

# THE SLOW TRANSITION FROM WOMANHOOD TO PERSONHOOD: CAN EDUCATION HELP?

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Looking back on his days of solitary confinement in a concentration camp, sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf commented that it was then “that an almost claustrophobic yearning of freedom was bred, a visceral desire not to be hemmed in neither by the personal power of men nor by the anonymous power of organisations”.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising then, that he went on to become a major theorist of industrial society, analysing in detail the nature of class conflict in democracies.<sup>2</sup> Dahrendorf’s poignant description of a primeval human instinct is, in a pragmatic, business - like manner, the basis for democracy : very simply, participation and self expression by citizens in the commonweal, in decision-making in the polity, work place, educational institutions and so on, is regarded as fundamental to a democratic order. Certain rights and entitlements<sup>3</sup> are laid down in a constitution, and their realisation is based on reciprocal obligations. Without obligations and duties there is very likelihood of the Hobbesian state of nature taking over. yet modern democracies are the arena of increasing discord where questions over rights result in violence as competing groups vie for what they perceive to be their legitimate due. In large part, this hiatus between reality and the ideal is caused by differences between individuals and groups. In time these differences acquire an emotive quality and a rank ordering. The following discussion should help explain this process a little more.

The early idealists of post-Independence India pledged themselves to justice, liberty and “equality of status and a opportunity”. There was to be equal pay for equal work for men and for women, and “special care for the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people” and so on.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to observe the interface between legend - making and reality almost forty years after the worthy gentlemen ( and a smattering of women) of the Constituent Assembly provided us with a constitution. Post-colonial society did not succeed as was expected in destroying elite structures and establishing egalitarian ones in their place. Rather, existing injustices had now to contend with new inequalities, brought about paradoxically in many cases by ‘modern’ institutions introduced by the British such as the educational system, legal structures and the bureaucracy. Operating the state apparatus the corporate world, the administration and so on are what Nigerian author Kole Omotoso calls the Westward - looking English-speaking “trans-ethnic elite”.<sup>5</sup> In India, as in many of the newly independent states of Africa, millions live hundreds of years from the few thousand trans-ethnic elite who run this economic and political system of neo-colonialism based on supposedly democratic values. In actual fact, new inequalities now contend with old ones. The British brought not only the school, the railways and a network of roads, but also a value system

which stressed science, rationality and mechanical order. Indians were regarded as mystical, unscientific and irrational, and therefore in need of immediate redemption. The educational and legal systems maintained by a bureaucratic hierarchy were to be agents of this new order. Education was to bring about social change if not equality. However, these assumptions were based on an inadequate appreciation of the tenacity of hierarchy and of traditional belief systems. In other words, the ideology of entitlements based on the principle of equality had to contend with the ideology of hierarchical ordering based on the principle of difference. What is relevant here is not the denial of difference but the implications of this difference.

Depending on one's perspective, there can be at least two ways of analysing difference: difference as inequality and, what I will call difference as a positive value, which may or may not include the demand for equality. I am aware that these two conceptualisations of difference involve the use of highly emotive terms, the defence of which may not always be easy or logical. Difference as inequality (which could also be interpreted as hierarchical oppositions) would logically lead to the construction of a world view based on deprivation, injustice and of the woman-as-victim. It would imply a world which incorporates ethnic, religious and sexual differences as well as a liberal, if not radical, reaction to these differences. It is in a fact yardstick of contemporary *real-politik*, of societies based on domination and surrender. Difference as a positive value would question a system which grades qualities on a scale and argues that it should be possible to judge individuals and their situations on their own merits and not in the context of their social position on gender. It points out that there can be a plurality of views which attach greater importance to some individual response and collective organisation than to other, though often within the framework of overall inequality. Feminist scholars as well as activists have been deeply interested in the notion of difference as a positive value. While I am not competent to give an account of all the relevant theories - some of which are extremely difficult to comprehend - there are certain themes which are of direct relevance here. In the main, the manner in which difference has been treated by various intellectual streams is vital to an understanding of how women have perceived and used this difference. Observers of women's history have pointed out that the tendency, however well-intentioned, of viewing women as victims is counter-productive. As Gerda Lerner says "the true history of women is the history of their on-going functioning in that male-defined world *on their own terms*. The question of oppression does not elicit that story and is therefore, a tool of limited usefulness to the historian". Oppression as a logical corollary of difference would tend to bring the argument back to variations between male and female qualities. Not only would this constrain the scope of analysis of difference but also impose an ideological framework based on assumptions of male superiority and authority. It is important to remember argues Amartya Sen, that women are not patients, but contributors to development and growth.<sup>6</sup>

The implications of sexual difference have been of considerable interest to western feminists in a range of academic disciplines and with varying political

and social commitments. A dominant group of French Feminists have experimented with a separate language - *sericulture feminine* - as they feel that existing language represses the female voice and experience; expectedly, this results in a glorification of femininity, of the female body and psyche.<sup>7</sup> In the U.S. whether it is the cultural feminists<sup>8</sup> with their similar emphasis on women's nurturant, caring spirit or psychologists who stress the individualizing principle of attachment (as against the male tendency to separation), the overall trend is towards emphasising the strengths inherent in differentness.<sup>9</sup> Thus a number of Indian to encompass the woman's experience as not only that of one who has been oppressed but of an individual as capable as any other of facing and of taking on challenges of various kinds. A history of oppression is not denied, nor should its implications for the relations between genders be under-estimated. What is being stressed is the view that women are not only victims. Here, one might add, the so-called victim displays unexpected reserves of strength and energy. However, there is always the danger, of course, when women speak of the need for a more caring, sympathetic approach to life, to teaching as well as to learning, of leading back to biological determinism. What is the guarantee that difference will not be interpreted as excluding other so-called male qualities such as rationality, decisiveness, pragmatism and so on? How can women's contribution be judged on their own terms, and not in relation to external standards? And who will be the judges? A close look at women's lives provides numerous examples of how in fact individuals have, while acknowledging differences, resisted succumbing to the victim or women-in-head syndrome.

Nonetheless, the relationship of difference with inequality is much more readily understood as it is the organising principle in most spheres of activity. On the other hand for difference to be recognised as a positive value either in operational or philosophical terms is not nearly as easy. It involves a conscious process, an effort to strive for its acceptance and legitimacy; the natural tendency is to gravitate to a position of inequality, where differences are emotively ranked on a scale. Those who argue for difference as a value would say that no ranking is valid as one kind of activity or attribute is as important or unimportant as any other. This position acquires particular significance in contesting the well-entrenched theory of differences between the natures of men and of women: it is argued that a woman's nature inclines her to certain activities and interests while that of men makes them more amenable to others. As we shall see such arguments lie at the basis of inequalities between the two sexes and have been sanctified in an educational system which treats boys and girls unequally. In principle, however, the educational system is supposed to do quite the opposite, namely legitimise difference as a value, to make those designated as unequal more equal through enlightened policies, class room strategies, and committed teachers.

This paper will look at how difference as inequality has led to gender differences in the use of education. I will then present a case study of one of the first Bengali women to write her autobiography; if Kailashbashini's life appears incongruous at the end of a litany of injustices it is only to prove that difference as a value can-

and did-put down early roots in a hostile environment. Acknowledging her subordinate position in a male dominated society. Kailashbashini used the skills of literacy effectively. The wife of a Bengali official with reformist tendencies was taught to read and write by her husband. In time, she described in great detail her life; her powerfully reasoned arguments only proved that those regarded as unequal and subordinate could in fact match many in their logic and rationality. Here, the informal, self-taught skills of literacy equipped Kailashbashini to express herself, her pain and her hopes through a long life. The therapeutic value of such an exercise can not be underestimated in a highly segregated, hierarchical society. However, before going further into the role of literacy in facilitating individual self-expression, it is necessary to explore further the relationship between difference and inequality. For it is against this backdrop that the former acquires a particular significance and relevance.

Irrespective of political ideology, in recent years, there has been a growing concern with difference and inequality, and by implication, with differences have a material as well as a non-material base. Societies are divided on the basis of class, caste, ethnic groups and gender : some groups more than others own capital, productive resources and assets of various kinds which give them access to employment, education and a range of skills. Occupations are graded accordingly with menial, unskilled work being invariably clustered at the bottom of the job hierarchy. The working class, blacks, women and in India, the scheduled castes have traditionally been the assetless and hence low status groups. Of equal, if not greater importance however, is what I have called non-material differences. Undoubtedly, the two are causally linked, and in fact it may be difficult to differentiate prejudice against a Black woman from her material position. At the same time, it is important to make the distinction though often self-images and self-perceptions are formed by the conjunction of both material and non-material differences. In this context, Robert Merton's development of the notion of relative deprivation describes well the psychological and emotional traumas faced by deprived groups.<sup>10</sup>

What factors then cause a Scheduled Caste woman to feel materially deprived as well as socially isolated and stigmatised? Material deprivation is the result of poverty; but what makes a difference in caste ranking associate ignorance, squalor, low morals with one group rather than with another? Even when members of the Scheduled Castes are successful, it is not unknown for Caste Hindus to make under the breath comment on their style of life or belief systems. It is my basic argument here that a set of rules, regulations and taboos govern inter-gender relations as much as they do inter-caste and in-religious interactions. These reaffirm the philosophy of *superiority, exclusion and separateness* and manifest themselves in an oppressive and institutionalised hierarchical relationship in the domestic as well as social arenas. As in inter-caste relations there is the "public face"<sup>11</sup> of dependence and mutual cooperation. In actual fact, an exploitative network based on exclusion from ownership, control over and access to productive resources, and in the case of women, lack of control over their reproductive capacities as well, operates. Women and the lower castes are

to be controlled, managed and worked in a manner not dissimilar to property and other assets.

It is a truism that the main difference between men and women is physiological and apart from the rare cases of sex change, this difference cannot be overcome. Under what circumstances, then does this basic difference incorporate differences of other kinds, namely differences - and hence inequalities - in mental attributes and aptitudes, emotional qualities and so on? How and why do evaluative scales become operative? If it is accepted that, as Andre Beteille<sup>12</sup> says, these scales "are not given to us by nature and are culturally constructed by particular human beings under particular historical conditions", what circumstances lead to these constructions? This paper cannot attempt to answer these questions; the relationship between Indian men and women, namely inequality in access to education in terms of differential aptitudes and a woman's nature and basic roles. I will then go on to show how, parallel with this dominant trend, has grown the questioning mind, which reiterates the primacy of difference as a value. This mind too, is the product of education and how limited availability and use, historically have been justified in terms of differential aptitudes and a woman's nature and basic roles. I will then go on to show how, parallel with this dominant trend, has grown the questioning mind, which reiterates the primacy of difference as a value. This mind too, is the product of education; the subordination and encapsulation of the latter within the wider social fabric has limited its role in the creation of more such minds, of belief systems committed to humanism. Yet, in collaboration with other emancipatory movements the educational system can increasingly play a vital role in ensuring rights, entitlements and individual self-expression.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to have a workable definition of equality in the context of education. Does it imply *equal education* for all or does it mean *equal opportunity to be educated*? There is a world of difference, as Mary Warnock says,<sup>13</sup> between the equal right to education and the right to equal education. In most societies the former is the analytical and operational problematic. Rooting squarely for the relationship between difference and equality, Isaiah Berlin<sup>14</sup> has pointed out, that "so long as there are differences between men some degree of inequality may occur" and as "equality is a value among many", it has to be compatible with "other ends". These "other ends" may well mean conflicting claims in a society divided on the basis of the privilege of the few which work against the rights of all. According to J.P. Naik,<sup>15</sup> an important educational administrator of post-Independence India, in an unequalitarian society like ours, equality of opportunity means equal opportunity to try for education; even here "it is never really possible to give "equal" opportunity to all the underprivileged.... There is very little possibility of solving the problem through equality of educational opportunity along unless simultaneous efforts are made on the political and economic front, to destroy privilege itself". In most developed countries, the issues raised relate increasingly to what happens to children who have access to the assorted educational bread basket.

Once within the system, can everyone expect to have a piece of bread of the same size and quality? Or will some, because of certain advantages, be able to stake a

claim for a bigger and better slice? To put it more sharply, once within the system, the distribution of bread is determined by causes which may have nothing to do with the basket itself. There are factors which work in favour of some children and against others. Among other things, this is manifested in a higher rate of drop-out and unsatisfactory performance in school among those from socially and economically underprivileged groups; the better quality bread goes to those who came to school within inherent advantages. In present-day India, a commitment to the ideology of inherent advantages, of hierarchy and separateness is exemplified in the approach to women's and girl's socialisation, education, and employment. Here too an alienated trans-ethnic elite passes judgement on what society should be like without taking adequate cognisance of existential realities.

## II

The contemporary higher education scene for girls is a good example of how restrictions in access are justified on grounds of supposed differences between men and women. College-going women in India are a tiny percentage of the population; an increase in this number is linked to societal perceptions of femininity. Often, a girl's educational choice is determined what is regarded as fit for her and not by her ability or aptitude. As we shall see later, aptitudes too are largely socially conditioned. Boys too have to face pressures of various kinds as well when making choices, and the stresses imposed by the syndrome of achievement, competition and selection are not inconsequential. These are of a qualitatively different nature from the problems affecting girls. The basic premise of the educational system is one of freedom of access to a wide range of courses, to be achieved through open competition. Theoretically too girls are supposed to have access to the same courses as boys. In actual fact, they tend to flock to a few selective 'feminine' areas of study. Boys are socialised to compete and succeed, and girls to accept the follow well-demarcated educational realms.

From 1947 onwards, the liberal reformist tradition of successive governments emphasised the need for increasing educational opportunities for the under privileged, of whom women soon formed a recognisable segment. Most policy statements attempt to self pedal deeply ingrained prejudices and project instead a progressive-looking official position. Thus each quinquennial report states that there are more and more girls going to school each year; yet, the dropout rate continues to rise. The latest government figures show that for every 1000 illiterate men, the number of illiterate women went up from 1250 in 1961 to 1322 in 1981; by and large these differences have been accepted as a facts of life, though ever so often commissions and committees have been appointed to look into problems affecting women's education. However, none of these have been able to conceal successfully the fundamental conviction that a girl's nature requires a special type of education which will not threaten her primary role of home-maker. Consequently, it is somewhat meaningless to talk of democratic and equitable uniform educational policy for the country as a whole: just as it is necessary to accept that the administrative, professional and industrial elite with a very specific world-view comes from a handful of educational institutions, it is equally important that those in

positions of authority recognise that the latent function of girls' education is fundamentally different from that of boys.

At this point it would be useful to adapt Pierre Bourdieu and J. Passeron's<sup>16</sup> argument that the elite in France has labelled as prestigious some abstract and esoteric courses as well as specific educational institutions, so as to maintain their control over social reproduction. The authors had in mind a homogeneous socio-cultural elite; however, if this group was further divided on the basis of sex, the authors would have found that boys tended to dominate the prized institutions while most girls had to rest content with access to less taxing - and less prestigious - arts courses. In so doing they would be sharing choices with boys from a less privileged social class rather than with men of their own socio-economic background. In India, there is a distinct dividing line between high status and extremely competitive educational institutions such as the medical colleges, institutes of technology and of management, engineering and other professional colleges, and the bulk of higher education consisting of the proliferating arts and education colleges, Industrial Technical Institutes, polytechnics and so on. While the former are the preserve of boys from certain privileged homes, the latter cater to girls from such backgrounds as well as for boys who are by and large unable to succeed in the highly competitive admission tests which often assume a fluency and familiarity with a certain culture as well as the English language. Thus the dual system of higher education with a select, self-perpetuating elite and a large number trained in indifferent institutions is divided only on the basis of socio-economic class but also on the basis of gender.

Why has it continued to be regarded as important to channelise women's access to education along certain restrictive lines? A vital reason for this variance in approach to the education of boys and that of girls relates to a conflict of values. The purported aims of education which are to create a democratic spirit of enquiry, an independence of judgement as well as an interest in the acquisition of knowledge of different sorts come into conflict with the ideals of womanhood: a girl is socialised to be obedient, committed to the family unit and above all to be modest in demeanour, and to value chastity and purity greatly. There is little significance attached to independent action in most girls' lives; if a certain kind of education ends up by changing this well-structured frame of reference, it is clearly to be avoided.

For their survival and unity most Indian families need to stress the nurturant and benevolent aspects of femininity. Higher education of a certain kind as well as jobs of the technological era can be regarded as potentially disruptive if not destructive of family harmony of which the linchpin is the woman. With equal access to education, control over women's lives may be marginalised and new educational and work ethos may come into conflict with the demands of the family network. By and large, whether the formal structure of the family is joint or nuclear, the ideological basis is that of a joint family with a strict hierarchy of authority and patterns of control of women, particularly of those in the reproductive age. Undoubtedly, families have to take some risks as soon as they

concede that girls have a right to be educated together with their brothers; however, these are based on the assumption that education and educational institutions of a certain kind will be able to minimise these risks. It is in this context that differentiation of curricula becomes a critical importance, substantiated as it is by certain views on women's intellectual capacities and inclinations. Assumptions on inclinations are based on the view that women have a distinct nature which is different from that of men. Again it is argued that a woman's nature is formed by, among other things, intellectual capacities and interests. Historical evidence has been selectively used to show how these capacities are different, if not inferior. It would perhaps be appropriate to look at the evolution of some of these notions.

Views that women had a distinct nature, separate and distinguishable from that of men, were vital in determining Nineteenth Century thinking on the kind and extent of education to which they were to have access. In 1820, Rammohun Roy felt that men took advantage of women's "corporeal weakness" to deny them access to certain "excellent merits" and thereby concluded that "women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits". He had in mind depriving women of the kind of opportunities which would allow them to display their intelligence and understanding of situations. At the same time, Rammohun was full of praise for women's long-suffering endurance of their husband's often appalling behaviour. He noted approvingly that "all this pain and affliction their virtue alone enables them to support".<sup>17</sup> Perhaps Rammohun's personal life helped him paint a convincing picture of the anguish of women in polygamous marriages: he had three wives and a powerful mother with whom he entered into a long legal battle over property. Reaction to his strong and wilful mother undoubtedly resulted in his ambivalence: his writings on sati stress women's strength of character and physical courage, at the same time he was convinced of their virtuous commitment to duty, which lead them obey the dictates of a harsh patriarchal order. Like John Stuart Mill who was to argue for women's equality with men in 1869.<sup>18</sup> Rammohun also believed that the implications of this attribute were not to be tested in the job market, but were to be cultivated for women's greater fulfillment within matrimony. It was to help them to become better wives and mothers.

When Rammohun wrote, studies in phrenology and physiology aimed at identifying sexual differences were yet to be undertaken. From the second half of the Nineteenth century there was scientific corroboration for arguments on differences in natures, and consequently in destinies. Studies in Britain and Europe had added a new dimension to debates on sex-related characteristics. In the 1870s it was believed that intellectual functions were located in the frontal lobes of the brain, and as men's lobes were larger, they were naturally intellectually superior. However, by the end of the century, the intellect was thought to be located in parietal lobes, which were again more pronounced in men.<sup>19</sup> For instance, the views of French Professor of Education and one of the founding fathers of modern Sociology Emile Durkheim were shared by many of his intellectual peers. In his classic, *The Division of Labour in Society* he pointed

out that even when women and men participated in intellectual activities, “women carries out her own nature, and her role is very specialised, very different from that of men”.<sup>20</sup> These differences were accentuated not only by physical variations but also by differences in sizes of the crania”. This affected the potentialities of the two sexes differently. While he did not spell it out, for Durkheim, this difference implied a higher level of performance by men in certain socially valued areas such as science and rational enquiry. Such differences justified the sexual division of labour, initially within the family.

A steady dissemination of ideas from the West which spoke of women’s superior intuitive faculties, and stressed that “learning interfered with the functioning of intuition because it trained women to reason<sup>21</sup> had begun by the 1850s. Marriage, and not employment, was a woman’s vocation and thus anything that detracted from basic feminine virtues was to be avoided. Nonetheless, as home management required training, girls were to be accordingly instructed by their mothers, and school was to only teach those subjects which enhanced feminine traits. As a twentieth century student of such discussions in Britain has pointed out.

men feared that contemporary teaching with its emphasis on French, music, and art was responsible for the neglect of truly feminine subjects. Matters would surely become worse if women were encouraged to study Mathematics and Latin. What was needed was a revitalisation of the traditional feminine subjects.<sup>22</sup>

Studies is phrenology only consolidated the arguments in favour of women’s nature and aptitudes: men were thought to be better equipped to perform certain strenuous and complicated mental exercises while women were more competent in expression, both literary and artistic. What caused equal if not greater concern were the studies which dealt with the relationship between a girl’s reproductive functions and mental activity. it was believed that at puberty, girls needed considerable energy to develop their reproductive organs, and thus, the energy which remained for learning was accordingly reduced. Or, “only by robbing their reproductive organs of essential resources or energy could they continue serious study”.<sup>23</sup> As a woman’s primary role was to be wife and mother, there was clearly no question of even a debate on priorities. Education for girls was certainly desirable, but it had to take secondary place to considerations arising out of the physical strain of education. There was also the issue of what too much learning would do to a girl’s personality: there was a general apprehension that girls trained in science. Logic and advanced Mathematics would develop the spirit of enquiry as well as become argumentative, competitive and generally difficult to mould: such an education may even threaten the carefully maintained sexual division of labour.

What is most significant for the present study is the emphasis on distinct natures; in one form or another, references to a women’s nature seemed to underlie discussions on their social and familial roles. Scientific theories lent credibility to

accepted role differentiations; Victorian notions on a woman's physical frailty and lack of strength had been cited as factors contributing to feminine inferiority from the beginning the century. Around the same time, Evangelical religion had sanctified the 'passionless' woman, and fictional depictions of sexual promiscuity as the cause of the downfall of the gentry became popular. Sexual control, particularly among women, was stressed as the ideal; emphasis on the image of the virtuous, devoted wife was gradually being strengthened.<sup>24</sup> It is equally interesting to note that mid-Nineteenth century British records showed that women constituted a majority of<sup>25</sup> patients in the public lunatic asylums. Late twentieth century feminist interpretations have spoken of the need to look more closely at social definitions and representations of madness; they also point out that the prevalence of mental ill-health, hysteria and tension indicated that women were reacting to societal expectations and a moulding of their behaviour.<sup>26</sup>

The verbalisation of such stereotypical expectations was essential for the emotional stability of upwardly mobile groups: a restful, non-threatening home environment was regarded as vital if men were to cope with the stress of change and competition. It may be useful to take a look at Bengal in the Nineteenth century; as the venue of early debates on women's education, many issues were thrashed out at home; in institutions and in the print media which are relevant and alive even today. The notion of separate curricula for boys and for girls were related to distinct roles and obligations, as well as to distinct and separate life styles within the same home. In the Bengali context, emphasis on the plight of the woman, her ignorance, ill-health and unhygienic life style within the *anatahpur* or inner rooms of the home were vital for the construction of the new femininity. Controlled access to education had an important role to play in this construction.

The environment in which these inequalities were primarily worked out was the home. Strict segregation of the sexes was maintained by physical division into the private and basically feminine spaces and the public or male areas. The former included the kitchen, a courtyard, roof, and perhaps an inner room or rooms depending on the resources of the family; in the outer *baithakhana* or sitting room men discussed everything ranging from new job opportunities to the implications of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's 1855 petition on widow re-marriage. It was usually the hub of the public area, open to men from a range of backgrounds and occupations. The sleeping quarters, where men and women met for a few hours in the night were usually serviced by both male and female domestic servants. Until they reached puberty, or were married, girls usually had access to both the public and private spaces. Traditionally adult women did not come out of the *antahpur* to which only a select number of men had access. Veiling or covering the head and part of the face known as *ghomta deowa* was obligatory for married women, particularly in the presence of older women, the husband and his senior male relatives. It was usual for a woman from even the wealthiest of homes to wear only a single piece of cloth, the unstitched *sari*. Consequently, dress reform for women became a relevant issue in the latter part

of the nineteenth century: women and young girls could hardly be presented to mixed company or even go to school if they were not adequately clad.<sup>27</sup>

In Britain, a demarcation of space was not always essential for the notion of separate yet complementary spheres which was firmly established by the nineteenth century. In Bengal, however, the separation of areas in homes was symbolic not only of two completely different worlds of physical experience and quality of life but also of varying norms and expectations which affected relationships between the sexes. As in western cultures, the feminine world was regarded by and large as an essential appendage of the male sphere. Paradoxically, inequalities and deprivations imposed by the dominant world of men were in fact the cause of the *antahpur's inferior status*. Yet views that women in the *antahpur* were knowingly indulging in practices leading to illness, were wilful and chose to remain illiterate and limited in their understanding of situations were widely accepted; the fact that *sati*, child marriage, *kulin* polygamy and a host of other restrictions imposed on women were regarded as essential for the preservation of family honour and the purity of the lineage were often conveniently overlooked. It was almost as though the newly evolving *bhadra samaj* or civilised society was looking for a scapegoat for its past misdeeds in the image of foolish and untutored woman in the *antahpur*. Whether such an assumption is valid or not, there is enough writing to suggest that the urgent need to educate women had roots in this characterisation of them.<sup>28</sup>

An important point of reference for the Nineteenth century reform movement in Bengal then, was the position of women; self conscious embarrassment over the institutionalised practices of *sati*, child marriage and polygamy undoubtedly contributed to the growing enthusiasm for change across a wide spectrum of opinion. Equally, there was the need to protect the lineage, and its women. At the same time, an influential lobby felt that women as much as men had the right to the new learning and knowledge systems. While the Victorian ideal of the intelligent helpmate and competent and enlightened mother was gaining ground as a useful role model, modes of realising this ideal had to be worked out: codes of conduct and expectations were radically different for men and for women.

In this context, Sumit Sarkar believes that social reformers were motivated more by expediency than through a commitment to essentially liberal values. A "limited and controlled emancipation of wives" had to be seen in the context of traditional commitment to casteism, patriarchy and *shastric* functions.<sup>29</sup> Access to controlled education seemed like a good solution to this dilemma: sections of the *bhadralok* were indeed caught in a double bind. Logically, exposure to a liberal education should have meant a questioning of inequalities based on caste, class and gender. However these very questions could threaten the foundations of a well-worked out division of labour and double moral standards. Men may have balked at the performance of women's rituals such as their fasts and *bratas* yet they were aware that the underlying ideology was vital for the survival of family dignity, tradition and even honour. The way out was clearly to choose an educational system, texts and curriculum which would keep basic values intact

while exposing women to a new world of experience and opportunities, however limited. Home tuition or later the *zenana* system of learning, well chose syllabi and a body of supporting literature were developed as suitable ways of mediating between the extremes of *antahpur* culture and values and the lure of emancipation. Tuition by men in the family was the earliest and most popular form of education for girls and women. By the middle of the century, peripatetic missionary tutors used to go the *antahpur* and teach women either singly or in groups. Considerable though was given to the curriculum which was to be quite different from that of boys. The cultured *bhadramahila* or gentleman was to take what was supposedly the best for her from both worlds: yet she was not free to make the choice, not decide on options. Nor were these options easily or readily come by and involved years of debate and discussion.

That the principle of differentness is still a live issue is apparent if we look at quotations from two policy documents on education, separated in time by almost a century and a half: in 1984, the Commission for Planning of Higher Education in West Bengal set up by the CPI(M) government submitted its voluminous report without so much as bothering to give a sex-wise breakdown of those in various educational courses. Further, a subsection of the chapter on "Courses of Study" which deal with "Home Science Education for Girls" laments the fact that there are only two home science colleges in the state which necessary limited admission to an elite. There was an urgent need to expand home science education as it was a course which educated girls "to rebuild homes consistently with the demands of modern life, *teach to create an atmosphere of peace, happiness and moral and spiritual well-being in the family*" (emphasis added). Further, and it is not clear how this goal fitted in with the earlier home-oriented ideal woman that home science was to create - it would make girls "economically independent and capable citizens of the community".<sup>30</sup> Out of its 220 recommendations, there were only two which related to women, namely a plea for the expansion of home science and polytechnic education.

The spirit of this document does not appear to be too different from that of the Woods' Educational Despatch of 1854 which stated that

The importance of female education in India cannot be over-rated; and we have observed the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire or the part of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is impacted to the educational and *moral tone* of the people than by education of men.<sup>31</sup> (emphasis added).

Both stressed the role of education in training women to build a moral and peaceful home environment. On the other hand, men are supposed to be trained for competition, performance and achievement in a range of modern courses and occupations : not only do girls rarely have access to many of these but also their performance in education is judged in relation to their accomplishments in other roles.

Through the decades, whether girls should be allowed to study in co-educational institutions, read science or only literature, prepare to earn a living or be good housewives and so on have been looked at by leading citizens as well as administrators, educationalists and policy makers. Each year more and more girls are entering the formal system of education and whether or not to send a middle class girl to school is now rarely a matter for family debate. yet, attempts at ensuring sexual equality in access founder once more against ingrained prejudices. As individual talent accepts the mandate of the collectivity, an increasing number of girls go to college, training to be school teachers instead of scientists, librarians rather than doctors. There is no value judgement involved in saying that girls become school teachers, librarians and typists in large numbers; the question really is given, the right environment both at home and in the educational system, would not some of these girls move into non-feminised areas of study and work?

### III

It is necessary then to look briefly at what schools teach, how they do so and what their basic ideology is. This would mean an examination of not only curriculum and syllabus but also modes of transmission of knowledge and the atmosphere in which it is done. It is now being increasingly recognised for instance that the textbook, whether it teaches English or Mathematics, can, through the use of characters and symbols in certain situations become a powerful medium for the perpetuation of stereotypes and role models. For instance an NCERT sponsored study of Hindi text-books which are widely used in the country found that the ratio of boy-centred stories to girl-centred stories was 21:0. Again when the books made biographical references, 94 out of 110 relate to prominent men. In the thirteen English language text-books published by the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, boy-centred stories outnumbered girl-centred ones by eighty-one to nine. Further, the general tenor in books in both the languages was to portray boys as courageous, achieving and interested in Science and Technology; girls and women were rarely portrayed in roles associated with economic activity or independence. A study of Marathi text-books found that even when girls were seen as being employed they were invariably portrayed in menial and subordinate roles.<sup>32</sup>

Taking note of the fact that such gross deviations from reality could indeed affect self-perceptions, the Women's Education Unit in the NCERT a few years back undertook projects to devise handbooks on how text-books should be Mathematics demonstrates aptly how change in attitudes can be introduced through a supposedly value-neutral subject. Thus, where earlier, problem sums would deal with shopkeeper Joshi's purchases at the wholesale market and the monthly expenses of Mr. Sathe, the suggested problems ask students of Class III to work out how much Lakshman had in his bank account before he distributed equal sums to his daughter and to his son. At the middle school level, ratios, graphs and equations are introduced through the biographical details of women scientists and mathematicians. Of greater importance than the sums themselves

are the instructions to teachers who are asked to weave in the text while teaching students how to solve a problem.<sup>33</sup>

The originators of these innovative handbooks are well aware of the fact that unless the teachers are convinced of the need to teach more imaginatively, children will concentrate on the solution only and not on the text. Clearly this is the crux of the problem: teachers are by and large a conservative force, who are not easily convinced of the need to teach or preach greater equality between the sexes through Mathematics, Physics or Hindi. Extensive courses to be covered in a set period of time limits the scope for innovative teaching. Nor is it easy to start the process of text-book revision or ensure that the same text books are to be taught in all the schools in the country. Further, text book writers themselves are singularly resistant to change as they feel that radical deviations would clearly disturb the well-entrenched expectations of both the school community as well as the family.

One major advantage of the 10+2+3 system (where 10+2 refer to the years in school and +3 to the time spent on a first degree) is that it makes the learning of Science and Mathematics obligatory for all students upto the Class X (10) level. Yet, though this pattern of education was officially adopted in 1968, it has still to be accepted in a few states. Consequently, under the old scheme, schools continue to offer Home Science and Art for girls rather than Science and Mathematics. However, we also find that schools under the new scheme find ways of countering the system due to the professed inadequacy of teaching staff. Thus in the Jama Masjid area of Delhi, which caters to a largely Muslim population, girls' schools are unable to offer Science and Mathematics because qualified women teachers are not available. It is also not improbable that such schools are in fact catering to the demands for education of a certain kind for girls from an essentially *pardah* society.<sup>34</sup>

That the notion of what is right and proper for a girl to study permeates the educational system in general, is evident from the kind of choices that girls make at the +2 level, that is, for Classes XI and XII. A recent study of Delhi schools indicated that while girls constituted about 60 per cent of the Arts stream and about 30 per cent in the Science and Commerce streams, over 40 per cent flocked to the relatively new vocational stream. Further, the subject-wise breakdown of vocational options showed that girls were concentrated in Typing, Weaving, Textiles, Health Care and Beauty Culture while boys chose Ophthalmics and Optics. Auditing and Accounting in addition to Office Management. Again, for the Socially Useful-Productive Work options in a non-academic area which children can opt for in Classes IX and X, choices are 'markedly sex-typed and girls continue to do the same tasks in school as are assigned to them at home'.<sup>35</sup> However, a look at the performance of girls in school leaving examinations in various parts of the country indicate that not only is the pass level of girls higher than that of boy but also those who have opted for the science stream often fare as well-if not better than their male peers.<sup>36</sup>

The scientific aptitude of girls is represented in school leaving results. However, two important questions need to be asked here: first, how many girls who fare well in Science at the Class X examinations do in fact opt for it at the +2 stage and second, how many of those who offer science for the final school leaving examination continue with it or with related subjects at the degree level? While it is difficult to give precise answers there are indications that in some of the best schools in the country there is only one girl to four boys in the Science section. Further, classroom observations of trainee teachers show that these girls are quiet and reserved non-participants. While they are diligent about their home-work and performed well in unit tests, they rarely take part in discussions which are dominated by the boys.<sup>37</sup> The fact that they are in a minority may have accounted for their low degree of participation. Nonetheless, those who taught Class VI and VII found that girls were as assertive and definite in their point of view as boys, indicating that adolescent girls soon internalised the need to be submissive and obedient, rather than be questioning and argumentative, particularly in an environment where boys are in a majority.

It would appear then that far fewer girls do in fact go in for Science and Technology than would be reasonable to expect from their school-leaving results.<sup>38</sup> Clearly then, there are important non-academic factors which influence choices at the ages of sixteen or seventeen. These are related to social and familial expectations of what a girl's basic role in life is to be; if, as in the majority of cases, it is assumed that she is to be a good wife and devoted mother, who may, if she has time, work as a teacher or as a clerk, there seems little point investing time and energy on a career in science and other related areas. Again, if it is a question of investment of scarce resources, these are invariably invested in a boy: even if his sister has similar aptitudes, she more often than not, redirects them to traditional feminine-oriented courses. Underlying many of these decisions is of course a deep-seated conviction that a woman's basic nature equips her to perform better in certain areas than in others. Even when school results point to the contrary, families - and indeed girls themselves - choose to believe that there can be no true fulfillment in combining too many roles, or in competing to enter male-dominated disciplines.

A survey of parents<sup>39</sup> conducted in a private co-educational school in New Delhi found that 25 per cent said that they would not discriminate in role distribution between sons and daughters; on the other hand, work outside the home such as fetching eggs and bread from the market, taking the dog for a walk or running an errand at the neighbours' were regarded as the boy's legitimate area of activity. Thus only 1 per cent expected their sons to help in the kitchen, while 58 per cent felt that this was a daughter's function. She was also expected to sweep the floor, dust furniture and wash the occasional dish in many more instances than was the case for a son. Another questionnaire circulated among 66 teachers (44 women and 22 men) indicated that "male teachers display a traditional expectation of role-behaviour from girls, whereas the women teachers believe in a definite personhood being given to girls and *ascribe roles to girls that are incongruent with our society's expectation*"<sup>41</sup>(emphasis added). Interestingly, though teachers of

both sexes expected girls to be good at studies, there was greater variance regarding their social role.

This data is from an urban, progressive school, where the environment is organised to encourage the development of a girl's individuality and talent. The situation in the country's many co-educational and girls' only schools is very different: dominant patterns of socialisation both at home and in the school stress feminine docility, chastity and obedience. Girls are expected to study and even to perform well; however, they are not to be excessively competitive or demand the freedom of thought and expression that is essential for the development of *personhood* and not merely *womanhood* along prescribed lines. Krishna Kumar's<sup>41</sup> experiences of "growing up male" is amply substantiated by Leela Dube and Sudhir Kakar's<sup>42</sup> studies of male and female socialisation in India: thus watching girls heading straight home in the silent clusters" from school caused Kumar to believe that "girls are not individuals".<sup>43</sup> As boys, they were free to spend time on the road, experiment with their cycles and watch the world go by. Such small joys are rarely available to a large section of middle class girls; in fact whether or not to allow talented gymnasts, debaters and actresses to participate in activities after school hours often becomes the cause of some tension in many homes. Parents raise legitimate question of the dangers implicit in using public transportation, of girls coping with other participants and of the world at large. Then there are always the queries of curious relatives who want to know why Mina is not there to serve tea to them such disapproval is invariably accompanied noises at Rajesh's success at the computer and at football.

#### IV

In Nineteenth century Bengal, controlled and carefully monitored education for girls was an essential part of the reformist package. It was supposed to provide a life of dignity and gentility to those hitherto exposed to violence and indignities within the home. Ironically in the closing years of the Twentieth century, improved educational and occupational facilities for women have been matched by increasing violence against them, much of which is focussed in and around the home.

Roop Kanwar, the young Rajput girl who was burnt on her husband's funeral pyre on September 4, 1987 has created history in recent times. While she has passed into the realm of mythology, an object for various academic exercises, the event raises several important issues. For instance, at her *barsi* ceremony last year, after the *Gita Path*, glorification of *sati* began "as those attending the *path* including the parents and in-laws of Roop Kanwar started raising pro-*sati* slogans".<sup>44</sup> Women are reported to have raised slogans such as "josati ko satayga, zindagi bhar pachtayega" (he or she who trouble *sati* will regret it all his or her life). While the following day 45 arrests were made, the incidents only highlight the strength of deep-seated social attitudes toward femininity. Of particular relevance is the participation of women in the glorification of *sati*; at the same time, the documentary film. "From the Burning Embers" provides us

with accounts of articulate village women who felt that Roop Kanwar had been forced on to the funeral pyre.<sup>45</sup> They also questioned why men were not expected to immolate themselves, and why women alone were subjected to various indignities and anguish. At the same time, a socially conscious college teacher was totally unprepared for the responses of some of her students. Roop Kanwar, they felt was right; after all, a woman's essence lay in sacrifice and devotion. It would be simplistic to attempt an analysis of the variance in these women's attitudes as clearly different situations evolve different responses; of importance nonetheless is the fact that in parts of rural Rajasthan, the woman's essential role has become a matter for some debate.

Roop Kanwar's death, the suicide by hanging of three educated sisters in Kanpur, the 1319 officially reported 'dowry deaths'<sup>46</sup> in 1987, endless cases of molestation, kidnapping of women and children are only part of the growing violence against women. At one level these can be variously viewed as symptomatic of increasing criminalisation of the urban lumpen, the outcome of an amoral cinema industry which breeds frustration and anger, a burgeoning population with growing aspirations and so on. At another, more fundamental level, the acts of physical or other violence against women - and against other weaker sections of Indian society symbolise an entrenched commitment to a gender-biased, hierarchical order. This commitment manifests itself on the one hand in the glorification of motherhood, of the *sati* or chaste woman, and on the other, in the brutal suppression of a belief system based on the dominance of an upper caste, middle class male Hindu elite.

Analysing 147 reports on marital violence since 1979 the journal *Manushi* Madhu Kishwar<sup>47</sup> concluded that the demand for more dowry was not the only or major cause of violence: "in their own accounts, women tended to emphasise that the husband's and in-law's cruelty and causeless". Further, "it could be triggered off on any pretext and was essentially non-negotiable".<sup>48</sup>

Ashish Nandy has made a distinction between "*sati-as-an-event* and *sati-as-a system*".<sup>49</sup> The event shocks, horrifies and results in people taking up positions which they fiercely defend, in time, the arguments are forgotten, lost. Of greater relevance is the notion of *sati-as-a-system*, or as I understand it of the ideology of *sati*, which manifests itself in the oppression and subordination of women. Particularly significant is the fact that most women themselves internalise many of the values arising out of this ideology. They accept the ideology of difference as inequality; yet there are a growing number of instances of those who question, and, in their own way, argue for difference as a positive value. Such instances one to be found not only in the intellectual arguments of concerned scholars but also in the lives of ordinary women. Some go to *Manushi* with tales of anguish, others write about personal experiences and views and a handful fight for their rights in the courts of law. Here I shall go into the details of only one woman's life; in the concluding pages I will discuss my reasons for doing so as well as try to draw some implications of Kailashbhashini's life for women in the late Twentieth century.

## V

In the Nineteenth century, growing industrialisation and a cut-throat market economy encouraged the British middle class to reinforce, through various sources, the image of the female home-maker *par excellence*. Soon in India, the emergent Bengali middle class or bhadrak culture<sup>50</sup> too fast realised the merit of a sympathetic home environment based on the willing cooperation of the woman. As we have seen in earlier sections, in order to create this compliant and understanding woman and bring her away from the culture of the *antahpur*, it was essential for her to have the right kind of education. Thus learning and writing for women were primarily introduced for the creation of accomplished housewives and daughters. The word was in many senses, an instrument of power and control over women ensuring as it did their development within a prescribed format. However, though men may have been the owners of what they wrote, they could neither control interpretations of their work nor fully monitor women's access (however limited) to the preserve of male power; a few used their skills to express themselves frankly on prevailing social injustices. Women wrote novels, essays and about themselves, providing valuable insights into their lives. The articulation of such views often acted as a catharsis, triggered by the unequal encounter between the sexes and between cultures. With access to learning and writing women started examining hierarchical family relations and their own roles. They were helped by an environment which increasingly stressed the need for social, physical and occupational mobility. The East India company and later, the British Empire, provided substantial scope for ambitious and adventurous men who wanted to be freed of the feudal frame of reference and complex family obligations.

In some cases, and this is particularly true of the autobiographical writings of women, the act of putting pen to paper or recounting one's existence is like a cry of anguish against a life of oppression. The dictated life of Sharadasundari Debi, mother of the eminent social reformer, Keshub Chunder Sen, is a long and sad narration of ill-treatment by her in-laws after her widowhood, at the age of nineteen. But it is also the story of a strong-minded and determined woman who was successful in creating space for herself in a segregated and hierarchical society.<sup>51</sup> Between 1876 and the Nineteen seventies, there is a record of at least fifty autobiographies and autobiographical sketches having been written by Bengali women. The earliest was by Rassundari Debi, the wife of an East Bengal *Zamindar*, who was born in 1811. Unlike many of those who followed her, the self-taught Rassundari received little encouragement from her family, and recounted how she used to hide pages removed from her son's books within the folds of her sari. Rassundari wrote her autobiography in two parts; the earlier part which was written in the late 1870s gives a more comprehensive account of her life. She felt strongly about being denied education, and reflected, "women were indeed unfortunate, and could be counted as being like animals". But "my mind would not accept this, and it was always restless with the urge to learn".<sup>52</sup> *Amar Jiban* or My Life is the account of this amazing women's quest for learning.

In the early years it was not unusual for illiterate or semi-literate women to talk about their lives to scribes; these were published sometimes several decades later. After the middle of the last century, when newspapers, journals and public meetings discussed women's education, spoke for or against child marriage, widow remarriage and the system of *purdah* or female seclusion, women from *bhadralok* families started writing about their lives as well as commenting on the above issues. In addition the role of the *bhadramahila* in changing Bengali society, relations with her husband and the need for greater awareness on health, hygiene and child-care were discussed in the growing number of women's journals and magazines.<sup>53</sup> Kailashbashini Debi's *Janaika Grihabadhur Diary* (A Certain Housewife's Diary)<sup>54</sup> is in the form of reminiscences of her life between 1846 and 1873 and was put together and published only in 1953. It would appear that she kept rough notes which she organised only after her husband's death in 1873, when she was 44 years old. As experiences of over a quarter of a century are compressed in a little over thirty printed pages, clearly she wrote selectively on issues which she remembered well and had been influenced by. An important theme in Kailashbashini's writings is her evolving relationship with her husband, Kissory Chand Mitra, whom she married when she was 11 and the tensions his reformist tendencies created in her mind. Kissory Chand and his brother Peary Chand were both deeply influenced by the ideology of the Brahmo reform movement as well as by Derozie's Young Bengal group. They reacted against polygamy and believed firmly that women should be educated. Accordingly, Kissory Chand taught his wife himself and later arranged for an English woman tutor for her. He was a man of letters, being the editor of the *Indian Field* and a regular contributor to the *Calcutta Review*. While it is not clear whether he actually joined the brahmo Samaj, he was greatly impressed by many of its tenets and had several friends who were its matters. His premature death was attributed to intemperance in food and drink.<sup>55</sup>

Though Kailashbashini did not mention how her husband died, the last few *pages* of her *Diary* reflected a certain helpless sorrow. She mentioned more than once her reservations about the company that he had started keeping on their return to Calcutta after a happy life in the districts. The fact that Kailashbashini wrote as freely as she did on her friendship with her husband as well as about her anguish over his last few years is indicative of a degree of candour not expected of a Hindu widow. But then, Kissory Chand Mitra's wife had been exposed to much more than most average middle class Bengali women. In addition, through education she had acquired the ability to express herself freely : her *Diary* was her confidence in later life. She was also in many ways a fitting example of a *Zenana*-educated women. A certain degree of fluency in both English and Bengali meant that she was able to read fairly extensively - as well as liken her at times lonely *mofussil* (district) life to that of Robindon Crusoe's. She was also able to teach her young daughter, Kumudini. Unlike other educated women of her day, Kailashbashini decided to write about her life. Though we are given no reasons for her wanting to do so, the *Diary* clearly fulfilled an important role in her later life: through its pages she freely expressed the dilemmas faced by a

woman caught between tradition and the inexorable forces of changes during those action-packed years.

In many ways, Kailashbashini's conflicts reflected in microcosm, the drama being enacted on a much bigger stage. When, in around the 1830s, Kishore Chandra Mitra was first attracted to the reform movement, it was entering its most dynamic phase, by the time he died, the movement was deeply divided, one of the major controversial issues being the role of women and how they should be equipped to face change. Not unexpectedly, the nature and extent of women's education was an important talking point. While the more orthodox, and certainly dominant sections of Hindu society were unwilling to educate their womenfolk at all, Brahmos too were not united on this question. For most, the ideal was *zenana* education which conveniently combined the notion of feminine seclusion with a modicum of basic learning. By and large, opinion on the education of girls was divided along the following lines : while Dwarkanath Ganguly, Sivanath Sastri and other radical Brahmo felt that as both men and women should have equal chances in life, there was no justification for the study of separate subjects or limits to the level to which girls should be educated, mainstream Brahmos led by Keshub Chunder Sen and Umash Chandra Datta, editor of the influential *Bamabodhini Patrika* (Journal for the Enlightenment of Women) as well as a section of more enlightened Hindus were advocates of limited education for girls, with a separate curriculum. On the other hand, conservative Hindus, most of whom were, at best, prepared to allow a modicum of *zenana* education, were greatly concerned with the harmful affects of education, which they felt would make women negligent of their families and lax in house keeping. In the early 1860s, the *Bamabodhini Patrika* (which was founded by the followers of Sen) had started a scheme of education for girls and women through correspondence known as *Antahpur Shiksha* (home education). As a feasible alternative to a few years of schooling in a formal institution this course provided the opportunity for girls to continue with learning even after they were married.<sup>56</sup> *Zenana* education through the columns of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* as well as from home tutors continued to be the most popular method of education of girls for several years.

Kailashbashini was initially taught by her husband, and later, when the couple moved to Calcutta, became a student of the *zenana* system. Her reflections on life were clearly influenced by contemporary events as well as by all that she had been through personally. For her, reform had been a bitter-sweet experience: on the one hand while it had meant personal emancipation and the evolution of a meaningful marital relationship, it had on the other, also involved putting up with a style of life which ultimately spelt destruction for her immediate family. Kailashbashini who was 11 years old when she was married had a great eye for detail, dates and names, the description of each incident or occasion was accompanied by meticulous information on the day, month and year as well as of the persons encountered. Her ability to enjoy the countryside and the experience of travelling for days on end along the waterways of East Bengal are evocatively described. Her visit to Plassey - "where the British and the *nawabs* first fought" -

was an exciting event: she wrote “even though at that time I felt the loss of my son acutely, I experienced a deep sense of satisfaction when I came home”. After the birth of her daughter in 1847, she wrote: “My mother-in-law was very sad. She said, “I have lost gold and got glass instead”. Kailashbashini did not dwell on her mother-in-law’s feelings much but goes on to describe Kissory Chand’s responses, and the discomforts of her confinement. Her husband wrote to say that he was very happy and that “you should feel no sorrow. All are the same in the eyes of the *Jagatpita* (father of the world, or God). We should also treat all equally. I am awaiting the time when you will be able to write to me”.<sup>57</sup> But it was a long time before Kailashbashini could reply, confined as she was to a room which she likened to “a kind of jail room”. For almost a month the upper caste post-partum woman was not to touch anything nor communicate with others except functionaries assigned specific tasks. With their young daughter Kumudini, the couple soon started touring the *mofussil* areas together, often sending long days on the river “when we played cards and chatted”. Kailashbashini kept track of her husband’s work and proudly reported the establishment of a hospital or a school. Wherever possible, she made friends with other Bengali women. While family members used to visit the districts occasionally, the young couple spent most of the time on their own. On her visits to either her parents or her in-laws, Kailashbashini recounted how she used to be counting the days for her return to her husband. Kissory Chand used to teach her English, and in 1852 when he was posted to Calcutta, he engaged an English woman, Miss Tugod, as tutor for his wife. This lady used to teach two other *bhadramahilas* also, and was paid Rs. 25 by each family. Kailashbashini added “and there was tuition from the home guru (her husband) as well. In this way a certain amount of knowledge was acquired”.<sup>58</sup> In Jahanabad there were not many women whom Kailashbashini could befriend:

My daughter and my husband were my only support. I did not see the faces of any other living being. Not that this caused me much discomfort. When he used to go to the *mofussil*, I used to live like Robinson Crusoe. I ate, slept, read and did needle-work. I also taught my daughter and wrote this book. And I used to count the days for his return. When my husband came back, I was greatly relieved.<sup>59</sup>

Life changed for Kailashbashini when her husband became a Junior Magistrate in Calcutta; the last few pages of her brief *Diary* make frequent mention of her husband’s growing attraction for the more westernised, liberal Bengalis, many of whom were Brahmos. Kissory Chand obviously enjoyed the ideas of his new friends, where no doubt discussions were carried out over a glass of port or wine. When Kailashbashini objected, her husband chided her affectionately, but did not give much attention to her protestations. As her husband’s interaction with social reformers increased, Kailashbashini too started mixing with their wives. At the homes of eminent Brahmos Ramtanu Lahiri and Ramgopal Ghosh, she ate food prepared by a cook and served by a Muslim bearer. Though she clearly found the situation somewhat unusual, strong conviction of the validity of her own way of life left her unaffected. She reported:

I told Babu about Ramtanu, Babu's wife, Babu asked "where did she eat"? I replied, "why, with everyone else. After all who am I or who is she, or who is anyone for that matter"? Babu replied "that indeed is true and it is only Bengalis who make an unnecessary fuss". I don't believe in Hindu rituals, but nonetheless, I observe them. The reason for this is that if I slacken even a bit, my husband, will cease being a Hindu. The Hindu are my closest relatives. I cannot give them up and hence I observe all the rituals.. My husband can do what he likes, there is no problem in that Bengalis observe this religion, and hence those who have brains, do not observe the Bengali religion. I don't believe in it but I will never tell my husband this. If Babu heard this from my lips I cannot describe how happy he would be.<sup>60</sup>

While Kailashbashini was not actively hostile to the Brahmo faith, she was reluctant to give up what she had been brought up to believe in. In a particularly dramatic passage she described her discussion with Kissory Chand regarding their differing beliefs. She told her husband that as from childhood he had been teaching her as one would teach a pet bird to speak, "I cannot have any views that are basically different from yours. But I will not leave Hinduism and I have given you the reasons why". Her husband retorted "do you have so little belief in me"? To which Kailashbashini replied, "No, that can never be; but I do not believe in your style of life". Finally, "Babu understood and did not say anything more".<sup>61</sup> Kailashbashini's questioning and sceptical mind was critical of some aspects of Hinduism and she clearly had a growing interest in the Brahmo faith. However, on balance she felt that it was her duty to uphold certain Hindu values at a time when families were being torn apart by religious and social dissensions. This decision was not free of tension, and dilemma comes through in her writings. As an obedient wife she knew that it was her duty to follow her husband and his commitments. Yet, she ultimately chose to abide by her own beliefs - not only because she was convinced of their basic validity, but also through an intuitive conviction of the stability of staying with the known and tested.

The year that the Company Rule ended "there was a comet sighted in the sky and in the month of *Aswin* (September), there was a terrible earthquake". It also brought to an end Kissory Chand's employment with the British and he was unceremoniously stripped of his title of *Rai Bahadur*. In the days that followed, Kailashbashini consoled him and even suggested that she could contribute to the family income by selling her needlework. Her husband was apparently appreciative of her support and understanding:

Babu said "I have gained great courage from your words .... From your words I realise that you are as brave as I am, that you are as intelligent as I am and in fact that your staying power is greater than mine. In knowing this all my pain has gone".<sup>62</sup>

The pages of Kailashbashini's *Diary* are alive with descriptions of her relationship with her husband, which among other things are characterised by a strong sense of

companionship and mutual respect. They not only played cards with each other, read together but also argued on matters of considerable social and religious significance. Kailashbashini's writings give the distinct impression that not only were the discussions frank and forthright, but also that Kissory Chand often accepted his wife's point of view and reasoning. Despite her maintenance of strict *purdah*, travels in the districts of Bengal gave Kailashbashini insights into different ways of life. The fact that Kissory Chand had chosen to keep his wife and child with him provided for the development of a strong family bond where both partners looked upon the home as a refuge from the fast changing world outside. Judging by the narration of events, neither Kailashbashini's family nor that of her conjugal home had much of a role to play in their lives. Though as a dutiful daughter-in-law she attended every important family function, Kailashbashini never failed to recount how both she and her husband were counting the days for her return.

*Janaika Grihabadhur Diary* is remarkable for its candour and insights. It describes in some detail the life of an Indian working for the East India Company through the eyes of a woman who was educated enough not only to teach her child, be familiar with the scriptures of other religions but also to write lucidity on moral and social issues. At the end of the *Diary*, the editors have included a page of monthly accounts and details of jewellery, both of which were meticulously maintained by Kailashbashini. Without the all-encompassing purview of older family members and in-laws. Kailashbashini developed a strong sense of personal identity and was quite clear, particularly in the early years of her marriage, on her role in preserving domestic harmony: though she did make occasional statements about the limitations of a woman's mind, her well-reasoned response to Hinduism at the level of ritual and behaviour convey the impression of a balanced, independent-minded woman.

Kailashbashini's Diary starts in the year her son died and ends with the death of Kissory Chand in 1873.

Oh reader, here my book ends. Today my life is finished ... I came back a widow. When this name (widow) comes to my ears, it is like a thunderbolt. Alas, what a frightening name (word) - hearing it is like having a heart attack.<sup>63</sup>

It is possible that Kailashbashini's apprehensions of widowhood were based on an awareness of the singularly oppressive and limited life of a Hindu widow. What is more possible however is that her agonised words lamented the premature end of a life of companionship and mutual trust. This evolution of a husband-wife bond with limited interference from the larger family collectivity was not usual in Nineteenth century Bengal. To characterise it as a marriage based on the 'romantic love' notion which was growing in the west would also perhaps be inappropriate. It would be more realistic to liken Kailashbashini's attitude to Kissory Chand as being one of *bhakti* or devotion, of thanks - giving to a man she admired, and who had done much for her. But her account is not free from a certain implicit regret and a feeling that after a point of time, situations had overtaken her. While she did not express openly her resentment at this turn of events, it is implied in many of her musings.

Kailashbashini was an independent-minded woman, who nonetheless knew when and how to give in. She was a fine strategist who combined tact with a degree of firmness. Yet, in the ultimate analysis, she was a helpless and lonely figure in a world where men and the male way of life determined the fate of families.

Written from the point of view of one deeply affected by social change, Kailashbashini's *Diary* provides insights into how an individual woman responded to the events influencing her life: her story is neither a paean for change, nor an indictment of it. Rather, it gives a realistic assessment of how she was affected, and influenced. Using the tools of literacy provided to her by these very forces of change, Kailashbashini gives us a fairly vivid idea of her life and its concomitant tensions. She started reading and writing in her mid-teens by which time she had been socialised into the ethos of the *antahpur*; nonetheless, she looked eagerly to the male preserve of learning, combining her innate commitment to order and continuity with her desire for access to the new knowledge. Her education gave her the skill to express on paper; learning did not merely create an unthinkingly devoted helpmeet but also a questioning, and at times troubled mind. In part, Kailashbashini's apprehensions regarding the social reform movement indicated a willingness to question some of the values of the western-oriented yet staunchly male-dominated society. Ultimately, her tenacity in sticking by tradition was of destruction. As a woman, she was in no position to impose her will on his; though she had in some areas resisted Kissory Chand's dominance, she was, by and large, his creation, his willing student. Not did Kailashbashini write openly on her ultimate anguish, of her suffering as her life's companion abandoned an existence of dimple pleasures for the more compelling intellectual stimulation and way of life of his peers.

Education did not result in too many Kailashbashini's; what it did however, was to provide those who were interested, access to new kinds of information as well as to a certain way of thinking and of analysing situations. Most importantly, acquisition of the skill of writing helped not only in documentary events but also in giving expression to feelings and emotions.

With their return to Calcutta, Kailashbashini clearly found certain social relationships strenuous; while she could not accept her husband's new life style nor his associates she was not free to ignore their implications either. It is possible that she often sought refuge in the pages of her *Diary*. In its present form, the *Diary* reads as a subsequent re-casting of earlier events. Though Kailashbashini did not give any reasons for keeping a journal, it was evidently a source of great comfort to her. For instance in the passage where she described the reasons for remaining a Hindu despite a basic sympathy for the reformist cause, Kailashbashini was clearly using writing as a medium for externalising a deep-seated conflict. By doing so she was able, presumably to cope with the situation better.

Writing fiction, poetry as well as about themselves were forms of self-expression at which a small number of *bhadramahilas* soon became quite adept. Life in the *zenana* undoubtedly provided women with the opportunity to share the joys and their

anxieties with female affines and relatives; yet such communications had their limitations as well as structural constraints. For some, literary writing provided a newly acquired freedom, creative yet not threatening. Descriptions of delicate manoeuvrings, strategic negotiations as well as outright frustration all find their place in these texts which range from well-organised books and articles to random and somewhat haphazard jottings. A reading of these texts becomes meaningful for a better understanding of the impact of social forces on women's lives; in the present context, such writings are examples of the liberational potential of education.

By the middle of the 1850s, upper middle class, upper caste Bengali women had started writing in journals, and newspapers, while like a handful also wrote full-length books. Not all had her determination or strength of mind; many wrote in a manner which clearly indicated a dominant male influence. Their aim was to reiterate the new goals of womanhood which neither the *antahpur*, nor interestingly enough, education was to disturb or threaten. Women who wrote had been educated at home, or may even have spent a few years in a girl's school. As we have seen, a well-monitored curriculum and access to a limited number of texts was controlled by men in the family and in educational institutions. By the end of the century, a steady trickle began entering the highly recommended feminine profession of teaching; a few became doctors, others became involved in the national movement and in social work. Most, of course, remained enlightened housewives, trained in the art of modern home management.

The educational system, then, has performed its role well in the creation of the ideal women; yet Kailashbashini and her spiritual heiriness in the present century are also the products of the same system which, by granting individuals certain skills, has equipped them to be considered as persons in their own rights: by drawing a distinction between womanhood and personhood. I am re-stating in another way, the two conceptualisations of difference. Difference as inequality celebrates sexual difference which is graded on a scale, while difference as a value celebrates sexual difference for the sake of this very difference. Difference as inequality believes in a distinct manhood and a womanhood, while difference as a value views individuals as persons. Persons, whether they are men or women have specific attributes but there is no necessary stereotypification or ranking involved. In fact, there is, as Kailashbashini's life has shown, a questioning of stereotypes and of an unequal hierarchical order, and a demand to be considered as separate, but equal. Of course, such notions are mere thoughts hinted at the Kailashbashini's writings; in contemporary India they are the mandate of a growing number of women who are becoming more aware of their *rights as persons and* not merely of their *obligations as women*.

Legal intervention,<sup>64</sup> the work of voluntary organisations and a number of groups committed to the creation of awareness are playing an increasingly important role in this process of consciousness raising. The natural tendency of the educational system would be to perpetuate inequality; in earlier sections, discussions of existing policies as well as of practices have shown how easily education becomes a handy tool in a stratified society. But there is also the other, more subtle, if not covert

process at work that which creates the mind which questions. The enquiring mind is supposedly one of the chief goals of education; yet, training by rote, an uninteresting curriculum and disinterested teachers do not encourage the spirit of discovery or of enquiry. There is in all of us, however, the Dahrendorfian urge to be free, and questioning is but one part of a mind that seeks freedom and self-expression. This paper has attempted how education provides the training and skill for expression, enquiry and an intellectual search for options. The manner in which individuals use these is a function of their socialisation and commitment. Often, one's socialisation may be at variance with a deep-seated commitment to change. The choices that one makes are very much a product of one's ability to stake a claim for one's convictions and beliefs.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

I am grateful to Aparna Basu, Sureshachandra Shukla, Vina Mazumdar and Hiranmay Karlekar for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. Dahrendorf discussion his views on library in the Reith lectures put together in *The New Library*, London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. This quotation is from "From Expansion to Improvement: Changing the Subject of History", p.3.
2. Sen his *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* , London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959.
3. In the present context, Amartya Sen's discussion of entitlements within the family and in society is most appropriate. See in particular his "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts", Discussion paper number 1342, October 1987, Harvard Institute of Economic Research, Harvard University.
4. The Preamble to the Constitution establishes a commitment to liberty and equality, as well as "Justice, Social, Economic and Political". Article 14 deals with equality before law, Article 15 prohibits discrimination *inter alia* on grounds of sex. Part (3) of the same article permits the state to make special provision for women and children. Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in terms of employment. In 1976 an amendment to the Constitution added Fundamental Duties in Article 51A. Relevant "practices derogatory to the dignity of women".
5. In my "Education and Inequality" in Andre Beteille's *Equality and Inequality : Theory and Practice* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1982) I have looked at how education has brought about new inequalities among certain groups including women and the Scheduled Castes.

Kole Omotoso, "The Language of Our Dreams or the Dreams of our Language" in *Criticism and Ideology - Second African Writer's Conference*, Stockholm, 1986, edited by K.H. Peterson, Uppsala:Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988, p. 57 deals aloquently with the forces of neo-colonialism as does Ngugi Wa Thieng `O's *Decolonising the Mind*, London : James Currey, 1986.

6. On p. 45 of his "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts" (Discussion paper No. 1342, Harvard Institute of Economic Research, 1987) Amartya Sen draws attention to the consistent tendency of viewing women as patients rather than as agents within the family and in society as a whole. Reiterating his wellknown position that bargaining relations in the family result in cooperation for survival within the overall environment of conflict, Sen shows that it is important to understand the role of "perception and agency" in determining women's general well being. A number of Indian researchers

have been considerably influenced by this conceptual approach. Gerda Lerner's "Placing Women in History : Definition and Challenges" in her *The Majority Finds its Past - Placing Women in History*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1979 discusses the trend in American History of "contribution" history which while documenting the roles of important women nonetheless ends up "treating women as victims of oppression" which again places them "in a male-defined conceptual framework" (p.148). The quotation in the text is also from the same page.

7. Any brief assessment of theory exposes itself to the accusation of misrepresentation; this is particularly true when dealing with a complex area such as French feminist thought in the post-1968 period. In this context, Toril Moi's "Introduction" to her *French Feminist Thought* is an excellent overview of themes; Chapters by Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and others, all foremost exponents of *l'écriture féminine* discuss the use of a language, written in the white ink (i.e. women's milk) of difference, where differentness resides not only in themes and approaches but in how women form a language out of their physiology. Drawing on the work of neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and the Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, these abstruse theorists make the important political point that as a woman thinks, writes and experiences life differently, "phallogocentric western thought" and all that it stands for needs to be rejected and replaced by a woman's experience which lives through her metaphors and her language. For an earlier English introduction to these writings see Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, *New French Feminisms*, Brighton : Harvester Press, 1979.
8. For instance, foremost exponents of this school of thought such as Mary Daly (*Gyn/Ecology* and Adrienne Rich (*On Lies, Secrets and Silence*) ask for a return to femaleness, to a basic female essence. Such theories can, without much difficulty, lead to a reductionist essentialism; they also lend credence to a male/female opposition which can be conveniently ranked on a hierarchy of male: Culture; superior in opposition to women : nature : subordinate. See Linda Alcoff's "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism : The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory, *SIGNS : Journal of Women in culture and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1988, for a discussion of cultural feminism and deconstruction.

In her well-known *In a Different Voice* Carol Gilligan discusses male and female differences in perceptions to rights and responsibilities; based on data from 3 empirical studies, she concludes that women appear to temper responsibility with caring while men are more concerned with fulfilling their obligations without getting unnecessarily involved. Women students also appear to respond better to what Mary Field Belenky *et al* call 'connected teaching' (*Women's Ways of Knowing*, New York : Basic Books, 1986) rather than to impersonal, 'separated teaching'.

10. See his *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York : The Free Press, 1968 for a detailed elaboration of the notion of relative deprivation and its implications.

11. In his *Stratagems and Spoils* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1967) F.G. Bailey discusses the public face of politics and the private wisdom of participants in the context of a few case studies based on his field observations.
12. Andre Beteille, *The Idea of natural Inequality*, London School of Economics 1980, p. 60. In his 'Race and Caste : A Reconsideration', (mimeo 1989) Beteille makes the point that Women's Studies can contribute not only towards "a fuller understanding of relations between the sexes but also for a deeper insight into the general problem of inequality" (p.6). His acceptance of the role of Women's Studies in widening the social scientists' epistemological base marks a major shift in the position of a leading sociologist. From another discipline, psychologist Carol Gilligan raises similar questions on the association of difference with qualities ranged in a hierarchy. See *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge:Harvard University Press, 1986.
13. See p. 26 of Mary Warneck's "The Distribution of Education" in her *Schools of Thought*, London : Faber and Faber, 1977. The author discusses with great clarity the notions of equality and egalitarianism in this essay.
14. Quoted on p. 30 of Warnock, *ibid.*
15. From p. 177 of J.P. Naik's "Equality, Quality and Quantity in Indian Education" in the *International Review of Education's Jubilee Number*, 1979.
16. Pierre Bourdieu and J. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London : Sage Publications, 1976.
17. Rammohun Roy put forth his views on women in five pamphlets, two petitions and a number of letters. Written originally in Bengali, he translated these into English so as to make them available to a larger reading public. These quotations are from his second tract on *sati* entitled "A Second Conference Between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive" as it appears on pp. 51-2 of Sophia Debson Collect's *Life and Letters of Rammohun Roy* (Calcutta: A.C. Sarkar, 1913, edited by Hem Chandra Sarkar).
18. See in particular chapters I & II of J.S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, London : Oxford University Press, 1971 (1869).
19. In their "Sex Differences and Cognitive Abilities : A Sterile Field of Enquiry?" Dorothy Griffiths and Esther Saraga give a competent overview of these scientific trends. Their essay appears in Donagh Hartnett *etal's Sex-role Stereotyping*, London : Tavistock Publications, 1979.
20. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York : The Free Press, 1964 (1933), p. 60.
21. Joan Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, London : Croom Helm Ltd., 1980, p. 37.

22. *Ibid*, p. 38. In particular, Chapters 1, 2, 4 & 5 deal with notions of femininity and emerging ideas on women's capacities.
23. *Ibid*, p. 91.
24. See for instance Nancy F. Cott's "Passionlessness : An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850" in *SIGNS*, Vol. 4, No. 21, 1978, pp. 219-236 for the growth of these ideas on feminine sexuality.
25. From p. 3 of Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*, New York : Penguin Books, 1985.
26. Part one of Showalter's book is full of interesting information on Victorian Notions of women's mental disorders.
27. See the Bangladeshi historian Ghulam Murshid's most informative *Reluctant Debutante : Response of Bengali Women to Modernisation 1849-1905* (Rajshahi University Press 1982), and Meredith Borthwick's *The Changing Role of women in Bengal, 1849-1985* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1984) for considerable material on the lives of women and on attitudes to and of women during his period. Borthwick categories and *bhadramahilas* as the women from *bhadralok* homes and deals at length with their responses to education, the family, marriage, dress reform and so on.
28. While men wrote extensively on women in the *antahpur* similar writings by women were not unknown; the two most noteworthy are Bamasundari Debi's *Ki Ki Kusanskar Tirohitha Hoiley Desher Sribridhi Hoibey? (Which are the Superstitions that Need to be Removed for the Country's Prosperity?)* published in 1861 and Kailashbashini Debi (Gupta's) *Hindu Mahilaganer Hinabastha (The Lowly Position of Hindu Women)* published in 1864.
29. Sumit Sarkar, "The Women's Question in Nineteenth Century Bengal" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid's edited *Women and Culture*, p. 160.
30. Government of West Bengal, *Report of the Commission for Planning of Higher Education in West Bengal*, New Delhi : Government of West Bengal, 1984, p. 144.
31. From Selections from Educational Records, Calcutta, 1922, Part II, p. 388.
32. Kamlesh Nischol, *The Invisible Women*, New Delhi, Amalatas, 1978 and *women and Girls as Portrayed in Hindi Text Books*, New Delhi, NCERT, 1976. In Vasudha Dhagamwar's "Women Who Use the Marriage Act", *India International Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 1 1985, Marathi Text books have been analysed.
33. NCERT has brought out three handbooks on textbook writing, namely Status of Women through Curriculum, Elementary Teachers Handbook, 1982, Status of Women through Curriculum. Secondary and Senior Secondary Stages

- 1984, and Status of Women through Teaching of Mathematics - A Teacher's Handbook, 1984. All three are interesting and informative.
34. *Challenge of Education*, New Delhi, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1986, p. 43 discusses the non-implementation of the 10+2+3 system particularly in respect of the education of girls. Observation on schools in the Jama Masjid area were made by a Muslim girl student of Jamia Millia Islamia who has studied in one such school.
  35. Usha Nayar, "Education of Girls at the Secondary Level in India", unpublished paper, 1983. It gives a detailed analysis of streaming of students in different disciplines in Delhi schools.
  36. *Patriot*, New Delhi, 25 May, 1985; this report merely confirms what national data in *Education in India* volumes clearly show.
  37. Jamia Millia, observation of B.Ed. student.
  38. Rajani Kumar, "Secondary Education for Girls; The What and How", *Education Quarterly*, October 1982, Vol. XXIV, No. 4. Her analysis of Delhi applies equally to the rest of the country.
  39. From Vibha Parthasarathi's "Socialisation, Women and Education: An Experiment" in Karuna Chanana's edited *Socialisation, Education and Women*, New Delhi; Orient Longmans, 1988.
  40. *Ibid*, p. 211.
  41. Krishna Kumar, "Growing up Male", *Seminar* 318, February 1986.
  42. Leela Dube, "On the Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Review of Women's Studies, Vol. XXIII, No. 18, April 30, 1988, p. WS-11. See also Sudhir Kakar's *The Inner World - A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood in India*, New Delhi : Oxford University press, 1981. His later *Mystics Shamans and Doctors* (New Delhi : Oxford University press, 1984) gives interesting case histories of how traditional society copes with psychic stress among women.
  43. Kumar, p. 22.
  44. From the *Times of India*, New Delhi, September 23, 1988.
  45. This is a 40 minute documentary made by Mediastorm, a group of five young women trained in video technology. It deals with the aftermath of the Roop Kanwar incident as well as with the response of activists and politicians.
  46. From p. 32 of *Parliamentary News and Views Service*, Budget Session 1988, quoting Minister of State for Home Affairs, P. Chidambaram's response to a question by Syed Shahabuddin.

47. Madhu Kishwar analyses reasons for increasing domestic violence in "Battered!" in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, September 24, 1989, pp. 12-19.

48. *Ibid*, p. 14.

49. Nandy makes this point in his "Sati as Kaliyuge", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 38, September 17, 1988, p. 1976.

Apart from "Sati : A Nineteenth Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest" in his *At the Edge of Psychology:Essays in Politics and Culture*, New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1980, Nandy has also written, "The Sociology of Sati", *Indian Express*, October 5, 1987; and "The Human Factor", *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, January 17, 1988. See also, Imrana Qoadeer and Zoya Hasan, "Deadly Politics of the State and Its Apologists", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 14, 1987; and Sujata Patel and Krishna Kumar, "Defenders of Sati", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 23, 1988.

50. For a discussion of the term *bhadralok* see J.H. Broomfield's *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 13. While Broomfield envisaged the *bhadralok* as a distinct category, Rajat Kanta Ray in his *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1984, is more inclined to conceptualise the society" rather than a homogenous group.

51. Sharadasundari Devi dictated her life to her grandson-in-law Jogendralal Khastigir. It was published in Bengali as *Atmakatha* (Autobiography) in 1913.

52. From p. 28 of Rassundari's *Amar Jiban* included in Vol. 1 of Nareshchandra Jana *et. al's Atmakatha*, Calcutta, Ananya Prakashan, 1981.

53. See Borthwick, Chapters Three and Eight.

54. Kailashbashini Debi's *Janaika Grihbadhur Diary* was serialised in the Bengali monthly, *Basumati* in 1953 and has recently been put together in the Bengali literary and cultural journal *Akkhon*, special issue of 1982, pp. 8-64. Present reference are from this version, and I have done the translation.

55. While there is no biography of Kissory Chand, I have gleaned these details of his life from various sources as well as appendix II, pp. 170-1 of Roper Lethbridge's *A History of the Renaissance in Bengal*, Ramtanu Lahiri : *Brahman and Reformer*, Calcutta, Editions Indian 1972 (first published in 1907).

56. In Appendix Two, Murshid describes *Zenana* education in full. While a number of journals for women had started appearing by this time, *Bamobodhini Patrika* and *Tattabodhini Patrika*, and later Dwarekanath Ganguly's *Abalabandhab* were the most important journals for women. Earlier in Chapter I, he discusses attitudes to women's education. See also Borthwick, Chapter I.

57. Kailashbashini Debi, *op.cit*, p. 10.
58. *Ibid*, p. 30.
59. *Ibid*, p. 21.
60. *Ibid*, p. 32
61. *Ibid*, pp. 32. From page 31 onwards, Kailashbashini starts discussing in some detail the dilemma facing her.
62. *Ibid*, p. 14-35.
63. *Ibid*, p. 41.
64. For recent studies on judicious intervention see Lotika Sarkar's "Women and Law" in the Annual Surveys of Indian Law published by the Indian Law Institute, New Delhi from 1985 onwards.