

The 1950s: Journeys into Postcolonial South Asia

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Registration <https://bit.ly/37L4zuQ>

A 1950s Women's Question? Family Planning and Transnational Development Regimes

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The 1950s has conventionally been understood as a period of “lull” between the late colonial women’s movement and a re-invigorated feminism from the 1970s onwards. Recent scholarship on the early postcolonial decades calls this into question by examining the multiple spaces of political discourse and activity in the aftermath of independence. Building from this scholarship, my paper interrogates family planning as one key site of activity that was organized by women, claimed to be for women, and connected women’s activism both to the postcolonial state and to emergent transnational development networks. I situate 1950s family planning programs in India within a wider national and transnational context, and ask how these campaigns shaped a “women’s question” during the decade.



In a doctor's waiting room in the Indian village of Badlapur, a group of women sit below posters advocating family planning. (Photo by Three Lions/Getty Images)