

Family History as Mother Line Herr's-Stories in Daughters: A Story of Five Generations

Dr. Sucharita Sarkar

Associate Professor, Dept. of English, D.T.S.S College of Commerce, Mumbai, (M.S.) India

Abstract

This paper studies the historically situated resistances in Bharati Ray's memoir *Daughters: A Story of Five Generations*. This is a feminist memoir documenting the lives of her maternal female ancestors (great-grandmother Sundar-Ma, grandmother Didi-Ma, mother Kalyani), herself and elder daughter Isha. It is intended as a counter-narrative to patrilineal family histories. Ray's multi-generational memoir is a Mother line legacy that re-visions, centralizes and affirms ordinary female experiences, resisting their trivialization. She also resists the mother/daughter binary by imbricating these identities in her memoir where each daughter is also a mother. Whereas the resistances of Ray's foremothers are sporadic and limited, Ray and her daughter, equipped with feminist education, can challenge patriarchal norms in more sustained ways. The paper also locates Ray's memoir in an emerging tradition of Indian feminist Mother line projects.

Key Words: Bengali, family, feminist, history, memoir, Mother line

In *Daughters: A Story of Five Generations* (originally published in Bengali as *Ekaal Sekaal* in 2008; trans. in 2011), mother-daughter relationships, family and social history are examined through the multi-generational, matrilineal memoir format by feminist historian Bharati Ray. Ray undertakes the writing of this memoir as a conscious feminist Motherline project of recording and recuperating the stories of five generations women from her mother's side of the family—her great-grandmother Sundar-Ma (her mother's grandmother), her grandmother Didi-Ma (her mother's mother), her mother Kalyani, herself and her elder daughter Isha, whom she calls Khuku. The concept of the Motherline has been theorized by Jungian feminist Naomi Lowinsky as “stories of life cycles that link generations of women” and she posits that searching for the Motherline entails a “journey back to her female roots” by

engaging with ancestors; thus, implicitly coupling gender and history (Lowinsky 1; 13).

One of Ray's declared intentions in writing this project is to highlight the rapid social change in the lives of Indian, specifically Bengali, women, from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century to the present day. As a historian researching women's histories, Ray emphasizes in the prefatory section, titled “Before I Begin,” the importance of writing, documenting and disseminating the life experiences of “ordinary women,” so that “future generations know about them” and, equipped with this knowledge, will be able to “measure their own actions,” “make progress” and “work for change” (Ray xv). Ray's declared intention of using the personal memoir as an entry point for investigating social history as well as a tool for social change is also aligned with second wave feminist strategies that

transform the personal into the political. The politicizing of the personal also includes the historicizing of memory. Smith and Watson explain memory as a “social, collective and intersubjective.... means of passing on” from one subject to another, of “sharing a social past that may have been obscured, in order to activate its potential for reshaping a future of and for other subjects” (Smith and Watson 19-20). This potential of memory, not only as a repository of the past, but also as a shaper of the future, is what Ray seeks to realize in this memoir.

One of the most significant areas of feminist scholarship has been in investigating the private sphere to which women have been confined, and feminist activism has focused on dismantling this public/private divide for women. Ray’s feminist politics is evidenced in her chapter plan: the sections on each woman are divided into chapters that move not only chronologically through their lives, but also from the private world to the public. Each subject is thus situated in a historical and social location, and their agency and autonomy are assessed in the context of their situated positions. For instance, in the first section on Sundar-ma, Ray moves from “Sundar-ma’s Childhood and Marriage” to “New Delhi: Sundar-ma’s Household” to “Sundar-ma’s family,” “The Larger Family” and finally to “Beyond the Family.” This structure is repeated in all the other sections, except for the final one on “Khuku,” her daughter. In this short chapter, Ray has strategically avoided the indoors-to-outdoors structure because the chapter expresses a feminist hope that public/private boundaries have been largely erased and that “the home and the outside world are fusing together” (Ray

315). In this concluding section, Ray summarizes the trajectory of her Motherline by comparing the social contexts in which each woman is situated.

She writes that while Sundar-ma and Didi-ma were “self-taught within the confines of their homes,” Ray’s mother was formally and “highly educated,” although “restricted to girls’ schools and colleges,” and in spite of this education, it “never occurred to her to earn her own living” (Ray 311). Ray’s post-Independence generation of the 1950s was the first to exercise their own agency through paid employment outside the home, and Ray marks this as a “major modification” made possible by “co-education”: “Walking side by side with men was a consciousness-raising experience; it enabled us to raise our sights and increase our self-confidence” (Ray 312). The private, sporadic resistances of her foremothers changed to more aware, open and sustained challenges against male hierarchies and dominations. Ray celebrates the “tremendous transformations” that have enabled her daughters—the “fifth generation” of her Motherline—to make their own choices regarding career, marriage and motherhood, without the coercion of parental or cultural expectations, inhabiting transnational spaces and “ignoring differences of race, religion, nationality” in ways that were not possible earlier (Ray 313). In this way, Ray’s memoir becomes a chronicle, not just of her own personal Motherline, but also of a social history of women’s progress, where gradually, increasing access to education and opportunities for employment have enabled women to make freer choices about their own lives and work.

As a historian and as the founder of the Women's Studies Research Centre at the University of Calcutta, Ray is very aware of the role of education in the emancipation of women. While narrating how Sundar-ma received "some basic education" at home before she was married off, Ray situates this narration in the historical framework of late nineteenth century middle-class Bengal, when "education for women was not yet the norm" (Ray 17). Ray points out Sundar-ma's ordinariness in comparison to the pioneering women graduates of her time, but she explicitly blames Sundar-ma's father, who was an educated, progressive, affluent doctor, for failing to "rise above the social mores of his time" and denying educational opportunities to his daughters (Ray 18). The rule of the father in patriarchal Bengali middle-class families, and the blatant son-preference, discriminated against and denied most women formal education, and education for women was a dynamic but gradual process of change.

Sundar-ma's resistance to the restrictive social mores was enacted privately, "she sat in her room and studied in secret whenever she could," in spite of violent abuse from her mother-in-law whenever she got caught in the act of reading (her mother-in-law subscribed to the belief that women who read too much would become widows) (Ray 20). In the intergenerational, intrafamilial struggle for women's rights, it is not always men who subordinate women, but also women themselves act as agents of oppression. Sundar-ma's mother-in-law internalized and reproduced the prevailing, traditionalist, patriarchal norms that considered women unfit for education

and imposed these norms on her young daughter-in-law.

In spite of being denied education through gendered social constraints, Sundar-ma exercised her agency through her secretive but sustained practice of reading, which was an act of subversion as well as empowerment. Sundar-ma's self-making through her reading changed and expanded from covert to overt acts after she moved to New Delhi with her husband. Ray recalls how Sundar-ma's efficient daily routine (along with a position of class privilege that afforded her a retinue of house helps, gardeners, cooks, drivers and gatekeepers) enabled her to perform multiple roles seamlessly: supervising a very large, extended, multi-generational family, actively looking after the welfare of all those dependent on the family, and yet creating her own space and time when she would read, write and spin the *charkha* in private. Sundar-ma's self-education and desire for knowledge extended beyond reading. She self-learnt Sanskrit and translated Sanskrit texts like the Bhagavad Gita into verse. She wrote two volumes of poetry; Ray attests that her writing was "of a high standard": Sundar-ma also wrote diaries "filled with the joys and sorrows of her daily life; about her home, society and political activities around her" (Ray 53). Although her education was informal and home-centered, Sundar-ma applied her learning and her intellect to matters outside the boundaries of home.

Inspired by Gandhi's swadeshi movement, Sundar-ma actively contributed to the freedom struggle. Ray writes that Sundar-ma was in Bengal during the tumultuous period of the 1905 Partition. This was the time when growing numbers of ordinary middle-class women stepped out of their

domestic thresholds to participate in the freedom struggle. Radha Kumar writes that “The 1905-08 Swadeshi movement in Bengal reflects the beginning of women’s participation in nationalist activities on a larger scale” (Kumar 41). Sundar-ma would spin cotton on her *charkha*, make and sell hand-made dolls and clothes and “peddle them on the streets” with her daughter-in-law, donating the proceeds, as well as her ornaments, to the Congress fund: “it was her way of serving the national cause” (Ray 51). Ray, as a feminist historian, has researched extensively on women’s rights movements in India, and she remarks how “the Indian women’s movement is closely linked with the nationalist movement” (Ray 51). Ray records that though Sundar-ma did not join active politics, she constituted the “New Delhi Mahila Samiti with women and girls in her locality,” where she encouraged members to read, discuss current affairs, learn to prepare and sell handicrafts that could earn them some money which would often be distributed among “the poorer women” (Ray 52). Thus, Sundar-ma’s resistance against political structures of colonial subjugation was much more direct and public than her secretive defiance of Brahminical familial strictures. However, this resistance was not radical but more in conformity of the prevailing trends of those times, as the 1920s “were a watershed for women’s participation in the Congress-led nationalist movement in India” (Bjorkert-Thapar 54). Ray suggests—and this fact is corroborated by other historians—that the participation of women in the nationalist struggle was a direct response to Gandhi’s leadership and his “special appeal to women” (Ray 50; Thapar-Bjorkert 54). The leaders of the nationalist movement legitimized the

participation of women in the public sphere in the cause of the nation. The women’s organizations, like the one Sundar-ma established, functioned as a kind of “extended female space” which was intermediate between the domestic and the public world: the women of this extended middle space, like Sundar-ma, were usually not very educated, “unlike those from the female intelligentsia,” like Sarojini Naidu (Thapar-Bjorkert 46). By extending the female space, the nationalist ideology, therefore, restricted the role of women like Sundar-ma into socially approved limits of participation, voice and agency.

Although Sundar-ma was neither silent nor compliant, her articulation and resistance were mostly unacknowledged by her family members, including her husband. Ray’s grandmother, Didi-ma (Ushabala), was Sundar-ma’s eldest daughter and she largely replicates the template of her mother’s life. “Ushabala was just given a basic education at home and married off when still a child” (Ray 59). Like her mother, Didi-ma created a daily time and space for herself to read, “for three hours in the afternoon;” like her mother, Didi-ma had “her own private world” of writing her “diary, short stories, essays and belles-lettres” (Ray 77). For her, too, reading/writing is a private, self-chosen site of resistance and identity-making. Ray writes that “following her mother’s example,” Didi-ma “put together a women’s association in Berhampore,” persuading the conservative women in that small district town to join and read newspapers, spin khadi, make and sell handicrafts and give the proceeds to other needy women (Ray 106). Ushabala’s self-making is shaped largely by the agentic

choices her mother made, although Ray does not explicate on the relation between the two.

Yet Didi-ma's emotional history is different from Sundar-ma's. Whereas Sundar-ma's diary entries reveal a distance from and an emotional disconnect with her husband, Didi-ma's diary entries spoke of "the rapture of our love"—a feeling shared by her husband, Prof. Jyotish Dasgupta—even in her middle age (Ray 63). Didi-ma considered mothering, cooking and carework meaningful activities and performed her designated domestic role with a sense of satisfaction and affective joy. Her husband's deep love anchored her at the centre of her home, and this home became the site of her self-fashioning. As Gulati and Bagchi comment, previous generations of women (like Didi-ma) often "found personal space under the bushel of domesticity," and the role of the homemaker gave them "distinctive and centered identities that made their lives meaningful" (Gulati and Bagchi 11).

Despite the expressive and continuing fulfillment that Didi-ma found within the walls of her home, Ray remembers her Didi-ma's joy at stepping out of her home. Didi-ma would say, "This is so liberating. Oh, the joy of stepping into a world outside the home! To be able to open your doors wide!" (Ray 106). This sense of assertive jubilation in crossing the threshold is different from the sense of duty that Sundar-ma felt when she stepped out. Sundar-ma was serving the cause of national liberation, Didi-ma was serving the cause of self-emancipation, although she had restricted access. The generational difference is also highlighted in the other two pastimes that Didi-ma enjoyed: bathing in the river (with her husband or

women-friends) and playing bridge (again, with her husband or his friends). By performing these leisure activities Didi-ma constructs a subjectivity that moves away from the template of the submissive, sacrificing mother. One point of difference is that while Sundar-ma's self-making is more covert and within the private space of her attic where she retired to read or spin *khadi* (secluded even from her husband), Didi-ma's self-making (except for her writing) is more open, shared and encouraged by her husband. The other difference is that Didi-ma and her husband had done their best to educate all five of their children, unlike the discrimination that she herself had faced as a girl in her natal family (her father, especially, even objected to her reading habit). This arc of progress indicates the changing conditions of girls and women in middle-class Indian families: Ray's mother, unlike her grandmother and great-grandmother, grew up in a middle-class society where it was the becoming the norm, rather than the exception, for girls to receive formal education in schools and colleges, and this has been possible because of the changing attitudes of both the women and the men who are in decision-making positions in the patriarchal family structure.

Ray's mother, Kalyani (born in 1915), was sent to Sundar-ma's house in Delhi by her parents to enable her to "pursue her studies," marking a clear shift from the preceding generations (Ray 117). Yet, even for her, education continued to be a gendered and restricted experience. Although she "came first among girls in her matriculation examination under Delhi University," she was not allowed to study medicine by Sundar-ma, although she wanted to: "not obstinate enough to

disobey her grandmother,” Kalyani took up Mathematics and Economics in college, and, in the middle of her college education, “obeyed her father” and got married to Jyotish Das Gupta, a high-ranked civil servant (Ray 118). Ray is critical of her mother’s lack of ‘obstinacy’ and defiance. The married and pregnant Kalyani came first in her B.A. finals, but, deeply in love with her husband and immersed in her role as a housewife and a new mother, she “gave up sports and studies—the two fields that she had excelled in” (Ray 123). Ray is frankly disapproving of her mother for “erasing one’s self completely in order to meld with one’s husband” and discontinuing her studies; and although she fixes blame on both her “conservative father” and “loving mother”, her accusation is directed at Kalyani, “Why did you make such a mistake, Ma?” (Ray 122-123). This accusatory tone reveals a fraught mother-daughter relationship and a degree of ambivalence towards the mother. Historical records document how progressive policy-makers for women’s education during the early decades of the twentieth century focused more on “producing educated wives and mothers” than on “women doctors, professors, and lawyers” (Forbes 80). Middle-class Bengali women were culturally expected to become educated within the boundaries of their regulated gender roles.

Like Ray’s great-grandmother and grandmother, however, Ray’s mother also resisted these cultural expectations and found her own space for self-making in her own way. For her, the afternoon was a time for stitching, “pillowcases, quilt-covers, dusters, napkins and tablecloths, she even made our dresses, pennies and

bloomers” (Ray 128). Within the limits of the domestic and the routine, she found opportunities to be creative. Ray’s mother’s fondness for the outdoors—she was a keen badminton player and loved going on holidays in the mountains, and she also accompanied her husband on his work-tours—indicates the gradually expanding horizons for Indian women as the strict divisions between private and public spaces began to wither away after Independence. Kalyani performed her “assigned domestic role” dutifully but “without excessive love” (like Sundar-ma), what “truly appealed to her was the outside world” (Ray 152). In her own way, through her preference for the outdoors and through her quiet disaffection for domesticity, Kalyani subverted the expectations of good wifedom and motherhood. Another, more direct subversion of her assigned domestic role was her continuing and committed participation in the All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) (Ray 170). Like her foremothers, Kalyani found deep satisfaction and purpose in working for women’s development and helping indigent women. This is a maternal genealogical legacy of service to women’s causes that she inherited and then passed on to her daughter as well.

Ray is conscious of a “certain underlying tension at the root of the relationship” between herself and her mother: only on three occasions is this tension erased by a “mutual dependence and a sense of trust that overwhelmed,” twice when Ray stayed with her mother after giving birth to her daughters, and the last time when Kalyani was on her “final sickbed” (Ray 177). In order to write and record her Motherline, Ray has to overcome her

matrophobia and engage intersubjectively with her mother. It is only during certain specific periods of “mutual dependence” that Ray is able to experience intersubjectivity in relation to her mother. Lowinsky writes that “Motherline stories are filled with sense of future held in the seeds of the past” (Lowinsky 41). The Indian custom of mothers going to their natal homes during and after giving birth enables the past, present and future generations to engage with each other at a time of heightened affect, trauma and need in mutually supportive and intersubjective ways.

Ray experiences another kind of difficulty when she attempts to write about herself: “To write about oneself is far more difficult than writing about others. When the subject is someone else, it is easier to use judgment to select or reject facts But when the subject is the self, then ego stands in the way” (Ray 183). Ray’s insistence on the insignificance of her life-experiences is an articulation of resistance to the male canonical tradition of autobiography writing, which valorizes the ego and the autonomous self. Instead of this, Ray situates herself and the other women protagonists within a wide network of relations, often digressing into descriptions of events and people who are distantly related to or acquainted with them, creating a spatially and temporally extended relational context to embed and enplace her foremothers, daughters and herself.

The vast grid of relations that shaped her childhood included her younger sister, Tapati, her paternal grandmother, Thakurma, whom she loved dearly, her father and many others. In the section on “Formal Education,” Ray refers to the many women

teachers, including her mother, who taught her and influenced her academic development and the academic choices she made. For instance, she was so inspired by the teaching of Suprabha Dasgupta, whom she called Mini-di, that when she heard that Mini-di had become headmistress of a new school in Jalpaiguri district of Bengal, Ray packed her belongings, “sent a telegram off to Baba and boarded a train to Jalpaiguri,” and she terms this “one of the best decisions I had ever made” (Ray 205-206). Contextualized against the India of the late 1940s, this was a sovereign expression of agency rare amongst girls. Ray’s radical and bold actions were matched by her pioneering academic performances, she was ranked amongst the first ten among boys and girls in both her matriculation and intermediate examinations (Ray 210).

When Ray is forced to give up her ambitions for a profession in the Indian Administrative Service because her husband, Sukhendu, did not want her to have a transferable job, she bargains that she would agree on one “condition,” that nobody should ask her to quit when she finds a job in Calcutta (Ray 224). Living in the huge joint family of thirty-four members and two kitchens, Ray acknowledges the predicament of a working wife in a joint family, which meant that often “one’s desires and one’s personality are curtailed,” but in return, “what one receives is beyond all calculation” (Ray 235). Ray’s work-family balance was precarious, informed by a sense of guilt, and contingent on the support network of her mother-in-law, Shasuri-ma and her sister-in-law, Aparna, who performed the major part of the household labour. Motherhood, however,

further problematized Ray's work-family balance. Her mother-in-law increasingly pressured her to opt out of her career, but Ray resisted, invoking the sanctity of the "condition" she had negotiated prior to her marriage. But, when she had an opportunity to do her Ph.D. at Oxford University after the birth of her first daughter, Isha, Ray's determination to go abroad for three years was countered by both her own mother and her mother-in-law. Although always resistant, always self-determining, in this instance Ray "set aside my own wish and took my mother's advice" (Ray 234). This compliance is a negotiation between autonomy and relationality in which relationality is embraced for conflict resolution.

Ray similarly negotiates the challenges of work-family balance after she and her husband move out of the joint family to shift into a nuclear set-up. Valorizing the wisdom and experience of foremothers, Ray requested her mother-in-law to visit her daily from 2.30 p.m. to 7 p.m., enabling Ray to focus on her career while Shasuri-ma supervised the nurturing of her daughters and the house work (Ray 236). This arrangement suited Ray because "home management was never central" to her life and she was "always attracted to the working world outside" (Ray 249). Here, she directly contests the normative gender roles that restricted women of previous generations to the domestic world. In her challenge to patriarchy, Ray is assisted not by her husband (although he does not overtly subjugate her decision-making after marriage), but by the women in her family who were proud of her being "the first working wife" in their midst (Ray 312). Ray acknowledges the support of her mother-in-law in her doctoral

research: "Shasuri-ma had stopped me from going to Oxford but now she held out a helping hand" by looking after Ray's three children during her research activities (Ray 255). Thus, developing the female networks within her family strengthened Ray's commitment to her career and empowered her to achieve a long-lasting work-family balance.

Ray's professional life, beginning with a teaching career in the all-girls' Bethune College, is enriched and supported by similar networks of collegiality and mentorship with women colleagues and students. She writes: "The students of Bethune College won my heart and so did my colleagues.... Who but women can appreciate the problems any woman must face in her daily grind as a home manager?" (Ray 251). Ray memorializes the "struggle" of her colleagues (a struggle she shared in certain ways), many of whom were "first generation working women," to "pursue higher studies and work outside the home" and historicizes their individual stories in the context of Bengal's social history: "Women had started working from Kadambini Ganguly's time and female education had been under way from the middle of the nineteenth century" (Ray 252).

Although the work of her mother and foremothers is largely undocumented, under-theorized and even marginalized within their family discourse, Ray's tribute to her Motherline recuperates their contribution to her own life and work and to the lives of the other women they impacted. Using her feminist scholarship, Ray is able to theorize her foremothers less as victims, and more as agents of change. She locates, records and shares how they were able to exercise agency in

determining their own lives to a certain extent, in spite of the prevailing gender constraints in their family. By detailing how they occupied multiple subject positions within and outside the family (as housewives, as writers, as readers, as organizers of women's groups, as mothers) and how they negotiated among positions of relative power and powerlessness to construct layered and multifaceted identities, Ray is resisting dominant stereotypes of submissive, essentialist womanhood and constructing new meanings and potentialities for mothers and daughters.

Unlike her own fraught relationship with her mother, Ray is able to "make amends" and improve her relationship with her children over time (Ray 297). Marianne Hirsch theorizes that "In her relationship with her daughter, a mother works out her unresolved relationship to her own mother" (Hirsch206). The unspoken tensions and mother-blaming that underpins Ray's ambivalence for her mother are resolved through Ray's willingness to listen and learn from her daughters, and also to respect and understand their generational differences. Although Ray initially protests against some of her daughters' professional and personal choices, she appreciates their "multifaceted" abilities and "different values" regarding marriage, money and motherhood (Ray 314). According to Ray, her daughters' generation has resolved the need to resist male domination by evolving a new gender equation based on equity of status and sharing of domestic labour: "Husbands and wives...both work outside the home and work together to maintain their home.... It involves a mutuality of understanding, working together and

equality of companionship" (Ray 314). Ending with a positive assessment of contemporary gender relations and women's empowerment in her daughters' era, Ray concludes that the various social, political and historical changes that have taken place—the spread of women's education, the equal rights granted by the Indian Constitution, the development of new towns, new industries and new technologies, the "storm of globalization" that opened doors of opportunity—have broken the boundaries between domestic and public spheres, boundaries that confined women: now, women "were on the move" as "life at home has become one with life in the world" (Ray 314-315). The historically situated resistances that Ray's memoir traced over generations have, thus, resulted in more empowerment and more choices for contemporary women.

As a feminist historian, Ray writes this multi-generational memoir with a declared feminist intent. She has "chosen to break with tradition [of tracing family histories through the male line] and tell my story of five generations via the female line" (Ray xiii). Ray contends that there is a "powerful yet invisible chain of values, hopes, aspirations were bequeathed from mother to daughter (Ray xiii). The use of the word "bequeathed" reveals Ray's intent of writing her memoir as a project of Motherline legacy that she had received from her foremothers, and that she intends to pass down to her daughters: "Ordinary human beings are our real inheritors. Our life experiences are our chief inheritance" (Ray xv).

As a conscious strategy, Ray reclaims and valorizes these ordinary human female life experiences that make women whole and centered. She repeatedly emphasizes the

ordinariness of the women whose lives she is narrating. "I relate the story of five ordinary women.... They set no new standards of achievement and have no list of outstanding contributions to boast of. They were born, they gave birth and spent their lives...like other average women" (Ray xiv). By emphasizing the ordinariness of her Motherline, Ray is articulating a feminist resistance to the male concept of history being a record of the extraordinary. Motherline stories, as Lowinsky states, are "as common as gossip, as ordinary as women's talk...as easy to come by as...the uterine blood we shed each month. They are stories of being female, of being mothers and daughters" (Lowinsky 210). In a way, the very purpose of Motherliness is to document, circulate and celebrate the 'ordinary' mother-daughter stories, and through this celebration, to revalidate the affirmative powers of these stories.

Ray's feminist Motherliness is not an isolated project. The spectrum of research

and writing engaged in by feminist scholars in India in the last two decades reveals other similarly intentioned projects. For instance, in *A Space of Her Own* (2005), Leela Gulati and Jasodhara Bagchi collaborated with ten other feminist scholars and activists and edited an anthology of their narratives about the "women of their natal families": this "somewhat subversive" project attempt to reclaim and "reflect on the emotional lines of matriline within the social structure of patriline" (Gulati and Bagchi 10). Ray's singular project is here multiplied as an organized strategic feminist academic activity (eight of the twelve narratives in *A Space of Her Own* were written in for a workshop organized by the Centre for Development Studies in 1998), with the specific subversive and assertive purpose of creating and being empowered by Motherliness. These memoirs, then, serve as guidelines for how to access, write and record Motherliness, how to re-vision history as her-story and how to make the personal political in order to redress the gender asymmetries of documented histories.

Works Cited:

- Forbes, Geraldine. *The New Cambridge History of India: Women in Modern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.
- Gulati, Leela and Jasodhara Bagchi (Eds.). *A Space of Her Own. Personal Narratives of Twelve Women*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005. Print.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Mothers and Daughters". *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 200-222. *JSTOR*. Web. Accessed 02 January 2017. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173518>>.
- Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990*. New Delhi: Zubaan, 1993. Print.
- Lowinsky, Naomi Ruth. *The Motherline: Everywoman's Journey to Find Her Female Roots*. 1992. Cheyenne: Fisher King Press, 2009. Print.
- O'Reilly, Andrea. *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism and Practice*. Bradford: Demeter Press, 2016. Kindle e-book.
- Ray, Bharati. *Daughters: A Story of Five Generations*. Trans. Madhuchhanda Karlekar. 2008. New Delhi: Penguin, 2011. Print.
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Print.
- Thapar-Bjorkert, Suruchi. *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices 1930-42*. 2006. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015. Print.