

In this fascinating and innovative study, Ruby Lal explores domestic life and the place of women in the Mughal court of the sixteenth century. Challenging traditional, orientalist interpretations of the *haram* that have portrayed a domestic world of seclusion and sexual exploitation, the author reveals a complex society where noble men and women negotiated their everyday life and public-political affairs in the “inner” chambers as well as the “outer” courts. Using Ottoman and Safavid histories as a counterpoint, she demonstrates the richness, ambiguity and particularity of the Mughal *haram*, which was pivotal in the transition to institutionalization and imperial excellence.

“Arguably this is the most important book to appear on Mughal history for a generation ... Lal has rescued the engagement of women with the world from a patriarchal and orientalist historiography which hid it from view.”

Francis Robinson, University of London

“Dr. Lal’s monograph is a highly imaginative study of family life under the first Mughal rulers of India based on a very sophisticated use of source material. It questions the received wisdom on life in the *haram* and opens up a very original line of enquiry into the role of women in the society and politics of the early Mughals. I feel sure that it will be received as a pathbreaking work.”

Tapan Raychaudhuri, Emeritus Fellow, St. Antony’s College, Oxford

“... an original and signal contribution to the study of women, family, court cultures and the politics of empires. By examining the shifting political contexts of the first three Mughal generations – of women and men alike – Ruby Lal demonstrates the evolution of a ‘domestic’ politics that lay at the heart of imperial self-fashioning.”

Leslie Peirce, University of California, Berkeley

Ruby Lal is Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University, Atlanta. Her research and writing have focused on issues of gender relations in Islamic societies in the pre-colonial world.

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LAL Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World

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