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# GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



## Passages to India

Edited by  
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abstracts (October 1),

completed papers (January 1)

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abstracts (January 1),

completed papers (April 1)

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abstracts (May 1),

completed papers (August 1)

Winter Issue:

abstracts (July 1),

completed papers (October 1)

## About

*Gender forum* is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

## Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to [gender-forum@uni-koeln.de](mailto:gender-forum@uni-koeln.de).

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

## Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

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There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

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## Editorial

1 “Passages to India. Literary and Socio-Political Perspectives on Gender Concepts in India” is dedicated to the investigation of the country's prevailing gender concepts and gender politics. India is a country which appears to have a rather distinct history and agenda in this regard, particularly compared to Western feminist theories, concerns and histories. The articles assembled in this issue of Gender Forum offer insights into the status quo of feminist concerns in India and approach this topic from a variety of angles, including analyses of literary representations, religious discourses and socio-political developments, to medical-juridical concerns.

2 As Rita Banerji in her contribution “Why Kali won’t rage. A Critique of Indian Feminism” states: “Two unique factors distinguish Indian feminism from the feminism in the west. One, it rejects the notion of a deep-rooted, tradition-fed gender hierarchy in India, defined, dominated and exploited by men. Secondly – it does not ascribe the abysmal state of women in India to longstanding patriarchal oppression, and hence sees no reason to rage against it. While to western feminists, these factors might seem oddly perplexing, there is within Indian feminism a rationalization of these outlooks.” In the article Banerji therefore explores the necessity and the means to readdress the deep rooted gender bias within this culture.

3 The essay “Racialised Boundaries. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and Alice Walker's “In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens” by Parminder Bakshi-Hamm investigates gendered and racial implications of the metaphor of the garden as presented in the two well-known literary works. She argues that in Hodgson’s novel “the garden is not a neutral, ahistorical, timeless idyll but culturally defined, and insofar it is deliberately distanced from India and everything that India is intended to denote in the novel. The garden is created as an exclusive space, signifying whiteness.” In juxtaposition with Alice Walker’s narrative the article shows the different but at the same time complementary engagement of both authors with this trope and its racial and gender implications.

4 Julia Hoydis’ contribution “A Palace of Her Own: Feminine Identity in the Great Indian Story” provides a gender-theoretical analysis of *The Palace of Illusions*, a retelling of *Mahabharata*, an ancient epic that has maintained the status as culturally foundational text also in terms of shaping Indian gender and social norms ever since. *The Palace of Illusion*, Hoydis argues, “retells the epic from the point of view of one of its heroines, Draupadi, thus

reclaiming female agency in the famous tale of war between two families, hyper-masculine heroes and their devoted wives. The text [...]displays the struggle for identity in a mythological context, which is distinctly Indian, yet transcends cultural borders, all the while showing the illusionary nature of those imposed by history and gender.”

5 In “Sociology of Female Foeticide and Infanticide. Where does the Law Stand?” Bir Pal Singh offers another lens through which the gender bias and patriarchal structures in India become apparent. By taking into account religious beliefs, society’s systematic ordering of social relationships and India’s law system, the article argues that in India “the mentality and attitudinal problem at the level of society are directly responsible for [...]violence, rape, foeticide, infanticide, marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, cultural imperialism and a traditional notion of polyandrous marriages to women of our contemporary society.” Although from a different angle, the concluding contribution of this issue also deals with current notions of parenthood and maternity, a review of Lisa Baraitser’s *Maternal Encounters. The Ethics of Interruption*.