



Under the Raj: Prostitution in Colonial Bengal

By Sumanta Banerjee

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Like other pre-colonial socio-economic formations, the profession of prostitution underwent a dramatic change in Bengal soon after the British take-over. **Under the Raj** explores the world of the prostitute in nineteenth century Bengal. It traces how, from the peripheries of pre-colonial Bengali rural society, they came to dominate the center-stage in Calcutta, the capital of British India--thanks to the emergence of a new clientele brought forth by the colonial order.

Sumanta Banerjee examines the policies the British administration implemented to revamp the profession to suit its needs, as well as to screen its practitioners in a bid to protect its minions in the army from venereal diseases. He also analyzes the class structure within the prostitute community in nineteenth century Bengal, its complex relationship with the Bengali **bhadralok** society--and, what is more important and fascinating for modern researchers in popular culture--the voices of the prostitutes themselves, which we hear from their songs, letters, and writings, collected and reproduced from both oral tradition and printed sources.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

SUMANTA BANERJEE is best known for **The Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising** and **The Thema Book of Naxalite Poetry** as well as his milestone study, **The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in 19th Century Calcutta**. He is currently based in New Delhi, doing research on the popular culture and religion of Bengal.

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