.<sup>118</sup> Writing during the popularity of Marie Stopes's bestseller *Married Love*, he advocated for contract marriage while underlining the need to teach appropriate ideas of love. On the other hand, Karve criticised arranged marriage as a complete blind game and systemic chaos (*andhala karabhara*, अंधळा कारभार) in which couples must make choices simply by looking at each other's faces and parents must choose based on financial deals (*vadhu-warans cheharyawarun ani aai-bapans thaili warun nivad karawi lathe*, वधू वरांस चेहऱ्यावरून आणि आई बापांस थैली वरून निवड करावी लागते).<sup>119</sup> Karve asked couples to overrule parental authority in case of conflict. Nevertheless, encouraging couples to overrule parental authority in their marital choices; arguing for doing away with marriage entirely; and

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<sup>117</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 748–49.

<sup>118</sup> SS, year 2, issue 7 (January 1929), pp. 145–49.

<sup>119</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 89.

advocating contract marriage were contradictory positions. Karve failed to understand the role of parental consent in marriage, limiting it to financial arrangements: parental consent thus remained a compulsory and inevitable aspect of marriage.

### ***To Transcend or Not to Transcend Caste?***

The balancing act between tradition and modernity was also explicit in discussions about caste sanctions in marriage. To establish the eugenic centrality of sex in marriage, it was inevitable to engage the prior centrality of caste. Projected as a choice between acceptance and rejection, for all sex educators, the caste sanction was a matter of re-interpretation and re-articulation to modernise conjugality.

Caste, in one way, was a fluid discussion that seeped into discussions of various issues in relation to marriage, but it was also important in its own right as a sanction legitimising or invalidating marriage choices. This was invariably expressed in terms of the possibility to transcend or not to transcend caste when selecting marriage partners. For Shivananda, similar to his approach on parental sanctions, caste was an assumed as well as a mentionable issue. When expressing the appropriate qualities of the couple as the first rule for eugenic sexual engagement, he wrote that they should be healthy, virtuous, brahmachari, educated, and equal in beauty, qualities, caste, religion, and deeds (*saman roopa, guna, varna, dharma, karma yukta*, सामान रूप-गुण-वर्ण-धर्म-कर्म युक्त).<sup>120</sup> Mixed marriages (*mishra vivaha*, मिश्र विवाह) were not a distinct dysgenic category for analysis in Shivananda's writing because he assumed that sexual intercourse always happens and should happen within an endo-caste marriage frame. Nevertheless, pointing out the dangers of such marriages with a reference to the *Bhagvad Gita*, he elucidated,

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<sup>120</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 181.

The girl should be from the same caste. Mixed marriage leads to caste hybridisation. Hybridisation destroys the *kula-dharma* and ultimately both families receive hell. . . . Also mixed marriages reproduce strange hybrid progeny, like the mule. Such a couple rarely seems to be happy.<sup>121</sup>

कन्या सामान जातीतील असावी. मिश्रा विवाहाने वर्णसंकर होतो. 'वर्ण संकराने कुळधर्म नष्ट होतात आणि शेवटी उभय कुळे नरकात जातात'... शिवाय मिश्रा विवाहाने खेचरतुल्य विचित्र संतती उत्पन्न होते. असे जोडपे क्वचितच सुखी आढळते.

Beyond denigrating inter-caste marriage by referring to inferior-quality reproduction, Shivananda tried to change the definition of transcending caste boundaries in marriage. The Hindu *dharmashastras* condemned inter-caste marriages and defined them as *anuloma-pratiloma vivaha* (अनुलोम प्रतिलोम) marriages. In these marriages *anuloma* signified a union of an upper-caste man and a lower-caste woman whereas *pratiloma* referred to the union of a lower-caste man and an upper-caste woman. Shivananda, however, changed the meaning of transcending caste by reflecting on these terms and interpreted them as intermarriage within sub-castes of the same varna, which he warmly welcomed.<sup>122</sup> However, he warned against actual inter-caste marriages. Limiting caste transcendence to sub-castes of the same varna, even if in a sexual way, was a continuation of nineteenth-century Brahmin reformism.<sup>123</sup>

Talk of unhappy conjugality in inter-caste marriages was also found in Bhave's writing on mismatched couples (*vijod jodpi*, विजोड जोडपी) and mixed marriages (*mishra vivaha*, मिश्र विवाह).<sup>124</sup> He made the marker of caste distinction

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<sup>121</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 184.

<sup>122</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 103–104.

<sup>123</sup> Sahasrabuddhe (ed.), *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre*, pp. 180, 296–97.

<sup>124</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 1–23, 148–60.

ubiquitously based on food as well as culture.<sup>125</sup> Bhave's anti-inter-caste marriage theories also referenced the *Bhagvad Gita* to touch upon the issue of heredity:

How one should give importance to hereditary qualities is known to those who breed best-quality bullocks, horses, and dogs. If one applies the same rule to human beings, [then one can say] the extent to which Brahmins can reproduce Brahminical qualities is less likely to be possible with the other castes. . . . Therefore, Geeta has loudly said that hybridisation ruins the family.<sup>126</sup>

आनुवंशिक गुणास कसे प्राधान्य द्यावयास पाहिजे हे उत्तम घोडे, बैल व कुत्री यांची निपज करणारांना माहित आहे. तोच न्याय मनुष्यास लावल्यास ब्राह्मणाच्या वंशात ब्राह्मणी गुणांची संतती होणे जितके संभवनीय आहे तितके इतर जातीच्या कुळात संभवनीय नाही.... म्हणूनच गीतेमध्ये वर्णसंकराने कुळाचा नाश होतो असे कंठरवाने सांगितले आहे.

In contextualising his eugenic obsession with heredity by commenting on the greatness of the caste system, Bhave even made a sarcastic comment on B.R. Ambedkar:

By giving examples of people like Ambedkar, many ask, what is the difference between Ambedkar and the Brahmins? . . . The answer is that culture is constituted by physical, psychological, intellectual, and metaphysical qualities. Of these, if any one person becomes equal to the Brahmins in intellectual culture, that will not make him equal to the Brahmins.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 45.

<sup>126</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 153.

<sup>127</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 52–3.



डॉ आंबेडकरांसारख्यांचे उदाहरण घेऊन कित्येक जण विचारतात कि आंबेडकरांत व ब्राह्मणात काय फरक आहे?... त्यास उत्तर असे की संस्कृती हि शाररिक, मानसिक, बौद्धिक व आत्मिक असते. यापैकी बौद्धिक संस्कृतीत कोणी एकाने ब्राह्मणांची बरोबरी केली म्हणून तो ब्राह्मणाच्या बरोबरी चा ठरणार नाही.

Echoing both Shivananda and Bhavé, in Bhagwat's marriage modernism, caste was among the 'not at all to be forgotten' (*ajibat visaru naye*, अजिबात विसरू नये) considerations, mentioned as crucial to shaping a person's mind. Similarly, his argument for following caste rule included projecting the psychological fears and social opposition likely to be faced by those who did not.<sup>128</sup> This fear was also crafted by referring to Havelock Ellis's criticism of D.H. Lawrence for writing a couple of unequal status into one of his novels.<sup>129</sup>

In all these narratives, married love was preferred to love marriage and seen as a cultural phenomenon. Pre-marriage love was fraught with the possibility of not being sustainable throughout marriage.<sup>130</sup> Such articulations repurposed arranged and endo-caste marriages while eliminating the possibility of inter-caste marriages opaquely implied in the idea of love marriage. The equation of married love with happiness in marriage was cemented with caste, by advocating arranged marriage and by either showing love marriages in a negative light.

Did the transcendence of caste and love marriage become connected in apparently radical perspectives? The answer can be hardly positive. If dysgenics of married unhappiness were achieved through warnings against transcending caste, such unhappiness was also projected through the radical dismissal of caste. While other sex educators insisted on endo-caste marriages, Phadke and Karve

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<sup>128</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>129</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 45.

<sup>130</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p.110; Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jivan*, 3–4, 11–2, 61–2; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, 36–7.

positioned themselves as radicals challenging caste-based society. (Even South Asian academics, writing about late colonial sexual cultures, have to an extent believed in these projections.<sup>131</sup>) If Shivananda was vocal about protecting *varna ashrama dharma*, Phadke was asking in his eugenic advocacy, with the neo-modernist zeal of sex reformism,

Why should there be a limit on marrying within the same varna? . . . Brahmins and Shudras are sub-species of one humankind and there should not have been any objection to their coupling together.<sup>132</sup>

वर्ण मात्र निराळा असता कामा नये हि मर्यादा काय म्हणून असावी?... ब्राह्मण आणि शूद्र हे एकाच मानवी जातीचे उपवर्ग आहेत व त्यांचा संबंध घडून येण्यास काहीच प्रत्यवाय असता काम नये.

Although this statement may appear to advocate inter-caste marriage, it does not. The question projected is not Phadke's opinion but a gross expectation from society. Phadke subsequently explains to his readers that he has 'no desire to hurt the sincere believers in marriage . . . within the varna'.<sup>133</sup> On the contrary, he endorses and validates historical endo-caste restrictions by saying that the Aryan ancestors

thought it improper to exchange brides between the four varnas, including Brahmins, Shudras and others. . . . It is also true that eugenics was a key concern at the root of this. Our ancestors condemned marriages within kin and clan relations as well as outside varna, as they thought it would not lead to eugenic

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<sup>131</sup> Srivastava, *Passionate Modernity*, pp. 64–75.

<sup>132</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

<sup>133</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

reproduction. This could also get support from botanical science.<sup>134</sup>

ब्राह्मण शूद्रादि चार वर्णांत बेटी व्यवहार होणे त्यांना अनिष्ट वाटत होते [... ] या समजुती च्या मुळाशी सुप्रजनना विषायिक आस्थाच होती हे ही खरे आहे. सगोत्र सपिंड किंवा असवर्ण विवाह झाल्याने सुप्रजनन होणार नाही असे वाटल्यामुळेच आपल्या पूर्वजांनी हे विवाह निषिद्ध ठरवले होते. आधुनिक वनस्पती शास्त्राचा ही आधार या गोष्टीला मिळण्यासारखा आहे.

Endo-caste eugenics here is historically sanctioned, with Phadke asking the reader to focus on ancestral tradition, rooted in caste but interpreted as a eugenic design, even to the extent of giving a botanical example to support it as scientific. Inter-caste marriage, as a result, was framed as an expectation of ‘no objection’ from people concerned for their traditional beliefs. Although critical of kin (*sagotra*, सगोत्र), clan (*sapinda*, सपिंड), and caste (*asawarna*, असवर्ण) restrictions, instead of rejecting caste restrictions as eugenically baseless, the skilled eugenicist declared his inability to explain the eugenic rationale behind restricting inter-caste coupling.<sup>135</sup> Further roping inter-caste and eugenics together, he submitted,

Also, the law still does not permit the breaking of these bonds while staying within Hindu religion. Therefore, the only thing I am saying is that regarding marriage, these bonds (*gotra*, *pinda* and *varna*-related) must be followed, but while doing so one should not overlook the greater bond of eugenic intention.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 754.

<sup>135</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

<sup>136</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

खेरीज हिंदू धर्मात राहूनही बंधने तोडण्याची अजून कायद्याची परवानगी नाही म्हणून  
आम्ही इतकेच म्हणतो कि विवाहाच्या बाबतीत हि बंधने तर पळविताच पण शिवाय  
सर्वात मोठे जे सुप्रजननहेतूचे बंधन त्याकडे दुर्लक्ष करू नये.

With this sociohistorical understanding of endo-caste eugenics, Phadke was known for his advocacy for love and romance, on which he insisted within the reproductive frame of eugenics.<sup>137</sup> The radical-sounding question from his pen challenging the limits of varna and caste, along with his expressed lack of objections for crossing varna, were not even lip service to inter-caste marriage. Instead, they constituted a leisurely fantasy of overthrowing caste restrictions with the purpose of providing weight to the argument for scriptural and traditional sanctions of endo-caste marriage as the historical foundation of modern eugenics.

A similar appearance of advocating the transcendence of caste, along with a politically granted lack of objection, can be found in Karve's writings. The background to this is Karve's total rejection of caste—he considered it absolute nonsense. Unsurprisingly, when writing about partners selection criteria, Karve commented that

To loosen the bonds of caste differences or untouchability, family dining would be more useful than public communal dining. Mixed marriages, if required [by society], would only be possible with individual acquaintances and not by giving public lectures.<sup>138</sup>

जाती भेद किंवा अस्पृश्यतेचे निर्बंध दिले करण्यास सार्वजनिक सहभोजनांपेक्षा कौटुंबिक  
भोजनांचाच जास्त उपयोग होईल व मिश्रविवाह पाहिजे असल्यास ते वैयक्तिक  
ओळखीनेच होतील व्याख्यानांनी होणार नाहीत.

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<sup>137</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

<sup>138</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 89–90.

Discarding the idea of advancing a public appeal to eradicate caste and untouchability through marriage, for Karve, inter-caste marriage only appeared cryptically as a possibility, ‘if’ society required. Karve further exposed the caste bias in his thinking when he denigrated the sexual reform proposed by a Mahar-caste gathering in 1931:

We have heard about the Pune Mahar caste gathering passing a resolution, instructing Mahar women not to live as concubines with other-caste men. It then seems that Mahars are not ready to eradicate caste differences!<sup>139</sup>

महार स्त्रियांनी इतर कोणत्याही जाती च्या पुरुषांजवळ रखेली म्हणून राहू नये असा ठराव पुणे येथील महारांच्या सभेत पास झाल्याचे समजते. जातीभेद मोडण्यास महार तयार नाहीत तर!!

Such derogatory remarks on the Mahar resolution did not only mean an unabashed defence of the sexual exploitation of Dalit women inherent in the Brahminical hierarchy of caste conjugality. It also reflected an upper-caste male-chauvinist understanding of what modernising conjugality and advocating free sex could have meant to the radical Brahmin sex educator.

Inter-caste marriage as an antidote to caste sanctions, in all these expressions, remained an obstacle to discussing happy marriage and conjugality. Be it Phadke or Karve, the perspectives posing as radical in overthrowing the caste sanctions were in reality neither radical nor attempting to reject or challenge the centrality of caste to the project of redefining and modernising marriage and conjugality. In fact, this deceptive talk of challenging caste only served the remaking of caste endogamy. This remaking of can also be traced through the discussion around rituals and the presence of Brahmins—the ultimate performative agents of marriage.

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<sup>139</sup> SS, year 5, issue 2 (August 1931), 36. Mahar was a leading caste in the anti-caste movement led by B.R. Ambedkar.

### ***Remaking Rituals, Remaking Priest***

In the process of making Marathi marriages first unhappy and then happy, the last step before the actual public performance of marriage was the remaking of the Brahmin priest and the rituals. For Shivananda and Bhave, supporters of the role of caste in shaping marriage, rituals were crucial in making marriage a permanent bond (*sanskara*, संस्कार) and not a terminable contract (*karar*, करार).<sup>140</sup> For them, the *dharmashastra*-sanctioned rituals of *kanyadana* (कन्यादान, bride-giving), *homa* (होम, sacred fire), and *saptapadi* (सप्तपदी, seven steps around the sacred fire) were essential.<sup>141</sup>

However, Phadke, denouncer of horoscope matching and self-projected challenger of caste restrictions, was calling for a redefinition of marriage rituals, particularly *kanyadana* and *vara daxina* (वर दक्षिणा, price paid to the bridegroom).<sup>142</sup> In these rearticulations N.S. Phadke, the Sanskrit expert, instead of taking the core Sanskrit Vedic meanings of these rituals, followed their popular everyday meaning. He tried to understand dowry as the demonised form of *vara daxina* and *kanyadana* combined while considering the original practices sacred. Simultaneously, he insisted on taking the original Sanskrit meaning of the sacred fire ritual, while interpreting it as having a eugenic purpose in Brahminical marriages.<sup>143</sup> In this redefinition, Phadke was not simply thinking of the technical presence of the Brahmin, but took him to be a crucial mediator in modernising and eugenising marriage. Phadke's convenient reinterpretation affirmed Brahmin authority in marriage for eugenic modernisation. Similarly, Bhave explicitly mentions the importance of Brahmins while condemning Ambedkar's burning of the *Manusmriti*.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 84–85; Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 77.

<sup>141</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 46, 58, 76–80; Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 88–89.

<sup>142</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 751.

<sup>143</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 738–39.

<sup>144</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 107–8.

Karve took the reverse position, dismissing the importance of both Brahmin mantras and Brahmin authority. He commented,

Traditional ideas like . . . [that] sex is a sin and that its sinfulness disappears by the chanting of the *bhatts* and or by mediation of the registrar. . . . From the modern point of view such ideas are meaningless.<sup>145</sup>

पारंपरिक कल्पना म्हणजे ...रतिक्रिया हे सामान्यतः पाप आहे. परंतु भटांच्या बडबडीने किंवा रजिस्ट्रार च्या लुडबुडीने त्यातील पाप नाहीसे होते ...[ या कल्पना] आधुनिक दृष्टीने फोल आहेत.

This dismissal was Karve's technical engagement with Brahminism, rather than a real one. Understanding ritualism in this fashion might appear radical. However, this was not opposition to Brahminism but its trivialisation. Karve systematically and deliberately ignored the cultural role of Brahminism, while denigratingly calling Brahmins as *bhatt* (भट्ट) and mantras *badbad* (बडबड, chat). This diluted the political role of mantras as meaningless 'chat' and the Brahmin as a worthless man enacting it. Such trivialisation was a continuation of the nineteenth-century Marathi Brahmin reformism that differentiated between learned Brahmins and ritualist *bhatt*, and through this Karve projected himself as a radical critic of Brahminism.<sup>146</sup>

In making these moves Karve and Phadke, though apparently against caste restrictions, ultimately served to strengthen the Brahminical structure rather than challenging it. However, in total, these debates led to the definition of the

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<sup>145</sup> R.D. Karve *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 161-162

<sup>146</sup> The Brahmin social reformer Gopal Hari Deshmukh, in 1848, made a distinction between Brahmins and *bhatts* while criticising modern Brahmins as *bhatts* (corrupt Brahmins) and ancient ones as learned, with an idea of the ancients being the 'real' ones. See S.R.Tikekar, *Lokhitwadinchi Shatapatre* [Hundred Letters of Lokhitawadi] (Satara-Aundh: Usha Prakashan, 1940), pp. 118-19, 137-38, 288-89.

standard modern marriage. Despite questioning the practices of dowry-giving, horoscope matching, obeying parents, and reinterpreting ritualism, the traditional caste-sexual power structure of marriage was kept intact through reworking its details. This was a politically meaningful development in the cultural scene of late colonial Maharashtra.

### **Conclusion: Discussing Marriage, Remaking Caste**

An elaborate marriage reform movement that projected the dialectics of tradition and modernity was a particularly significant act when considering the non-Brahmin and Dalit challenge in late colonial Maharashtra. Marriage in contemporary non-Brahmin discourse was a site of an effective challenge to Brahminism through non-Brahmin print networks. Late colonial times saw the proliferation of non-Brahmin pamphlets and booklets that attacked Brahmin ritualism and the cultural and material exploitation in marriage. Brahmin ritualism was countered by non-Brahmin ritualism. Series of books such as *Swayam Purohit (Self-Priest, 1909)*, *Lagna Vidhi Shikshak* (लग्न विधी शिक्षक, *Marriage Ritual Teacher, 1928*), *Lagna Sudharana* (लग्न सुधारणा, *Marriage Reforms, 1919*) were published and circulated.<sup>147</sup> Booklets such as *Bhatjich Vadhucha Nawara Arthat Brahmananchi Pape* (भटजीच वधूचा नवरा अर्थात ब्राह्मणांची पापे, *Brahmin as Bride's [First] Husband, or The Brahmin Sins*) unpacked the caste-sexual exploitation of Brahmin marriage ritualism.<sup>148</sup> Even Jotirao Phule's late-nineteenth-century Satyashodhak literature about marriage rituals was revived. This was not just about condemning Brahmins but remaking the social fact of marriage in a non-Brahmin way. This is not to say that all non-Brahmins were anti-caste radicals: they were also under the influence of Brahmin ritualism when conceiving of their resistance. Nevertheless, this opposition was an important

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<sup>147</sup> Chopde, *Vidarbhatil Satyashodhak Chalwaliche Sahitya*, pp. 44, 49; Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, vol 1, p. 677.

<sup>148</sup> Chopde, *Vidarbhatil Satyashodhak Chalwaliche Sahitya*, pp. 48.



reference point from which the apparent radicalism of Brahmin sex educators with regard to priests, rituals, and caste can be analysed.

Similarly, considering the centrality of Manu to the Marathi Brahmins' understanding of marriage modernism, Ambedkar's burning of the *Manusmruti* in 1927—with an explanation of the sexual degradation of lower castes inscribed in the text—was a significant fact.<sup>149</sup> In addition, his advocacy of inter-caste marriage in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) posed a serious cultural challenge to Brahminical conceptions of caste reproduction and sexual engagement.<sup>150</sup>

In this environment, the discourse of 'unhappy marriage' was consistently deployed in the public domain. These narratives sometimes explicitly mentioned the caste problem. However, the very activity of discussing marriage reform meant remaking caste. With 'virtues' always defined in Brahminical terms, Shivananda and Bhave defining marriage as a non-terminable *sanskara* represented, in itself, a caste language of modern conjugality. Phadke's insistence on causing the minimum possible damage to tradition was an insistence on retaining the caste-reproducing Brahminical social structure through eugenic marriage. Even Karve's advocacy of contract-based marriage, with reservations for inter-caste alliances and the denigration of the lower castes, was equally a caste language of marriage reform. Discussing the sexual ignorance of the respectable, educated, and white-collared as well as parental consent were other means of bringing caste into the topic of conjugality. In combination, all these factors contributed to making the dominance of caste invisible in the making of marriages.

Resistance to child marriage was a fact common to both Brahmin and non-Brahmin discussions.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, sex educators equating child marriage

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<sup>149</sup> Khairmode, *Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*, vol. 3, pp. 189–212.

<sup>150</sup> Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 66–69.

<sup>151</sup> M.D. Nalawade (ed.), *Brahmnetaranche Vichar Dhan* [The Non-Brahmin Wealth of Thought] (Pune: Choice Bookstall, 1993), pp. 143–46.

with lower castes and bad marriage practices with *paishacha* and *asura* marriages in their advocacy of adult marriage was not a coincidence. However, metaphorically, using lower castes as examples of deterrence was not simply a matter of upper-caste arrogance. It was an important move to situate the anti-modernity of marriage in the lower-caste cultural milieu, to make the case for the upper castes to adopt modern practices. Caste, otherwise made invisible, reappeared here while articulating cultural and civilisational backwardness around the lower castes. The upper-caste 'self', thus modernised, was freed to occupy the terrain of conjugal modernity, devoid of lower-caste disturbances.

Dysgenic marriage practices, while metaphorically making caste visible, were constructed as the 'Other' of the Brahminical self. In fact, debating sanctions *underlined* the 'Brahminical self' and the 'lower-caste Other' in creating the subjecthood of conjugal modernity. Emphasising the practices discussed in this chapter meant emphasising the non-transgression of caste. Yet sex educators' deceptive expressions of 'no objections' to inter-caste marriages, calling rituals pointless chatter and Brahmin priests foolish performers, trivialised the role of Brahminism. Such trivialisation, combined with denigrating conjugality reforms initiated by Dalits/Mahars, strengthened Brahminism rather than challenging it. If some writings treated caste restrictions as essential conditions, others trivialised them to construct caste as a powerless and meaningless force to resist or engage with. Thus, I argue that conjugal modernity's subjects in late colonial Maharashtra emerged from the simultaneous strengthening and trivialisation of Marathi Brahminism as a projected dialectic of 'tradition and modernity'. With a stern epistemic resistance to transgressing caste, this dialectic itself was made into an endo-caste phenomenon. Thus made, the conflict between tradition and modernity was the mechanism for making inter-war neo-Brahminism through marriage reforms.

At the socio-political level, this process created the upper-caste and endo-caste heteronormative couple as the 'eugenic subject' of sexual modernity. Sexual knowledge was proposed as the fundamental principle, and eugenics its holy intention; the modernisation of marriage was worked out through

sexualising it to reproduce caste. The next chapter delves further into the corporeal sexualisation of marriage.

## Chapter 5. Sexual Modernity in Marriage

It is only through the appropriate knowledge of responsibility in marriage, which means only through knowing conjugal science [sexual science], that lakhs of married [couples] are going to be most happy.

हया वैवाहिक जबाबदारी च्या यथार्थ ज्ञानानेच म्हणजे दाम्पत्य विज्ञानानेच (sexual scienceनेच) लाखो विवाहितांचे जीवन बहुतांशी सुखी होणे शक्य आहे.

—Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya*, 1929<sup>1</sup>

This deterministic statement by Shivananda is representative of all late colonial Marathi sex educators' understanding of the relationship between marriage, sex, modernity, and science. Every one of them wrote on marriage and sex. Whether they criticised or glorified it, they saw marriage as a responsibility. Their advocacy of pleasure and happiness in marriage was inseparably linked to this responsibility. They strove for a renewed understanding of sexual relations as a crucial factor in humans' pursuit of happiness and in achieving better social health. For all of them, *social good* and *social health* were interchangeable phrases; all projected rational sexual knowledge as the most urgent requirement. Marathi sex educators firmly believed in rational sexual relations as a carrier of modernity. Marriage became the basic unit of reform, with sexual science believed to be the epistemic path to achieve rationality. In fact, sexual science was seen to create the sense of responsibility that was fundamental to a marriage built on reason and rationality. *Science* became a catchword for sex, and thereby for marriage. Though they articulated marriage in different ways, foregrounding this connection was a pursuit common to all Marathi sex educators.

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<sup>1</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 7–8.

Nevertheless, neither Shivananda nor any other Marathi sexual-science propagators primarily made this connection between sexuality and rationality. The rhetoric of the 'sexual' as a social problem and of placing married sex and conjugality on scientific grounds was the reality before, during, and after the world wars. A politically shaped desire to transform the 'social' and the 'sexual' was common to imperial as well as to late colonial societies. The dissemination of sexual-science literature across imperial and colonial boundaries and the presence of Western sexual scientists, sexual moralists, rationalists, and eugenic birth controllers were only one side of the coin. Sex educators among the colonised were also voraciously reading these works and adapting them to their own cultural context to develop a local language of social reform. Reforming and reformulating conjugal and sexual relations was a distinctive feature of the early-twentieth-century modern world.

Marathi sex educators advocated for this rational reconstitution of marriage by problem-solving within their own cultural milieu. While making connections between sex, science, and modernity, as spelled out in the last chapter, they perceived the contemporary system of marriage as a serious social problem. Through their discussions of this problem, they constructed marriage as unhappy. At the core of this unhappiness was the unsuitability and dissatisfaction of partners. To reform this situation, they brought eugenics into the discussion and debated the matchmaking process and parental as well as religious sanctions associated with arranged marriages. However, the discussion did not stop there. The most important intervention in the making of marriage into a social problem was suggesting scientific sex as a solution. Sex educators focused on sexual relations within marriage as the crux of the matter for both individual happiness and a healthy society. Sexual-science determinism as a solution to disturbed conjugality, demonstrated by Shivananda's epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, was an example of such concerned thought common to all inter-war Marathi sex educators. The previous chapter discussed the making of marriage as a social problem; this one analyses the scientific sexual narratives Marathi sex educators advanced as a solution.

Understanding the late colonial literature on marital sex is not about unpacking the nationalist separation of the spiritual and the material or the gender-segregated private and public spheres.<sup>2</sup> The nationalist, or rationalist, male creator of the inner and outer worlds was an active member of both spheres, and was trying to remake them while conceiving of his sexual ‘self’ through marriage reforms. In fact, this sexual literature refers to remaking domesticity in late colonial India. The discourse on sexual marriage was simultaneous with discussions in contemporary Marathi literature about companionate marriage. My question is not about what women learned when men gave them advice about better conjugality,<sup>3</sup> but how upper-caste male sex educators advised men to reform marriage and become modern. Similarly, this analysis refers to the making of the nation and nationalism, but it is not about the making of the ideal wife and domesticity within colonial Hinduism, nor does it explore the world that wives created for themselves under colonialism and patriarchy.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, Marathi sexual marriage literature is about shaping the ideal upper-caste *husband*. Considering the popular discussion about masculine degeneration in the colonial public sphere, the aim of the marriage manuals analysed here was to modernise the husband as a sexual man. He was the subject of the biopolitical frame of ignorance manufactured to create caste-sexually aware conjugality. The sensitive conjugality constructed through him was seen as necessary to grasp the essence of modernity. This chapter, like the previous one, analyses sexual marriage narratives by Shivananda, N.S. Phadke, R.D. Karve, L.K. Bhawe, and K.P. Bhagwat, and argues that Marathi sex educators equated ‘making marriage modern’ with ‘making marriage scientific’.

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<sup>2</sup> Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Judith E. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*, pp. 23–134.

However, this simple-looking argument requires some more explanation. Despite appearances, constructing the ‘modern’ was not a secular activity that invoking science did within sex and marriage discussions. In remaking the ‘modern social’ through science, the ‘modern’ was not a generic episteme open to all but was accessible to a select few—and the basis of this selectivity was the hierarchy of caste society. The explicit sexual remaking of marriage emerged in the inter-war times, exactly when the hierarchical core of the caste system was being challenged by non-Brahmins, Dalits, and women in their own particular ways. This was a time when traditional caste society was declared fundamentally incompatible with the idea of modern society. Therefore, the making of modern marriage, for the narrators of sexual science and ‘married sex’, was also a project to defend, update, and remake a modern caste society.

This modern remaking of married sex, as the chapter explains, was achieved through writing on anatomy, sexual matchmaking, and how marriage was to be consummated. While unpacking these processes, I further argue that Marathi sexual marriage discourse was a multi-layered activity of systematising the caste-sexual nexus foundational to Brahminical conjugality. It created a Brahmin body while structurally subordinating the lower castes in legitimately understanding corporeality. I end the chapter by arguing that through such discussions of anatomy, sexual matchmaking and the consummation of marriage, caste was biologised to reproduce endogamy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will analyse Marathi sexual anatomy narratives. The second will investigate the sexual selection criteria claimed to be the precondition to a successful marriage. A consummation pedagogy aimed at reproduction is analysed in the last section.

### **I. The Body Language of Caste**

That the performative journey of conjugal modernity in scientific rhetoric begins with corporeal theatrics of anatomy is not a surprise. Given the projection of the ‘ignorant husband’, it makes sense that sex progressives started out by explaining the sexed body and its anatomical functions before moving on to the topics of

seduction, sexual intercourse, and conception, only to culminate in reproduction. The following section unpacks anatomical modernism, the first phase of this journey, through the writings of Shivananda, Karve, Phadke, and Bhagwat.

### ***Making the Body Relevant***

The inter-war anatomical talk—also treated in the next chapter on obscenity—meant making a ‘sexed body’ while discussing its bio-culturally determined reproductive and nonreproductive functions. Most sex educators gave information about male and female anatomy in their marriage-related writings. Distinct chapters focused on sexual anatomy, such as ‘Stri Purush Guhyang Vichar’ (स्त्री पुरुष गुह्यांग विचार, Thoughts on Male-Female Secret Parts) in Shivananda, ‘Stri Purushanchi Jananange’ (स्त्री पुरुषांची जननांगे, Genitals of Men and Women) in Karve, ‘Jananendriyanchi Rachana’ (जननेन्द्रियांची रचना, Structure of Genitals) in Bhagwat and ‘Jananendriyanchi Rachana Va Garbhadharana’ (जननेन्द्रियांची रचना व गर्भधारणा, Structure of Genitals and Conception) in Phadke.<sup>5</sup> Discussions about seduction and reproduction came after anatomy. This trajectory of understanding modern marriage in a sexual way was adopted by the defenders of marriage as well as Karve, who posed as its opponent.

Sex educators who had conflicting views on other topics wrote about anatomy with similar pedagogic structure and content. They were almost unanimous in their articulations of anatomy. The bottom line was to impart knowledge of the sexual body to further understand the epistemic journey towards conception.

The term *sexual anatomy* was used interchangeably with *sexual science*. Shivananda used the two interchangeably when defining the relevance of having knowledge of one’s own body, adding:

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<sup>5</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 11–37; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 839–48; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 69–90; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 50–80.



How so strange and unnatural it is to have absolutely no information about the work that you need to accomplish. Men and women not having information about their own bodies is actually a matter of huge shame, barbarity, obscenity, anarchy, and destruction.<sup>6</sup>

जे काम करावयाचे त्याचीच मुळीच माहिती नसणे हि केवढी विचित्र व अनैसर्गिक गोष्ट आहे बरे? स्त्री पुरुषांना स्वतःच्याच शरीराची माहिती नसणे हि वस्तुतः मोठ्या लाजेची असभ्यपणाची अश्लीलतेची, अनर्थाची आणि नाशाची गोष्ट आहे.

For Phadke, anatomical knowledge was a precondition for understanding eugenics and a ‘sacred duty’ of every person to underline the importance of knowledge while invoking the Bhagvad Gita: ‘Nothing is as sacred as knowledge’ (*nahi dnyanena sadrushyam pavitramihamuchyate*, नहि ज्ञानेन सदृश्यम पवित्रमिहमुच्यते).<sup>7</sup> Talking of reforms without understanding of sexual anatomy, for Karve, was a futile and shallow activity. If modernity for the sex educators was dependent on knowing the sexual scientific truth, scientific conjugality and scientific sexuality were dependent on the knowledge of sexual anatomy. *Sharirachi mahiti asne* (शरीराची माहिती असणे, to know the body) was thus made into an axiom of sexual science and the essence of modernity professed through the talk of marriage and conjugality. The subsequent question is: How was this anatomical construction rationalised?

Writings on anatomy were not unknown to earlier Marathi speakers. Anatomy was very much a part of Ayurvedic discussions but was not vocally asserted or competitively circulated in the popular domain.<sup>8</sup> In the inter-war times, however, sexual science narratives presented the ‘sexual’ as the ‘real’ social reform to signify ‘anatomical body knowledge’ as the most urgent thing to

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<sup>6</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 839–40.

<sup>8</sup> *Dhanwantari* 29 (Pune: Chandrika Press, 1888), pp. 2–3.

know.<sup>9</sup> While comparing human beings with other animals in the natural world, sex educators considered the knowledge of the sexual body a ‘requirement’ for human beings.<sup>10</sup> Most importantly, the need for anatomical writing was underlined by projecting an absolute ‘lack’ of it in the Marathi publishing world so far. Consequently, Shivananda, Karve, and Bhagwat insisted on writing in Marathi as a matter of social responsibility.<sup>11</sup> Despite the prior existence of anatomy writings, they posited this ‘absence’ in the vernacular language as the root cause of this new venture. Creating modern sexual sensibilities was thus sex educators’ pedagogic burden and duty, in the interest of modernising the Marathi speaking masses. They saw sexual anatomy as the vanguard of this late colonial sexual revolution in bringing modernity to Marathi speakers. As sexual science was the answer to Marathi sexual backwardness, anatomical knowledge was the master key that set the solution in motion. So, how was this master key made, which intended to unlock sexual modernity in a society hierarchically ordered on the basis of caste and gender?

### ***Making the Relevant Body***

Anatomical narratives, in their endeavour to provide correct and detailed information, were both gender- and caste-biased. The agenda of reforming the husband was, of course, best fulfilled by making the sexual anatomy of the female body more visible pictorially and textually, not the other way around.<sup>12</sup> Female bodies were declared more complex, which justified the disproportionate detailing of their anatomy. Phadke, making this argument, went to the extent of focusing exclusively on women’s bodies in his eugenic writing.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 12; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 37–40.

<sup>11</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 2–3; R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, 5; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 24–9.

<sup>12</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, 13–28.

<sup>13</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 840.

The gender discrimination was further reflected in making anatomy fundamentally reproductive: for example, preferentially identifying male-female sexual organs as ‘reproductive and secret organs’ (*jananendriya*, *jananange*, *guhyanage*, जननैन्द्रिय, जननांगे गुह्यांगे) instead of calling them ‘sexual organs’ (*kamendriya*, कमेन्द्रिय).<sup>14</sup> Even Karve, who claimed to separate sexual pleasure from reproduction while advocating sexual freedom, was no exception. To show the body in a reproductive light and gender preferences in imagery was a construction made in a caste society, where woman in a traditional sense was considered the producer of caste-identified bodies (though whether caste was a birth-based identity or not was a matter of debate in colonial and late colonial society).<sup>15</sup>

If modern sexual anatomy was a ‘for Marathis by Marathis’ endeavour, how was the anatomical project inscribed? The first way this project exhibited caste bias was by producing texts of sexual anatomy in Sanskrit. Marathis’ understanding of the body was reformed by narrating it in Sanskrit. The penis was called *shisna* (शिस्न), the scrotum was *vrushana* (वृषण), the vulva *upastha* (उपस्थ), the vagina *yonī* (योनी), the labia majora and minora *maha-bhagoshtha* (महाभगोष्ठ) and *laghu-bhagoshtha* (लघु भगोष्ठ) or *bruhadoshtha* (बृहदोष्ठ), the clitoris *yonilinga* (योनिर्लिंग) or *madanchatra* (मदनछत्र) and the hymen *yonī patal* (योनी पटल) or *kala* (कला).<sup>16</sup> In describing reproductive functions, invisible organs such as the ovaries were termed *stri andashay* (स्त्रीअण्डाशय), the prostate gland *stambhan*

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<sup>14</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 69; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, p. 20; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 839. Shivananda did use the word *kamendriye*, but mentioned it as an additional way of addressing the reproductive organs.

<sup>15</sup> V.K. Rajwade, *Bharatiya Vivaha Sansthecha Itihas*, p. 26; Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, pp. 61–64; Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jeevan*, p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 69–73, 77–82; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, pp. 15–17, 20–27; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 840; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 50–53, 55–58.

*granthi* (स्तम्भन ग्रंथी), the vas deferens *viryawahini* (वीर्य वाहिनी), the seminal vesicles *viryakosha* (वीर्यकोश), the uterus *garbhashaya* (गर्भाशय), and the ligaments and fallopian tubes *garbhashayarajju* and *garbhandak wahini* (गर्भाशयरज्जु and गर्भांडक वाहिनी).<sup>17</sup> Seminal fluid was *virya* (वीर्य) or *ojas* (ओजस) and menses was either *raja* (रज) or *artava* (आर्तव). Menstruation was *rajastrava* (रजसाव) or *ritustrav* (ऋतुसाव), ovulation was *sukshmandaparipaka* (सूक्ष्माण्डपरिपाक), and breast development was *kuchodgama* (कुचोदगम).<sup>18</sup>

Terms for sexual intercourse followed this pattern as well. Bhagwat translated 'seduction' as 'coquetry', *priyaradhan* (प्रियाराधन); caressing breasts, for Shivananda, was *kuchamardana* (कुचमर्दन).<sup>19</sup> Actual sexual intercourse was *samagama* (समागम) for Karve,<sup>20</sup> *abhyantara* (अभ्यंतर) for Shivananda,<sup>21</sup> and *sanveshan* (संवेशन) for Bhagwat.<sup>22</sup> Conception, for most of them, was *garbhadhana*, *garbhadharana* or *garbhasthapana* (गर्भाधान/गर्भधारणा/गर्भस्थापना).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 73–76, 83–89; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, pp. 17–20, 29–35; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, 843–46.

<sup>18</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 843–44; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, p. 37; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 87–88.

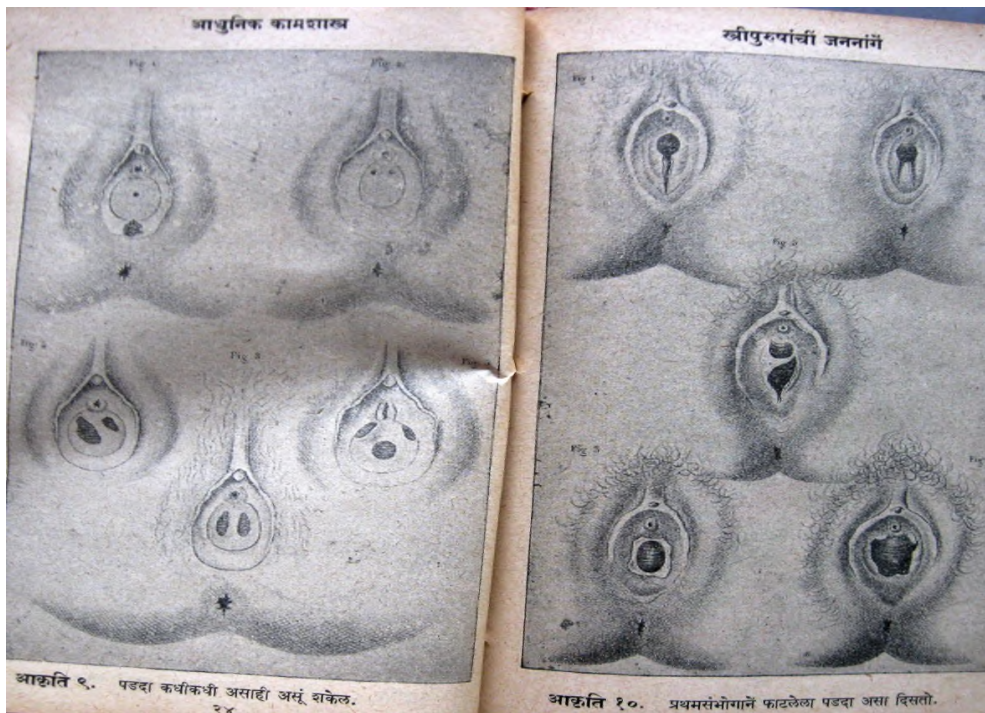
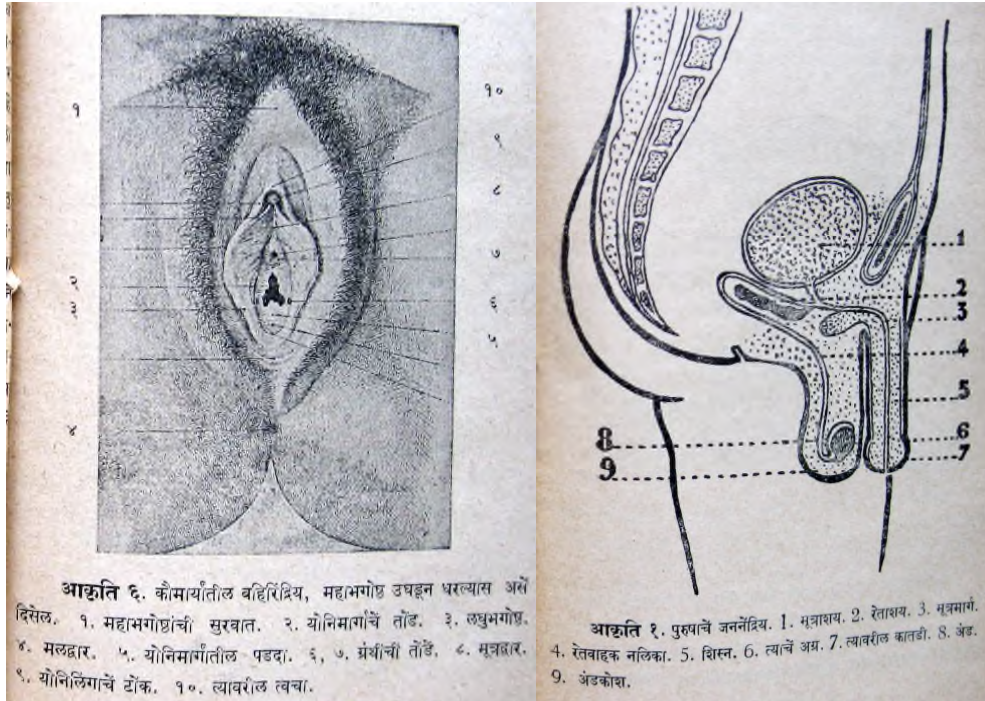
<sup>19</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahika Jivan*, pp. 83–84; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 163.

<sup>20</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahika Jivan*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 118; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, p. 55; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahika Jivan*, p. 70.



Images of male and female genitalia published in *Adhunik Kamashastra* (1932)

All the above-mentioned anatomic titles of sexual body parts and functions were derived from Sanskrit. In such anatomical translations, writers drew parallel words from Sanskrit texts like the Nasadiya Sukta (नासदीय सूक्त) from the Rigveda, the Sushrut Samhita (सुश्रुत संहिता),<sup>24</sup> and Hindu nationalist linguist Dr Raghu Vira's Sanskrit-based Anglo-Indian lexicon.<sup>25</sup> Karve's and Phadke's anatomical narratives assume prior knowledge of Sanskrit on the reader's part, to the extent that they even cite Sanskrit verses from the Bhagvad Gita and Kalidasa's play *Kumarsambhava* (कुमारसंभव) without translating them into Marathi.<sup>26</sup>

Using Sanskrit words for scientific narratives may appear as obvious as Latin in Western science, but it was not so. Instead, considering the social history of Sanskrit, its equation with scientific terminology was political, inseparably linked with its status in Brahminical caste society. In a classical sense, Sanskrit was not only a Brahmin language but the language of the Brahmin male. The Brahmin in classical Hinduism is seen as the *bhu-deva* (भूदेव, earthly god). From Manu to Kalidasa, this language of the heavenly and earthly male gods—known as *deva-bhu-deva bhasha* (देव भाषा, भूदेव भाषा) and *girvana bharati*, (गीर्वाण भरती)—was a matter of denying the language to the Other.<sup>27</sup> Beyond the statistics of Brahmin and upper-caste dominance in Sanskrit education, the social history of Sanskrit in colonial Maharashtra was also a social history of Brahmin resistance when Sonars, Lingayats, Marathas, Dalits, or Brahmin women tried to learn or

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<sup>24</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 62; Shivananda, *Manowanchit Santati*, p. 187.

<sup>25</sup> R.D. Karve, *Klaibiyachi Mimansa*, p. 6; Raghu Vira, *A Comprehensive English-Hindi Dictionary of Governmental and Educational Words and Phrases*, (Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, [fifth edition], 1965); Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangha: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 206-07

<sup>26</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 36; Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 840.

<sup>27</sup> Sheldon Pollock, *Language of Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit Culture and Power in Pre-modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Only Brahmin male characters spoke Sanskrit in Kalidasa's plays; others spoke Prakrit, the language of the 'Others'.

teach the language. Appa Varad Solapur in the 1870s, Pandita Ramabai in the 1890s, B.R. Ambedkar in the 1910s, and Kumud Pawade in the 1950s are colonial and late colonial representative examples of this denial and resistance.<sup>28</sup> Given this upper-caste/Brahmin monopoly on Sanskrit, considering it the obvious language of knowledge was a deeply political act. Brahmin man's exclusion-based command over the so-called knowledge language of Sanskrit, I argue, was a caste effort to establish the language of command in the domain of science.<sup>29</sup>

This play of monopoly and resistance was the reality on the ground in Maharashtra, where Brahminism was seriously challenged in its textual and scriptural authority in late colonial times. The association between Sanskrit and Brahminism was inversely proportionate to the renewal of anti-Brahmin resistance. Brahmins taking advantage of non-Brahmins not knowing Sanskrit was connected to the *vedokta* controversy (discussed in chapter 3).<sup>30</sup> Brahmin and Sanskrit ritual mantras related to marriage and conception ceremonies also came under heavy criticism from the non-Brahmin movement<sup>31</sup> and the burning of the *Manusmriti* in 1927. Around the same time, however, there was a revival of Sanskrit in extremist Hindu organisations such as the RSS and the Arya Samaj campaign, as well as in the cultural drive for linguistic reorganisation in the early

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<sup>28</sup> Chavan, *Language Politics under Colonialism*, pp. 61–62; Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar*, p. 18; Kumud Pawade, *Antasphot* [Thoughtful Outburst] (Aurangabad: Anand Prakashan, 1995), pp. 21–31.

<sup>29</sup> I have borrowed the 'command of language and the language of command' formulation from Bernard Cohn's analysis of colonial knowledge politics: *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 16–56.

<sup>30</sup> Dhanjay Keer, *Rajashree Shahu Chatrapati* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1991), pp. 81–82.

<sup>31</sup> Gundekar, *Satyashodhaki Sahityacha Itihas*, p. 252.

decades of the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> Equating knowledge and education with Sanskrit was a product of this political process of denial and assertion.

The politically manufactured obviousness of scientific language as Sanskrit was a matter of insistence for Karve and an assumed fact for Phadke, Shivananda, and Bhagwat. Karve, who appreciated contemporary efforts to convert scientific English words into Sanskrit and used them for his Marathi writing agenda, said:

Those who know only Marathi are more likely to understand Sanskrit. The author completely agrees with the ongoing efforts of making Sanskrit-based scientific terminology to make knowledge easy for such people. Therefore, as an alternative to English, [my book] uses words from Dr Raghuvēer's Anglo-Indian encyclopaedia. . . For those who can only read English, a list of Sanskrit word followed by English is appended. Those who will face inconvenience even despite this should forgive the author.<sup>33</sup>

केवळ मराठी जाणणारांना संस्कृतोद्भव शब्द कळण्याचा जास्त संभव असल्यामुळे त्यांना शास्त्रीय ज्ञान सुलभ व्हावे म्हणून, संस्कृतवरून शास्त्रीय परिभाषा बनविण्याचे जे प्रयत्न चालू आहेत त्याशी लेखक पूर्णपणे सहमत असल्याकारणाने . . . इंग्रजी शब्द ऐवजी डॉ रघुवीर यांच्या आंग्ल भारतीय महाकोशातील शब्द वापरण्याचा प्रयत्न केला आहे. . . . ज्यांना इंग्रजीच वाचण्याची सवय आहे म्हणून पुस्तकाच्या शेवटी प्रथम संस्कृत नवीन शब्द व नंतर त्याचा इंग्रजी अर्थ अशी एक शब्द सूची जोडली आहे तरी देखील ज्यांची गैरसोय होईल त्यांनी लेखकास क्षमा करावी.

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<sup>32</sup> Narinder Kumar Sharma, *Linguistic and Educational Aspirations Under a Colonial System: A Study of Sanskrit Education During the British Rule in India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976), p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> R.D. Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 5–6.



Anatomical language was a matter of legitimate comprehension of the body in general and the sexual body in particular, while matching linguistic and anatomical structures. To use a specific phrase, word, or language for a specific body part was a matter of linguistic crystallisation of the body, pedagogically disseminated to readers as the legitimised body. If language was a grammatical structure in terms of its accuracy, it was also one of the social structures of caste hierarchy in the Indian setting. It was a caste battleground of availability, accessibility, standardisation, and dominance. Therefore, to translate testicles as *vrushana*, menses as *artava*, and to use the phrases such as *sukshmandaparipak* for ovulation and *abhyantara* for sexual intercourse, I further argue, was a structural subordination of the lower castes in comprehending the body through the language of anatomy. In this process of subordination, caste appeared as implicated in the use of a monopolised language, and Sanskrit worked as another language of caste while legitimising comprehension of the body.

The implied caste of the corporeal structure can also be seen in the descriptions of seminal fluid and menses. This key information in anatomical knowledge, about reproduction-related fluids, was culturally constructed through connecting them to food consumption. The culturally determined choices of *satvik*, *rajasi*, and *tamasi* (vegetarian; nonvegetarian and spicy; stale and spoiled) food were implicitly linked to caste hierarchy in the language of sacredness and demonisation. The consumption of these different categories of foodstuffs was basic to the making of reproductive fluids for Shivananda.<sup>34</sup> If the body was made out of the sacred language of sacred people, it was also created through the categorisation of food into sacred and profane.

Beyond these implicit ways, the caste of anatomy was made explicit in Shivananda's repeated mentions of Shudras, Shudris, Chandals, and other lower

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<sup>34</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1929), pp. 60–65.

castes when describing sexual and reproductive regulations.<sup>35</sup> Even Phadke's Galtonian eugenic narrative equated criminals with a caste category, Berad (बेरड), stamped as a criminal tribe by the colonial government, arguing that the Berad body was an appropriate body for sterilisation, fraught with biologically reproducing criminal tendencies.<sup>36</sup>

The anatomical body, structural and porous, was constructed as Brahmin and labelled in Sanskrit to allow it to become sacred through the caste understanding of corporeality and sexual fluids. Its caste was made implicit in determining the appropriate manner of knowledge consumption and explicit through the exclusions of certain bodies. In the era of print capitalism, the caste-determined meanings, implicit and explicit, of the sacred and not-so-sacred readied the Brahmin body for sexual selection in the marriage market. These determinations, proposed as the solution to modernity, are analysed in the next section.

## II. 'Casting' Sexual Selection

The caste determination of conjugality was further shaped by discussions on appropriate sexual coupling that went beyond the marriage sanctions described in the previous chapter. Sexual narratives offering instructions and guidelines for partner selection scrutinised the sexual qualities of the ideal mate. These writings attempted sexual classifications, categories, and parameters meant to shape the selection process. Such classifications were in part derived from medieval Indian erotic texts, but they were also legitimised by modern Western sexologists, psychologists and endocrinologists to emphasise the importance of sexual qualities in the partner to be chosen for marriage.

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<sup>35</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 196–97; Shivananda, *Manowanchit Santati*, p. 365.

<sup>36</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 773.

### ***The Conjugal Erotica of Caste Selection—The Ratishastra***

When discussing sexual selection, Shivananda took classical tradition as its referent by citing Vatsyana's Kamasutra (कामसूत्र) and Jayadeva's Ratimanjiri (रतिमंजिरी), but he mostly relied on medieval Brahminical erotic texts such as the Anangaranga Ratishastra (अनंगरंग रतिशास्त्र). His chapter-length writing on *stri purush chaturvidha lakshane* (स्त्री पुरुष चतुर्विध लक्षणे, distinct characteristics of men and women)<sup>37</sup> sexually classified the mind and body of man and woman based on information derived from these texts. However, these classifications were not a repetition of those presented in the archaic, classical erotic texts, but were conveniently remade to make use of them in late colonial reproductive politics. Physical and mental sexual qualities in the narrative were personified and hierarchically arranged in the metaphorical feminine characters of Padmini (पद्मिनी, lotus), Chitrini (चित्रिणी, artist), Shankhini (शंखिनी, conch shell), and Hastini (हस्तिनी elephant). Following the same logic, men were personified as Shasha (शश, rabbit), Mruga (मृग, deer), Ashwa (अश्व, horse) and Vrusha (वृष, bull).<sup>38</sup> Packaged in the language of the natural world, these were categories of men and women arranged in a hierarchy by assigning sexual and cultural qualities to the personalities they represented.

In a descending order of hierarchy, the first two women, Padmini and Chitrini, were the ideal, with proportionate and delicate bodies. The latter two, in order, Shankhini and Hastini, were associated with disproportionate, crude figures with hairy hands and legs. The first two were said to be fair-skinned and gorgeous, the latter two increasingly dark-skinned, ordinary, and ugly, descending down the hierarchy. The classification included detailed descriptions of all their body parts, beginning with the forehead, eyes, cheeks, lips, and throat and continuing with taking extensive stock of the shape of the breasts, vaginal

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<sup>37</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 325, 988–89, 1169, 996, 790–91, 959–60, 101–102.

canal, thighs, and legs. Padmini was praised and preferred for cleanliness as well as for her sacred and pious nature. Shankhini and Hastini were deprecated for their impure, stinking bodies and their dirtiness. Padmini and Chitrini were depicted as having a low sex drive, considered a respectable quality. Shankhini and Hastini, on the contrary, were hypersexual. Hierarchically superior, Padmini and Chitrini were commended for being submissive, calm, gentle, and extremely loyal and monogamous; Shankhini and Hastini were jealous, hateful, shameless, and adulterous, one more than the other.<sup>39</sup>

Among the four categories of men, Shasha and Mruga were projected as good-natured ‘great men’ with sharp eyes and broad foreheads. Shasha was a man with fair skin, long hands, and a delicate body like that of the spiritual yogi, whereas the fair-skinned Mruga had a healthy, athletic, strong body, making him a brave person. Vrusha and Ashwa, by contrast, were black-skinned and their bodies disproportionate in stomach and chest. Shasha was particularly mentioned as a pure vegetarian and brahmachari, desirous of religious men’s company, while Mruga was truth-loving, short-tempered, and aggressive but forgiving and kind. Vrusha, however, was a hypocrite, and Ashwa was cunning, treacherous, a scoundrel, and prone to adultery.<sup>40</sup>

On this scale of quality, the semen of the first two great men, Shasha and Mruga, was classified as fragrant and perfumed like lotus and honey.<sup>41</sup> Vrusha’s semen was stinking and sour; Ashwa’s stank strongly, like the indigo plant.<sup>42</sup> The descriptions further mentioned standard penis size and vaginal canal length. Shasha and Mruga were described as ‘moderate’, specified at an average of six inches. Ashwa and Vrusha, on the contrary were seen as abnormal and their

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<sup>39</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 91–99.

<sup>40</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 100–103.

<sup>41</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 102–103.

length 'indecent'.<sup>43</sup> Such psychosexual and corporeal imaginations were put in the service of matchmaking in Shivananda's writing within the appropriate hierarchical categories, deployed not as suggestions but as binding orders.<sup>44</sup> Shasha and Mruga, with their fragrant semen, were suitable to couple with Padmini and Chitrini; Vrusha and Ashwa, with their stinking semen, were associated with their hypersexual and adulterous female counterparts, Shankhini and Hastini.<sup>45</sup>



**Chitrini with Mruga (left) and Hastini with Ashwa (right). Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929)**

<sup>43</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 105.

<sup>44</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 103–104.

<sup>45</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 107.

South Asian scholars of erotics, despite recognising the Brahminical stamp on this *ratishastra* literature, have understood this classification as a secular grouping of sexual qualities. Kenneth Zysk pronounces these metaphorical masculine and feminine descriptions to be the Hindu art of physiognomy, interpreting it as a comparison with the natural world and the animal kingdom.<sup>46</sup> Yet such descriptions of the natural world—in the original texts or in their early-twentieth-century reincarnations—can hardly be called secular, as they exhibit unabashed caste and gender discrimination. These psychosexual corporeality metaphors drawing parallels with nature had distinct caste understandings associated with them.

Padmini and Shasha were the ideal couple, considered to carry the best sexual qualities of men and women. The male figure was given the name Shasha, one of the names of the Vedic deity Vishnu and that of the creator of Rigveda hymn VIII. In addition, the word *shasha* means the moon, or the hare-shaped patches said to be inscribed on the moon.<sup>47</sup> *Padmini*, meaning lotus, is known in Brahminical Hindu mythology as Vishnu's wife, who had the lotus (*padma* पद्म) as his symbol. The word *mruga* in Brahmin Hindu mythology means 'deer' and was associated with the king and his 'privileged hunting practice', which in Sanskrit was called *mrugaya* (hunting मृगया) and perceived as a sign of bravery. While the king was understood to be a Kshatriya, he was also called *mrugendra* (deer hunter मृगेंद्र). Several words related to *mruga* in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Sanskrit-English dictionaries widely used by Marathis elucidate this relation with the Kshatriya king.<sup>48</sup> The Kshatriya Mruga's association with bravery, short-temperedness, and generosity was matched with

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<sup>46</sup> Kenneth G. Zysk, *Conjugal Love in India: Ratishastra and Ratiramana* (Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. 12–14.

<sup>47</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 91.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 790–91.

Chitrini's royal nature, including her love of art, benevolence, and forgiving nature.

The other categories of men and women show resemblance to caste and varna in an uneven way. Shankhini was shown as a licentious, wealthy, greedy, and treacherous woman, and her name is associated in the Sanskrit-English dictionaries with a Buddhist goddess.<sup>49</sup> Vrusha, an abbreviation of *vrushabha* (वृषभ, bull), was associated with agriculture and Shudras. The word *vrusha* also has a strong resemblance to *vrushala* (वृषल), another name given to Shudras in the *dharmashastras*.<sup>50</sup> The adulterous *Hastini* resembled a Shudra woman with a crude, black body associated with agrarian labour.

The strong caste association of these qualities is further strengthened by associating vegetarianism only with the highest categories. Only Shasha and Padmini were said to be vegetarians, and only Shasha was said to be a brahmachari. Padmini was associated with reading, particularly biographies of sacred men.<sup>51</sup> The remaining feminine categories were not associated with education and learning or shown reading or writing. If Brahmins' association with learning, found in the ancient texts, shaped the making of these categories, it was also reflected in contemporary late colonial writers' interpretations. Padmini's description in the medieval erotic text *Anangaranga* mentions her as taking pleasure in the company of learned Brahmins.<sup>52</sup> Against the background of late colonial caste conflict, Shivananda wrote about Padmini as enjoying reading sacred literature and the company of 'virtuous men and women'.<sup>53</sup> Only Mruga was athletic, brave, and kind, resembling the *dharmashastra*-given

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<sup>49</sup> Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 988–89.

<sup>50</sup> Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, p. 138.

<sup>51</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Burton, *Anangaranga: The Hindu Art of Love* (London: Kamashastra Society, 1885), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 94.

characteristics of a Kshatriya. This association was also depicted using Raja Ravi Varma's famous paintings in service of the sexual classifications. While adapting these images to his *ratishastra*-driven metaphors Mruga and Chitrini in Shivananda's narrative depicts Mruga as a king, with the illustrative bow and arrow. Similarly, the caption of the picture of Ashwa and Hastini emphasised Hastini's identity and pronounced her to be from the lower-caste Koli (fishermen) category from the Mahabharata.<sup>54</sup>

Shivananda warned his reader to follow this hierarchy of matchmaking for a happy and eugenically reproductive marriage.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the typology of 'the good, the bad, and the ugly' in ideal sexual matches kept Padmini permanently associated with Shasha, Chitrini with Mruga, Shankhini with Vrusha, and Hastini with Ashwa. Shivananda also mentioned that these are qualities (*gunas* गुण); with their own deeds, men and women in the lower categories can reach a higher quality, whereas high-quality men women can sink to the levels of the lower ones. However, such talk of quality came with the terminology of *guna karma swabhava* (गुण कर्म स्वभाव division of individuals' nature according to qualities and deeds),<sup>56</sup> which resembled the classical Hindu language of *gunakarma vibhagashaha* (गुणकर्मविभागशः)—projecting the division of varna as according to qualities while talking about the caste hierarchy.

This manufactured symbolism and classification was the metaphoric superimposition of the language of the natural world on the varna hierarchy to reframe the four caste categories in disguise. With the help of nature metaphors, this practice idealised and demonised male and female sexual bodies with a distinct-caste coded understanding that was to be followed for coupling and marriage. Though posited as descriptive characteristics, these characterisations made ideals based on caste realities. Simultaneously, the use of metaphors served

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<sup>54</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 95–105.

<sup>55</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 103–104.

<sup>56</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 103–104.



to essentialise psychosexual qualities in the body and through, symbolic naturalisation, kept the narrative open for a caste-determined reinterpretation. For the late colonial Brahminical crisis, these descriptions, I argue, acted as guidelines for marriageable men and their parents to comprehend not only corporeality but also the social anatomy of caste in a sexual way. As an extension of determining the Brahminical body structure and anatomy, caste here was further made biological through metaphors from the natural world, culturally interpreted.

### ***The Caste and Class of Eugenic Matching***

While Shivananda was poring over the Anangaranga Ratishastra literature to classify couples, Bhava was doing the same with late-nineteenth-century Western literature on happy conjugality. Emphasising the importance of choosing a *saman varna* partner (समान वर्ण, same varna/same colour), Bhava tried to combine varna with colour and class when discussing the *anurup patni* (अनुरूप पत्नी, compatible wife). Leopold Lowenfeld's writing on conjugal happiness<sup>57</sup> was Bhava's inspiration for creating ideal lower-, middle-, and higher-class divisions when trying to comprehend sexual intercourse.<sup>58</sup> Bhava, in this way, created his sexually well-matched couple by differentiating matches based on sexual desire between the labouring classes, the cultured classes, and the highly cultured classes. Such classifications essentialised physical and mental qualities and capacities in an attempt to understand sexual sensibilities.

For Bhava, following Lowenfeld, a strong sexual instinct, faithfulness, and a love of all things material were the aspirations of labouring and rural classes in marriage. He understood the cultured class to have a desire for intellectual intercourse and to be inclined towards similarities of habit and a common

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<sup>57</sup> Leopold Lowenfeld, *On Conjugal Happiness: Experience, Reflection and Advice of a Medical Man* (London: John Bell and Sons, 1912), pp. 20–23.

<sup>58</sup> Bhava, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 6–7.

understanding of enjoyment. The highly cultured class, in Bhave's narrative, saw the wife taking an 'intelligent interest' in the husband's professional pursuits.<sup>59</sup> Lowenfeld's writings attracted Bhave's attention just as the euphemism of 'cultured classes' was settled as the new language to denote the Brahmin castes in Maharashtra.<sup>60</sup> He merged Lowenfeld's sexual class division with his own terminology of *sanskriti samya* (संस्कृती साम्य, cultural similarity) to construct conjugality on the basis of degrees of civilisation and sexuality. Not surprisingly, Bhave wrote exclusively for Brahmins.<sup>61</sup>

Shivananda, Bhave, and Phadke all argued that ideal conjugality based on sexual selection was a matter of eugenics. Despite being a staunch advocate of love marriages, Phadke understood the idea of love through eugenics. Invoking the educationist Ellen Kay to construct his ideal conjugality, Phadke wrote that 'men should choose their loving women by thinking about the possibility and non-possibility of best eugenic reproduction if she becomes his wife' (आपल्या प्रीतीतील स्त्री आपल्याशी संलग्न झाली असता आपण उत्तम प्रजा निर्माण करू किंवा नाही हा विचार करूनच तरुणांनी स्त्रिया निवडल्या पहिजेत).<sup>62</sup> He happily used these eugenic criteria to equate criminality with Berads while considering them morally and socially unfit for reproduction.

### ***Endocrinology of Coupling***

Despite his claims to oppose marriage, Karve spoke at length about sexual selection in marriage based on endocrinology, inspired by the writings of the endocrinologist Dr. Zenop. Karve said his partner selection criteria (*lakshane*,

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<sup>59</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Marathi intellectual S.M. Mate refers to Brahmins as the 'cultured classes' while expressing his worries about them in a letter written to Marie Stopes in October 1930, PP/MCS/A313, box 51, Wellcome Trust Library, London.

<sup>61</sup> Bhave, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 107–108.

<sup>62</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 756.

लक्षण) were based on excessive or insufficient functioning of the thyroid gland and ovaries.<sup>63</sup>

These endocrinological functions determined not only sexual desire and satisfaction but also intelligence, as well as social and moral behaviour. Karve suggested that differences in height, obesity, cheeks, hair, stomach, throat, and eyebrows were physical parameters of selection for both girls and boys. Within this, breast size and regularity of menstruation in girls and quality of voice in boys were distinctly gendered categories.<sup>64</sup> Short girls with chubby red cheeks; hair growth on the neck, ankles, and thighs; big breasts but small nipples; big stomachs; or irregular menstrual cycles were considered to have low sexual desire (*mandakama*, मंदकामा)—and, connected to all these symptoms, they are also considered to be bad-natured (*vait svabhav*, वाईट स्वभाव). In particular, those with small stature and red cheeks were also thought to be short-tempered (*tapat*, तापट), wicked (*dushta*, दुष्ट), unstable (*asthir*, अस्थिर), selfish (*matlabi*, मतलबी), and unloving (*premal nasne*, प्रेमळ नसणे). Excessively tall girls, though not short-tempered, were also unloving and had a low sex drive. Woman with excessive thyroid activity and irregular menstruation were identified as extremely bad-natured (*atyanta vait svabhav*, अत्यंत वाईट स्वभाव).<sup>65</sup> Karve considered excessive ovarian function to be related to a malfunctioning thyroid and to explain and shape the image of a ‘hypersexual woman’—demanding sexual intercourse many times a day—consequently associated with adultery and being a bad mother (*vyabhichari asne ani changali mata nasne*, व्यभिचारी असणे आणि चांगली माता नसणे).<sup>66</sup>

Through these associations, girls who had a medium stature; a hairless body; and proportionate cheeks, breast size, and stomach; and regular menstrual

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<sup>63</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 90, 96.

<sup>64</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 90–96.

<sup>65</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 92–94.

<sup>66</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 92.

cycles were seen to have an appropriate amount of sexual desire and a good nature—all in all, to be the ideal sexual partner. Disproportionate size and shape or body hair, meanwhile, were associated not just with excessive or low sexual desire but with a diseased body, bad nature, adultery—consequently bad motherhood.

Judging men on similar criteria, deficiency in the functioning of the testicles (*beeja koshatil kamatarta*, बीज कोशातील कमतरता), while connected to a lower sex drive, was associated with a disproportionate stature, chubby cheeks, a feminine voice, a big stomach, a lack of facial hair, forehead frowns, and obesity.<sup>67</sup> The excessive functioning of testicles (*beeja koshanche fajil karya* बीज कोषांचे फाजील कार्य), however, was linked to an excessive sexual desire, leading to short-temperedness and adultery.<sup>68</sup> Men without facial hair were seen as totally impotent. Whether describing men or women, height was an important aspect: the middle ground—that is, a medium height—was considered the sexual ideal for both.

Thus, the ideal potent male with sufficient sexual desire was a moustachioed man with proportionate stature, a toned body, a flat stomach, and a rough voice. The proportionate size of different body parts was only vaguely defined. However, height was the crucial factor linked to sexual desire and the development of testicles. Still, vaguely defined standards of proportions, particularly with respect to height, were supposed to be evaluated by the reader in consideration of hereditary and ancestral background when selecting a partner.<sup>69</sup>

Whether it was Shivananda's erotic classical categorisations, Bhave's Lowenfeld-inspired distinctions, or Karve's Zenopian endocrinology, sexual

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<sup>67</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 94–96. Karve uses the word *beejakosh* for ovaries as well as testicles.

<sup>68</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 95.

<sup>69</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 91, 95–96.

coupling made it crucial to attempt a classification of bodies and mind. In the name of scientific sexuality, body measurements were projected as determining sexual, conjugal, and social behaviours. A combination of vague measurements of the sexual body and sharp behavioural judgments was the most defining feature of these classifications. This vague language was systematically converted into talk of ‘appropriateness’. The language of bodily proportions was camouflaged by reiterating moderation. The moderate was seen as proportionate and determined the appropriate. However, measurements of moderation made into a standard of propriety, rested on family heritage and previous generations, which were essentially to be trusted as an endogamous unit in a caste society. By citing Zenop, Karve, in a similar way to Shivananda, was arguing for determining the characteristics of a moderately and appropriately sexed body. Measuring such appropriateness without taking recourse in the language of caste, but through the encouragement to rely upon the previous generations to determine the familial characteristics had made these into a matter of caste.

Looking at variations in people’s height, weight, size, complexion, and corporeal tendencies, such vague talk of measuring the sexual body and mind was hardly an implementable solution for scientific conjugality. In practical terms, matching penile and vaginal lengths in the process of matchmaking was impossible in the contemporary marriage market. Such instructions on measurements consequently became a mechanism to essentialise people—fixing their sexual credentials and worth based on their physical descriptions. The outer social world knowing other individual’s sexual measurements was a further impossibility. Consequently, instead of idealising moderate penis size as Shasha or Mruga, the Brahmins and Kshatriyas who resembled descriptions of Shasha and Mruga made them sexually moderate and the standard parameters of sexual civility, along with their destined female mates, Padmini and Chitrini. While Shivananda constructed women with body hair in caste-coded language as represented by the figure of Hastini, Karve took the same characteristics, without nature metaphors or ancient text, and constructed them into a woman with disproportionate sexual desire and bad temper based on endocrinology.

According to him, women with excessive sexual desire should be matched to men with similar sexual tendencies.<sup>70</sup> Karve cited Zenop for all these classifications, considering his opinions totally scientific and hence true.<sup>71</sup>

In a sense, Karve's classifications were similar to the embodied typology of Padmini, Chitrini, Shankini, and Hastini even though he used the scientific language of endocrinology. Instead of challenging norms and sexual conventions, they were made to fit caste conventions. Also, the vagueness of proportions and the moderation of the sexed body kept it open to interpretation according to social and political convenience. Hence, sexual selection based on this methodical classification failed to move beyond being an 'exciting read' to provide a scientific solution. On the contrary, in the name of reformist sexual coupling, these so-called methodical classifications produced sexual essentialisation in a society where caste already determined 'good' and 'bad' qualities. These sexual classifications were superimposed on people already 'casted' as good and bad. In both Shivananda and Karve, body proportions were linked to sexual desire and sexual desire was linked to moral and social behaviour, already fixed by upper-caste stereotypes. Seeing sexual identity as fixed by caste and social identity was consistent with every sex educator's views on inter-caste marriage. Discussions of the consummation of marriage fit these parameters as well, as the following section shows.

### **III. Consummating Marriage: The Caste-Sexual Pedagogy**

If marriage was about legitimate sexual engagement linked to reproductive possibilities, the consummation of marriage was an inevitable aspect of modernisation discourse. Similarly, in a performative effort to sexually remake caste, the consummation of marriage was a crucial junction. To Brahminise sexual anatomy was to remake bodily units prepared for sexual intercourse, while

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<sup>70</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 95.

<sup>71</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 96.

sexual matchmaking was about reframing the caste boundaries of this engagement. Subsequently, the discussion of marriage consummation in late colonial Marathi sex literature aimed to making caste intrinsic to the sexual act itself. Marriage modernisation followed, taking place as it did in a time of Brahminical crisis in Maharashtra. As the upper-caste husband's ignorance was at the core of this discussion, marriage-consummation pedagogy was aimed at preparing him to fulfil his duty of caste reproduction.

### *Scripting the Sexual Act*

Shivananda, Karve, and Bhagwat's elucidations on the process from seduction to conception was a discourse to teach the legitimate form of sexual engagement. This meant rationalising men's sexual behaviour and rationalising women's behaviour for him. Shivananda wrote on sexual arousal (*kamoddipan*, कामोददीपन), making love (*premopachara*, प्रेमोपचार), and sexual satisfaction (*kamashanti*, कामशांती) to this aim in *Dampatya Rahasya*.<sup>72</sup> A similar narrative teaching sexual engagement is found in his eugenic tract *Manowanchhit Santati*, which included writing on menstruation-regulated sex (*rutrungamitwa*, ऋतुंगामित्व), limited sex (*yatha kamitwa*, यथाकामित्व), and self-control (*atmasanyaman*, आत्मसंयमान).<sup>73</sup> Parallel to this, Karve wrote chapters on preparation for sexual intercourse (*samagamachi purva tayari*, समागमाची पूर्व तयारी), sexual intercourse (*ratikriya*, रतिक्रिया) and sexual positions (*asane*, आसने) in *Adhunik Kamashastra*.<sup>74</sup> Bhagwat, meanwhile, wrote about sexual engagement of the genital organs (*jananendriyanche vyapar*, जननेंद्रियांचे व्यापार) and fulfilment of sexual desire (*kamapurti*, कामपूर्ती) in his marriage manual *Vaivahik Jivan*.<sup>75</sup> While teaching

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<sup>72</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 112–87.

<sup>73</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, pp. 209–42.

<sup>74</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 55–64, 69–76.

<sup>75</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 63, 81.

sexual behaviour to the man, manufacturing legitimate heterosexual engagement, from seduction to intercourse to conception, was at the core of these writings.

Like those previously discussed, such pedagogy, presented as expert advice, was blended with Western sexology and Brahminical scriptural sources for legitimacy. While explaining seduction and sexual satisfaction, Bhagwat criticised the Indian traditional references of Vatsyana and Kalyan Malla:

However much importance is given to these texts in the history of Indian *kamashastra*, none of them are useful today as a guiding book on *kamashastra*. For up-to-date guidance in this context we must turn to Western writers like Havelock Ellis and van de Velde.<sup>76</sup>

भारतीय कामशास्त्राच्या इतिहासात या ग्रंथांना कोणी कितीही महत्त्व देत असले तरी या पैकी कोणत्याही एक ग्रंथाचा कामशास्त्रावरील मार्गदर्शक ग्रंथ म्हणून आज उपयोग होण्यासारखा नाही. या बाबतीत अद्ययावत मार्गदर्शनासाठी आपणास हॅव्लॉक एलिस, व्हॅन डे व्हेल्ड वगैरे पाश्चिमात्य ग्रंथकारांकडेच वळले पाहिजे.

Similarly, Karve blamed Vatsyayana for having less correct knowledge of women's sexual desire than his contemporaries.<sup>77</sup> Although the discourse cited modern Western sexual science expertise to right the wrongs of Indian traditional knowledge, it also criticised it. As Karve and Bhagwat were criticising the Indian tradition, Shivananda attacked Western experts for not understanding the true meaning of eugenics and for lagging behind in realising the importance of eugenics.

Nevertheless, this two-way criticism did not prevent sex educators from relying upon the traditions and authors they criticised to construct their narratives of marriage consummation. Shivananda extensively referred to Marie Stopes in

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<sup>76</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>77</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, preface p. 6.



explaining sexual stimulation<sup>78</sup> and cited American phrenologist Lorenzo Fowler on sexual satisfaction.<sup>79</sup> Despite his criticism, Karve did not just refer to Vatsyayana in describing intercourse and sexual positions<sup>80</sup> but appreciated him for acknowledging the fact of women's sexual desire.<sup>81</sup> Though he deemed Stopes a popular and non-scientific writer, she was important to his understanding of sexual intercourse positions.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Bhagwat, despite having denounced tradition, looked to the Nasadiya Sukta (नासदीय सूक्त), Kamashastra (कामशास्त्र) and Ratishastra (रतीशास्त्र) for constructing anatomy and sexual engagement.<sup>83</sup>

Such textual support for the science of marriage consummation was a matter of quoting experts, but also an attempt to understand the essence of sexual modernity. The references to Eastern and Western experts here also was a site for 'casting' sex in the sexual knowledge-making process. Shivananda's narrative of seduction derived the idea of women's cheerfulness (*stri prasannata*, स्त्री प्रसन्नता) from the *Manusmriti*.<sup>84</sup> The Garbhopenishada (गर्भोपनिषद्) and Kamasutra helped him connect disabled and diseased reproduction to unhappy and hateful women.<sup>85</sup> 'Simultaneous orgasm,' for him, was equivalent to the ancient Hindu concept of *garbhadhana* (conception), which he derived from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishada (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्).<sup>86</sup> Shivananda's references were rooted in his Brahmin caste consciousness, to the extent that when he looked to

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<sup>78</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 170–75.

<sup>79</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 176.

<sup>80</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, preface p. 6 and main text pp. 58–59.

<sup>81</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, preface p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 70; SS, year 2, issue 12 (June 1929), p. 270.

<sup>83</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 62, 84–85, 118–19.

<sup>84</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 125.

<sup>85</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 117–18.

<sup>86</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 189.

the Upanishada for a Sanskrit verse on *garbhadhana*, he chose one that categorically mentioned the Brahmins.<sup>87</sup>

Karve, though, critical of Vatsyayana, cited his thoughts to understand ‘seduction’.<sup>88</sup> Both Karve and Bhagwat read Vatsyayana; the latter also turned to Kalyana Malla to explain sexual satisfaction.<sup>89</sup> Such an erudite, interpretative, and Brahminical legitimisation, I argue, made referentiality into an epistemic tool of the caste-endogamous eugenic reproductive frame. This was the epistemic foundation on which the architecture of consummation pedagogy was built.

### ***Seducing Caste Endogamy***

Narratives of Brahminical sexology unanimously departed from constructing the figure of the ‘ignorant husband’ to build their instructions on topics from seduction to conception to making a marriage happy. Shivananda blamed the ‘ignorant husband’ for ignoring the *shastras*;<sup>90</sup> Karve and Bhagwat blamed him for knowing neither scientific sex nor his wife’s sexual desire.<sup>91</sup> Such language made him into a figure who had no concern for his wife during sexual intercourse, which justified the sex-education agenda.<sup>92</sup>

Such a husband-oriented marriage ‘consummation pedagogy’ followed the woman’s body from beginning to end, while demonstrating concern for her. These were almost all one-sided descriptions of how a husband should approach his wife’s body before and during sexual intercourse. He was asked to talk to her. In a supposedly romantic narrative, she was asked about ‘her feelings about

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<sup>87</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 191–92.

<sup>88</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 57.

<sup>89</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 70–74; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, p. 119.

<sup>90</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 116–17.

<sup>91</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 62; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 81–89.

<sup>92</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 55–76; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 81–89; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 116–78.

intimacy'.<sup>93</sup> However, she was not given the chance to answer; instead, her body was touched. Her upper and lower lips were kissed. She was undressed, her breasts were caressed, her nipples pricked, her body softly beaten (the use of soft violence was justified as useful for arousal). The quantity and quality of her sexual desire were scrutinised, debated, and measured, including a discussion of her sexual secretions, said to make penetration easier, more comfortable, and less troubling for her.<sup>94</sup> Consummation here became a pedagogical project taught to the husband in detail, with the wife's sexualised (but passive) body the medium of this pedagogic endeavour. She was made into a biological object in the process of constructing the modern sexual subject—the husband. The only subjectivity unanimously granted to the object of this pedagogy lay in instructions not to resist intercourse: Shivananda and Karve, telling the husband about the possibility of 'false resistance' during the seduction process, warned the wife against prolonging her resistance.<sup>95</sup> Beyond detailing instructions, the 'seduction-to-sex' pedagogy foregrounded the necessity of heterosexual intercourse. At the same time, it created a pedagogic pyramid of sex education with the husband as the tutor of the wife, the sex educator as his guide, and sexual science as the topmost sacred knowledge.

However, the subject and object of this pedagogic pyramid were not simply husband and wife. They were a caste-endogamous couple. Sex educators, through debating social sanctions and marriage, as we have seen, had already fixed the endo-caste nature of the couple ready for sexual intercourse. Shivananda, Bhave, and Bhagwat explicitly underlined endo-caste marriage. Karve and Phadke expressed their political position as having no objections to

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<sup>93</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 116–25.

<sup>94</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 112–78; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, pp. 55–64; K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahika Jivan*, pp. 81–97.

<sup>95</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 165–66; R.D. Karve, *Adhunika Kamashastra*, p. 56.

inter-caste coupling, but ultimately were talking within the caste-endogamy frame. As explained in the previous chapter, despite having no objection to inter-caste marriage, Phadke was not ready to go against people's desire to marry within the same caste. Similarly, Karve's endo-caste framework was highlighted in his reservations about the questionable success of public-awareness campaigns for inter-caste marriages, as well as his denigrating remarks of the conjugality reforms proposed by the Mahar caste. With all this, the couple being sexually trained in the pedagogic pyramid was therefore neither caste-free nor part of an inter-caste imagination. The subject/object and teacher/pupil were endo-caste binaries for bringing about conjugal modernity.

The caste-endogamous ignorant husband had to be enlightened about the wife's menstruation cycle to make him capable of scheduling intercourse. Nor was this a secular, caste-free matter. Quoting the Upanishadas, Shivananda instructed,

The menstruating wife of a husband . . . should not be touched even by Shudras or Shudris. Needless to say, the husband should not touch [her] either. If the husband were to consider the wife touchable [then], falling to lust he might consider her worthy for consummation . . . therefore the *rishis* have put pious and strict religious restrictions on considering her totally untouchable for three days.<sup>96</sup>

ज्याच्या भार्येला ऋतू प्राप्त होईल . . . (तिला) शूद्र शूद्रिनी सुद्धा स्पर्श करू नये (मग पतीने स्पर्श करू नये हे सांगणे नकोच.) पतीने राजस्वलेला स्पृश्य लेखल्यास कदाचित तो मोहात सापडून तिला सेव्य-उपभोग्य सुद्धा लेखण्याचा बराच संभव आहे . . . म्हणूनच राजस्वलेला पूर्ण तीन दिवस अस्पृश्य लेखण्याचे अतीव कल्याणकारी कडक धर्म निर्बंध ऋषींनी घातले आहेत।

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<sup>96</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 196–97.

To make his argument for considering the upper-caste woman untouchable during her menstruation cycle, he used lower-caste men and women as a comparative framework of untouchability.

Shivananda went on to locate, qualify, and quantify sexual desire in fifteen different parts of the woman's body, based on his reconstruction of the fourteenth-century *ratirahasya* (रतिरहस्य). For him, women had eight different types of sexual desire (*ashtavidha kama*, अष्टविधः कामः) and therefore had to be aroused in eight different ways. In this construction, he contested the popular Hindu male understanding that women had eight times more desire than men. This was an attempt to quantify the wife's sexual desire by qualifying it. Further, by matching her desire to the dates of the Vedic Hindu lunar calendar and the moon-tide clock (*chandrakalanusarini stri-kama sthiti* चंद्रकालानुसारीणी स्त्री-काम स्थिती), the woman's body was thoroughly sexualised.<sup>97</sup> In doing so, the appropriate body parts were assigned to be pressed, hammered, or tickled to arouse her for intercourse.<sup>98</sup> This Vedic calendar-based spacing, pacing, and identification of sexual desire was not a random distribution. Such desire was situated in her body, in hierarchical order from head to toe (*doke, payacha angatha*, डोके ते पायाचा आंगठा). The sexual desire located in the head was temporally associated with the full moon day (*pournima*, पौर्णिमा) given in the *dharmashastra* as auspicious and assumed to be high in quality. The desire located in the big toe was associated with moonless nights (*amawasya*, अमावास्या) and was seen as lowest in quality.<sup>99</sup> This head-to-toe understanding of female sexual desire, along with auspicious and inauspicious times, had a strong resemblance to caste hierarchy. Social hierarchy, as anatomised in Vedic literature, did associate Brahmins with the head and Shudras with the toe of the *purusha* (पुरुष, holy man) who supposedly

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<sup>97</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 145–52.

<sup>98</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 149–51.

<sup>99</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 149.

created the varna and thereby the caste system. The hierarchical anatomy of sexual desire in women was thus constructed analogically with the social anatomy of Brahminism. The resemblance made woman's sexual desire metaphorically caste-classified as well as touchable and untouchable in terms of its fulfilment.

### ***The Brahminical Simultaneous Orgasm***

Thus made, consummation pedagogy, in the attempt to explain sexual intercourse and conception, was arguing for sexual happiness, satisfaction, and fulfilment (*rati sukha*, *kamatrupti*, and *kamapurti*, रती सुख, कामतृप्ती, आणि कामपूर्ती), with an added emphasis on conception. The process from seduction to sexual satisfaction essentially led to reproduction, but through the rhetoric of 'simultaneous orgasm'. Consequently, talk of 'concern for women' during intercourse was put in the service of this rhetoric. Understanding the rise and decline of woman's sex drive was central to the concern with reproduction. As a result, 'simultaneous orgasm', a much-discussed topic in early-twentieth-century Western sexology, was discussed with assiduity by Marathi sexual pedagogues.<sup>100</sup> There was much discussion in the literature of men and women reaching orgasm at the same time, which was made into the ultimate goal of sexual engagement. Shivananda, Karve, and Bhagwat emphasised the husband's role in seduction and his control over ejaculation as crucial to successfully reaching the desired end.<sup>101</sup>

Simultaneous orgasm was thus further linked with reproduction.<sup>102</sup> This was also a matter of understanding orgasm in a Brahminical fashion. Shivananda

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<sup>100</sup> Stopes, *Married Love*, p. 57; Theodoor Hendrik van der Velde, *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique* (London: William Heninmen, [1928] 1940), p. 181.

<sup>101</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 157–58; R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 61; Bhavé, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 9–95.

<sup>102</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 59–60, 63; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 200–201.

equated simultaneity of orgasm to conception and understood it in terms of *garbhadhana*, a concept found in the *dharmashastra* and *upanishadas*. In the Marathi sex literature, *garbhadhana* was used interchangeably for the biological act of conceiving a child and the *dharmashastra*-described ritual performed by those desiring children. Shivananda used the term as the conception of the child, but also equated *garbhadhana* with simultaneous orgasm.

This articulation stressed the seduction of the wife to achieve this reproductive simultaneity, but within the framework of classical Brahminical conventions. By referring to the Hindu lunar calendar and astrology, the moon was associated with sex power (*chandrabala*, चंद्रबल) and seen to exist in every man and woman. Seducing a woman was interpreted as exhausting her sexual power (*hinbal karne*, *kledit karne* हीनबल करणे, क्लेदीत करणे) before the actual sexual act.<sup>103</sup> With these steps, reproductive simultaneous orgasm was seen as an achievable target through self-control during the sexual act.

In this interpretation, *garbhadhana* meant subduing a woman's sexual dominance for successful conception. Her sexual satisfaction was situated within her subdued sexual activity. Male dominance and female sexual submission were seen as the secret to sexual satisfaction, which in turn enhanced her biological potential to conceive a child.<sup>104</sup> Simultaneous orgasm, thus defined by Brahmin scriptures, presented gendered sexual subordination as sexual happiness and satisfaction. Conceiving a male child then became the marker of the wife's sexual satisfaction and conjugal fulfilment and, thus, the reason for displaying concern for her in the sexual act. Failure to attain a simultaneous orgasm with the woman subdued, then, was either seen as lack of conception or the conception of a girl child, due to female dominance.<sup>105</sup> *Garbhadhana* as 'simultaneous orgasm' was

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<sup>103</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 149–54, 166–70.

<sup>104</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 201–202.

<sup>105</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 147–48.

made into an equivalent of the sexual act, and thus converted into a gender-biased reproductive mechanism.

However, using the concept of *garbhadhana* to remake simultaneous orgasm was also a caste-reproductive engagement. *Garbhadhana*, beyond its corporeal understanding as conception, was also among the sixteen Brahminical *sanskaras* (संस्कार, sacraments) prescribed to be performed in the life-cycles of upper-caste Hindu men and women. Each *sanskara* was strictly accompanied by particular Brahmin-performed rituals. Performing such rituals in a classical sense was a within-caste activity. These rituals applied to the lives of the upper three varnas, not Shudras or the so-called untouchables.<sup>106</sup> Further, the *garbhadhana* ritual was supposed to be performed before the first time a married couple had sexual intercourse, to channel the couple's sexual desire into producing a male child. *Garbhadhana*, in both meanings—conception and as a ritual—was an integral part of upper-caste Hindu life in the early twentieth century. Ubiquitous references in the writings of Marathi sex educators provides evidence of this fact. However, the point here is not to lament Shudras being denied the *garbhadhana* ritual but to highlight the caste sexual-politics that constituted the making of this concept.

While Karve touched upon simultaneous orgasm, he also expressed opposition to *garbhadhana*, in his rationalist style. While criticising it, along with marriage, he wrote,

The reason reformist people consider *garbhadhana* obscene is the same reason we consider marriage an obscene act. No need to declare the physical union of two people by beating drums.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kane, *Dharmashatra Vichar*, p. 71.

<sup>107</sup> SS, year 7, issue 6 (December 1933), p. 147.



सुधारक लोक ज्या कारणाने गर्भधानाला अश्लील समजतात त्याच कारणासाठी आम्ही  
विवाहाला अश्लील समजतो दोन लोकांचा शरीर संबंध होणार हे वाजंत्री लावून पुकारण्याची  
गरज नाही.

However, a close reading of this statement suggests that the comment was restricted to the rejection of ritualism behind *garbhadhana*. Yet the reproductive meaning of simultaneous orgasm was also present in Karve's writing. If he linked simultaneous orgasms to women's sexual satisfaction, he also linked their sexual satisfaction to the possibility of conception.<sup>108</sup> The association between orgasmic simultaneity and conception underlined by Shivananda remained constant even in Karve, despite his rejecting the *garbhadhana* ritual.

## Conclusion

The late colonial Marathi sex literature made marriage modern by discussing the social performativity of marriage as a problem and scientific sexual performativity as its solution. Implemented through the upper-caste husband—the subject of sexual solution—marriage was made into the nub of reform to reconstitute caste-sexual reproductivity.

While modernising the anatomical knowledge of Marathis in the service of a better married life, sex educators labelled the body in Sanskrit and thus Brahminised it. Conjugalities were further hierarchised by constructing a structural subordination of the lower castes in comprehending modern corporeality. The sexual discourse of matchmaking—in the language of the *ratishashtra*, the cultured classes, or endocrinology—was superimposed on a society already hierarchised by caste. With reservations about inter-caste coupling, sex educators' categorisations reinforced endo-caste matchmaking not only socially but bio-sexually.

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<sup>108</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 59–60, 63.

In this discourse, the husband was moulded into a tutor for the wife, and their sex life supervised by the sex-education prophets and their sacred sexual science. While scripting 'modern sex' to conform to Brahminical society, they made lower castes, metaphorically and eugenically, the Other of the modern Marathi sexual self. Consummation pedagogy thus also strengthened the caste boundaries of Marathi sexual modernism.

Despite speaking the language of pleasure and satisfaction, sex educators made the sexual act caste-confined and reproductive by calling simultaneous orgasm, considered the ultimate sexual pleasure, *garbhadhana*. In modernising reproductivity, the sexual solution they suggested to the problem of marriage was to 'remake' conjugal sex to reinforce endogamy and made caste biological. While the late colonial upper-caste Marathi male 'sexual self' was made modern through marriage, as the next chapter shows, his lower-caste Other was constructed as obscene to construct respectability.

## Chapter 6. Modern Marathi Obscenities

Obscenity is not a quality of any image, article or any other thing,  
it is only the intrinsic mental quality of the accuser.

—Havelock Ellis, quoted in *Samajswasthya*<sup>1</sup>

अश्लीलता हा कोणत्याही चित्राचा, लेखाचा किंवा इतर वस्तू चा गुण नसून तो फक्त  
तसा आरोप करणाऱ्यांच्या मनाचा गुण आहे—समाजस्वास्थ्य.

This statement, from British sexologist Havelock Ellis's key 1913 text *The Psychology of Sex*<sup>2</sup> decorated the front of Karve's sexual-health journal *Samajswasthya* for many years.<sup>3</sup> Using it as an epigraph marked Karve's attempt to define obscenity for his readers, who looked to him for information on sexual hygiene. Like other Marathi sex educators, he expended huge efforts to criticise the concept of obscenity. These authors were particularly invested in these debates because, as sex educators, *they* were regularly accused of obscenity.

Even sexologists from other parts of the world faced similar accusations. In this context, Marathi sex educators' dismissal of obscenity charges directed at them might look like the most logical and rational measure to take. However, the issue was far more complex. Allusions and references to obscenity are found throughout Marathi sexual science literature—in explanations of physiology and sexual desire and in comments on celibacy, contraceptive, eugenics and sexual morality. Sexual health journals went to the extent of publishing nude images of women and obscenity-related news from India and around the world to counter charges of obscenity. They were not simply trying to counter obscenity charges but to create a discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> SS, year 14, issue 1 (July 1940), p. 1; Deshmukh, *Ra Dho*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Deshmukh, *Samajswasthyakar*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> SS, year 14 (1940s) to year 26 (1950s).

Why did obscenity occupy such an important position in the late colonial Marathi sex-education agenda? What purpose did it serve for the proposed sex reforms? What was the connection between the deployment of the obscenity narrative and the late colonial modernisation of the Marathis? Keeping these questions in mind, the present chapter will analyse Marathi sex educators' intense desire to drive home their arguments about obscenity and imprint them on readers' minds. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Marathi sexual science and its authors recreated the modern Brahmin as brahmachari and as 'dutiful husband' as part of their sex-reform agenda. These categories needed a modernised framework in which respectability could be interpreted, and the discourse of obscenity fulfilled this requirement. The present chapter analyses Marathi sex educators' writings on anatomy and nudity to elaborate on this statement. In constructing this obscenity discourse, making the upper-caste male respectable and fit for producing modernity was, I argue, at the root. The brahmachari, unmarried and married, was conceived as a sexually respectable reproducer and carrier of modernity who was instructed on what was 'obscene' and what was not. In shaping the parameters of respectability, I further argue, the Marathi sexual-science agenda associated the lower-caste body and mind with obscenity. This was done through anatomical interventions and a discourse around nudity that situated the upper-caste 'self' in opposition to the lower-caste 'Other'.

The writings under examination suggest that this was a matter of dismissing charges of obscenity and that, in the endeavour to impart sexual science, building an argument against obscenity was a primary requirement. For sex educators, countering the charges levelled against them and criticising popular perceptions of obscenity were means to establish their scientific agenda, credentials, and importance. However, it will become evident that their expressions were not entirely about warding off attacks and changing misconceptions—rather, they ended up becoming a way to construct and define the obscene. Using sexual science as a tool, Marathi sex educators countered charges against the 'text' and 'images' they circulated. Nevertheless, they did not

altogether reject the concept of obscenity. They sought to locate it elsewhere. To remove the obscenity of the upper castes, the lower-caste body and mind were designated the new locations of obscenity, as a product of Marathi sexual modernity in the battle for respectability.

My argument is based on the anatomy writings of Shivananda, R.D. Karve, N.S. Phadke, and K.P. Bhagwat, and those of Karve and Shivananda on nudity. To contextualise the discussions around anatomy and nudity, I also make use of obscenity-related references in sexual-health journals such as *Samajswasthya*, *Jivan*, and *Sawai Jivan*. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief critical review of the colonial history of obscenity and the obscenity discussions produced by Marathi sexual science. The second and third sections analyse writings on anatomy and nudity.

## **I. Making Colonial India Obscene**

Obscenity was an argument rather than a ‘thing’<sup>4</sup>: a category of thought, representation, and regulation.<sup>5</sup> Historical analyses so far have considered the occurrence of obscenity as a phenomenon that was simultaneous with the onset of modernity. This was a crucial categorisation through which elites in the modern world constructed, claimed, and contested modernities as well as denying them to others. Obscenity-related perceptions in modern Western society were crucial in influencing Marathi sex educators’ anti-obscenity agenda. Western and Indian understandings of this concept are connected by the history of colonialism. In fact, even Indian academics writing the history of obscenity have understood it as a colonial construct.<sup>6</sup> The same assumption is found in the writings of the

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<sup>4</sup> Walter M. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography, 1500–1800: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Banerjee, ‘Bogey of the Bawdy’, pp. 1197–1206.

modernist Marathi sex educators who form the subject of this study.<sup>7</sup> Analysing obscenity in the context of modern Western society and imperialism has also been an important reference point for historians working on obscenity in colonial India. Western historical analyses of secret museums, nude images and paintings, pornography, and sex toys suggest that the origin of the concept lies in the development of print culture as well as in the democratisation of culture.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, these historical approaches reflect on obscenity's inevitable socio-legal relations with the state.<sup>9</sup>

Obscenity was also linked to imperialism and colonialism as a political category. Making colonial men and women obscene was a part of the process through which empire was made respectable.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, it was also part of the project of orientalism. The circulation of obscene materials was a concern for the British imperial regime in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to purify the empire.<sup>11</sup> The relation between obscenity and racism was also evident from sexually essentialised representations of Sarah Baartman as the 'Hottentot Venus'.<sup>12</sup>

Picking up the thread from arguments like 'state regulation' and 'colonialism constructed obscenities', Indian historians have commonly worked within a framework that spoke about obscenity as imposed by Victorian morality

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<sup>7</sup> Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya*, pp. 150–51.

<sup>8</sup> Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 94; Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> Hunt, *Invention of Pornography*, p. 18; Nead, *Female Nude*, pp. 91–96.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures', *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (November 1989): pp. 647–48; Philippa Levin, 'State of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination', *Victorian Studies*, no. 2 (Winter 2008): pp. 191–92.

<sup>11</sup> Deana Heath, *Purifying Empire: Obscenity and the Politics of Moral Regulation in Britain, India and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 35–64.

<sup>12</sup> Clifton Crais and Pamela Scully, *Sarah Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: Ghost Story and a Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 3–6.

and the colonial elite. Indian historians have interrogated the obscenity constructions of colonial times by focusing on the relations between elites, subalterns, and state power. Sumanta Banerjee, for example, analyses subaltern folk songs and practices through the *chottolok* (छोटोलोक, subaltern)/*bhadralok* (भद्रलोक, elite) binary, while indicating the link between influence of Victorianism and colonial Bengali obscenity perceptions.<sup>13</sup> According to this argument, Indian elites in colonial times saw subaltern expressions and practices as obscene. However, this simplified division romanticises the subaltern and obscures the caste and cultural politics that played out through articulations of obscenity within Indian society.<sup>14</sup> The print networks of colonial times were where such politics were expressed. The middle-class Bengali *bhadralok* considered the subaltern-produced cheap prints from the *battala* (बट्टाला) region of colonial Calcutta obscene; nevertheless, such prints had an elite readership, too.<sup>15</sup> The market of *battala* prints, as Anindita Ghosh explains, also countered the elitist politics of print standardisation.<sup>16</sup> Although this analysis complicates and unsettles the elite-subaltern boundaries, cheap literature produced by subalterns remained the site of obscenity.

Perceptions of obscenity in colonial times applied not only to cheap prints but to ‘dirty literature’. Charu Gupta’s analysis of this literature, in the context of ‘chaste literature’, is useful in understanding the making of late colonial Hindu fundamentalism through constructions of obscenity.<sup>17</sup> But such work conflating all so-called dirty literature as one literary genre,<sup>18</sup> understanding ‘pleasure’ as a

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<sup>13</sup> Banerjee, ‘Bogey of the Bawdy’, pp. 1198–1201.

<sup>14</sup> Banerjee, ‘Bogey of the Bawdy’, pp. 1202–1203.

<sup>15</sup> Ghosh, ‘Cheap Books, “Bad” Books: Contesting Print Cultures in Colonial Bengal’, *South Asia Research* 18, no. 2 (1998): pp. 188, 192.

<sup>16</sup> Ghosh, ‘Cheap Books’, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>18</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, p. 108.

secular idea,<sup>19</sup> and omitting any caste analysis seriously limits their ability to comprehend colonial obscenity.

Apart from Hindu identity politics, the circulation of obscene literature in empire was a transcontinental reality. Deana Heath points out the governmentality behind a desire to purify the empire in her analysis of the British Empire's failed attempts to control and regulate the circulation of obscene materials within its territories.<sup>20</sup> However, her transcontinental analytical frame does not engage with the specific notions of the obscene and empire and of the colonial state contained in the 'obscene' material.

The present chapter analyses the specific notions of obscenity found in the works of Marathi sex educators. I have used caste as an analytical tool to unpack the discourse and many of the issues related to the construction of obscenity. I use the term *subaltern* in my historical assessment to refer to the lower castes. Instead of the 'cheap' and 'dirty' literature, I focus on the 'scientific' literature to locate the creation of obscenity, and on who and what this literature pronounced obscene. More than the readers or accusers, in my analysis, Brahmins and the Brahminical elite were the creators of obscenity. Finally, this chapter does not concern itself with the respectability of colonisers or of empire. Rather, it traces the project to purify the upper castes from obscenity while redefining them in the same move. For such an endeavour, before moving to an analysis of anatomy and nudity, we need to pay attention to the locations of obscenity within Marathi sexual-science literature.

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<sup>19</sup> Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>20</sup> Deana Heath, 'Obscenity, Empire and Global Networks', *Commodities of Empire*, Working Paper no. 7 (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2008), pp. 12–13; Heath, *Purifying Empire*, pp. 65–92.



## **II. Locating Obscenity in Sexual Science**

To say that obscenity was ubiquitously discussed in Marathi sexual-science literature and at the same time try to locate it might appear self-contradictory. However, this is not the case. Rather, its omnipresence is the reason to search for obscenity's location while trying to understand the politics around it.

Obscenity as constructed through Marathi sexual literature, unlike brahmacharya or marriage, was not about asking the sexual-science reader to follow or stay away from a particular practice. It was not a journey toward a specific mode of sexual engagement or an end that the reader was supposed to accomplish. In fact, besides the many different perceptions of obscenity prevalent in contemporary society, sex educators were themselves accused of it in various ways. Their opinions, their texts, and the images they used were targeted by readers and Marathi intellectuals as well as the colonial state. These charges made obscenity an actual problem in the contemporary public sphere. Although legal charges were not levelled against every sex educator, sex education always operated in the shadow of such possibility. Creating the respectable modern man was the mission; obscenity, then, was not simply an assumption but a moral and legal reality to be faced. Sex educators were trying to establish their so-called scientific and rational credentials against this reality. In a sense, they perceived obscenity as the 'Other' of their so-called scientific sexual selves. It was a project.

To convey this to the reader, every Marathi sex educator commented on obscenity. Shivananda and R.D. Karve remained its leading architects in terms of their consistent treatment of the topic and their missionary presence in the domain of sex reformism. Sexual-health journals likewise played a crucial role in making talk around obscenity prominent.



Covers of *Samajswasthya*, 1935 and 1952



Covers of *Jivan*, 1942

The editors of *Samajswasthya*, *Jivan*, and *Sawai Jivan* wrote articles criticising obscenity and commented on its legal as well as literary and aesthetic aspects. Karve wrote a series of articles called ‘Ashliltewar Widwananchi Mate’ (अश्लीलतेवर विद्वानांची मते, The Experts’ Opinions on Obscenity).<sup>21</sup> Even his review of Marie Stopes’s bestseller *Married Love* was titled ‘E’ka Ashlil Grantha chi Hakikat’ (एका अश्लील ग्रंथाची हकीकत, The Story of an Obscene Book). Similarly, obscenity law was a crucial topic of discussion. Karve wrote several articles with titles such as ‘Ashlilteche Kayade’ (अश्लीलतेचे कायदे, Obscenity Laws).<sup>22</sup> The editor of *Sawai Jivan*, P. J. Kulkarni, wrote an article titled *Laingik Vishayacha Kayada* (The Law About Sexual Issues लैंगिक विषयाचा कायदा).<sup>23</sup> Karve’s *Samajswasthya* faced legal charges four times,<sup>24</sup> while *Sawai Jivan* was charged once.<sup>25</sup> These court cases were narrated as articles, such as ‘Amchya Khatlyachi Hakikat’ (आमच्या खटल्याची हकीकत, The Story of Our Court Case).<sup>26</sup>

Beyond legality, articles on nudity often included comments on obscenity, such as ‘Nagnateccha Prachar’ (नग्नतेचा प्रचार, The Propagation of Nudity)<sup>27</sup> and ‘Nagnata Ashlil Ahe Kay?’ (नग्नता अश्लील आहे काय? Is Nudity Obscene?)<sup>28</sup> There were columns defending images of nude women on the journals’ covers.<sup>29</sup> While defending erotic literature, *Jivan* editor A.K. Bhide, under the pen name Kumari Shailaja, wrote ‘Shrungar Mhanje Ashlilta Nhave’

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<sup>21</sup> SS, year 4, issue 12 (June 1931), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Karve, *Samajswasthya Nivdak Lekh*, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 5, issue 8 (May 1946), pp. 22–26.

<sup>24</sup> Y.D. Phadke, ‘*Samajswasthyakaranche Wicharwishwa*’ [The World of Thought of the Creator of *Samajswasthya*], *Mauj* (Diwali Issue, 1972), pp. 60–61.

<sup>25</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 8 (May 1942), p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> SS year 5, issue 8 (February 1932), pp. 192–96.

<sup>27</sup> SS year 5, issue 3 (September 1931), p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Sawai Jivan*, year 3 issue 3 (December 1943), p. 40.

<sup>29</sup> SS year 2, issue 5 (November 1928), p. 106.

(शृंगार म्हणजे अश्लीलता नव्हे, The Erotic Is Not the Same as the Obscene).<sup>30</sup> The issue was also reflected in 'Paurastya va Paschimatyā Laingik Wangamayachi Tulana' (पौरस्त्य व पश्चिमात्य लैंगिक वाङ्मया ची तुलना, A Comparison of Eastern and Western Sexual Literature),<sup>31</sup> 'Purogami Wangmaya' (पुरोगामी वाङ्मय, Progressive Literature)<sup>32</sup> and other articles on sexual desire and the question of adultery (*vyabhichara cha prashna*, व्यभिचाराचा प्रश्न).<sup>33</sup> Although Shivananda did not write independent articles on obscenity, his narrations of brahmacharya, *Kamavidnyanache Mahatwa* (कामविज्ञानाचे महत्त्व, *The Importance of Sexual Science*), and *Kamashanti* (कामशांती, *Conjugal Secrets*)<sup>34</sup> all commented on obscenity. All sex educators who wrote about anatomy invariably ended up mentioning popular perceptions of obscenity.<sup>35</sup> They also dealt with the topic in flashy anti-obscenity headlines,<sup>36</sup> cinema and theatre reviews,<sup>37</sup> in publishing other authors' opinions on the issue,<sup>38</sup> and through interventions into the obscenity debate in upper-caste literary circles.<sup>39</sup>

However, most of these writings were about criticising obscenity and rejecting the charges levelled against them. They questioned the legal definitions of what exactly constitutes obscenity. They invoked Western experts to establish

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<sup>30</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> SS, year 11, issue 10 (April 1938), pp. 321–29.

<sup>32</sup> SS, year 14, issue 2 (August 1940), p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Deshmukh, *Sanajswasthya*, pp. 296–303.

<sup>34</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatyā Rahasya* (1929), pp. 9, 28–29; Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, p. 839.

<sup>36</sup> SS, year 14, issue 1 (July 1940), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> SS, year 5, issue 2 (August 1931), pp. 42–43.

<sup>38</sup> Mama Warerkar, 'Nachya Porya' (Male Dancers [in *tamasha*]), *Jivan*, year 1, issue 12 (December 1941), pp. 27–31.

<sup>39</sup> Anant Deshmukh, 'Marathi Sahityatil Ashliltecha Ek Wad' [One Obscenity Controversy in Marathi Literature], *Lalit* (November–December 2005), pp. 103–10, 184–86.

the relevance of the sexual-science agenda and to authenticate their own opinions. At the same time, publishing extracts from their court cases allowed them to give selective details of their legal defence to convince readers of the justness of their mission while criticising judges and the legal system. Simultaneously, they emphasised the importance of sexual desire to criticise the religious attitudes and traditional beliefs they believed to be causing perceptions of obscenity. They also attempted to remove obscenity's stain from Indian erotic literature. Publishing obscenity-related reportage and quoting Western sexologists was an effort to gain legitimacy from the global world of sexology as well as to make people aware of the irrationality underlying obscenity. Their main goal was to counter and deny the charges against the sexual-science agenda and to establish its correctness. These were the locations of 'rejections of obscenity'.

If most of these writings were the locations of rejections, what were the locations where obscenity was produced? Two prominent subjects played a crucial role in defining obscenity as well as in creating the obscene Other: anatomy and nudity. If obscenity was the discourse through which sexual science could be justified, then one of its most prominent agendas was to establish the body (anatomy) and nudity as the opposite of obscene. Thus, it is important to understand who and what were considered as obscene or respectable as well as how these were constructed. Anatomy and nudity demonstrate how the obscene Other was created out of the anti-obscenity agenda.

### **III. Anatomy of the Obscene**

Since the sexual body was central to sexual science, anatomy was a permanent reference point in all its discourses. People's reservations regarding talking explicitly about the sexual body and considering such expression obscene was Marathi sex educators' favourite topic, emphasised by popular sexual-science

narratives.<sup>40</sup> They quantified the need for sexual science by claiming to have received thousands of letters from people explaining their ruined family lives due to ignorance about sex.<sup>41</sup> If anatomy was central to discussions of brahmacharya and marriage, it was equally important in constructing a framework for obscenity. The multi-referentiality of anatomy was core to making this corporeal politics multi-dimensional. As explained in the previous chapter, all contributors to Marathi sexual science constructed anatomy in almost the same fashion. It was presented at the vanguard of the sexual revolution, pronouncing the requirement to know the structure of the body in a scientific way and name it in Marathi. This task was fulfilled by giving names that derived from Sanskrit to body parts and functions, which in turn politicised and Brahminised the project. In this lexical politics around the body, lower castes were subordinated through the determination of the valid and invalid body, with the help of the rhetoric of scientific sexuality.

This also meant standardising anatomy, which in turn defined obscenity through corporeal understanding. The establishment of a Sanskrit-derived Marathi language of anatomy, though it appeared secular, was a corporeal journey of restructuring caste through making the obscene ‘Other’ of the anatomy. Mounting criticism of people’s squeamishness at the mention of ‘unmentionable’ body parts was seen as a sign of sexual progressivism. However, turning the charge of obscenity on its head and directing it against ignorance of sexual science was part of the same process. The obscene was anatomised through detailing the body’s structure, commenting on cyclical bodily processes and on masturbation, as well as using classical *ratishastra* metaphors to describe the body. While speaking of sexual anatomy to underline concerns in midwifery, Shivananda wrote:

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<sup>40</sup> Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, pp. 5–7; Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 21–38; *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), pp. 9–12; *Sawai Jivan*, year 1, issue 4 (Jan 1942), pp. 4–6.

<sup>41</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), p. 37.

Only hypocritical, corrupt, and arrogant people create religious pomp around false claims to purity and accuse such a moral sexual subject, sanctioned by the Vedas and *smritis*, of being obscene and make disgusted facial expressions: ‘*Chhi, chhi!*’ If this life-giving subject is to be considered obscene then the Vedas, *dharmashastras*, medical texts, books on midwifery [reproductive science], texts on anatomy, and all scientific books by Dr Trall, Harry Foulter, Cowan, Kellogg, Gillette, Havelock Ellis, . . . Marie Stopes, Mrs Duffy, Mrs Margaret [Sanger], and other sexual scientists openly displaying photographs of men and women’s secret parts should be seen as obscene and worth discarding! . . . All human happiness and welfare is located not in the [perceived] strangeness but in the demonstrated openness of this knowledge. . . . Actually, what is shameful, destructive, and obscene is that men and women do not know their bodies in the correct way.<sup>42</sup>

खोट्या पवित्रतेचे धार्मिक अवडंबर माजवणारे दांभिक अतिशिष्ट, भ्रष्ट आणि नष्ट लोक या वेदश्रुती मान्य धर्म्य कामाला मार, नरक व अश्लील नावे ठेवतात व छी छी करून नाके मुरडतात . . . जर या जीवन विषयी धर्म्य कामविषयाला अश्लील म्हणायचे तर मग संपूर्ण वेद, धर्मशास्त्र, वैद्यक ग्रंथ, मिड वाइफरी चे ग्रंथ (म्हणजे जनन विज्ञानाचे ग्रंथ), अनाटॉमी (म्हणजे शरीर किंवा इंद्रिय विज्ञानाचे) चे ग्रंथ, डॉ ट्रॉल, हॅरी फाऊलर कोवेन, कॅलॉग, जेलेट, हॅव्लॉक एलिस, तसेच . . . मारी स्टोप्स, मिसेस डफी, मिसेस मार्गारेट प्रभृती कामशास्त्रज्ञ, स्त्री पुरुषांचे काही एक आडपडदा ना ठेवता वैज्ञानिक दृष्टीने लिहिलेले व स्त्री पुरुषांच्या सर्व गुह्य अवयवांचे प्रत्यक्ष फोटो देऊन चित्रित केलेले सर्वच शास्त्रीय ग्रंथ अश्लील ठरले असते . . . या शास्त्रांच्या विचित्र नवे तर सचित्र व उघड उघड ज्ञानातच अखिल मानव जातीचे कल्याण भरले आहे . . . स्त्री पुरुषांना स्वतःच्या

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<sup>42</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 34–35.

शरीर अवयवांची यथार्थ माहिती नसणे हीच वस्तुतः मोठ्या लज्जेची असभ्यपणाची,  
अश्लीलतेची अनर्थाची आणि नाशाची गोष्ट आहे.

When combining Brahminical sources and the writings of popular sexual science for the experts, *yathartha mahiti* (यथार्थ माहिती, proper information) was the key issue in emphasising what should be considered obscene. In a similar vein, criticising the lack of sexual scientific knowledge in Marathi and asserting his own authority, Karve said,

In Marathi, except our [my] writings, there is actually not a single book written in a modern scientific sense—that is, without bringing in nonsense such as religion and morality. But for writing most indecent things without even naming the genital organs, there are authors available . . . but scientific writers are very few.<sup>43</sup>

मराठीत आमचे स्वतः चे पुस्तकांशिवाय खरोखर आधुनिक शास्त्रीय दृष्टीने म्हणजे त्यात  
नीती धर्म वेगळे फालतू गोष्टी न आणता लिहिलेले एकही पुस्तक आमचे माहितीत नाही  
. . . मात्र जननेंद्रियांची नावे हि न घेता शक्य तितका वाहियातपणा करणारे काही  
लेखक आहेत . . . परंतु शास्त्रीय लेखक फारच कमी.

While advertising himself as an expert like Shivananda, Karve emphasised the lack of ‘proper’ anatomical knowledge in other writings. As Karve was referring to scientific writings on the body, it appears, from the sexual literature surveyed for this study, that educational texts used anatomical terminology. Shivananda and Phadke also elaborated on morality and religion but did use anatomical terminology. Hence, we can see Karve’s claim as self-advertisement, but these writings had the effect, beyond marking the valid and standard body, of constructing respectable sexual knowledge. Shivananda and Karve were both fundamentally attempting to problematise the sources of sexual knowledge.

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<sup>43</sup> SS, year 11, issue 10 (April 1938), pp. 325–26.



Providing anatomical information was considered urgent because of the perception that, otherwise, people would get knowledge from other, less legitimate sources. Shivananda proposed that if it was not for his educational effort, corrupted people would otherwise fulfil this requirement. He instructed his construction, the ideal brahmachari, to avoid uttering or hearing *shivigal* (शिवीगाळ, rude words).<sup>44</sup> As such things lead to *vyabhichar* (adulterous behaviour व्यभिचार).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the habit of *nokar-chakar* (नोकर चाकर, domestic servants) and *dushta dasa-dasi* (दुष्ट दास दासी, wicked men/women servants) playing with children's genitals was seen as one cause for the habit of masturbation.<sup>46</sup> Even for Karve, whose views echoed those of eugenicist William J. Robinson, it was domestic servants who got children into the habit of masturbation.<sup>47</sup> Domestic servants in colonial and late colonial Maharashtra were generally from the lower castes; this reality is reflected in the memoirs of upper-caste intellectuals.<sup>48</sup> Shivananda and Karve located the 'disrespectable' in domestic servants while identifying them as the sources of corruption, and defined sexual sensibilities in this context. Shivananda claimed that if sexual science did not make efforts to the contrary, *bhrashta* (भ्रष्ट, corrupt) and *dushta lok* (दुष्ट लोक, wicked people) would educate the youngsters to be *durachari* (दुराचारी, ill-behaved) and *vyabhichari* (व्यभिचारी, adulterous).<sup>49</sup> These ill-behaved people are also found in Shivananda's caste-coded categorisation based on food, as explained in previous chapters. Similarly, the words used to describe them occurred also in the context of Muslim men in the 1930s, during the high time of communal tensions.

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<sup>44</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 54.

<sup>46</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (2012), p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> SS year 3 issue 2 (August 1929), p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Appa Pendse, *Express Tower Warun* [From Express Tower] (Bombay: Patrakar Sangha Prakashan, 1981), p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 36–37.

Combining all these fears, Shivananda defined obscenity by saying that ‘any deed that will destroy the progeny and the nation is obscene’ (*santati bijacha va rashtracha nash hoil tech karma ashilil hoy*, संतती बीजाचा . . . व राष्ट्राचा नाश होईल. तेच कर्म अश्लील होय).<sup>50</sup>

Once sex educators highlighted the danger posed by the availability of disreputable sources of sexual and anatomical knowledge, they could underline the lack of scientific sources. They posited their writings on scientific anatomy as the foundational information to bridge this gap and to offer a respectable source. Significantly, this lack of standardised and scientific anatomical knowledge was fulfilled in Sanskrit. As noted in the last chapter, sexual body parts were translated using Sanskrit and Sanskrit-derived terms. Sanskrit’s grammar signified scientificity, as discussed in the previous chapter, and marked high-caste respectability. It was perceived to be beyond obscenity. In fact, many writers supported the credentials and respectability of sexual science by citing Kalidasa’s erotic descriptions.<sup>51</sup> Karve’s writing was aimed at and used by people who knew Sanskrit.<sup>52</sup> ‘Most people know Sanskrit’ was a convenient linguistic assumption that ended up fixing an upper-caste clientele for sexual knowledge—presented as the epitome and the embodiment of respectability.

Simultaneously, there was resistance to the use of Sanskrit terminology: the contemporary non-Brahmin intellectual and Sanskrit scholar Bhaskararao Jadhav complained about the incomprehensibility of the loaded language used to explain anatomy.<sup>53</sup> But Marathi sex educators invalidated his complaints by talking of the obscenity law.

Obscenity law was a reality, but obscenity was also a cultural problem. Anatomy and obscenity were mutually constitutive phenomena, fundamentally

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<sup>50</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 37.

<sup>51</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), 11.

<sup>52</sup> R.D. Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>53</sup> *SS*, year 11, issue 10 (April 1938), pp. 321–22.

linked with the epistemic politics of caste. In the prolonged cultural process of standardising language, words used predominantly by the lower castes were understood as sexually insulting and disqualified from use in polite society. For example, the Marathi word *gand* (गंड, buttocks) was used predominantly by the lower castes. In the era of the civilising mission of print cultures and capitalism, the word was not only used in abusive phrases but understood as an insult in itself, and was considered unprintable.<sup>54</sup> Through and beyond the law, Marathi sex educators' concerns for scientific respectability were shaped by 'rude word' politics that explicated obscenity and vulgarity as simultaneous to defining sexual anatomy. Shivananda's warning to his brahmachari to stay away from 'rude words' has to be seen in the context of this cultural politics.

Karve, meanwhile, emphasised the need to write his rationalism in Marathi and showed himself to have a concern for common people's need to understand sex in their own language.<sup>55</sup> However, he blamed the impossibility of achieving this aim on the colonial legal system:

Why consider the words understood by commoners as vulgar and call them rude words? And why are only those words with the same meanings [for the body] that are understood by elites not considered obscene? Can anyone really answer this question? People like Bhaskararao Jadhav who insist on using simple language should understand this problem. . . . The present situation is such that judges have the authority to decide what is obscene and what is not according to their whims. . . . Nobody knows where the exact line lies between following the law and overruling it.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Shrikant Botre, 'Tuzya Aaychi... Maychi' (On Marathi Rude Word Politics), *Vatasuru* (Diwali issue, 2011), p. 242.

<sup>55</sup> SS, year 11, issue 10 (April 1938), pp. 321–22.

<sup>56</sup> SS, year 11, issue 10 (April 1938), pp. 321–22.

सर्वाना कळतील अशा शब्दांना ग्राम्य अशी शिवी देऊन ते अश्लील का ठरवायचे आणि त्याच अर्थाचे फक्त शिष्टांसच समजणारे शब्द अश्लील का नव्हेत हे कोणास सांगता येईल काय? सोपी भाषा लिहिण्या संबंधी आग्रह धरणाऱ्या भास्करराव जाधवांसारख्या लेखकांनी हा प्रश्न विचारात घ्यावा . . . हल्ली ची स्थिती अशी आहे कि आपल्या लहरी प्रमाणे वाट्टेल त्याला अश्लील म्हणण्यास न्यायाधीशास मुभा असल्यामुळे . . . कोठे कायदेभंग झाला हे कळत नाही.

In the context of Karve facing legal obscenity charges for his writings and publications, these statements may sound progressive and rational. However, as a member of the uppermost caste cluster, Karve was aware of the caste-inflected nature of the elitism he mentioned. Though expressing rationalist concern for the common Marathi speaker, he repeatedly asserted his linguistic authority by including Sanskrit words in the titles of his writings even while insisting on writing in Marathi.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, he declared his total support for Brahmin intellectuals' efforts to create scientific terminology in Sanskrit.<sup>58</sup> As explained earlier, Karve was a critic of Marathi literature. He wrote extensively on obscenity and constructed it as the problem of colonial law, but was crucially silent on the explicit connection between caste and obscenity. His 'inability' to understand why the words sanctioned by elites were valid and the colloquial obscene was feigned ignorance, a matter of invisibilising 'caste', despite its centrality to the making of obscenity.

Karve emphasised the legal issue and the unavailability of non-obscene Marathi words as the reasons for the use of Sanskrit words, but this was not a reality. In fact, non-obscene Marathi words, such as *masik pali* (मासिक पाळी) for menstruation, *pishwi* (पिशवी) for uterus, and *jugne* (जुगणे) for sexual intercourse,

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<sup>57</sup> SS, year 8, issue 2 (Aug 1934), p. 33. Except for his first book on birth control, Karve wrote all of his other books in Marathi.

<sup>58</sup> R.D. Karve, *Klaibya chi Mimansa*, pp. 5–6.

were ubiquitous.<sup>59</sup> However, for firm believers in Sanskrit's scientific respectability, this was not a concern. If such words appeared in anatomical narratives, they were used as explanations instead of presented as scientific words. Of two words for uterus, why was *garbhashaya* (गर्भाशय) scientific and *pishwi* (पिशवी) non-scientific? This was a cultural question of respectability connected to caste-differentiated language. While narrating the body, 'scientific' was always a culturally determined category that also produced obscenities. The Marathi journey of sexual anatomy through Sanskrit thus was a caste journey that made obscenity and the obscene Other while making the respectable man.

Body structure was also made respectable and obscene through the casteist understanding of biological substances. This was done by reviving classical *ratishastra* metaphors and food classifications from the Bhagvad Gita. These metaphorical articulations also helped in constructing a corporeal respectability. If the *satvik* (sacred) food consumer was seen as someone who should become a brahmachari, the *tamasi* (bad) food consumer was imagined as eating *ushte* (उष्टे, tasted), *wallele* (वाळलेले, rotten), *durgandhi yukta* (दुर्गंधी युक्त, stinking), *shile* (शिळे, spoiled), and *vit* (वीट stale) food and considered a *papatma* (पापात्मा, sinful) and *pratyaksha krurakarmi* (प्रत्यक्ष क्रूरकर्मी, cruel person).<sup>60</sup> These specifications came alongside popular upper-caste understandings that equated Brahmins with consuming sacred food, non-Brahmins with nonvegetarians, and so-called untouchables as people who ate beef as well as stale, leftover, and spoiled food. In turn, obscenity was related to the consumption of certain types of bad food. While making these connections, Shivananda categorically said,

A man becomes what he eats. . . . Those who eat spicy food, their minds also become spicy and hot-tempered. . . . One who develops

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<sup>59</sup> The word *pishwi*, commonly used in lower-caste Marathi, is even today considered non-standard usage.

<sup>60</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), pp. 60–61.

the habit of eating sacred meals . . . soon he will become calm and a man of sacred thoughts . . . with sacred and less food consumption, a man can easily practice brahmacharya.<sup>61</sup>

मनुष्य जसा भोजन करतो तसा तो बनतो . . . तिखट व गरम भोजन करणारांचा स्वभावही तिखट आणि गरम असतो . . . सात्विक भोजनाची सवय लावील . . . तो लवकरच शांत व पवित्र विचारांचा पुरुष बनेल . . . सात्विक आणि अल्पाहाराने . . . मनुष्य सहज ब्रह्मचर्याचे पालन करू शकतो.

Beyond the sex educators, modernist Marathi Brahmins who were talking about the *dharmashastras* around this time were also debating vegetarianism.<sup>62</sup> While their vegetarianism was a matter of cultural respectability, it was also an issue of physical strength and intellectual power. In this context, obscenity was constituted by connecting food consumption with mentality.

Furthermore in the *ratishastra* sexual-matchmaking metaphors revived in Shivananda's work, the upper-caste Brahmin and Kshatriya men resembling Shasha and Mruga were producing fragrant, white semen, whereas the lower-caste men who resembled Vrusha and Ashwa were denigrated for their bluish, rotting semen.<sup>63</sup> The making of semen, as much as mentality, for Shivananda was also connected to food consumption.

Such classifications, rooted in caste and varna structures, constructed and imagined respectable, obscene and dirty bodies. The unpleasant, boorish, and diseased were associated with lower-caste bodies and the pleasant, healthy, clean, and pure with upper-caste bodies. While Shivananda presented these classifications as sexual science, K.P. Bhagwat also endorsed them as valid in *Vaivahik Jivan*, despite his negative attitude towards classical Indian sexual

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<sup>61</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 60.

<sup>62</sup> Kane, *Dharmashastra Vichar*, pp. 174–87.

<sup>63</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 101–103.

knowledge.<sup>64</sup> At the apex of restructuring caste through sexuality, *ratishastra* metaphors proved crucial to dressing the categories of respectability and obscenity in biological tones through caste references, down to the level of making a porous body.

Besides metaphors, obscenity was also made corporeal through the rhetoric of hygiene and cleanliness. For Shivananda, sexual cleanliness was linked to the practice of secluding women during menstruation. According to him, ‘Some castes do not consider women untouchable during their menstruation, which is an unhygienic and life-destroying practice’ (*Kityek jatit vital manit nahit he far arogya vinashak ahe*, कित्येक जातीत विटाळ मानीत नाहीत हे फार आरोग्य विनाशक आहे).<sup>65</sup> The unspecified caste referenced here appears to be the Jangam and other such castes, whom colonial Brahmins considered impure for not following this menstruation related rule.<sup>66</sup> Shivananda condemned them even more strongly in later editions of his eugenic text *Manowanchhit Santati*. He considered not following this rule a *ghanerdya chali* (घाणेरड्या चाली, ugly practice).<sup>67</sup> Sexual purity (*yoni-shuchita*, योनी-शुचिता) in this construction was not only a rhetoric of policing caste boundaries. It was understood through the frame of obscenity that was rooted in the caste-coded social meaning of menstruation. This sexual-hygiene project, I argue, allotted not just non-subjectivity but *anti*-subjectivity to the lower castes while rendering them obscene through the rhetoric of sexual cleanliness.

Karve, on the contrary, discarded the idea that women had to be secluded, though continued to emphasise cleanliness when treating the subjects of obscenity and sexual intercourse:

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<sup>64</sup> K.P. Bhagwat, *Vaivahik Jivan*, pp. 118–19.

<sup>65</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati*, p. 190.

<sup>66</sup> Y.D. Phadke, *Mahatma Phule Samagra Wangmay*, p. 142.

<sup>67</sup> Shivananda, *Manowanchhit Santati* (Lakhani 2009), p. 113.

From the sexual intercourse point of view, bodily cleanliness is also a part of morality. . . . Due to considering genitals and the surrounding area obscene, due to having a guarantee about people not watching them when they are naked, and due to the belief in the appropriateness of having sex in the dark, many people do not keep these parts clean.<sup>68</sup>

समागमाचे दृष्टीने स्वच्छता हा देखील नीतीचाच एक भाग आहे. हे पुष्कळांना कळत नाही. जननेंद्रिय व आसपासचा भाग अश्लील समजल्यामुळे, आपणास कोणी नग्न पाहत नाही अशी खात्री असल्यामुळे व समागम अंधारातच योग्य अशी बऱ्याच लोकांची कल्पना असल्यामुळे पुष्कळ लोक हे भाग स्वच्छ ठेवत नाहीत.

Karve did not talk about ‘unclean’ castes like Shivananda did. Nevertheless, cleanliness was a matter of social morality for him like it was for Shivananda. This was a common issue among sex educators’ conceptions of obscenity. Similar to other matters presented as such and discussed in the previous chapters, cleanliness was not a secular social category. It was a rhetoric in which popular upper-caste understandings of ‘unclean ways of living’ were associated with the lowermost castes, especially the ‘untouchables’.<sup>69</sup> Despite not talking in caste terms, even Karve articulated cleanliness in a frame of social morality that easily fed into the caste-coded rhetoric already present in society. Interestingly enough, Karve’s rationalist critique made Shivananda appear backward for his advocacy of menstrual untouchability, but not for his caste-influenced understanding of sexual hygiene. In a period when caste and untouchability were being redefined, cleanliness was an issue that created the obscene through criticising lower-caste sexual practices. At the same time, it was the marker of respectability within the framework of a ‘new rationalist social morality’ that chose to remain silent on the casteism of sexual orthodoxy.

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<sup>68</sup> R.D. Karve, *Adhunik Kamashastra*, p. 81.

<sup>69</sup> Navalkar, *Shivaram Janaba Kamble*, p. 17



Thus, in the project of sexual modernity, Sanskrit became the key for caste-ing the respectable self and its lower-caste Other. Reviving classical corporeal metaphors, with their caste understandings, was the way to create an anatomical sense of good and bad as well as stinking and fragrant porous bodies, with minds not detached from them. On the other hand, sexual cleanliness was the new moralism that made clean and unclean bodies, with both explicit and implicit caste language. This dialect of corporeality and obscenity was further developed through seeking to establish a hygienic nudity that was also put in service of respectability politics.

#### **IV. Nudity, Hygiene, and Caste**

If the sexual body was one location where obscenity was constructed, nudity was another. Sexual health journals published articles promoting nudity and sold nude photographs and sketches.<sup>70</sup> R.D. Karve gave theoretical support for starting a nudist organisation in Maharashtra and was ready to coordinate between interested people and the supposed organisers.<sup>71</sup> *Samajswasthya* published advertisements by men searching for female friends who would support their nudist thoughts.<sup>72</sup> Some readers supported this, but they were opposed by others. Men and, more prominently, women objected to sex educators' propagation of nudism in general and to the publication of articles on nudity and images of nude women in particular.<sup>73</sup> Not every sex educator supported nudism, however; Shivananda, for example, opposed it but still wrote on anatomy and nudity.

In this process of speculating about sex reforms and combating criticism, sexual-health journals and their editors published consistently on nudity-related

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<sup>70</sup> SS, year 2, issue 5 (November 1928), p. 106; SS, year 10, issue 12 (June 1937), p. 354.

<sup>71</sup> SS, year 10, issue 7 (January 1937), pp. 193–94; SS, year 10, issue 8 (February 1937), pp. 225–26.

<sup>72</sup> SS, year 25, issue 4 (October 1951), back cover.

<sup>73</sup> SS, year 19, issue 9 (March 1946), pp. 203–204.

matters. They published translations of Havelock Ellis and E. Arma and articles by Karve, Shailaja, and Welde. Even Jadhav contributed to this discussion by writing on ancient Indian nude sculptures.<sup>74</sup> News reported in Western journals related to nudity and its restrictions were published and commented on.<sup>75</sup> Along with this, nudity was also an important topic for the public correspondence of *Samajswasthya* and other journals. Marathi sex educators even participated enthusiastically in the debate raging in the Marathi literary world around the cover of the modernist literary journal *Ratnakar* depicting a ‘woman wearing transparent garments’—known as the *Oleti* (ओलेती) painting controversy.<sup>76</sup>

Since nudity was the most common reason for obscenity charges, the argument developed against it was shaped by these charges. Defences of nudity shrouded it in arguments about sacredness and hygiene. Shivananda, in his battle against public ignorance, selectively appreciated nudity for its role purifying sexual science. He argued that looking at nude photographs was a decline from practising brahmacharya.<sup>77</sup> Still, for him, nudity was legitimised by the Vedas, *shrutis*, and *dharmashastra* as an anatomical requirement. As noted above, Shivananda also held that ‘all human happiness and welfare is located not in the [perceived] strangeness but in the illustrated openness of this knowledge’.<sup>78</sup> *Jivan* described the nudity in Kalidasa’s writings as respectable and justified and argued that talking about the topic was the opposite of obscene when done with virtuous intent.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, in N.S. Phadke’s writings, anatomical nudity was not only a scientific requirement but as a part of knowledge creation in the service of the noble cause of population management. To defend this knowledge creation,

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<sup>74</sup> SS, year 8, issue 9 (March 1935), pp. 262–64.

<sup>75</sup> SS, year 14, issue 5 (November 1940), p. 160.

<sup>76</sup> SS, year 8, issue 9 (March 1935), pp. 277–81; SS, year 8, issue 8 (Feb 1935), pp. 254–55. *Oleti* was a painting by Sardar Thakur Singh.

<sup>77</sup> Shivananda, *Brahmacharya Hech Jivan* (1922), p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Shivananda, *Dampatya Rahasya* (1929), pp. 34–35.

<sup>79</sup> *Jivan*, year 1, issue 1 (January 1941), p. 11.

Phadke even invoked the Bhagvad Gita.<sup>80</sup> Such descriptions created the obscene ‘Other’ that was nonreligious according to Brahminical parameters, as well as non-Sanskritised and unscientific. Nudity as sanctioned by Sanskrit texts, Brahminism, and noble scientific intentions was a respectable corporeal revelation; its reverse was declared the obscenity of the ‘Other’.

Nudity was made hygienic as well as sacred. R.D. Karve, while destigmatising nudity, argued on the grounds of corporeal and moral hygiene. For him, uncovering the body was natural—and being natural was being hygienic. Denying the ill effects of nudity, he argued,

This is absolutely untrue. . . . Now in many places nudist organisations have started. Not just men and women, even children are present there. And leave aside the bad impact on them; modern experts and even Christian priests have certified that it has good effects on them. . . . Of course, scientifically thinking, the skin is a very important organ and if it does not get air it cannot function properly. Therefore, maximum air should be given to the skin. Only the clothes essential to protect oneself from the cold should be used.<sup>81</sup>

हे साफ खोटे आहे . . . अनेक ठिकाणी नग्न संघ निघाले आहेत, तेथे स्त्री पुरुषच नाही तर लहान मुले पण असतात आणि त्यांच्यावर वाईट परिणाम तर होत नाहीतच पण अत्यंत उत्तम परिणाम होतात असे मत आधुनिक तज्ज्ञांनी तर दिले आहेच पण ख्रिस्ती पादयांनी पण दिले आहे . . . अर्थात शास्त्रीय दृष्टीने विचार केल्यास त्वचा हे अत्यंत उपयोगी इंद्रिय आहे. आणि त्याला हवा ना मिळाल्यास त्याचे काम योग्य रीतीने होत नाही. तेव्हा त्वचेला शक्य तितकी हवा दिली पाहिजे आणि थंडी वाऱ्याकरता जितके कपडे जरूरच असतील तितकेच वापरले पाहिजे.

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<sup>80</sup> Phadke, *Samagra*, vol. 5, pp. 839–40.

<sup>81</sup> SS, year 7, issue 10 (April 1934), pp. 278–79.

This hygienic conception of nudity needed to be legitimised as much as other sexual-science formulations. To this end Karve cited the existence of societies and social groups which did not require women to cover their breasts:

People do not consider familiar things obscene. For example, Indian women of the high classes do not walk on the streets with uncovered breasts, and they also do not keep them uncovered at home. But in some places in India, women keep their breasts uncovered while in the house and only cover them with a thin cloth when they go out. If we go to Java island, there [women] don't cover them even while going out. Looking at such examples helps us understand that obscenity is only a symbolic concept.<sup>82</sup>

परिचयाच्या गोष्टींना लोक अश्लील मनात नाहीत उदाहरणार्थ हिंदुस्थानात उच्च वर्गातील स्त्रिया स्तन उघडे टाकून रस्त्याने जात नाहीत व बहुतेक ठिकाणी घरीही उघडे टाकत नाहीत. तथापि हिंदुस्थानातही काही ठिकाणी घरी स्तन उघडे ठेवतात व बाहेर जाताना मात्र वर पातळ आच्छादन असते. जावा बेटात गेल्यास तेथे ते बाहेर जातानाही झाकीत नाहीत. अशी उदाहरणे दिसली असता अश्लीलता हि केवळ सांकेतिक कल्पना आहे . . . हे समजण्यास मदत होते.

Karve's reasoning categorically drew upon the examples of upper-class and lower-class Indian women and Javanese women. With caste and class used interchangeably in late colonial India, the reference to covered breasts indicated high-caste women. Speaking to these classes or castes, Karve's hygienic conception of nudity was legitimised by invoking unspecified lower castes along with Javanese women.

Conveniently made invisible and ignored in such formulations, caste politics were nonetheless central to the issue of nudity in colonial India. The practice of covering breasts was not a health-awareness issue about purposefully

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<sup>82</sup> SS, year 11, issue 9 (March 1938), pp. 308–309.

airing the skin. It was a matter of caste-sexual chastity politics and even led to controversy.<sup>83</sup> Lower-caste communities faced upper-caste opposition in terms of body politics while in the process of embracing colonial modernity, as is evident from how upper-caste Nambudris (नंबुद्री) and Nairs (नायर) in south India prevented Nadar (नाडर) women from covering their breasts.<sup>84</sup> In Maharashtra and Karnataka, Vadar-caste (वडार) women had similar cultural restrictions.<sup>85</sup> Nudity here was a matter of cultural imposition from the upper-caste Brahminical corporeal regime, not a health- and skin-restoring practice. Besides the politics of chastity, it was a mechanism to assert control over the lower-caste 'Other' not only as social body but also on their actual corporeal bodies. Further, not allowing lower-caste women to cover their breasts was a matter of making their bodies visually accessible to others while imposing subordination on them through their bodies. Control over one's own body, and social dignity based on that, was defined by the caste hierarchy.

In this context, Karve's example conveniently manufactured an unspecified lower-caste legacy to strengthen his upper-caste respectability agenda based on nudity appreciation. Constructing such a legacy while making nudity into a health argument was a convenient and blatant conversion of caste exploitation into a justification for nudist modernism. He attempted to remove the stain of obscenity from nudism by such convenient hygienic interpretations, to make it modern and respectable for the upper castes.

However, nudity *was* a social hygiene issue when linked to prostitution. Karve was a self-declared supporter of prostitution, similar to Robinson.<sup>86</sup> For Karve, who was obsessed with the idea of a free society and free sex, prostitution

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<sup>83</sup> Hardgrave, *Nadars of Tamilnadu*, pp. 59–70.

<sup>84</sup> Cohn, *Colonialism*, pp. 140–41.

<sup>85</sup> R.E. Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications [1922] 1987), p. 140.

<sup>86</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya*, pp. 7, 158.

and nudity were closely connected. While explaining this, he said that, in a free society,

clothes are not important because nudity is not considered obscene. [In such a society], since sexual intercourse is not considered as a sin, they don't consider any part of the body obscene, nor do they feel the need to cover any body part. . . . All this is very closely connected to the prostitution business. Where there is no restriction on sexual intercourse beyond the two involved persons' consent, prostitutes would obviously not exist. . . . The demand for prostitutes is created only when for some reason such restrictions are created in society. This is a natural demand. It cannot be stopped by giving lectures . . . till those restrictions are removed, society requires prostitutes.<sup>87</sup>

वस्त्रप्रावरणाला तेथे महत्त्व नसते कारण तेथे नग्नता अश्लील नसते. समागम हे पाप नसल्यामुळे शरीराचे कोणतेही भाग अश्लील मानीत नाहीत आणि ते झाकण्याचे कारण पडत नाही . . . या सर्व विवेचनाचा वेश्या वृत्तीशी फार निकटचा संबंध आहे. जेथे समागमावर दोन माणसांच्या संमती पलीकडे कोणताही निर्बंध नसतो तेथे अर्थातच वेश्या नसतात . . . जेव्हा काही कारणाने समागमावर कोणताही निर्बंध उत्पन्न होतो तेव्हाच वेश्यांना मागणी उत्पन्न होते. हि मागणी नैसर्गिक असते. ती व्याख्यानांनी बंद होत नाही . . . ते निर्बंध नाहीसे झाले नाहीत तोपर्यंत समाजाला वेश्यांची गरज आहे.

This was the justification behind Karve's support for prostitution in India, especially with his own location in late colonial Bombay. Invoking Malinowski and Ellis, in his articulation nudity was made non-obscene and a distinguishing characteristic of a free society, whereas the prostitute was seen as the 'Other' of the ideal free society and thereby of ideal nudity. The prostitute was further seen as a necessity in a non-ideal contemporary society. If nudity in these

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<sup>87</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyavasaya*, pp.2-5.

constructions was not obscene, logically, the prostitute as the projected 'Other' *was* obscene, without being mentioned as such. Instead, she was a 'useful body', necessary for providing satisfying sexual intercourse for men who could not have that within the bond of marriage. She was also seen as useful for the unmarried man to test his sexual performance before marriage and to make the marriage successful.<sup>88</sup> Not only was this rationalisation patriarchal, it refused to see the relationship between sexual exploitation and caste—both fundamental to the institution of prostitution in India.

In colonial India, it was predominantly lower-caste women who were 'forced' into prostitution. This was a general understanding, but was also established by the Bombay Prostitution Committee's Report of 1922.<sup>89</sup> Despite knowing and mentioning the caste reality of sex work, in his book *Veshya Vyawasaya* (Prostitution), Karve presented it as pure business.<sup>90</sup> He argued that most prostitutes entered what he called 'business' out of free choice and desire.<sup>91</sup> Thus constructed, the prostitute and prostitution were the obscene 'Other' of a free, natural, nude society. The same obscene was a 'useful' Other in contemporary society. Nudity thus was turned from obscene to respectable by conveniently misinterpreting the sexual exploitation of lower-caste prostitutes as 'business women' to construct an argument of social hygiene for the upper-caste man. This respectable nudity, finally, was seen as the truth of the sexual-science agenda. In explaining and defending the nude covers of his journal, Karve said, 'From the beginning of the second year we decided to publish images of nude women on the cover with the intention of saying that the truth is always naked'

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<sup>88</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya*, p. 158.

<sup>89</sup> *Bombay Prostitution Committee's Report*, supplement to *the Indian Social Reformer*, vol. xxxiii, no. 52 (27 August 1922), pp. 2, 6.

<sup>90</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya*, pp. 152–56.

<sup>91</sup> R.D. Karve, *Veshya Vyawasaya*, pp. 156–57.

(सत्य हे नेहमी नग्न असते हे सांगण्याच्या इराद्याने दुसऱ्या वर्षाच्या सुरुवाती पासून आम्ही मुखपृष्ठावर नग्न स्त्री चे चित्र छपायचे ठरवले होते).<sup>92</sup>

Defending nudity against obscenity charges made nudity itself into the defender of ultimate truth. Nudity was not only made not obscene but even sacred and the manufacturer of sacred truth. If the sacred anatomical nudity sanctioned by the *dharmashastra* was the ultimate truth for Shivananda, hygienic nudity was the ultimate truth for Karve. In this context, the sexual-science discussion of obscenity was not simply a matter of rejecting obscenity charges against sex educators. It was a representation of obscenity as a political argument. While projecting their resistance to this phenomenon, sex educators *created* obscenity and the obscene through their consistent discussions. If anatomy and nudity were the locations of this creation, the lower-caste body and mind embodied the obscene Other: non-Sanskrit, non-sacred, and unhygienic.

To make the upper-caste man respectable by rejecting obscenity charges was not enough. In fact, the rejection of obscenity was not enough to establish modernist credentials. Creating obscenity and the obscene was a requirement of this respectability. Even Havelock Ellishile rejecting the existence of obscenity in a text or image, turned it around to find obscenity in the accuser's mind and body. His ardent followers, including both Karve and Shivananda, created the same obscenity in the lower-caste body and mind while making Marathi sexual science. With caste as the axis of power in Brahminical Hindu society, the sacredness of text and image was established by making obscenity lower-caste, through anatomical and hygienic methods, in Marathi sexual modernity. Lower castes were made the 'Other' of upper-caste respectable sexual knowledge and conveniently put in the service of defining the modern sexual sensibilities of the upper caste. Modernity was a caste-coded search for sexual sensibilities in late colonial Maharashtra, so the elite castes' defining of obscenity was bound to be endless and omnipresent.

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<sup>92</sup> SS, year 2, issue 5 (November 1928), p. 106.



## Conclusion

I started writing this thesis with the intention of unpacking the caste-sexual nature of late colonial Marathi modernity by analysing the sex-education literature produced between 1920 and 1950. I began with pointing out the marginal reference of sexuality in historical writings on caste in colonial and late colonial India, as well as showing the peripheral treatment of caste analysis in histories of sexuality that focus on this period. A similar marginalisation of caste and sexuality is reflected in historical writings on colonial medicine and science. In this context, my work illuminates the centrality of caste and sexuality in colonial Marathis' negotiation of the modern.

In explaining this inextricable caste-sexuality nexus through analysing the sex-education literature, I have shown that Marathi sex reform was an upper-caste attempt to rearrange caste and sexuality relations. The sexual modernity discourse that developed in Maharashtra was a response to the late colonial Brahminical crisis over the domination of articulating social reforms. To prove this hypothesis, the initial two chapters provide background: The first situates sex reforms in the larger context of colonial and late colonial Marathi social-reformist discourse while revealing the Brahminical crisis over dominating reform talk. The second chapter demonstrated the proliferation of Marathi sex literature and argued that the discourse over sex reform manufactured a repressive hypothesis.

The next four chapters analyse three major discourses emerging from the deployment of scientific sexuality. Brahmacharya, the first among them, was a bio-moral mechanism of restructuring caste, worked out through the construction of upper-caste male sexual behaviour. The subsequent two chapters analyse discussions of marriage, through which sex reformers reconstructed the social making of marriage to re-establish the endo-caste nature of arranged marriages. Sexual discussions about successful and happy marriages constructed and reformed the conjugal behaviour of an ideal husband by standardising his understanding of the sexual body and by creating a Brahminical pedagogy of marriage consummation. The last chapter demonstrates that the upper-caste

husband was not simply idealised, but also made respectable through discussing obscenity and creating an obscene ‘Other’ in the lower-caste body and mind.

My arguments have evolved out of thinking about the marginality of caste and sexuality in the historical literature to date. Rather than being accidental, this marginality is related to historians’ political choices, reading of the archives, and decisions about the ‘subjectivity’ of sexual-knowledge politics and the analytical frames they apply to decode it. My work contributes to the history of caste and sexuality while engaging with these issues.

### **Reading Caste, Reading Sexuality**

This work has analysed Marathi sexual literature that claimed to be scientific. My search for these references occurred mostly outside of the colonial record rooms, delving into the caste-coded Marathi popular print networks. Beyond the availability of sources, the archival question most central to any historical writing is fundamentally about reading sources—and their absence. Anjali Arondekar, while researching archival references to sexuality, appeals to historians to read the politics of colonial records.<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Dirks, in reading colonial archives, demonstrates the ‘colonial modernity’ of caste.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, feminist scholarship has long emphasised feminist readings of the text. Considering these historical and archival concerns, my analysis of Marathi sex literature underlines the need for a caste-sexual reading of the sources. Sexual relations being the principal mode of reproducing caste in Hindu society, colonial or otherwise, textual references that express concern with either caste or sexuality are inseparably associated with the endogamous connection between the two. In addition, the distinct caste consciousness that emerged during the late colonial period came with its own ways of talking about caste and sex. Hence, working at the interface

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<sup>1</sup> Arondekar, *For the Record*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>2</sup> Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 63–227.

of Marathi caste consciousness and Marathi sex literature, my historical narrative has developed by reading the sources through a caste-sexual lens.

While this work is about analysing explicit expressions of sexual relations, it has also examined the implicitness of caste that was crucial to the making of the upper-caste-oriented sex-reform discourse. This implicitness was a distinct feature of the modern making of caste, and was connected to the emergence of politically conscious lower castes. It was related to the simultaneous rise of assertive anti-Brahminism. In decoding these implicit references in the Marathi sex reform discourse, I have used M.S.S. Pandian's argument about 'the other language of caste', or speaking caste by other means.<sup>3</sup>

However, implicit references to caste were not limited to upper-caste writers' indirect expressions. It was also associated with the materiality of caste. Caste is not just psychological; it is also material. The discrimination, distinctions, and hierarchy fundamental to the everyday functioning of the caste system were also worked out through the material uses of 'things'.<sup>4</sup> The chapter on brahmacharya, in particular, refers to regulations on the ideal brahmachari's everyday life. Shivananda's constructed brahmachari wore wooden footwear instead of leather, bathed in well water, stored the drinking water in copper pots, ate vegetarian food, and wore the sacred thread—all material markers of Brahminism and caste distinction that regulated his daily life. The relationship between everyday materiality and caste produced the 'other language of caste', beyond implicit expressions. This 'material language' was even used by those who talked about caste discrimination explicitly. The bio-morality of brahmacharya was thus materially related to the brahmachari's sacredness in body and mind while talking about his sexual behaviour. The material language

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<sup>3</sup> Pandian, 'One Step Outside Modernity', pp. 1735–37.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Hodges, 'Plastic History, Caste and the Government of Things in Modern India', in Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (eds.), *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Post-Colonial Orderings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

of caste was crucial to the making of Brahminism and foundational to the biopolitics of brahmacharya.

### **Interrogating Sex-Education Frames**

This work also contributes to interrogating the discursive reference frames of colonial sex-education debates. As mentioned in the introduction, my work does not generically address the colonialism/nationalism binary. Instead, while considering caste as the central contradiction in the narrative, I have analysed Marathi sex-education literature within a caste-gender-sexuality structure. To go beyond such binaries and establish the centrality of caste, examining the reference frames of sex-education literature was a requirement. In doing so, this work has interrogated two reference frames within which sexual modernity was written and discussed—reformism and sexual silence.

The first chapter unpacks the crisis of Brahminical governmentality while discussing the politics of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reformism. However, ‘reform’ was also a frame within which the Marathi sex-education discourse developed. Late colonial sex-reform discourse was not generic talk about women and caste-related questions, like the prevalent contemporary social-reform ideas. For sex educators, the overarching frame of reform was a medium to channel ‘modern’ sexual thought. It is also true that social reform rhetoric, irrespective of sex-education discussions, was present all over colonial India. That nineteenth-century Brahmins, early-twentieth-century anti-Brahmin activists, and the late colonial state all spoke the language of reform was not a coincidence. This rhetoric was a medium to restructure caste society under colonialism; moreover, it was the language of colonial modernity. The British Empire, not just in the colonies but even at home, spoke the language of reform in its journey towards democracy. Reform was fundamentally a language of the ruling structure—political or cultural. In both the colonial bureaucratic state and the caste system, reform rhetoric was the medium through which governmentalities were exercised. As this work has demonstrated, the late colonial Brahminical governmentality crisis was related to the loss of Brahmin

dominance over articulating reforms. Governance of sex reform was an attempt to resolve this crisis. At the same time, talking in the frame of reform was a compulsion of the modernity to which sex educators aspired. My examination of sex-education literature, hence, is an attempt to interrogate the frame of reform through which caste and sexuality was governed.

If reform was a generic operational structure for Marathi sex educators, sexual silence and repression was a specific frame they used in developing the sexual modernity argument. Breaking sexual silence, for them, meant overcoming backwardness—and hence was the marker of modernity. South Asian scholars working on sexuality have interpreted the modernist frame of sexual silence in various ways.<sup>5</sup> At the level of popular writing, however, including all sex-education-related texts in colonial as well as contemporary times, sexual silence has remained an unquestioned reality. English-language works, Marathi academic writing, and popular biographical writings on Marathi sex educators have all played crucial roles in making and remaking this modernist sexual-silence frame in contemporary Maharashtra.

This is not to say that repressive sexual silence was a myth. In fact, even this writing, in a sense, is a product of the efforts to break the silence over sexual-knowledge politics. However, my work demonstrates that, beyond repressive realities, ‘sexual silence’ was also a politically constructed argument, even as it was also a part of late colonial Marathi cultural politics. The ‘sexual science’ literature in Maharashtra was predominantly written by Brahmin men. Despite conflicting in other ways, these sex educators articulated sexual silence in almost the same manner. This was not a coincidence. My work has proved that late colonial Marathi sex reform was an upper-caste project. In this project, if sexual science was perceived as iconoclastic for breaking silence, *articulating* the sexual silence it was breaking was an existential requirement for sexual science to justify

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<sup>5</sup> Mary John and Janaki Nair (eds.), *A Question of Silence: The Sexual Economics of Modern India* (London: Zed Books, 2000), p. 1; Gupta, *Sexuality Obscenity, Community*, pp. 2–3.

itself. The late colonial proliferation of sexual literature claiming to be scientific, its Brahmin male authorship, and the unanimous rhetoric of sexual silence were politically connected facts. Rhetoric about sexual silence was part of deciding the primacy of social problems to resolve—while simultaneously constructing them. The caste-shaped understanding and making of so-called sexual science, explained in chapters 2 through 6, sheds light on the political nature of the sexual-silence frame and its relation to sexual science. In fact, the ‘dominant-caste’-authored Marathi sex-education literature was an epistemic junction at which both sexual silence and sexual science were made into popular rhetoric to create its modern subject: the upper-caste man.

### **The Caste-Sexual Subject**

While analysing the Marathi discourse on brahmacharya, marriage, and obscenity, this work makes a major contribution to the question of assigning subjectivity to modernist sexual-knowledge politics. Who were the makers of colonial sexual-knowledge politics? Answering this question means not just knowing authorship but understanding the political agency of this knowledge creation, along with the political role it played. South Asian scholarship, as chapter 3 shows, has mostly discussed the brahmacharya constructions of eminent colonial personalities while making it an ‘Indian’ cultural phenomenon. This analytics of ‘Indian’ brahmacharya undermined the political role of caste in making the brahmachari into a sexual subject. Similarly, Indian histories that discuss colonial obscenity, as chapter 5 explains, are mostly about examining the domination-subordination relations regulated through the purifying missions initiated by elite men. Caste, in such histories, is one obscenity-related issue for their binary understandings of subaltern and elite. The colonised elite male, in such analyses, was outside obscenity in terms of its production, and so was his caste. While scholars have answered questions about ‘who’ and ‘what’ was obscene, obscenity’s ‘caste-sexual core’ and its elite makers have remained unanalysed.

On the other hand, in feminist histories of colonial marriage and conjugality, the main subject categories have been child wife, widow, concubine, and companionate wife, rather than the colonised Indian man and his caste-sexual identity. A caste-identified man does appear in works theorising Dalit and Brahminical patriarchies, but as context and in the role of controlling women's sexuality. Even colonial histories of reproduction remain confined to middle-class subjectivity, except for Hodges's and Anandhi's caste analyses of the Tamil birth-control movement.<sup>6</sup>

Against this background, my work understands Marathi sex-education discussions as an upper-caste male project. While Marathi Brahmins were the creators of this project, the upper-caste Brahminical man was the subject of their sex-reform agenda. I have demonstrated that brahmacharya, marriage, and obscenity were not independent and autonomous discussions emerging from the Marathi sex-education literature. Rather, this sequential discourse was a trajectory of making modern Brahminical respectability. The subject of such made sexual-knowledge politics emerged from the late colonial Brahminical crisis. This crisis was connected to the loss of Brahminical control over defining reforms when non-Brahmins, Dalits and women started defining their own reformist agendas in representational language. However, the language of reform became a means for non-Brahmins to gain political power and a medium to criticise Brahminism; for Brahmins, who had traditionally claimed social leadership, it meant the loss of a privileged upper-caste position. At the same time, the late colonial anti-Brahmin language of reform came as an attack on Brahminical domination; it challenged the supremacy of Brahmins in the textual, ritual, and public spheres while unsettling the foundations of endogamy. My work has underlined this crisis as the root cause of the language of sex reform. Reforming, restructuring, and reproducing caste endogamy with the language of

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<sup>6</sup> Hodges, *Contraception, Colonialism and Commerce*, pp. 77–103; Anandhi, 'Reproductive Bodies', pp. 139–56.

science and sexual science was foundational to the Brahminical sex-education agenda. It was a matter of remaking the Brahminical male self. This included making brahmacharya and the brahmachari into a prime social concern, along with making marriage endo-caste, eugenic, and reproductive. Equally, it was about Sanskritising the husband's understanding of anatomy and marriage consummation and constructing a lower-caste obscene. Discussing brahmacharya, marriage, and obscenity was a project designed to construct the upper-caste male subject of Marathi sexual-knowledge politics and make him respectable.

For this upper-caste Brahminical subject, the rhetoric of science, and particularly that of sexual science, was the new language of reform. Science was never a caste-free domain in India. In fact, the availability and accessibility of 'scientific' knowledge was related to caste realities. The manufacture of scientific knowledge was another caste-shaped concern. The production dynamics of Marathi sexual-science literature, analysed in chapter 2, shed light on the affordability, availability, and manufacturing of this scientific knowledge.

With this 'scientific' rhetoric, the 'sexual body' was the cornerstone of the Marathi project of endogamous respectability. Social histories of colonial medicine and science have emphasised the political making of the colonial Indian body.<sup>7</sup> Understanding the body as Indian or colonial is a political choice of the historian and has its own relevance in unpacking the dimensions of colonialism and nationalism. However, such categorisations are less helpful in understanding the Brahminical politics of corporeality. In a hierarchical social system where bodies were understood as touchable, untouchable, standard, representable, useful or obscene, the category of 'Indian body' is not sufficient for understanding corporeality-based biopolitics. Moreover, such an understanding also plays its own politics, making invisible the discriminatory cultural and social meanings allotted to the body.

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<sup>7</sup> Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*; Prakash, *Another Reason*, pp. 123–27.



My analysis of Marathi sexual anatomy, brahmacharya, and marriage consummation pedagogy has thus examined caste-shaped body politics. If bodies were made Sanskrit and sacred in disseminating sexual anatomy, they were made dirty in associating lower castes with unclean living. Shivananda saw certain lower castes not following menstruation-related purity conventions as ‘ugly practices’; Karve saw the lower-caste prostitute only as a female sexual body useful to men in contemporary society, while making her the ‘Other’ of his imagined ideal, free, nude society. This was not just a matter of understanding certain caste bodies as the ‘Other’: it was about defining and disseminating ideas of sexual desire, purity, and pollution that were understood in caste language, as well as in the ‘other language of caste’.

Whether in Shivananda’s *Dampatya Rahasya*, Karve’s *Adhunik Kamashastra* and *Samajswasthya*, or Phadke’s eugenics, talking about sex was a matter of projecting sexual reform as the ‘real’ reform. In unpacking sexual secrets, rewriting *kama* (sex) as *shastra* (science), and making eugenics, Marathi sex reform was about searching for a reproductive sexual truth for the upper-caste man, either through contraception or sexual self-control. This truth was rooted in caste-coded sexual corporeality. Understanding the sexual body was shaped by caste concerns, and redefining and remaking it for the modern Marathi man was an activity of redefining caste. Further, since the ‘sexual body’ was the corporeal language of caste, searching for and disseminating sexual truth was the pedagogic *body language* of caste. This search was a product of the late colonial Brahminical crisis. Sexual truth, like all other truths, relied on the binary existence of itself and the ‘Other’. The upper-caste Brahminical man was its subject (self), whereas the (directly and indirectly discussed) lower castes were its ‘Other’. Shivananda’s denigrating references to the Shudras, Karve’s male chauvinist remarks on Mahar conjugality reforms, and Phadke’s mention of the criminally stamped Berad tribe as unfit for eugenics exemplify this Otherness.

Sexual reform as real reform was the Brahminical resolution to Brahminism’s late colonial crisis. Understanding this redefined, caste-coded sexual corporeality as truth was core to Marathi sex educators’ idea of real

reform. Consequently, caste was the reformed sexual truth. Caste-sexual histories are therefore required to unpack the manufactured truth popularly known as sexual modernity.

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