

The Security State and Securitizing Patriarchies in Postcolonial India

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine the shifting nature of patriarchy and gender among Sikhs in Indian Punjab through the 1980s and into the 1990s in relation to the Indian state's counterinsurgent policies and practices. Our research reveals that Sikh masculinities were altered during its separatist insurgency as the patriarchal state and communities both relied on violence for their own ends. Specifically, we argue that the regimes of precolonial and colonial militarism, which constructed hegemonic notions of Sikh masculinity in service to the colonial and postcolonial state, were altered in this period, and that a dominant caste-based warrior masculinity came to be fractured to include a more securitized version. We see the targeting of Sikhs as part of a broader process of postcolonial nation-making through militarism and security that alters the nature of its patriarchy. We draw from interviews and fieldwork in Punjab, textual analysis of primary sources, human rights reports, and news articles to reveal the complex and changing intersections of culture, state, and religion that alter and recuperate state and community patriarchy and masculinity.¹

Keywords: Counterinsurgency, Reform Movements, Masculinities, Colonialism