

# Mental Health in Historical Perspective

Series Editors

Catharine Coleborne

School of Humanities and Social Science

University of Newcastle

Callaghan, NSW, Australia

Matthew Smith

Centre for the Social History of Health

and Healthcare

University of Strathclyde

Glasgow, UK

Covering all historical periods and geographical contexts, the series explores how mental illness has been understood, experienced, diagnosed, treated and contested. It will publish works that engage actively with contemporary debates related to mental health and, as such, will be of interest not only to historians, but also mental health professionals, patients and policy makers. With its focus on mental health, rather than just psychiatry, the series will endeavour to provide more patient-centred histories. Although this has long been an aim of health historians, it has not been realised, and this series aims to change that.

The scope of the series is kept as broad as possible to attract good quality proposals about all aspects of the history of mental health from all periods. The series emphasises interdisciplinary approaches to the field of study, and encourages short titles, longer works, collections, and titles which stretch the boundaries of academic publishing in new ways.

More information about this series at  
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14806>

Sarah Ann Pinto

# Lunatic Asylums in Colonial Bombay

Shackled Bodies, Unchained Minds

palgrave  
macmillan

Sarah Ann Pinto  
Independent Scholar  
Wellington, New Zealand

Mental Health in Historical Perspective  
ISBN 978-3-319-94243-8      ISBN 978-3-319-94244-5 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94244-5>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018947632

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Shackled Male Patient at Thana Lunatic Asylum, 1873-74, Author's illustration of a patient as described in the Annual Presidency Records (APR), 1873-74, p.4, National Library of Scotland

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*For  
my parents  
Susan Pinto and Julius Pinto  
and  
grandparents  
Eva D'mello and Anthony D'mello  
and  
in  
honour of  
Mary*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes a village to raise a child, or to write a book. I have had the support of a very multinational village while writing this book. From Professor Catherine Coleborne in Australia who encouraged me to publish my thesis, to relatives in London who opened their home to me, to my *whānau* in New Zealand and family in India—my village made this book possible. First, I thank Professor Catherine Coleborne for her feedback that has been crucial in editing this book. I thank my PhD supervisors, Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Giacomo Lichtner, for their constant support and guidance. Over the years, Dr. Fleur D’souza from my alma mater—St Xavier’s College, Mumbai—has advised me in many ways. I thank her for recommending the topic, but most importantly for instilling in me a love for history and teaching.

The staff at the libraries, archives, and mental hospitals assisted me in many ways. These include the staff at the Victoria University of Wellington Library, Mumbai University Library, Heras Institute, Maharashtra State Archives, National Archives of India, British Library, Wellcome Institute, Ratnagiri Regional Mental Hospital, and the Thana Mental Hospital. At the Maharashtra State Archives, I thank Mrs. Swagata Salonke, Mr. D.D. Pawar, and Mrs. Joanna D’souza for the timely arrangement of the documents and assistant photographer Mr. Santosh Dhanawde for undertaking the mammoth task of digitizing the sources for me. I also thank Dr. Shubha Pandya for providing me copies of the *Bombay Gazette* and Mr. Shivade Nitin Mohan for helping me at the Thana Mental Hospital.

The archival and fieldwork was possible because of the hospitality of family and friends. In London, I thank my relatives Norma and Joe

D'mello for opening their home to me. I also thank Sr. Evelyn for providing me accommodation in Delhi. Despite my menial student budget, I could complete my archival and fieldwork because of their kindness.

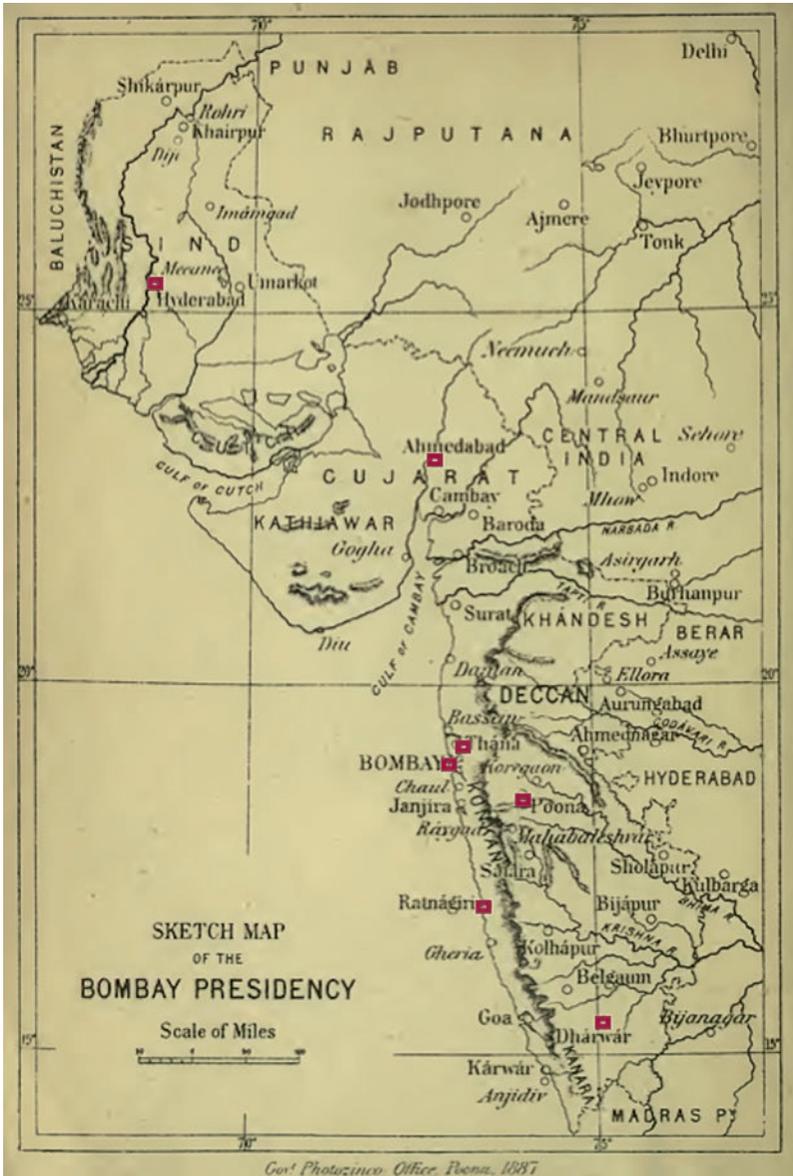
This book has benefitted from various seminars and presentations. At the University of Mumbai, I thank Professors Manjari Kamat and Ruby Maloni for giving me the opportunity to present my research at the Department of History Research Symposium. I thank Professor Charlotte Macdonald for letting me present my research at the History Staff Seminar at the Victoria University of Wellington and Dr. Steve Behrendt for all the postgraduate seminars that helped me develop the skills I needed for the writing of this book.

The publishing team at Palgrave Macmillan's Mental Health in Historical Perspective Series were phenomenal. Molly Beck and Oliver Dyer made sure a young historian like me never felt like an orphan in the publishing world. The production team shared my vision for the book and swiftly designed and edited the manuscript like magic.

On a more personal note, I deeply value the support and prayers of my *whānau*. In Wellington, I thank the faculty and my fellow colleagues at the Victoria University's History Programme. Among my colleagues, Mark Dunick needs special mention for being my grammar guru. During the isolating writing phase, the friendship of Hannah, Chante, Angela, Damon, Eliza, Lucy, Severina and Maxy Vaz, Pexy and Manuel Miranda, Anastasia Rebello, and Fr. Vinay Kamath have been a great consolation. Since I began my research in 2014, Fr. Kevin O'Connors has been both a friend and a counsellor. Over cups of tea, he gave me both life lessons and research advice. I thank Raymond Pinto for mentoring me in matters of faith and social justice. I am also profoundly grateful to my dear friends Janice and Handricks Gayen for all the ways in which they have helped, that are too numerous to mention here.

Finally, I owe the deepest gratitude to my family. I am indebted to my grandparents Eva and Anthony D'mello for their endearing support. I thank my aunt and uncle, Jean and Prakash D'souza and cousin Sean for practically adopting me and for opening their home to me in New Zealand. To an amazing bunch of siblings who are my inspiration—Gerard, Rachel, Naomi, and Joel—thank you. To my parents, Julius and Susan Pinto, this book is the fruit of the numerous sacrifices you have made. Thanks Dad for travelling with me to the archives, libraries, hospitals, and Mum for being my personal manager in many ways. I thank you both for your unconditional love.

I dedicate this work to the people suffering from mental illness, their families, and those who work for their care.



Lunatic Asylums in the Bombay Presidency, 1793–1921. (The map indicates the geographic locations only of the main asylums at Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Thana, Colaba, Poona, Ratnagiri, and Dharwar [From North to South]. Source: Edmund Cox, *A Short History of the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1887))

# CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Indian Insanity and the Local-Colonial Contest for its Treatment	33
3	The Asylum as ‘Middle Ground’: Contestations and Negotiations	61
4	The ‘Common-Sense’ Treatment of Indian Insanity	93
5	Unsound Soundscapes: Shrieks, Shouts, and Songs	127
6	Public Perceptions of the <i>Pagal Khana</i>	153
7	Conclusion: Shackled Bodies, Unchained Minds	183

<b>Appendix 1</b>	195
<b>Appendix 2</b>	211
<b>Glossary</b>	215
<b>Bibliography</b>	217
<b>Index</b>	233

## ABBREVIATIONS

APR	Annual Administration and Progress Report
AR	Annual Report on the Mental Hospitals in the Bombay Presidency
Asst.	Assistant
BL	British Library
GD	General Department
GoB	Government of Bombay
GoI	Government of India
IMD	Indian Medical Department
IMS	Indian Medical Service
IOR	India Office Records
JD	Judicial Department
J–D	January to December
J–J	January to June
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel
MSA	Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Scotland
NMLA	Narotamdas Madhavdas Lunatic Asylum
Offg.	Officiating
PDD	Public Department Diary
PG	Pages
PWD	Public Works Department
RNP	Reports on Native Newspapers

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	<i>Possession of Afiza</i> , a picture in the book <i>By-ways of Bombay</i> . (Source: S.M. Edwardes, <i>By-ways of Bombay</i> (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala and Sons, 1912), p. 55)	49
Fig. 3.1	The superintendent's new bungalow (2) located outside the walls of the Colaba Lunatic asylum (1). (Source: Report on the Lunatic Asylum at Colaba for the Year Ending 1852, GoB, GD, 1853/48, MSA)	70
Fig. 3.2	Native Diet Scale for the asylums in the Bombay Presidency showing extra quantities of food permitted to those patients who maintained discipline through occupation. (Source: Rules of the Bombay Lunatic Asylum, 1864, GoB, GD, 1862–1864/15, MSA)	72
Fig. 3.3	The Mahar community that formed most of the subordinate staff in Bombay's asylums. (Source: William Johnson, <i>The Oriental Races and Tribes, Residents and Visitors of Bombay: A Series of Photographs with Letter-press Descriptions</i> , Vol. 2 (London: W.J. Johnson, 1866), p. 6)	86
Fig. 5.1	Padded rooms at Ratnagiri Lunatic Asylum. (Source: Plan of the Ratnagiri Lunatic Asylum, GoB, GD, 1886/58, MSA)	134
Fig. 5.2	The bell at the Ratnagiri Asylum (Ratnagiri Mental Hospital). The bell is attached to a small intermediary room where staff bring food to the patients. Patients then carry the food over to the dining area. (Source: Author's Photograph, November 2014)	137
Fig. A.1	Plan of the NMLA, Thana. (Source: From the Superintendent to the Executive Engineer, 14 May 1920, GoB, GD, 1920/1139, MSA)	196

Fig. A.2	Marble stone tablet installed at Thana Regional Mental Hospital (TRH), Mumbai	197
Fig. A.3	Main Gate, TRH	197
Fig. A.4	Main men's ward, TRH	198
Fig. A.5	Rear view of the main men's ward, TRH	198
Fig. A.6	<i>Charkha</i> or spinning wheel, used for occupational therapy	199
Fig. A.7	Weaving machine used for occupational therapy, installed by asylum authorities when the asylum was first established in 1902	200
Fig. A.8	The work shed, TRH	201
Fig. A.9	The side gate at the TRH, which is used for the dead. The gate is an example of the inclusion of the local custom of not taking a dead body through the main door. The gate also provides architectural evidence for the character of the asylum as a middle ground	202
Fig. A.10	Stone tablet outside the Superintendent's office in recognition of the trust fund set up by the Madhavadas family	203
Fig. A.11	Main Gate, Ratnagiri Mental Hospital (RMH)	204
Fig. A.12	The office in which patients are first evaluated on their arrival, RMH	205
Fig. A.13	Interiors of the same office	205
Fig. A.14	The men's ward, RMH	206
Fig. A.15	The space used for amusement, RMH	206
Fig. A.16	The gate to the women's section, RMH	207
Fig. A.17	Door to a small room that provides access to the women's section, RMH. Food is supplied through this door. It also serves as a pick-up point for food	208
Fig. A.18	The side gate, RMH	209
Fig. A.19	Women's infirmary, RMH	209
Fig. A.20	<i>Manali</i> , the women's ward, RMH. Patients were locked up throughout the day in this ward and were let out only during meal times or for work	210
Fig. A.21	The exterior wall around the hospital, built in 1886, proves the custodial intent in constructing the asylum	210

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	The number of <i>fakirs</i> , beggars, and religious mendicants incarcerated in the Asylums of the Bombay Presidency (1876–1900)	50
Table 6.1	Index of patients whose relatives applied for their discharge, Bombay Presidency (1897–1915)	175