

“This extraordinary portrait of young women in nineteenth-century North India begins with a vivid and moving conversation with an elderly woman whose memories stretch back over many decades. That intimate personal tone continues to animate the feisty and imaginative women that Ruby Lal found in neglected archives and brought to life for us.”

– Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions, University of Chicago

“Like the fabulous Azra who serves as guide and accomplice in this journey across nineteenth-century India, Lal’s book opens a door. Behind it we find a vibrant female world scarcely noticed before. Impeccably researched and beautifully written, *Coming of Age in Nineteenth-Century India* insists on the vital necessity of pleasure, creativity and play in lives constricted by patriarchal norms. This is feminist scholarship at its best. Erudite and expansive, rigorous and experimental, this book is much like the mischievous girl-child/woman it traces, escaping confinement to dance across rooftops and forbidden terraces.”

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“This is an innovative, thoughtful and clever book that opens up the study of girl/womanhood. With skill and imagination, Lal demonstrates how through playfulness young women were able to express themselves in the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century Muslim India. What was true for Muslim India was probably also true for other societies, non-Muslim as well as Muslim.”

–Francis Robinson, Professor of the History of South Asia, Royal Holloway, University of London

**Ruby Lal** is the author of *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). She is currently writing *Uncrowned Empress*, a historical biography of the iconic Mughal Empress, Nur Jahan.

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LAL  
Coming of Age in Nineteenth-Century India

# COMING OF AGE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIA

*The  
Girl-Child  
and the  
Art of  
Playfulness*



Ruby Lal



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