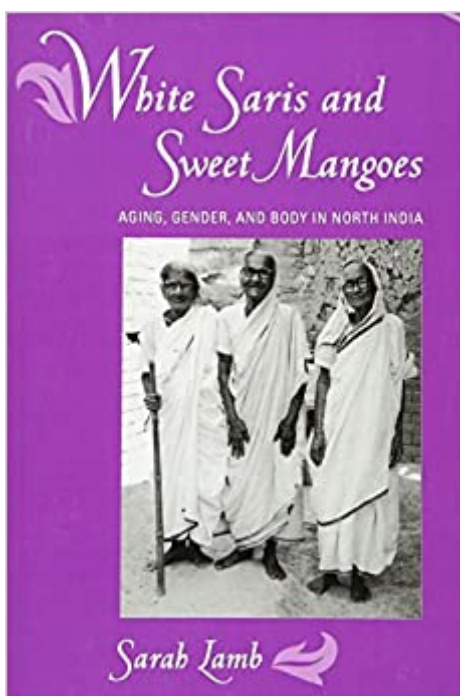


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White Saris And Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, And Body In North India



Synopsis

This rich ethnography explores beliefs and practices surrounding aging in a rural Bengali village. Sarah Lamb focuses on how villagers' visions of aging are tied to the making and unmaking of gendered selves and social relations over a lifetime. Lamb uses a focus on age as a means not only to open up new ways of thinking about South Asian social life, but also to contribute to contemporary theories of gender, the body, and culture, which have been hampered, the book argues, by a static focus on youth. Lamb's own experiences in the village are an integral part of her book and ably convey the cultural particularities of rural Bengali life and Bengali notions of modernity. In exploring ideals of family life and the intricate interrelationships between and within generations, she enables us to understand how people in the village construct, and deconstruct, their lives. At the same time her study extends beyond India to contemporary attitudes about aging in the United States. This accessible and engaging book is about deeply human issues and will appeal not only to specialists in South Asian culture, but to anyone interested in families, aging, gender, religion, and the body.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This richly detailed ethnography describes ideas about aging, gender, and body in a Bengali village in North India."-"Choice

Sarah Lamb is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brandeis University.

I am using this for a class on ethnography and I really only skimmed it before ordering it for the course. I am very impressed by the depth and breadth of the author's knowledge and the resonance it has with our own issues concerning aging in North America and beyond. As an anthropologist who has worked in India I also found it to be a vivid trip back to a much-loved land.

I hated the book itself but the purchase was legitimate, relatively fast, and in good condition.

This book not only provides a fascinating, rich account of the ways people in West Bengal, India experience aging, but it really makes one think in new ways about the kinds of assumptions permeating aging and dying, family and gender, in our own society (North America). The author, an anthropologist, has spent several years in India. The stories she tells of her own experiences there are some of the most engaging in the book. Particular individuals come alive as well, such as Khudi Thakrun, the oldest woman in the village (at 97 years), who doesn't yet want to relinquish life and the wonderful attachments and pleasures derived from eating sweet mangoes, wandering the village to spread news, and loaning out money to increase her wealth. The book centers on village life but includes as well interesting accounts of old age homes in Calcutta and Indian popular cultural representations of old age. It complements well Lawrence Cohen's NO AGING IN INDIA. This book focuses more on experience, everyday life, and gender.

Ms. Lamb has produced a sensitive look into aging in a particular society, but in the process has touched on people of all ages. In observing the people of India I am able to compare to our value system and to touch values of real significance in living. Ms Lamb writes as an anthropologist and pictures real people dealing with adversity and demonstrating positive outlooks. I found the book uplifting and I look forward to more from Ms. Lamb.

It has been several years since I read this book by Sarah Lamb. The characters are still alive in my memory, and I would like Ms Lamb to return to India to update the lives she described. She is an Anthropologist writing with warmth, who creates a lasting impression.

Useless book.

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