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phenomenological exploration

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Being an educated woman: A phenomenological exploration

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

From

University of Wollongong

By

Vinathe Sharma-Brymer

B.A., P.G. Dip Env. Planning, M.A. (psych), M.Ed. (Hons)

Faculty of Education 2007

Thesis Certification

I, Vinathe Sharma-Brymer, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at another institution.

Vinathe Sharma-Brymer

March 26, 2007

Abstract

This study explores ten Indian women's experience of 'being an educated woman.' These ten women have a bachelor's degree and hail from Bangalore city in India. The social phenomenon of being an educated person is a positive notion in postcolonial, Indian society. Girls' and women's education is regarded as important for their family and for the nation's progress. Academic research on asking educated women what do they think of themselves as being educated is hardly evident.

The value of this thesis lies in its explorative phenomenological framework used to document the participants' narratives of their experience. It also highlights the researcher's lived experience, using insider/outsider perspective. Applying a broad interpretive phenomenological approach this study provides an alternative framework of reflection, interpretation and analysis of the space in their lived experience. It also draws from educational theory, human development models and feminist research for a richer understanding of women, education and development area.

Data sources of this study include in-depth interviews, academic and non-academic literature and stories. The stages of interpreting the data included immediate reflections following the interviews, identification from the transcripts of thematic layers, and three layers of interpretation. In this three-stage process the participants' texts were analysed in depth through active listening, repeated reading of the transcripts, researcher's bracketed reflections, and layers of thematic interpretation – to illuminate the complexity of 'going back to the things themselves.'

Layers of interpretation revealed a 'torn-between' experience, an experience of tensions, conflict and contradiction both in the public and private spheres of life. It was an interplay on the continuum of an educated woman becoming a 'confident ideal' as well as living as a 'social ideal.' The contradiction illuminated a site of desire and threat related to change and action.

Through the analysis of this experience the thesis builds a theoretical construct to describe the space that can be created in educated women's lives, one which they are required to negotiate constantly. This construct is the Actionable Space (AS), which locates educated women's lived experience in the 'third space' between awareness of self-efficacy and awareness of social conformity leading to their tensions and conflicts. This critical space creates hope and the beginnings of a new direction in understanding the experience of being an educated woman. This research provides the personal practical and collective knowledge of the experience for the public. It is essential that teachers' training workshops, and parent and community education incorporates this knowledge to initiate a positive change in girls' and women's education. It needs to be included in all situations where female agency is discussed.

Acknowledgements

Many people, memories and many events have accompanied me during this research project. My heartfelt *thank you* to all those who have been with me.

To my father for his encouragement and my sisters for their invaluable support.

To all my friends in India and Australia for their interest in my research.

I have used a few photographs in the thesis to provide a suitable background. The individuals in the photographs are not related to the thesis in any way. Nevertheless, I thank these anonymous individuals who permitted me to photograph them. *Thank you* also to Dr. Eric Brymer, Asare and Aralu organisations for permitting me to use photograph/s from their collection.

To the Division of Communications and Education, and International Student Centre at University of Canberra where I started my doctoral degree studies.

To the Faculty of Education and Office of Research at University of Wollongong where I continued my studies.

My sincere thanks to Professors Victoria Foster and Alison Elliott for their supervision in the first two years of my candidature at University of Canberra.

My special thanks to Dr. Coralie McCormack, Dr. Eric Brymer and Dr. Lenore Armour for reading parts of the thesis and providing insightful critical comments. I appreciate their willingness, their precious time and attention to my writing.

Two individuals – Dr. Christine Fox and Associate Professor Barbara Pamphilon – have engaged themselves in my research and provided a high level of support while supervising my project. A *very big thank you* to them. Chris has had an additional and special role of witnessing the turning points and tensions involved in my journey. As always, she shared my concerns besides being insightful of my needs, strengths and limitations. I wish to acknowledge her expertise in my research area.

Can I ever express, in words, how thankful I am to my Eric, little boy Surya and the little little one still in my womb? They have been very patient! Eric and our two children have been a part of this thesis – with my reading, listening, discussions, conferences, writing, typing and reflecting. Eric, Surya and the little one – thank you for sharing my life.

Finally, a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to Kanaka, Ganga, Vinoda, Mani, Rani, Kavitha, Shubha, Nirmala and Deepa. Without these nine women, this project would not have continued. This work is dedicated to them.

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All photographic plates from the Vinathe Sharma-Brymer/ Eric Brymer collection

Prologue: I am an Indian, educated woman

Elder sister, elder sister

Elder sister, elder sister,
to have a talk
heart to heart,
let's push open the attic door
then untie our hearts.

Have a talk
heart to heart
with the sacred *tulsi* plant
swaying in the courtyard.
The moon has gone
behind the attic;
sweet is the talk
between mother and daughter.

Put a double wick
into the lamp;
elder sister, elder sister,
let's talk all night.

For such give and take
a mountain is not enough!
I live on the courage
your words give me,
elder sister, elder sister.

(Tharu & Lalita, 1991, p. 138)

This thesis is a phenomenological study that explores the experiences of being an educated woman in India. By 'educated' I mean women who have formal educational qualifications of a bachelor's degree and above. I am one of the ten women participating in this research. All except myself live in Bangalore city in Southern India. The ten women – Kanaka, Ganga, Vinoda, Mani, Kavitha, Rani, Shubha, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinathe – describe their experiences of 'being an educated woman.' Indian, educated women have hardly been asked the question 'what is your experience of being an educated woman?' This question opens up a 'space' to listen to their lived experience related to education and being educated.

The ten women's experiences, their life stories, are related to the private and public spheres of life wherein they identify themselves as being educated. When their voices speak and are heard, meaning rather than truth becomes more visible. This, I believe, is profoundly significant as many socio-cultural myths and beliefs exist around female education in India, which impact on their experiences in multiple ways. In postcolonial Indian society, the social phenomenon of a person 'educated with a bachelor's degree' is bigger than any formal/Constitutional definition of an educated person. In a society where girls' and women's education is regarded important for their family and for the nation's progress, there is an urgent and significant need to ask women what do they think of themselves as being educated.

The content of this thesis is interwoven with my lived experience of being an Indian educated woman to make sense of my own understanding of an Indian educated woman as well as to formally explore how other Indian educated women made sense of their 'being educated' selves. I chose Indian women particularly, because I am Indian and I am one among them. Except for Vinathe all the other nine women are represented by pseudonyms.

Tracing the journey back: Why is this research important to me

In 2001 when I was writing my Master's degree thesis in Australia on women and education in India (Sharma, 2001) I read an interview in a newspaper published from Bangalore city, India. In that interview an Indian academic Shrimati Das said Indian women hesitated to speak about their life stories (Das cited by Vattam, 2001). She was leaving for the USA to undertake more research on women's autobiographical accounts, which I personally found interesting – Indian academics learning more about researching women's lives in overseas countries. As a coincidence I was writing about three women's life stories in my thesis. My desire to write about women's personal lives and to reveal them to an academic audience, involved the risk of our secret, protected, innermost thoughts/experiences being scrutinized by the public. Nevertheless, I carried on, for "giving such an account of oneself has much to recommend it, for all of

us. ... it enables one to see... how circumstances can circumscribe as well as inspire...”
(Narayan, 1997, p.3).

I have been interested in listening to women’s experiences and how they relate to their life circumstances, in person rather than through others speaking about them. Over the years this interest developed from many encounters in varied circumstances and I became increasingly sensitive to the ways in which women who entered my lived world talked about tensions, conflicts and dilemmas in their everyday life. Growing up in Bangalore city, India, I found myself profoundly impressed by similarities in the accounts of educated women, the accounts narrated from many contexts such as a workplace, the world of their family or their relations with people and events.

Those women’s stories contained common elements. Many times I reflected upon the strengths, opportunities and choices available to educated women as compared to illiterate women; yet I heard these same women talking unhappily about the systems around them. These voices were opening untapped, invaluable ways of understanding educated women through the lens of everyday life circumstances.

Stories from educated women’s lives guided my academic research

Why was I so particularly interested in educated women’s experiences? Was I just offering sympathetic ‘ears’ or was I more serious than that? Was I hoping to see ‘some change’ brought to those stories? Research, initiated by an individual, reflects individual concern intertwined with an individual’s lived experience. Much of my research has been initiated by the intertwining of my own reflections and concerns about individual women’s lived experience.

I remember I was very aware of my mother’s feelings, words, and the ways she carried on with her life. I did not see her being happy, nor did I see happiness in most women in my small world. Without much conscious thinking, I believe, I became quite sensitive in my childhood towards women and their lives. These observations underpinned my academic research later in life and encouraged me to see out and interpret the multiple layers of women’s experiences.

The more I listened to women talking about their experiences, the realities surrounding them everyday/everynight, the more certain I was that I wanted to hear their own interpretation of their core experiences and to re-view them delving deeper into their (and my) experiences. As this study unfolded I became aware of how little I knew of their situation, their boundaries, their perspectives on life and mine (Mahoney, 2003).

Research has strong autobiographical roots (Seidman, 1991). Employing an autobiographical approach to study women's lives can also be a form of analysing their experiences (Visweswaran, 1994). Employing my lived experience as an insider and an outsider in this research has autoethnographic roots. "The notion of autoethnography ...opens up new ways of writing...A second question ... is that of voice and its authenticity. Who speaks and on behalf of whom are vital questions..." (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.3). Honouring women's voices has been one of my personal concerns (Marcus, 1994); listening to women's insider experiences has made me restructure my relationship with them (Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1998; Makler, 1991; Paranjpe, 1987).

The academic pursuit of studying women's experiences is a particular concern of feminist research, which offers intellectual rigour in analysing women's lives. As I am from India pursuing academic research in Australia, I recognised that I needed to position myself as a Third-world researcher living in a western country. I was neither following the traditional research analysis of women's life in India nor rigorously pursuing western feminist research theories. In this sense, I also recognised the risk that a thesis written for a western academic audience may be viewed with suspicion by Indian audience and be perceived as one of the "problematic products of our 'westernisation'" (Narayan, 1997, p.3). There is also a risk, at home, that I would be 'branded' as a western feminist. I would personally find it unsettling to have this research limited by such categorisation as my emphasis is on voice, change and action related to women's lives.

My work in India focused on teacher-training programs and workshops on gender and social issues that I designed and conducted with both women and men from 1998-2001

in my home state of Karnataka in South India. My concern at that time was to facilitate solid change through grassroots activist projects. In this work I became immersed in people's personal locations and identities. I found I was exploring the ways women and men, whether they had a Class IX level education or a bachelor's degree, viewed themselves, their lived worlds, their multiple identities and their self-perceptions. I was interested in pursuing a question – in what ways had their education influenced their lived experiences? In other words, how did they perceive themselves as educated people? I was interrogating beliefs, practices and attitudes around education at the grassroots; that is, it was of little concern whether education was formal or non-formal for there was only one purpose of education – it develops the person.

Within their public locations as activists in grassroots organisations these men and women were still surrounded by influences of caste, class and gender. Striking revelations that I would come across during those days were that men were bothered and intrigued by the caste/class problem and women by gender and also caste/class. Identity for these women was multi-layered, and their sense of being educated unclear. I found that it was immensely multi-layered for the women. However they seemed to have only one goal – achieving social justice in their society.

Construction of gender operates at different levels in varying degrees. These women were working as activists for social change agencies yet as women they still felt discriminated against by men. Their experiences varied in both degree and intensity. While these aspects of women's lives and their identities intrigued me deeply I perceived it as one of many elements associated with the broader area of social justice. Nancy Fraser's thoughts on social justice align with my own stand:

I think social justice is bigger than feminism, although gender is one dimension along which social justice needs to be understood. In the same way, democracy is bigger than feminism, although it contains an inescapable gender dimension. For me, in other words, feminism is not the master label for everything. I'm happy to accept a more limited definition of it, and then to think about what it means to articulate it to these other things (Fraser & Naples, 2004, pp.1121-1122).

While I perceive issues relating to gender and development as dimensions of social justice, I nevertheless took up my study of women's life stories with a deep sense of

commitment and sincerity, reinforced by my own, deeply rooted personal experiences both within my family and outside.

My ‘gendered’ lived experience has influenced this research

The texts of lives have unique evocations, metaphorical illustrations and tones. Research that sets out to reveal women’s experiences calls for an open mind: surprising questions, paradoxical experiences, everyday dilemmas, and unexpected contradictions might be revealed to a reader. It is with my best conscious effort that I respect and illuminate the following...

As the preceding reflections show, my involvement with carrying out training workshops on aspects of social change and interacting with diverse communities and families in India encouraged me to look into my own life situation to see from where my motivation and ideas came. Gradually I acknowledged the role of my family of origin and how it has influenced my personal development. While growing up, I was sent to a semi-private school on the outskirts of Bangalore city and developed a strong orientation towards education. My ‘sibling ranking’ was as the third daughter, followed by a much dreamed of and prayed for son. This positioned me firmly within my family as the least significant child, a social attitude maintained by my parents even though both were educated and school teachers.

I developed a strong desire to study ‘this family’s politics’ with an outsider’s eye while living within it as an insider. My personal position, combined with my intensive reading from the age of seven, influenced my attitudes, visions and worldview in many ways. Nevertheless, I firmly believed, as most others around me did, that education was the route to making positive changes in society. What changes I could neither specify nor define; but I felt the desire, made it mine, until the desire for change infused my life and my life’s decisions. Even as I continued with my formal education and determined my own path/s, I had to confront the expectations of entrenched social systems and my family culture. I remember asking my family, my relatives and others in my world ‘why are you like this, why are you frustrated with me for being different?’

As a child I often asked myself – why did mother suppress herself so much, at home and why did she insist with a singular directional force, upon following *stree dharma*, remaining a pious Hindu Brahmin woman? She was a school teacher; she was well respected as a good teacher, a writer, a talented and active staff member. At home, I watched her ‘lost’ voice against my father’s dominance. She made a supreme effort to raise us all with higher education and good values. At times I thought why did she not assert herself, as an individual, as a woman with higher education, skills, and thinking abilities?

On the other hand I saw my grandmother as a strong woman, asserting herself, refusing to give in to her sons’ dominance over her. She had formal education to middle-primary level.

There are remarkable differences in the life styles and attitudes of the three women’s stories. Not once did I see my mother standing up for herself as my grandmother did. My mother said she feared society. She was committed to living the life of a pious wife. Her conversations with me as a very young girl while I assisted her with kitchen work and her desperate attempts to reach my father through me affected me deeply. These family dynamics inspired me to seek answers about human society and the systems they created! I never told my mother that I knew she saw herself in me, as a rebel of the systems’ control and oppression. She was confronted and confined by her culture. Later I contested the same culture of the personal and the public that oppressed her. “The shape your ‘silence’ took is in part what has incited me to speech” (Narayan, 1997, p.7). Such shapes of women’s silences are what inspire this research.

The need to explore Indian educated women’s experiences is felt more in the context of their expressions about themselves as educated women. While listening to their voices, my exploring question sought to probe deeply what it means to be an educated woman. An understanding of an educated woman’s agency and well-being need not be restricted merely to describe fulfillment of social expectations of a good job, a good husband and a good family. Going beyond those expressions, I believe, research should probe questions such as what are the different levels of her agency? In what ways does she

understand and interpret her well-being? What does her inner voice speak of about her self as being an educated woman? What are her own meaning-making images of her self?

My personal question – what is the experience of being an educated woman – is also my quest in this research. This quest registers, legitimately, my inner reflections over decades of my own life time, voiced and written in this thesis. It reflects my dilemmas, my multiple questions revolving around the particular research question, the choice, acceptance and continuance with phenomenology to study women's lived experiences and my apprehensions while interpreting the experiences by describing. The thesis often presents my 'double voice', representing the above quest that engaged me deeply; nevertheless, I lived the journey with a sense of self-growth as I developed more consciousness of a consciousness (Morris, 1994). The double challenge was to share my quest and reveal the ten women's lived experiences. The research also registers my efforts to highlight women's lived experiences going beyond what has already been said in various branches of academic knowledge. In this sense it furthers and contributes to the knowledge of educational research, both methodologically and epistemologically.

Paddling my little boat

Here I am with my little boat
Sailing in the sea
But moving very slowly
For I have stopped paddling it.
Only temporarily.
Until I decide which way I go.

Ah, there is the green light
I had my fingers crossed
Until I saw it.
It says I can continue my journey.
I enroll for a Ph.D. degree.

I am happy. At last, I think.
I am enthusiastic.
I have something important to say
I am sure others around me too are interested!
One of them asks me to write
Ideas, questions, my plan.
Says 'look up at that study,
Yours is just like that.
It's already there. Just follow it.'

Oh! Confused.
Unsettled.
Lost.
That is how I feel.

I write. They appreciate.
Confused. Unsettled.
I am.
Is it my journey? What is it about?
My little boat is rattling.
Big waves are like that,
I say to myself, hold on.

Tensions. Struggles. More tensions.
Tightness, anxiety, tiredness.
That's how I feel.
I am D I S T A N C E D.

I stop paddling my boat.
Then I ask for directions.
Which way to go... please?
A positive nod there.
I am relieved. I paddle again.
But... 'I may be able to...'
Oh, I'm not sure...'
'Wait, I know who can lead you...'
See this person? Knows your study well.'

But... who is this new person?
Why is ... with me?
New face says 'What?!'
Is this what you are studying?!
That is not WHAT I WANT.
THIS IS WHAT I WANT.
FROM YOU, DO IT.'

It's a game, you know. Somebody else is saying.
Learn. Get to know.
The cards. The sequence. The timing.
What do you want?
Your end result? A piece of paper, uh?
Play your cards. Time it. Win the game.

Nooooo. My mind refuses.
Quit. Don't play the game,
It is not you. Quit.
Tightlipped. Put the lid on.
Twist it tightly. Closed.
Turn away. Self-pity. Guilt. Anger. Frustration. Bloody system!
An invisible brick wall!!!

Lost.
Tense.
Groping. Where's the light?
No paddling. Boat is still. I drift, I stare... where's the horizon?
Churn, churn, churn...ZZZZZZZZZZZZZ...

Then
I feel. I sense. I know.
I want to go to them. The women.
It is my life. Not just a study. My journey.
Women. We talk. We know.
I smile. I laugh. Fresh air.
Their stories. My story. Intertwining.
Our journeys. Our vision.
I don't worry about the end result.
Not yet. For now-
I listen as they talk. And we talk.
I listen more. I read. I write.

I have been paddling, slowly though.
My boat is on the move, foot by foot.
They are with me. I am one among them.
Our path is not clear to us,
Not yet. You see, it is quite a big ocean.
'Keep paddling. You may get there.'
'Go beyond what you see.'
Hope.

- October 2003

Chapter 1

Being an educated woman: Asking new questions

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis I explore and interpret the multiple layers of the experience of being an educated woman. My overarching research question has been ‘what is your experience of being an educated woman’, a question that has rarely (if at all) been asked of Indian women. My aim is to write the personal/particular of women’s experiences for public knowledge. In the Prologue, I exposed the tensions that surround the image of an educated woman in Indian society. I used my lived experience to highlight some of the tensions related to such an image.

Academic research on women’s experiences of being educated is hardly evidenced in India. This thesis fills an important gap in the field. Where research has such a focus it is most often related to participation in higher education, workplace and career experiences (Chanana, 2003), which are important issues investigated by an outsider. This research will provide both an insider and outsider perspective on ‘being an educated woman’ experience. “It may be that education can only take place when we can be the friends of one another’s minds” (Greene, 1991, p.xi). This study is less concerned with investigating women’s participation in education. More than definitions of an educated woman, which can be categorised as one having certain educational qualifications, I have sought to gain a deeper understanding of ‘being an educated woman’ experience. The stories of experiences emphasise what the ten women thought/felt/relived/narrated at the time of the interviews. Their texts (experiences narrated) re-constructed from in-depth interviews elucidate their perceptions of ‘what it means to be an educated woman’ in the shifting, postcolonial Indian society. The ten women participants describe their own experiences in a temporal and episodic manner, some of which are ‘shared commonly’ by most Indian educated (bachelor’s degree holders) women, others more specific to the middle class and local culture. Within the

phenomenological framework of this research, the experiences are woven together in the development of multiple interpretation levels/layers as they provide deeper and richer insights for the analysis of the final interpretive theme presented in the last chapter.

In this chapter firstly I examine the background to the concept of female education and gender discrimination in India. My intention here is to explore the popular social phenomenon of an educated woman in order to develop a case for asking new questions related to girls' and women's lived experience of education. My examination of existing beliefs about female education is supported by an example from my earlier work with college women, through a personal documentation of informed interviews about these college women's experiences of gender inequalities. I review what and how they perceive and make meaning of their experiences that begin from their family and extend to the public sphere of life – the personal becoming the public.

In the next section I elucidate the significance of this research, which illuminates women's lived experience through using an interpretive phenomenological framework. Then the chapter establishes how writing about Indian women's multi-layers of agency and power and identity in the personal and public spheres informs more about their lived experience. Noting women's experiences are multi-layered, which are the topics of research in all parts of the world, the chapter emphasises the significance of asking a set of new and different questions about education of girls and women. This sets the stage for Chapter 2 to investigate if the intended purpose of formal education is achieved at all in Indian girls' and women's lives.

1.2 Background to the concept of female education in India

Female education and the place of women in society have a long history, dating back to the sacred texts and epics of Indian culture. Contrary to popular historical claims of the Vedic period celebrating and honouring girls and women in terms of their position and participation some historians in more modern times have challenged the myths, and analysed the prevailing hegemonies of those times (Thapar, 1975). The episode of Gargi

being cursed by a male scholar in a public court for demonstrating her Vedic scholarship is a case in point (Roy, 1996). Although post-A.D. history has many examples of queens, poets, scholars and devotees demonstrating their scholarship, leadership and high levels of decision-making, the bigger number of ordinary women and their individual expressions seems to have been sidelined. An exception is a collection which documents ordinary women of India writing before and after Christ (Tharu & Lalita, 1991; 1993). During the colonial period the British administration and Indian social reformers took steps to promote female education irrespective of class and caste. However, such promotions neither primarily addressed gender inequalities in education nor succeeded in realising gender equality.

The Constitution of India in the post-independent period legally prohibits gender inequalities. Equality is ensured to everyone. Education is supposed to give girls and women a strong sense of equality and dignity (Ghosh, 1986b; Nussbaum, 2000b). Several committees have recommended education reforms to empower girls and women (for example India, 1986 & 1992). However, the *Towards Equality* report of 1974 and the recent 2001 UN-commissioned report (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001, available on <http://www.un.org.in/wiicnts.htm>) reveal that gender equality including girls' and women's education has not been achieved. Although there is a time-gap of 30 years between the two reports, they provide enough impetus to study the status of women in society. Giving an alarming comparison of the situation of gender equality in India, they raise profound questions about educated women's position in public domains such as employment, health, interrelationships with others and everyday agency. Of more relevance is the 2001 UN-commissioned report, which not only reiterates the 1974 report findings, but also argues that women's participation in the public on justice and equality grounds is shrouded in inequalities and discrimination.

Indian culture and society's image of a woman prescribes a woman's private sphere's role, keeping her participation in the public domain as optional and secondary. For most women 'womanhood' is not a proclaimed category of identity, along the lines of what Harding (2000, p.1043) recalls about her mother, who would say to a census interviewer 'I'm just a housewife.' This perception appears to be similar to my own

mother's who would, in her rigid tradition, proclaim to be a duty-minded Hindu *stree* who would suffer in her private domains of life rather than act towards a change. Here I would like to point out that I do not wish to portray her as a victim of the tradition or her culture; I would rather point out the opportunities that she had had to alter her life conditions and her choice of ignoring those opportunities. She would wait for the forthcoming years of 'life experience' anticipating a positive, upward movement in the power relations within her family. In the same way the mother of Uma Narayan would prefer to patiently watch her family's politics of power that could change/move women's position within the family over time – for example a mother-in-law gradually 'allowing' more power to her daughter-in-law (Narayan, 1997).

A woman's 'domestic' image is reinforced both by society and also women themselves who seem to conform to the normative image (Burra, 2001; Hancock, 1999). Although tremendous economic changes are happening in contemporary Indian society, there are few changes in terms of a woman's domestic role perception, from colonial to postcolonial times (Hancock, 1997; 2001). A woman who is a wife and a mother is preferred as a neighbour and respected in society, even in contemporary times. In my personal experience most married women did not tolerate me as a peer when I was not a wife or a mother even after 30 years of age; I was not a 'real', traditional woman in their eyes.

In a study exploring women's lives in South India, Catherine Riessman (2000b) discusses how childless married women face hurtful questions in their everyday life. She analyses their stigma and everyday resistance practices. She observes that the women whom she interviewed demonstrated that they made serious attempts to destigmatize themselves. Of particular relevance here is her thought: "Limitations of lived experience often constrain imaginative identification and alternative readings of a text" (Riessman, 2000b, p.117). My lived experience of related social stigma and my everyday resistance as an 'educated' woman to the social barriers around me also inform this thesis. In my case I was identified as unmarried and childless (many did not know about my 'informal marriage' and break-up that took place in a different city at a different time). My neighbours avoided me and would not invite me to their house at the

time of festivals and/or family functions, whereas married women held the ‘natural’ right and recognition to be invited. I simply was ‘disqualified’ for an equal participation in the traditional society. In those days my personal life storyline was ‘even if I don’t have a husband and children, I can live’ (Riessman, 2000a). By contrast when I spent a few months in my home city Bangalore in 2005 with my husband and my son, I recognised the immediate change in the attitude of the neighbourhood. It was both positive and overtly friendly. I had ‘earned’ a place in their world of ‘real women’ by the qualifications of being a wife and a mother. Being a traditional wife and a mother was the qualification by which I was judged, not my education, career or my research interests. Women’s personal lives are acutely public affairs in Indian society. What would ‘being an educated woman’ experience of other educated women describe in this light?

After living in Australia for about six years and being exposed to cultural diversities in many ways have provided me with a stronger lens of an insider/outsider to analyse Indian women’s lives. It has allowed me the ‘internal’ freedom and expanded horizon to step outside my home culture and analyse the diversities of Indian women’s lives with a feeling of enriched cultural understanding (Parekh, 2000).

1.2.1 ‘A learned woman is the eyes of her family’: A reflection

In 2003 I went to Bangalore to conduct the participants’ interviews for this research. A Non-Government Organisation (NGO), working just outside Bangalore for girls’ education and women’s empowerment, invited me to address a large women’s group on March 8, the International Women’s Day. I asked these women from semi-rural backgrounds, nearly two hundred of them, what did they want to find out about women’s issues from me. Most of these women were participating in adult literacy and income-generation programmes; some had completed upper primary schooling in their childhood. They wanted to know about Australian girls and women – their life style, family values and everyday life, including matters like marriage, education, employment, their domestic roles and family life. Rather than speaking from the podium as a guest speaker, I chose to initiate a conversation, which I thought would inform me better about their thoughts/experiences. The following is a brief account of their

comments following our questions/answers. I documented this in my research journal on March 11, 2003.

Do women in Australia do the everyday housework like cleaning, washing, cooking? We do all the housework ourselves here.

Do they do the housework as well as paid work in the field like us, Indian women? Are they paid daily wages or a monthly salary?

They are, then, much better than us. We do everything ourselves here. We cook, clean, work in the agricultural fields, earn money for our children... Our men are not of much use.

At what age do they get married?

Oh, marry at any age after teenage...even old age!! And they choose their own husbands! We are much better compared to them. We don't choose our husbands; our elders arrange everything. We just follow what they say. Our system is good.

Do they pay dowry to get their daughters married off like we do here?

How come they don't even know about dowry? This may not be true. You are not telling us the truth. We have to spend so much for a girl's marriage here. That is why people don't want to get daughters here. Everybody goes to school there? Well...here they say why girls need education (laugh).

Do they all send their daughters to school? And do girls take up jobs after schooling? What kind of jobs? How modern they are? What is the type of dress-code?

Are all women there educated? (Another woman reminds this woman that all women are educated there as it is a foreign country.)

Do men bash up their wives in Australia? Do they drink every evening like our men do here? Who is more dominant in their relationship? Who takes care of children? What do husbands do with their earnings?

They don't! Men also do housework like dish-washing! Oh, our men need to be sent to Australia to get trained, to learn to respect women.

We are not educated like them. Why do we need education for? It is enough if we are good in house-work! That doesn't mean we are not good women. We keep up our tradition, not like them, care-free. Our culture is different. We don't want to wear funny clothes.

Well, our society is different. We need to train our girls in house management first. Education comes after that. Our husbands and in-laws didn't ask if we were educated. They asked if we could cook well, clean, wash, like a proper woman.

Don't we give both to our daughters now? Yes, we send them to school and also train them well enough at home.

The questions and comments were mirroring these women's thoughts, voices related to power relations, control, decision-making ability, agency and authority. It was also revealing their compliance with their tradition. It told me, the researcher, that informal conversations often reveal tensions and inner thoughts. Here, the tensions were related to being an Indian woman and hesitation to reveal their thoughts publicly. The desire and threat of reflecting on change were also visible.

Several threads related to girls' position and education were visible – such as a girl's birth treated as a burden, the dowry problem, male dominance in private and public spheres, women's work undervalued and their decision to follow tradition with an inner tone of resistance. While the government slogan on compulsory education to girls was appreciated, the actual, everyday reality of following the tradition was compelling. When the contradictory messages about women's education were exposed it compounded the women's tensions. To me, it was a comparative snapshot of women's everyday life from two different societies.

On my way back home, on a public transport bus, I could not help but notice the slogan written on the side of the bus 'a learned woman is eyes for the whole community' and 'a girl's education, a nation's progress.' Here was a symbol of professed public support for female education that stood out so starkly in contrast to the realities expressed by the women themselves of how they experienced their lives.

I reflected on the interviews that I had held with three of my participants only the previous day. A learned woman becomes the eyes of her family and female education progresses the nation – *what does education give a woman herself? What do they think of themselves as being educated women? In what ways do they feel they are educated? Have we asked them?*

Sitting in a bus in a reflective mood of a researcher and looking at the slogans displayed on other buses, I once again reminisced about my growing up days and my emotional

reactions to the slogans. When I was growing up, I looked at and read many such slogans that encouraged girls' education in India, promoted by both Central and State governments. I also read derogatory slogans about women displayed on privately-owned autorickshaws, lorries and trucks, 'never trust an educated woman' and 'a learned woman is a curse for the community' and 'education to her, downfall to you'. As a girl I enthused about the encouraging slogans and as a woman later, I despised the derogatory ones. Much later I used these as examples in the training workshops on gender that I conducted with grassroots organisations staff.

I often heard government school teachers urging parents to send their girls to school 'if they wanted their families to prosper'. I saw many parents telling the teacher that their girl would be married, and sent off to another family, what was the use of her education to her parents? Some would agree with the teacher and add that the girl would become skilled as a wife and a better mother in future. Apparently educating a girl was beneficial to others in the family and society. And in cases of having marital hardships or becoming a widow, she could earn her own living and support her children independently. Is this what educated women feel about being educated? Did this challenge them and if so in what ways?

During my career as a lecturer, I often listened to women struggling with their dual roles as family caretakers and as employed women. Many said they were unhappy about their combined roles as wives, daughters-in-law, mothers and employed women. I heard voices of a harassed daughter-in-law, exploited wife and an exhausted mother, along with a frustrated working woman. Many said I, being a single woman, was in a better position; I did not have to fulfil social/family expectations. At the same time they did not approve of my freedom of choice and expression of my capabilities in many areas in the private and public spheres. They did not approve of my independent thinking and not following the stereotype. I would ask them why wouldn't they take action about their frustrations related to their private sphere. They were educated women, they could find alternatives with their own choices. They mostly disagreed with me when I used words like choice and alternative. They said they did not have many opportunities as

married women and as mothers. And they did not choose to challenge either their family members or society. They neither questioned their position nor the stereotype.

In my career as a professional in the human development area conducting training workshops on education and gender, I came across many women community development workers, health workers, teachers, women's and youth organisers. They were young adults with secondary schooling and pre-university education with oppressive family backgrounds. They would talk about choices, alternatives and action for change with excitement, it was part of their work. They were articulate, informed with awareness of social and economic issues. They keenly spread the message of enhancing girls' abilities through education. Interestingly, during workshops I found them hesitating to speak openly of the systemic influences; there was no debate on power and control in their personal life. However, they would acknowledge choices and alternatives available in life if they needed to change their life conditions. They chose to remain with tradition expressing fear of the risks involved in opposing their families or societal forces.

The above two experiences from two different contexts – listening to educated women colleagues and listening to women grassroots workers –have contributed to the development of this thesis by sharpening my conscious awareness of women's experience, and the importance of remaining open-minded when listening to women's accounts.

A third example relates to a snapshot of college girls' experiences related to their being educated and their experiences of gendered life. It further reinforced my resolve to explore more deeply the experiences of being educated and female in Indian society.

In 2000-2001 I co-ordinated and taught a human rights education module for undergraduate students (both boys and girls) in three colleges of metropolitan Bangalore city. This honorary course was hosted by an NGO working on human rights issues. I interviewed some of the girls and documented their responses in relation to their understanding of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), Women's Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) and Child Rights. Their responses are presented in the following paragraphs with my analysis. This example demonstrates the stronger influence of socio-cultural forces over the purpose of education in girl's lives.

Several girls that I interviewed identified a gap existing between formal knowledge of such Conventions and the reality of everyday life for girls in Indian society. They pointed out that discrimination against a girl child and gender bias is an everyday phenomenon in their lives, even in urban Bangalore. Several of them shared their lived experiences of family environment and public life. The typical sharing was around how their mothers, although not too partial, were still supportive of their brothers and how their mothers wanted the girls to train as 'good domestic' girls. The girls added that when they tried to bring this discriminatory attitude to others' attention, many a time their mothers' reply was affirming the gendered role of a girl and keeping up with their patriarchal tradition. Many of the mothers expected their daughters to get the parents a good name from future in-laws. These girls could not understand why their mothers couldn't break the tradition of stereotype.

During our group discussions that I personally documented the girls also narrated their experiences in public life circumstances. They experienced discrimination and ill-treatment while travelling in a public bus, in the market place or while paying bills. These experiences were frustrating for them. They said they failed to challenge such situations even with their newly-acquired knowledge on human rights. They told how both males and females in the public sphere, such as the bus driver/conductor, clerks, salespeople, vendors, and their own family members in the private sphere, were either reluctant to support their voice or pressurized them to accept this behaviour. This made them feel more frustrated, sad and annoyed. Though they registered their resistance to being stereotyped as subordinated women, they were confronted by their everyday experiences which they interpreted as being rooted in religion and socio-cultural tradition. They said their new-found awareness and knowledge of their rights was mere knowledge, which was academic and intellectual. There was no resulting change in their everyday living conditions or their personal well-being. When asked about the practical outcome of their formal education, of a bachelor's degree, they observed that the

outcome was economic-based; it resulted in benefits such as a better job, material progress, increased social status, and a 'better' husband. With these benefits they would be regarded as better contributors to their future family. Their words were signifying that education of women is not for them, but for their family and society (Unterhalter, 2005) – educational philosophy excludes women and women's experiences are excluded within educational arena (Martin, 1985; 1991).

The above described examples relate to questions that connect with female agency in Indian society, women in private and public domains of life, their resistance to their position as second-class citizens and their contestations related to their subordination (Sharma, 2001; 2003). Issues related to female education are strong topics in all these aspects.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have presented a detailed review of research studies exploring girls' and women's education in India, linking their education to family, children, employment, health, economic participation and political empowerment issues. Notably most of these studies have left a gap in exploring lived experiences. Occasional studies (for example Chanana, 2000; 2001; 2003) have voiced the importance of researching women's experiences of their education and of their being educated.

1.3 Significance of this research

The exclusion and discrimination of girls and women in India is documented in the light of indicators such as family, health, education and employment. Agnihotri (2001, p.228) provides a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the girl child's malnutrition, poor health, poor access to facilities and economic/social support, which result in a gender gap in mortality, a clear index of discrimination against the girl children. The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in India have drawn more criticism than appreciation in forcing girls and women to assimilate (Arora, 1999; Wazir, 2000b). Studies illustrate that the Gender Development Index does not adequately reflect or measure male/female disparities in the light of the bias towards males in the Indian socio-economic context (Sharma, 1997; Sonpar & Kapur, 2001; Tisdell, Roy, & Ghose, 2001).

Amartya Sen (2003), while calculating the female population across several Asian nations, has noted that the number of 'missing women' in India, which was 33 million in 1992, has not changed much over a decade. He considered that the evidence of violence against women (i.e., aborted female fetuses, killing of infant girls, other disposal of girl children) is related to hidden traditional cultural values and linked to the dominant Indian religion (Sen, 2003, pp.1297-98). Burra (2001) also shows how traditional Indian values still prevalent in contemporary Indian society produce cultural stereotypes. She observed that "The subordination of the adult woman in the household runs parallel with a subordination of the girl child, socialising the latter into the pre-ordained fate that she will assume as an adult" (2001, p.484). To this extent a girl's position and place within her family and society seem to be externally directed. I believe this is the starting point where external forces 'shape' women's experiences. Their inner voices are hardly heard. The environment of subordination, inequalities and cultural hegemony may also be 'shaping' educated women's experiences.

Studies quoted above suggest a link to the situation of female education in India. "The gender gap in education can be understood only in the wider context of female disadvantages in India" (Wazir, 2000b, p.18) The issues of female education are many including access, retention and attitude of parents and society. Although girls are receiving better education in urban areas now, a girl is still perceived to be a burden for the family, economically, socially and from the religious prescriptions (Singh, 2002a). A girl's socialisation also happens from the above perspectives with little economic investment, severe social restrictions and thick cultural adherence. In such an environment significance of education takes a secondary place (Chanana, 2001, p.53). This is the conclusion that several other researchers have drawn while analysing Indian girls' and women's educational situation; their call for changes in perceiving the importance of female education is noteworthy (Bordia, 2000; Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987; Reddy, 1991; Talbani, 2001).

In Indian society the normative, male-centred perceptions of girls' and women's education have been utilitarian, from the point of view of either employment or efficient domestic productivity. In a way Sen's (Sen, 1999; 2005) view that only if females are

educated will a country progress is positive. In another way this leaves little scope to explore women's lived experience of education and its influence on their lives. The well-being and agency of an educated woman are assumed to rest on her capacity to find a 'decent' white-collared office-based job (which is the popular saying) and/or her skill in being a good wife and a mother. There is a gap in the research on how women have experience their education and what it means to them as being educated women. A new perspective on education is needed to understand if critical awareness and transformation (Freire, 1973) of life's conditions can happen in educated women's lives before we can address gender inequalities in India. A new perspective that incorporates Nussbaum's human capabilities model (2000b) would advance female agency. However, over the past four years, during the process of exploring women's experiences of being educated, I realised the significance of studying the actual, lived experiences of women without myself assuming that gender inequality was a 'given' situation.

Ruth Lister provides a sound rationale for using the notion of human agency:

The idea of human agency is typically used to characterize individuals as autonomous, purposive actors, capable of choice. ... The conception of human agency which informs my approach to citizenship is one that not only locates it in a dialectic relationship with social structures, but that also conceives of it as embedded in social relations (Lister, 1997, pp.36-37).

In many ways the scenario of Indian women's education is 'The more things change, the more they stay the same.' In Indian society it is accepted that education of women is useful in finding employment, for better self expression in public life and to carry out their roles better in private life. It is supposed to be 'to progress the nation' or 'for the well-being of their family.' An educated woman is supposed to be the eyes and wealth of her family; educating a girl is educating a whole community. A comparison between an uneducated woman and an educated woman's image is always made in everyday life in some context. These suppositions of who and what an educated woman is imply that a woman's education is not her self but for others. Whatever changes have occurred over the last century, from the colonial period to the current, women are still taught and expected to play prescribed roles in both public and private spheres (Chanana, 2001; Talbani, 2001).

I believe the key intentions of formal education are to facilitate human agency, critical thinking and capabilities. The question, then, is does this mean those women who are educated have become active agents with critical thinking and enhanced capabilities; put in popular words, are they equal and successful in life (Hughes, 2002)? Sometimes a western researcher's perspective (for example, Taber, 2005) on educated, Indian women's agency seems slightly different to mine, mine being an insider/outsider perspective. All around me I have listened to educated women talking about themselves as good wives and/or better mothers. They take pride in these images. Most of them acknowledge that they live in a gendered world.

Many researchers have pointed out that social science studies on women's lives and education tends to repeat the same 'gendered' methodologies to study varied aspects (for example, Devi, 1992; Krieger, 1983). I am concerned that research on women's educational experiences have repeated the same viewpoints related to access, retention and participation (from the Third World countries), and power, voice and participation (from western academia). There is little research which focuses on listening to the experiences of being educated. By addressing this gap I intend to go beyond the stereotypic image and find out from a group of Indian women what being educated means to them. If education is really thought of as a channel to enhance our capabilities, our skills, our worldview and our sense of our self, more pointedly our agency (Sen, 2005), then it is necessary to examine how women define and interpret their experiences from their own autobiographical accounts.

So the questions still remain: what do educated women say about this situation? What is their experience of exclusion/inclusion? What would happen if women talked about their being educated experiences of the private and public spheres? Would they talk openly about themselves as themselves? What is their perception of themselves as 'being an educated woman?' What do their experiences reveal to the world?

The significance of this research lies in asking these questions to women participants and exploring their experiences. The literature mentioned in the chapter and the next two chapters have little evidence to show women's own voices are heard.

Setting aside cultural biases in interpretations of women's well-being and agency, there is a need to provide alternative understandings that do not exclusively rest on male premises, or even on feminist claims of women's subjugation in all realms of life. I chose a phenomenological framework as a ground to explore and describe those experiences. An open, explorative framework, a phenomenological framework which this thesis has employed, is needed to seek the meanings of experiences, not truths, from women's words themselves. It is urgent that women's voices are heard to avoid poisoning their unuttered truths (Nietzsche, 1896, p.165). For the need is greater today, when girls in the younger generation need to understand and also respond visibly and strongly to the complexities of life in the current globalized world. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's words make my point more clear:

My recurring question is how pedagogies can supplement, consolidate, or resist the dominant logic of globalization. How do students learn about the inequities among women and men around the world? For instance, traditional liberal and liberal feminist pedagogies disallow historical and comparative thinking, radical feminist pedagogies often singularize gender, and Marxist pedagogy silences race and gender in its focus on capitalism. I look to create pedagogies that allow students to see the complexities, singularities, and interconnections between communities of women such that power, privilege, agency, and dissent can be made visible and engaged with (Mohanty, 2003, p.523).

My exploration of women's lived experiences of being educated looks towards creating a pedagogical 'understanding' of such complexities and interconnections that the women participants of this research might be sharing. Thereby voices of agency, dissent, acceptance and resistance might get illuminated.

1.3.1 Significance of using interpretive phenomenology

The ten women's experiences, which this thesis explores, provide descriptions relating to a variety of life circumstances that are religious, social, cultural and political. Their experiences explore the everyday frames/references: "there is one permanent frame of reference...the organic connection between education and personal experience..." (Dewey, 1938, p.25). The organic connection that I weave in this thesis is my journey as a researcher and my 'experience' story as one of the ten women of the study. This connection is expressed best by Grumet: "Whenever we speak of education, we are

speaking of a person's experience in the world" (1992, p.29). As said in the beginning of the Prologue, my research quest comes from within my lived experiences and my desire to engage myself with an interrogation of women and their education. Thus this research is conceptualized as a living practice, re-living each turning point of life as being educated and re-interpreting the experiences with an open mind for identifying meaning.

The central subject of this thesis is to understand what it means to be educated, which entails a description of experiences for a multi-layered interpretation. Having this perspective, I have used interpretive phenomenology as my theoretical framework in this thesis.

Phenomenology both as a theoretical and a methodological application provides a convincing ground for describing and interpreting experience. Phenomenology when applied as a method to listen to women's experiences provides the nearest knowledge context and a rich scope to bring out the autobiographical accounts of their educated lives as it is based on a non-assumptive ground, open to receive any and all narratives, the texts of life of a person who enriches the hermeneutic process (Grumet, 1992; van Manen, 1990). Interpretive phenomenology is particularly suitable to explore educational experiences, and in this thesis I use that as a conceptual and methodological framework to explicate educated women's experiences.

A phenomenological framework, which to my knowledge has not been used to study the experience of being an educated woman in India, would bring to new light what they actually feel and experience. As phenomenology provides the ground to explore how educated women make meaning from and within their lived worlds it would emphasise each person's experience as unique and different and validate the individual person's standpoint in elucidating the experience.

The significance of this thesis is to learn from women's lived experiences. The particular style adopted in this thesis emphasises an interpretive framework. The intention is to step aside from the theoretical debates and to look at women's lived

experiences with fresh eyes. For, with swift changes (such as globalization, neo-liberalisation and increased educational opportunities for girls) happening in India in the last one decade, women's perceptions of their self and their relational world might also have undergone changes. The following section reviews some literature related to such possible changes in the perceptions related to Indian women's agency. Writing about Indian women's agency seems to be a challenge in many ways (Kabeer, 1996), especially from the point of view of western theories (Cranney, 2001; Hancock, 1997; Taber, 2005). Therefore in the next section I will briefly re-view multiple dimensions of Indian women's agency and in the section following this I will, by re-viewing relevant global stands, signify the need for a 'space' to ask questions related to agency, power and identity in women's lives.

1.4 Discussing Indian women's agency

Human agency is a highly significant area of research among social scientists and psychologists. Researchers have been investigating the relationship between the individual and society from many contexts. For example, from a psychological context, Bandura's theories on the agency of a human being in relation to self-confidence, self-perception and self-efficacy are popular as well as widely applied (Bandura, 1977; 1982; 1991; 1997). The active subject has been discussed as a dialectical self (Giddens, 1990; 1991). Giddens emphasises individual's ability to choose and act. Kenneth Gergen (2003) finds the philosophical, socio-political conceptions of agency 'flawed' and emphasises a radical relational perspective. Female agency has been researched with multiple focus – such as power relations, voice, position, and identity (for example, Archer, 1988). In this thesis I am using 'agency' to denote the positioning of women to enable them to participate, to act, and as a position of intentionally exercising power over actions resulting in a positive change. It emphasises practice and transformation in a systemic world (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). I am not engaging in the classical philosophical debates on agency.

With particular reference to Indian women, who are living within a tradition and culture that dates back to three thousand or so years (Roy, 1996; Thapar, 1975), there are

different ways of understanding women's position and their agency (Chakravarti, 1989). In postcolonial societies such as Indian society, where women were encouraged into education and to participate in public life, the topic of agency in women's lives assumes a different dimension from colonial or pre-colonial times (Hancock, 2001). However, some researchers observe that the notion of traditional Indian woman is a postcolonial concept (Suryakumari, 1993; Tharu & Lalita, 1993). Mohanty (1991) provides a different dimension, i.e., approaching the Third World female subject with concepts of choice and freedom rather than problems. Mohanty's point is crucial to my research.

Life is a work-in-progress, so are the individual actors (Giddens, 1991; Mishler, 1999; 2005). Indian women are uniquely positioned in an intersection of class, caste, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and the two domains of life (Jeffery & Basu, 1998; Mankekar, 1999; Mohanty, 1991; 2003). Several debates have focused on keeping up Hindu tradition rather than Indian women (Mani, 1998). Middle-class women are often expected to be the preservers of their tradition and culture (Tharu & Lalita, 1993). Although cultural influences seem to be still strong, democratization, modernization, women's participation and educational inclusiveness affect women's lives in many ways (Cranney, 2001; Ganguly-Scrase, 2002; Hancock, 1999; Taber, 2007).

With reference to women's participation in the local governance within India, where a decentralised local governance system (the local village *panchayat*) is in operation, there seems to be only a limited change in women's involvement and expression of agency (Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2001). A study conducted by Sooryamoorthy & Renjini (2000) found that, at the village level women are enthusiastic about holding the reins of power in local, decentralised, administrative organisations. However, their family men tend to intervene and act as decision-makers. Vijayalakshmi and Chandrashekar (2002) observe that although women representatives in local governance possess authority, it has not resulted in power. They emphasise that '...an alternative conception of power which is centred not on the position but on the individual' is required (Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2002, p.1).

Interestingly, women say they prefer to continue their traditional and cultural ways. During my interviews, in 1997, with women members of the *panchayat*, the women told me that they either knew very little about how decentralised governance operated or their men controlled their participation levels (Sharma, 2001). Also, while I was in conversation with the president of a village *panchayat*, in her house, I witnessed her strict control over her daughter's behaviour. The daughter was about 14 years of age and newly married, an enforced part of her socialisation. The dynamics were representative of an Indian woman's agency. The mother had showed good confidence about her role and her power in the *panchayat* and yet she revealed her preference towards cultural conformity and socialization at home. Hancock (Hancock, 2001) has elucidated how a home, the domestic space of Indian women, becomes a site where external cultural forces construct their identities. Do modern, educated, Indian women regard their homes as the sites of their identity-construction?

Indian women's agency is paradoxical. For example, Brenda Cranney (2001) observed that mountain women in Northern India "critique their oppressive situation while at the same time, they collude in it" (p.227). Patricia Taber (2005), in her study of women entrepreneurs living in Mysore city in South India, emphasised their experiences. Through an analysis of life stories she examined what it meant for the women entrepreneurs to have their new status and how they viewed their roles in social change. She illuminated their voices and high level of agency. Indian women's position as active agents in everyday life and their attempts to resist oppression, juxtaposed with their feelings of obligation to continue tradition, need to be understood in a new light (Azad, 1996; Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2001).

In several areas of women's lives conventional measures of well-being have tended to use male parameters of understanding which generally exclude women's experiences (Kabeer, 1996). Naila Kabeer, reflecting on the gender dimensions of poverty, recommended using different approaches to the analyses of poverty to build greater gender-awareness. In her argument she points out that most of the academic and policy discussion about poverty are premised on male-centred notions of well-being and agency (p.11). Kabeer's reflections encourage the use of alternative language to seek the

meanings of women's experiences, using their own words. Educational prospects, the utility value and application of education in women's lives have been measured using male-centred notions of enhancing women's capabilities (Chanana, 2001). Ironically these notions rest alongside the male tendency to restrict the use of education in women's lives or to ridicule her capacity to use formal knowledge.

Most Indian women seem to position themselves to 'have agency' in their everyday life (Cranney, 2001). They are the main contributors to their family's well-being as care-takers and carriers of traditional family values. They might also be the main income earners for their large families. For such women, agency can be interpreted differently, asking alternative questions (Kabeer, 1996) to take into account the traditional role performances that are based on socio-cultural expectations. However, can and do these women 'see' beyond their traditional roles, and reflect on change – changing their personal life conditions? To a great extent most women seem to carry on as actors as Fraser observes, with tensions and conflicts (Fraser, 1987; 1989; Fraser & Naples, 2004). They seem to be the agents or role-carriers of society's agencies with their own personal interpretations that may not be voiced. Fraser's call is to "*both* to interpret *and* to change the world" (Fraser & Naples, 2004, p.1106). Is this possible for these active women?

Gender inequalities seem to be deeply rooted in Indian traditional beliefs, male-dominance/preference in society, discriminatory parental attitudes, lack of motivation among women themselves, various family burdens and so on (Kalia, 1998; Reddy, 1991; Talbani, 2001; Vohra & Sen, 1986). Singh (2002a, p.175) concludes that "man-woman relationships do not seem to have been based on the notion of equality and equity due to various cultural, social and economic factors." Bordia (2000, p.315) observes "unfortunately the exhortation to reorient all educational programmes to serve the goal of women's equality had a very limited impact". It is essential that research on women's lives focuses on the individual rather than the universal position (Jones, 1993; Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2002).

An issue related to agency and subordination is the peculiar tendency of women against women, a form of misogyny affecting women's identity and position within familial relations. Another issue is internalisation – that women internalise the tradition and consider it a sign of distinction. Investigations of different dimensions of male and female relations strictly stand out as either psychological or sociological (for example Issac & Shah, 2004). While at the global level considerable feminist research studies have explored male/female relations, two important Indian scholars have looked into this challenging subject of misogyny (Nandy, 1976; Sen, 2005). Amartya Sen (2003; 2005) has expressed concern over Indian mothers' preference to have a son and their conscious participation in female infanticide. Sen makes a profound statement which I believe is an open call for a change of direction in educational research carried out by Indian academics:

A social and cultural climate in which mothers may themselves seek sons rather than daughters may require a more radical departure than mere schooling or outside employment can provide even though they too would, to some limited extent, help (Sen, 2005, p.250).

Ashis Nandy (1976), an Indian psychologist, has discussed the phenomenon of woman versus womanliness in terms of care, concern and respect for another woman. "The oppressive reality for woman ... is now only partially outside her. A part of that reality has been introjected through a long historical process of social learning" (Nandy, 1976, p.149). He also made a significant observation: "The woman's self-respect in the traditional system is protected not through her father or husband, but through her son. Also, it is through the son – and for that matter, on the son – that she traditionally exercises her authority" (Nandy, 1976, p.152). Nandy's observations may provide important insights on how educated women experience their motherhood and their experiences as wives. Are they thinking of a new change in their children's upbringing? Being educated, did they challenge the woman vs. womanliness tradition in their married life? What are their individual perceptions of their daughter/s and son/s?

Several studies have shown that Indian women regard their reproductive capacity as a source of power; "voluntary childlessness is rare in India...motherhood, in a word, serves critical cultural functions in India's hierarchical society" (Riessman, 2000b,

p.112). They use motherhood as a strategy in many ways (Dube, 1986). Many a time they construct their identity around motherhood and their participation in their children's upbringing. Especially in the context of the popular slogan that an educated woman is a nation's wealth and that she brings her children up as good citizens it is significant that women themselves are asked about their experiences of the above. Do they change their perceptions of 'traditional' motherhood and a wife's role? How do they participate in their children's upbringing as 'being an educated woman?' What are their experiences in family relationships? How do Indian educated women perceive sexual relations, the gender question and address power, control and identity in their personal and public spheres? As Riessman (2000b) points out in her study on married childless Indian women's experiences related to stigma and resistance, Indian women's experiences often contradict the western academic theories. Here is a case in point which calls for a need to ask the same questions on power and identity from an explorative background rather than approaching them from already established theoretical ground.

1.5 Agency? The question of power and identity

One very influential feminist researcher to comment upon sexual relations and women as citizens, positing a new debate on sexual politics is Carol Pateman (1988; 1989). In her analysis of the relations between men and women Pateman (1988) demonstrated that a sexual 'contract' operated as a fundamental subordinating channel that produced asymmetrical relations. Dismissing the use of gender in such an analysis Pateman argued that women's experiences stem from experiences of sexual differences acting as a contract between the two sexes where the male was the citizen and controller over the female. This contract shaped their relations in the society at different periods and provided the conditions for a social contract within civil society and the state. The contracted relationship suppressed the female as the owner of her body and mind (Puwar, 2002). Pateman pointed out that any description of social order needed an understanding of how democratic processes developed but also how women's position was subjugated in relation to men's. She claimed that our contemporary society is ultimately patriarchal where women's identity is only secondary to men's.

The power asymmetries between men and women in India are visible at both structural and symbolic levels (Bhasin, 1996; Burra, 2001) operating in both private and public spaces, not very dissimilar to what Pateman (1989) has observed in regard to the position of western women from a feminist political theoretical basis. Pateman has acknowledged that although she was talking about Anglo-American societies and did not use patriarchy as a universal concept “the general idea of a sexual contract...is relevant very widely” (Puwar, 2002, p.124). Arguments related to women as the ‘other’ in the patriarchal system (de Beauvoir, 1988) are true in most Indian women’s lives – she is the other in her parental family waiting to be married off and she becomes the other in her husband’s family too as she came from another family – thus she is positioned in a space of dilemma.

The ‘other’ position of women in patriarchal structure gives rise to the feminist issue of equality and difference, as has been widely discussed in feminist research. The debates, mainly arising from the man/woman relationship in a patriarchal structure in western, developed countries, have discussed political, cultural, economic, philosophical, social and bodily dimensions of equality and difference. Included as main issues are women’s status and position as well as crucial aspects related to power, identity and control over resources, body and mind; that is, all of women’s lives in both the private and the public spheres (Ahmed, 1999; Bacchi, 1990; Benhabib, 1992; 1999; Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, & Fraser, 1995; Boonzaier & Rey, 2003; Butler, 1999; Irigaray, 1980; Weir, 1998).

Feminist studies and debates of the past have recognised society’s systemic operation of patriarchy, the individual internalization of the role divisions, a process lived through in everyday life. Throughout the history of women’s studies in western societies, dating from early pioneers such as Mary Wollstonecraft to current theorists such as Madeleine Arnot, studies on women have focused and challenged various perspectives. Their critiques and theories have discussed a wide range of topics including sexual differences, gender, self-construction and historicities of identity construction. Within this broad range are included micro and macroscopic studies on power, control, identity, voice and agency (Arnot, Araujo, Deliyanni, & Ivinson, 2000; Arnot & Dillabough,

2000; Bacchi, 1990; Butler, 1990; 2006; Code, 1991; Evans, 1994; Foster, 1997; Gatens, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Hoskins, 2003; Leech, 1994; Pateman, 1988; 1989).

One of the earlier feminists to critique women's identity linked to reproduction and their bodies was Simone de Beauvoir who thought women's subordination lies with the phenomenon of women's reproductive biology (de Beauvoir, 1988). De Beauvoir, taking cue from Merleau-Ponty's (Merleau-Ponty, 1999) claim that body is a historical idea, argued in *The Second Sex* that both 'woman' and 'gender' categories that define men/women are historical connotations (de Beauvoir, 1988). Writing from the genre of existential, intellectual, productive thinkers of her time, de Beauvoir is outspoken in her stand on child-bearing, child-rearing and susceptibility to man's objectification. By claiming that a woman is a historical idea, she is pointing out the sexual difference, and her argument extends from this, critiquing the ways that a woman's body is culturally used and projected for various acts. Within this 'historical idea' a woman has many possibilities of contesting roles and perceptions. Gender issues in education can be analysed from multiple-dimensions such as sexuality (Lees, 2000), human rights (Guhathakurta & Lina, 1995; Sharma-Brymer, 2005). For example, radical, eco-feminists and human rights critics recognise that women's bodies are different to men's and as such so are women's experiences. Their emphasis is more on valuing women's bodies and their experiences (Millet, 1970; Shiva, 1988; Tong, Donchin, & Dodds, 2004).

The gender question has been approached from many perspectives (for example, Davies, 1993; 2006; MacKinnon, 1989). Many researchers have reviewed multiple approaches to understanding sex and gender (for example M. Gergen, 2003). Drawing from Marx's theory, socialist feminists base their arguments on gender relations around how the division of labour is organized. Men's participation in labour production, women's under-representation within the sexual division of labour have called for a different understanding of women's lives (Jaggar, 1983). Different perspectives related to empowerment of women and men, and equality and diversity raise important questions in the light of race, gender and class (Afshar, 1998; Grogan, 1999; Kane & Kyyro, 2001; Kukathas, 2002; White, 2004).

Within the nature of educational experiences there is a fundamental debate from western academia stressing differences. The debate, using feminist political, feminist educational theories, focuses mainly on issues related to asymmetries in relations and masculine paradigm of education among others. Martin (1991) stated that when girls and women receive education, their experiences are lost in the masculine paradigm. In other words, individual agency, enhanced by education, is restricted with little scope left for change in girls' and women's lives. Within the Indian context, while collective voices of women such as women's NGOs are partially heard, the voice of individual middle-class and educated women is hardly evident in reflecting on their life circumstances. This too excludes their experiences as being educated women. While all of the debates, analyses and research studies discussed in the above two sections are valid and important in understanding Indian women's agency, one main question still remains under-researched. That is asking women how do they perceive themselves as being educated women. This necessitates asking a set of new questions.

1.6 Agency and change: Significance of asking new questions

Many theories of gender and education emphasise that literacy empowers women living in a patriarchal society, and that knowledge and literacy are tools for improving agency (Stromquist, 1990b; 1996). Pro-literacy advocates in India celebrate the importance of women's literacy (Kothari, Chand, & Sharma, 1999). Literacy of women has been debated in many areas of research, and within feminist studies, gender theory focuses on the power relations between men and women. However, over the years theoretical differences have arisen on asymmetrical relations stemming from oppression, and on the definition of oppression and who is the oppressor from whose point of view. Third World feminists and Black feminists have challenged the understandings and approaches of the feminists researching from the Western developed nations (Basu, 1995; Bhasin, 1994; Jeffery & Basu, 1998; Longwe, 2001; Seidman, 2001). However, the point here is to see what exactly is the experience of the learner. It is to discover the extent to which the learner believes that education provides a platform from which the learner can construct their own knowledge, to better interpret the world and participate in the process of transformation, change and action (Stromquist, 2005, p.2).

Many theorists suggest that the ability to construct a feminine worldview is obstructed. Formal knowledge institutions such as schools and universities reinforce gender construction and reproduce the hegemony (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000; Blackmore, 1999; Davies, 1989; 1993; Gilbert, 2001; McLeod, 1998; Smith, 2000; Teese, 1995). Bronwyn Davies has looked into school children's formations of self and difference from an enabling pedagogical perspective (Davies, 2006). In another study, Katri Komulainen (2000, p.1) stated that education has been the main channel through which Finnish women have attempted to realise their individuality. She examined women's educational life stories – independent narratives – and analysed their gendered interpretations of their temporal self. Space occupied differently by boys and girls as learner-citizens in liberal democratic structures has been shown to subordinate girls (Foster, 1992; 1996). As such it is important to focus primarily on girls' educational lived experiences (Foster, 1994).

Most discussions concerned with female education in India and the empowerment of women have noted the significance of access, retention, availability, curriculum and further use of education (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Singh, 2002b; Unterhalter, 2005; Unterhalter & Dutt, 2001; Wazir, 2000b). Many studies delineate the socio-cultural factors as causes leading to the neglect on girls' and women's participation in education (Reddy, 1991; Singh, 2002a). The paradox of girl child friendly educational policies and the continuation of gender discrimination is pointed out in the background of "complex religious values, societal attitudes and a patriarchal ideology" (Scruse, 1993, p.113). Few studies have actually moved beyond the 'powerless victim' approach and emphasised the need to explore the experiences of educated women (Chanana, 2000; 2003; Unterhalter, 2005). Notably these writers have mentioned change and choice factors in educated women's lives. In the light of the above reflections this thesis takes upon the language of understanding women's lived experiences, exploring their being educated, describing their views of themselves as educated women and analyzing the location of choice and space for action.

It is through these narratives that another perspective emerges of the impact of these women gaining access to education, and of further use of their education. Women are

capable of creating their own inter and intrapersonal alternative worldviews and consciously change the normative expectations.

This study acknowledges feminist knowledge and debate over women's position but seeks to move beyond to explore the ways in which educated women perceive their self in relation to their lived world and interpret their experiences.

If educated women can interpret their own experiences, how is this possible? Is there a totally new dialogue based on the feminine feeling of writing the feminine desire as Helene Cixous compels us to (Shiach, 1991; Verma, 1997)¹? Will this be a language of choice, transformation and change (Mohanty, 1991)? Must a person writing on women's lives always follow the language that de Beauvoir advocated or the one Cixous insists upon? Or should it be Carol Gilligan's 'different voice' (Gilligan, 1982) that listened to women's personal accounts of their inner moral worlds? Is feminist research, although different schools are operating within its broader framework, always use the language of liberation? Is the debate always run around the feminist questions related to the radical, rational? Can human experience, that is women's experience, be inclusive of the commonality of every person that might open up a whole new space to listen to and explore differences as well (Taber, 2005)?

Feminist theories offer a range of methodological approaches to the woman's question, also a gender question (Joyappa & Self, 1996). Women's narratives, more than one 'occurring in a web of interlocution' converse with themselves and others, such as the outside researchers listening to the narratives (Benhabib, 1999). This is the language of women's experiential construction of their 'knowing and knowledge.'

Many Indian women have used analytical language in their writings on Indian women, their bodies, sexuality, power and control that stands out compared to the discussion of Indian girls' and women's education. These writings are on several different subjects bringing out the difference, desire, body/mind dichotomy in the relational context of power, position, control and authority that are powerful and insightful. The onus of such analyses is on how the representations are constructed, appropriated and/or violated. These writings are extremely thought provoking keeping in mind the cultural history

and intellectual gaps in exploring Indian women's lives in academic research. They critically review cultural and symbolic representations of women in Indian society including history and anthropology (N. Kapur, 2001; Kapur & Cossman, 1996; Lakshmi, 1999; Mani, 1998; Mankekar, 1999; Narayan, 1997; Rajan, 1993; S.Thiruchandran, 1999; Sangari & Vaid, 1990; Tharu, 1997; Tharu & Lalita, 1991; 1993; Visvanathan, 1997; Viswanath, 1997). However, "Unfortunately they have not taken women's lived experiences as the base from which to conceptualize these symbolic universes that structure women's lives" (Viswanath, 1997, p.314). This thesis brings to light such a need – the need to use the language of both universal feminist and also the particular lived experience which will be effective in describing and detailing the experiences of everyday life, making it academic, public knowledge.

An exception to the above gap in the literature are writers on women's movements in India, which often have traced female educational issues that tend to study women's experiences. Although this tendency has been significantly useful in registering the voice and exploring women's lives for an analysis of multiple dimensions, most such studies are social-political in nature and/or non-academic. Often, they are distributed amongst the grassroots organisations, escaping academic registration. As I have personally documented through my work in the human development area between 1993 and 2001, the trend is that only radical women's groups and non-governmental organisations working for women's development document such experiences. Interestingly the starting point of these studies is registering the experience of oppression, abuse, the violence and the subordination of women. Invariably such an analysis would talk at length about man's authority and women's subjugated lives both in body and mind situations. The language of analysis would remain patriarchal which would be the only standpoint available to further the studies on women's lives. The noteworthy element in this type of standpoint study is the open acknowledgement of and anxious discussions of power, control and authority that are linked with state and civil society. For, "If power is seen as located in the arms of the State then resistance is also directed at the State" (Viswanath, 1997, p.329). The analyses that these standpoints provide are commendable in that they address gaps within the academic studies.

Unfortunately the non-academic documented studies are not often given authenticity within the academic research bodies.

Although women's organisations' objectives have remained within the patriarchal constructions of questioning control and power over women's lives it is nonetheless crucial to any in-depth analysis of women's lives whether it is feminist or alternative. Especially for this study it is extremely useful to note that "They build upon these experiences in order to have a theoretical understanding from which to strategize for change and reclaiming spaces" (Viswanath, 1997, p.329). However this study, exploring the notion of being an educated woman in India, draws from other theoretical understandings also to expand an understanding on how education influences women's lives. Hence the research question, 'what is your experience of being an educated woman?'

Judith Butler's (Butler, 2006) reflections are useful here:

There is, in my view, nothing about femaleness that is waiting to be expressed; there is, on the other hand, a good deal about the diverse experiences of women that is being expressed and still needs to be expressed, but caution is needed with respect to that theoretical language, for it does not simply report a prelinguistic experience, but constructs that experience as well as the limits of its analysis (Butler, 2006, p.70).

I explore, describe and interpret the ten women's experiences in this thesis with personal recollections, using popular adages (general sayings and/or proverbs), examples, case studies, narrations and poems that have particular connotations in educated women's lives. They represent and re-present women's relational self and the world. My personal recollections are both autobiographical and reflective. Combined with these is a review of existing scholarly literature that illuminates various levels of theory, debate and experience of the chosen topic.

Foster's recommendation that research should focus on lived experiences (Foster, 1994) has been taken up in this thesis. The aim of studying women's lived experience of being educated allows the researcher to explore how the stands, claims and myths surrounding

women's education in India construct women's lives at an individual and personal level and how the personal can inform the collective.

This thesis explores women's being educated experience through phenomenological interpretation. The aim of this study is not to start with a pre-conceived stand on women's experiences; rather it is to approach them with an open question to study the phenomenon of being educated – what do they think of themselves as being educated?

How the chapters are organised

In this chapter I set out the significance of this research by examining the scenario of girls' and women's education in India in the background of existing popular myths and beliefs which impact strongly on their experiences. Questions related to girls' and women's levels of agency are discussed in such a background. Noting that sexual differences do exist along with the eternal debate on equality and difference, the chapter emphasises the significance of asking different questions related women's experiences of being educated. This sets the stage for Chapter 2 to investigate if the perceived purpose of formal education is achieved to any extent in Indian girls' and women's lives.

Throughout the thesis, I use both the first person voice and sometimes the term 'this researcher' the third person voice. The milestones of my research journey over the last five years is called 'this study', indicating the 'studying' stages of the lived experiences and sometimes 'this thesis', indicating the writing stages of the thesis document.

After presenting my understanding of education, in Chapter 2 I explore 'education for critical transformation' theory; in that light it reviews the current situation of female education in India. Section 2.3 of the chapter presents a brief historical outline of girls' and women's education that reviews how the belief of 'education brings progress' was shaped. This belief is compared with the contrasting realities of women's lives in contemporary times.

In Chapter 3 I take up an interrogation of women's education, emphasising the importance of studying their lived experiences. This emphasis is highlighted by two short accounts of two women's lives and elaborates on the theoretical perspectives of human capabilities and human freedoms. Later I present another level of literature review on how writers from different parts of the world and from postcolonial societies are reviewing the status of women's education and women's lives. The significance of using the lens of insider/outsider is further strengthened.

In Chapter 4 I discuss phenomenology as a methodological and theoretical framework. It also details the research process of developing the framework, research question/s, the selection of participants, using interview method and framework of analysing the participants' experiences.

In Chapter 5 I present the texts of ten women's 'being an educated woman' experiences. The texts are followed by first level interpretation with the researcher's reflections on the texts. These are 'bracketed' in the tradition of phenomenological interpretation. These reflections form the basis for the next level of interpretation presented in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6 I analyse and discuss the insights revealed in the first level interpretation. The chapter moves to the next level, discusses the 'torn between' experience of the ten women in the light of their confident ideal and social/traditional model experiences. It brings to light the lived experience of 'being an educated woman.' This lived experience is further analysed and discussed in Chapter 7 as the phenomenological theme. In this concluding chapter, I also propose a new analytical construct and delineate the concept of a third space from which educated women's lived experience of being an educated woman could be better analysed and understood for further critical thinking.

1.7 Conclusion

Phenomenology interprets *human* experiences. Questions that are asked of men and women come from everyday/everynight life situations. They are questions around gender construction and gender relations. They are also questions that interrogate lived

experiences of men and women² and their locations in social relational worlds. They are also phenomenological questions that inquire into the essence of human experiences that operate at two interrelated levels. Firstly, it is the systems of society that locate men and women. Secondly, it is the level of men and women with their life experience. They seem to internalise the systems of the relational world, responding to them either with a conscious choice or an unconscious acceptance.

Each woman talking about her lived experience of being an educated woman reveals practical knowledge of what an educated woman thinks of herself and her meaning of being educated. Connections between these experiences and issues that confront women in their everyday life situations reveal the interplay of social constructions and resistance. As an academic researcher and interpreter of the ten women's experiences I have a concern of analysing their experiences 'with an open mind.' My commitment is to emphasise their voices that might not have been included in western academic knowledge. These voices enrich our understanding on what is believed to result from one's education and what actually is happening in an educated woman's everyday life.

In this chapter I have discussed some beliefs related to female education in India. These profoundly influence girls' and women's experiences on education and of being educated. I presented two examples that demonstrate such influence, which also reveal gender inequalities. From this I argued the significance of my research which is exploring women's lived experience of 'being an educated woman.' I also pointed out the significance of using interpretive phenomenological framework necessary for this research project, which is asking new and different questions related to girls' and women's lived experience of being educated.

In the next chapter I examine the popular social phenomenon, 'education brings progress', in the light of my reflections on education and a discussion on 'education for critical transformation' theory. Later I present a brief historical timeline of female education in India. Through this I point out that education for girls and women in Indian society is intertwined with social expectations, which may not be in line with critical transformation. To strengthen my point, I discuss the significance of post-independence

reports on the status of Indian women. I further stress the significance of asking educated women for their experience of being educated.

¹ Helene Cixous, well-known French feminist philosopher calls for a new, feminine practice of writing moving away from the patriarchal language that cannot express women. I have not used her works in this thesis as they call for an in-depth engagement and analysis which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

² I have preferred to borrow the term *men and women* from Amartya Sen (Sen, 2005).

Chapter 2

‘Education brings progress’: Exploring contextual issues of girls’ and women’s education in India

2.1 Introduction

The proposition that ‘education brings progress’ is a popular social phenomenon in modern Indian society, a belief that impacts on girls’ and women’s education in multiple ways. A girl’s education is felt as a need for the well-being of her future family for a socio-economic upward movement. Generally, a woman’s education is felt necessary for the nation’s progress. In this chapter I examine this phenomenon in the light of my reflections on education and a discussion on ‘education for critical transformation’ theory. By presenting a brief historical timeline of female education in India, I point out that education for girls and women in Indian society is intertwined with normative social expectations, not so much in congruence with critical transformation of the self or society. To illustrate the continuing influence of tradition over the liberating purpose of education, I discuss the significance of post-independence reports on the status of Indian women. I further stress the significance of asking educated women to reflect on their experience of being educated.

2.2 Reflecting on education for change and action: An insider perspective

My understanding and experience of education has been influenced by my personal story (see Prologue) and by various educators from India and elsewhere. Among the Indian educators that are named in the following paragraphs, the statesman M.K.Gandhi and the philosopher-educator Rabindranath Tagore have had a particular influence on shaping educational policies in India. For example the contemporary economist Amartya Sen has drawn his conceptual theory of human freedoms from his teacher Tagore (Sen, 2005), a theory that is influencing human development policies at the

United Nations level. These influential educators came from different life circumstances then developed their own individual approaches to education. Their influence has triggered personal change in me and assisted the development of my own personal philosophy of the purpose of education. The extent to which these educators' viewpoints and approaches have had an impact on education for girls and women in India is discussed later in the chapter.

The experiments that Gandhi carried out with education, published as interviews, books, commentaries, biographies and an autobiography, have stressed experiential learning, including lived experience, with educational opportunities envisaged to be universal for a person's development (Gandhi, 1998). Rabindranath Tagore, the founder of Shantiniketan, an innovative experiment in education in the early 20th century, viewed education as a right that enabled individuals and communities to act on reflection (PROBE, 1999; Sen, 2005; Tagore, c1961). Amartya Sen (1999) reiterated that education was necessary for a person's development and enhancement of one's quality of life through human freedoms.

Outside of India, similar philosophies have been influential in the 20th century. According to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972; 1973), an educated person learns through critical reflection and 'conscientization' to act towards social change through informed political participation. Learning may take place in institutionalised contexts, through a dialogic process (Freire, 1973; 1985). Developing "the habit of looking honestly at life" forms the basis of A.S.Neill's educational philosophy (Neill, 1975, p.15), just as Ivan Illich claimed that learning from the world has a deeper connection to the learner than learning about the world (Illich, 1973, p.10).

Education as that which liberates is at the core of education in ancient Sanskrit texts and teaching (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996). This interpretation may be expanded to include the acquisition of knowledge, life experience, confidence and self-esteem, self-actualisation, and advanced wisdom. Many stories in Indian folklore (having literary and oral sources) and Hindu mythology (appearing in Hindu religious stories, the *puranas*), which I listened to everyday and read widely about, describe education as a

long process of acquiring mastery over sixty-four areas of knowledge and life skills, the teaching of which was experience-oriented. The entire process of this acquiring and living the knowledge and skills or *vidya* was education or *shikshan*. A ‘truly’ educated person was one who mastered all the *vidyas*, who became *sakala vidyaa parangathaha*. However, critics have raised questions about this learning process as it excluded certain caste and women (Roy, 1996).

Western education, which Lord Macauley introduced and expanded to most parts of colonial India during the 19th century, not only dis-established the native, local educational system in existence but also permanently etched English language in Indian people’s education (PROBE, 1999; Scrase, 1993). Macauley’s model aimed to instill certain knowledges for the reproduction of a particular social order so that the learned upper and middle class Indians could better contribute to the British administration in India (Scrase, 1993). In post-independent, politically democratic India, the mainstream formal education system is still modelled on Macauley’s ideas (Kumar, 1990; PROBE, 1999). However reforms, through the implementation of several innovative programmes in the existing educational system have been introduced in post-independent Indian society (Chanana, 2001; India, 1986 & 1992). Notably the New Education Policy (NEP) of 1986 and 1992 brought in many changes with respect to the education of girls and women (Sudarshan, 2000). Both recommended that the girl child participation level be qualitatively enhanced stressing the need for her active citizenship. Irrespective of gender inequalities still operating in education, the general education in India does not seem to fulfil the expectations as outlined by the NEP, 1986 & 1992 (Sudarshan, 2000). The system is said to perpetuate divisions among populations, with increased marginalisation of communities with continued educational inequalities, more so for girls (Bordia, 2000, pp.313-314).

I indicated elsewhere in this thesis that the ancient Sanskrit language adage says education is what liberates. A liberated person is a confident person. Liberation that one’s education results in is the confidence to critically review and analyse our locations in the world and respond. The ideology behind education is that one gains (or enhances) the ability to critically examine one’s reality and respond to it with deliberative agency

(Freire, 1973; Sen, 2005). This critical examination and response leads the person to choices, change and action in relation to life's reality, with special reference to women living in seemingly patriarchal societies, "if she is illiterate, she will either remain in an abusive marriage for lack of options, or she may leave and have nothing to fall back on" (Nussbaum, 2003, p.332).

The contemporary understanding about the goal of education favours a livelihood-concept; education must result in a job, otherwise it is a waste (Sharma-Brymer, 2004). This attitude not only diminishes the value of education as envisaged by Gandhi, Tagore, Illich, Freire and others but encourages negative attitudes about female education.

In contemporary times the main promotional slogan related to girls' and women's education in India is 'a learned woman is the community's eyes'; she is a wealth for her family/nation. As noted above, national educational policies have introduced positive changes for enhanced participation of girls and women. Nevertheless, it is commonly argued that female education which contributes to national progress has still not been achieved (Guha et al., 1974; PROBE, 1999; Sen, 1999; 2005; Wazir, 2000b). Secondly, gender equality in education remains elusive; even educated women occupying high positions in universities have less power than their male counterparts, and they operate in an environment that restricts their authority (Chanana, 2001; 2003). These arguments pose challenges to both the provision of female education and the question of the educated woman's position. While the former indicates the importance of national goals for increasing opportunities and quality in education for girls and women for the country's progress, the latter indicates that education is not resulting in gender equality and/or better status for educated women. Arguments related to female literacy and education for women's empowerment both still have gaps although 'remedies' have been suggested (Ramachandran, 2000).

With this background, the need for this research emerges, in order to offer a further dimension to the phenomenon of female education, that is, an exploration of the experiences of 'being educated'. While getting educated is held high in all realms of life

and academia, the question of whether the purposeful values of such education, such as equality and participation, have been achieved in educated women's lives remains less explored (Chanana, 2001). It is postulated that the study of the lived experience of being an educated woman and its place in all realms of everyday life may illuminate further dimensions to the meaning of equality and participation.

In the light of the above personal narration, I now turn to the question of whether the educational experience of the learner does transform the learner's life circumstances through critical conscientization. Is this happening in women's lives in India where the ideology of formal education is of a liberating purpose? Or is the reality of the social expectations of women of greater influence? Indeed, are the two diametrically opposed? Or can women find a third space?

2.3 Learning within internalised expectations, aiming for critical transformation

An important theoretical perspective on education relates to its value in bringing about a critical change in the learner's life circumstances, thereby life quality. This critical transformation theoretical frame originated mainly from the work of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970; 1972; 1973; 1985; Freire & Macedo, 1987) and is supposedly the life force of grassroots organisations' work with marginalised people's development in India. Critical transformation theory, in its practical sense, has initiated profound changes at the grassroots level in several developing countries by its strength of dialogic relationships between the stakeholders of the civil society and the state. Freire's notion of 'education as an act of knowing' (1972, p.13) denotes an inherent capability to express human agency. The knowledge from education enables a person to 'read' the world. This knowledge equates to the 'free human mind' (Sen, 1999; 2005; Tagore, c1961). However, 'reading' the world by the strength of one's ability to read the word may not equate with 'living' the world where society's structures may suppress the intended liberating, critical awareness of education. Freire's ideas of emancipating the grassroots people through education as a dialogue basically do not address the issues of race and gender. The subordination of women in many cultures seems to be present horizontally, alongside the many other forms of oppression.

Nelly Stromquist (1990a; 1990b; 1996; 2000; 2005) is an important gender theorist advocating education for critical thinking, although her work specifically addresses the gender gap and related issues of gender differences. Stromquist views education as the most effective, positive channel to empower women. Even then she observes that “ideas cannot be fully controlled. Training people to think analytically always carries a revolutionary potential” (2005, p.2). Stromquist’s arguments address the gender question and power relations between men and women effectively; however, her contention that education creates the scope for women’s empowerment seems less effective in practical terms with regard to the lived experiences of educated women who are restricted in their ability to exert power and authority in the workforce (Chanana, 2001; 2003). Empowering women with literacy that makes them better negotiators in the male-dominated world is very important and needful (Ramachandran, 2000). However, the questions that need to be asked are what is the life experience of educated women? Has their education enabled them to negotiate equity and achieve agency? Indian educated women’s image of their private life reflects that of their public life. The ‘housekeepers of the emotions’ (Benhabib, 1987) may not be positioned as ‘critical knowledge-keepers’ in a traditional society, superficially practising their critical thinking capacity as either educated women or literate women.

2.3.1 Critical transformation and schooling

Research on education and curriculum at the global level, mainly in the developed western nations, has uncovered many pioneering theories. Inspired by critical social theory, researchers such as Michael Apple (1982; 1996), Peter McLaren (2003) and Lisa Delpit (1993) have asked important questions about the role of the school in the reproduction of class and perpetuating inequalities of power and knowledge (also see Germov, 1998; Yates & McLeod, 2000).

Ivan Illich (1971) pioneered the critique on modern educational institutions as perpetuating inequalities, claiming that schools and the curriculum serve the interests of the elite. A key sociological theorist was Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) who argued that formal education favoured the upper class. He argued that education

widened class differences. His notions of ‘habitus’ and ‘social space’ are key concepts for this thesis.

In the Indian educational context the cultural and social division of society was reinforced through colonial rule. In the 19th and 20th centuries modern formal education was developed and sustained by the British colonial rulers. Their main intention while spreading their educational model was to train the middle and the upper class Indians to participate effectively in the colonial administration. Thus the curriculum, and the English language, became the reproducers of societal inequalities, not to mention the gendered nature of education that offered the ‘domestic’ subjects to women to learn to become better wives and mothers.

Australian researcher Timothy Scrase (1993) studied cultural domination, hegemony and schooling in India. Within the theoretical framework of social and cultural reproduction theory he explored an important influencing factor that educational researchers tend to neglect: they have neglected the analysis of school textbook content (Scrase, 1993). Interestingly Scrase also argued that Indian society is similar to western society in terms of power, domination and class exploitation, an argument which is contrary to the popular western image of India as a vastly different society. He revealed through his school textbook analysis how social, cultural, and gendered hegemony was reproduced in contemporary Indian society.

In a different manner to the generalised issues relating to girls’ education, such as access and retention, the issue of sexism in Indian education texts has scarcely attracted research focus, although few have focused on the topic (Ghosh, 1986a; Kalia, 1979; 1980; Kumar, 1986b). Kumar (1986a) compared learning material in primary and higher primary school curriculum between two states of two countries, viz., India and Canada. Kalia (Kalia, 1979; 1980) examined the image of girls and women in school textbooks in India.¹ His exemplary analysis demonstrated the continuation of female stereotype, exposed the clear-cut gender divisions, parental discrimination and socio-cultural factors that inhibit female educational opportunities. A deeper-level analysis of the female images in the stories reveals the theme of ‘weaker sex’ role-model, that is,

women being carers and nurturers and the profound nature of women's subordination. Scrase's (1993) analysis of text books used in Indian education also discusses female subordination. These are the everyday experiences of girls and women showcasing their identity, power and control over their lives. However, these studies explored the 'external' material that probed sexism in female education; they still lacked an exploration of lived experience.

Scrase, Kumar and Kalia indicate a good analytical ground on which to raise questions concerning the repeated encouragement to promote female education for national prosperity. I postulate that given the circumstances of continued social and cultural hegemonic influences on class and gender, any such promotion of female education merely touches upon the surface indicators of girls' educational access and retention. In other words, the quality of education and the impact on girls' lived experiences are still neglected.

Critical transformation theory argues that education enables a person to become aware of their everyday world, their location in that world, and what is surrounding them. It enables the learner to ask 'why' questions and find out the 'how' processes through questioning engagement/s at various levels and in considerable depth. It encourages the person to view layers of experiences and the webs of interlocation through a critical eye, without accepting or taking for granted the continuation of the existing conditions of life and personal locations. However, the question is how realistic is this expectation in the light of issues of race, class and gender?

Education that enhances awareness and becomes an act of knowing is of significant practical value at the grassroots level (Prakash & Esteva, 1998; Wazir, 2000a). The mostly marginalised people at the grassroots have little access to modern formal education, but when they become literate enough to read and write, they become more participative in political governance and processes. As I observed when working in the area of grassroots human development between 1995 and 2001, Freire's critical transformation theory was not only popular but also widely acclaimed to be bringing about social change. However, the operations of caste class and gender seem to have

restricted the realisation of education's ideal of transformative learning (Bordia, 2000; Sudarshan, 2000; Tandon, 2000; Unterhalter & Dutt, 2001).

Reading the world should translate into reading the hegemonic structures of society. Prakash & Esteva (1998), however, argue that in reality, peoples of the world with rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than the dominant culture, learn to read and write to find better ways of belonging with each other, not to challenge hegemonic power structures or follow them. They maintain that knowledge and knowing from the everyday lives of marginalised majorities might soon be erased through the invasion of consumerist modern education, which perpetuates divisions and maintains dominant power.

Attempts to implement critical transformation through education seem to be failing to change the everyday life conditions of women in general, or remove gender discrimination in the lives of Indian women in particular. Indian women in contemporary times, though economically active, are still experiencing discrimination based on social and traditional ways of life. Their capacity for managing domestic and paid work seems to be exemplary yet in both the public and private spheres they remain second to men (Ramachandran, 2000). Talbani considers this situation to be “ambivalent due to its paradoxical social structure, where traditions and modernity intersect each other” (Talbani, 2001, p.8). Even at the grassroots level where social change agents are following Freire's education for critical consciousness theory, raising the level of awareness seems achievable for the whole general population, but still not able to change women's second-class citizen status.

Freire's educational “process by which the educator invites learners to recognise and unveil reality critically” (Freire, 1985, p.102) seems to have little practical scope for women facing everyday subordination. The essence of Freire's theory – that we need critical consciousness to understand our positions of dominance and subordination – may not apply even in the case of women from the dominant classes who still experience a subordinated status in their family, workplace and public life (Chanana, 2001; 2003). Champion & Shrum (2004) surveyed the experiences of 293 women

scientists in less developed areas of Ghana, Kenya and India. They pointed out that “women were less likely than men to (1) report knowledge of new funding sources, (2) publish in foreign journals, and (3) adopt 'first world' views of environmental issues” (p.480). When diverse experiences across race, class, and ethnicity are painted on a canvas, women’s unequal status tends to spread across all three, whereas men’s experiences tend to vary depending on whether they are part of the dominant group.

While Freire worked toward the empowerment of marginalised people, Ivan Illich questioned the existing systems and conditions of dominance. Illich called for deschooling the society (Illich, 1971) whereas Freire argued for a change in pedagogy and challenged “the credibility of educational activities” (cited in Cayley, 1992, pp.206-207). Illich’s engagement with education as a hegemonic system in itself, led him to argue that education made no difference. As in any other institution, compulsory education continued the structured injustices and disparities, teaching people to conform to the expectations of the institutional powers. Kamla Bhasin (Bhasin, 1994) makes Illich’s point more significant with these words:

Neither educational opportunities nor legislative provisions nor revolutionary rhetoric – political, technological, or sexual – have changed the magnitude by which women, in their earnings, stand below men... haven’t more women been pushed to experience discrimination, all in the name of equity? ... Education makes no difference (Bhasin, 1994, p.8).

It is accepted generally that some form of education is necessary in every person’s life to expose oneself to and adapt to the changes of that contemporary period. Such change and adaptation should empower a woman to take action, coupled with enhancing her agency. Nevertheless, educated women, to a certain extent, seem to carry mental blocks about their position and so devalue their potential power and self-dignity (pr. documentation, Arora, 1999; Longwe, 2001; Sharma, 2003). Creating a space to redefine their self-perceptions and self-images to reclaim their voice and to overcome “a culture of silence” (Bhola, 1994, p.44) seems to be missing in their education. The notion of ‘Can the subaltern speak’ (Spivak, 1988; 1996), can be a reference point to study Third World educated women’s experiences, for when the subaltern are heard, they reveal stories different to the taken for granted ones that their society appropriates.

The stories may illuminate their complex, multi-layered worlds from their past and their tradition (Narayan, 1997; Sharma, 2001). Chanana states that social change is constantly occurring in Indian society, but women are expected to be rooted in the past and tradition, to be a stable, unchanging element in a “rapidly changing world” (2001, p.20). This is especially the case of educated, middle-class women who regard their middle-class identity as a value along with their ‘traditional Indian woman’ perception.

Female agency and the lived experience of action take on different meanings in the context of cultural tradition. Women are good agents in their everyday life when they demonstrate they are the caretakers of their families in every sense. Ironically their agency is a set of actions that is directed and controlled by the society’s systems, not desired and preferred by the women. Exposure to education entails a dilemma – an interplay of desire and conflict – about their own position and one that is envisaged for their daughters. Education for girls and women seems to lack an enabling experience, provisions to take action for change.

The multiple dimensions related to female education in India give rise to many questions – why are Indian educated women following tradition, keeping the liberating philosophical purpose of education secondary? Why does Indian society prefer that women remain unchanging even in the neo-liberal times? Have there been any positive changes in women’s status during post-independence years, if so, what kind of changes?

These questions can be partially answered only in the light of understanding the historical timeline of female education in India and the influence of religion and culture.

2.4 Multiple understandings of female education in India: A discussion

The aim of this section is to unpack different understandings and perspectives related to normalised beliefs about female education in India. In any discussion on education for girls this belief is quoted consistently but with a twist – a girl’s education will progress her future family; in other words it is not for her (Unterhalter, 2005). This section draws on historical socio-cultural aspects relating to female education in India, and reviews how the State has treated the issue of education for girls and women. Various reports

indicate that from 1953 to the present, the State has neither achieved the anticipated progress in relation to girls' education nor the supposed improvement in the position of women. In Section 2.4 I expand on the theme of women's status in relation to men, and in Section 2.5 I outline the findings of three reports, published in 1953 (UNESCO, 1953), in 1974 (India, 1974) and in 2001 (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001), to compare and contrast the situation of women's status that shows little overall progress. The 1953 report stressed the secondary status of women in all realms of life, with a particular criticism of the education of women (UNESCO, 1953): the *Towards Equality* report of 1974 commissioned by the then Indian government (India, 1974) and the more recent UN-commissioned report (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001) present the statistical details as well as point out the failure of State policies in realising the purposes of education, specifically for women.

2.4.1 Girls' and women's education in India: A brief historical timeline²

In India education has been thought of as a channel that develops a person and also prospers a person's life. Thoughts and words from ancient texts, folklore, proverbs and historical anecdotes support this (Ghosh, 1986b). Literacy is seen as a necessity. However, there is a vast documentation, through written, oral history, and folklore of the paradoxical position of Indian women – their agency is celebrated alongside awareness of their subjugation in a patriarchal society. While education in postcolonial times is seen to bring reforms in the public life with increased equity and participation, there have been arguments that education may not bring enough social change to transform women's second-class citizen status to one of greater equality (for example Bhasin, 1994; Bordia, 2000). Yet an educated woman, being employed, is viewed as an asset for the family's progress, not only contributing to the combined financial income of the family but also raising her children better (Chanana, 2001). The influence of a thick tradition seems to have a stronger influence over education, whether it is women living in India or Indian immigrant women living in London (Bhopal, 1997; Chanana, 2001).

The contemporary adage 'a learned woman is a wealth of her family' projects quite a positive attitude towards female education in India. The projection places the position of

a woman as the pillar of her family in her roles as care-taker, care-giver and nurturer, besides being responsible for building the life component in her family. She is attributed with qualities of compassion, care, co-operation, forgiveness, empathy and as an agent of peace. Her eternal patience is compared only to that of Mother Earth, offering home to the billions in her womb (Altekar, 1956). An adage in Sanskrit language describes an efficient and ‘real’ woman as one who is the best in bed, in cooking and in the management of family affairs; such a woman is man’s closest companion. Indian epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* describe women’s feminine qualities of patience and sacrifice. There are also quotations in Hindu holy scriptures and books that uphold the high honour for women as where they are respected, there will be prosperity. Several goddesses of Hindu religion occupy prime seats of power, wealth, valour, wisdom and knowledge. Both dawn and dusk are personified as goddesses; most rivers of India are also females. Married women of *Brahman* caste are meant to follow the image of five celebrated women of the Hindu *puranas*, representing chastity and virtues (Roy, 1996).

While girls in contemporary India are often asked to follow the example of these women characters of mythology and holy scriptures, they are also reminded not to pick up the desire of Sita of *Ramayana* or not to offend a male like Draupadi of *Mahabharata* did, as they caused misery to their husbands. Following the stereotypes, thus, often creates conflict and confusion for a girl in contemporary times (Sharma, 2001).

The Vedic period of Indian history records the participation of women scholars in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom; the devotion of domestic type of women to their family’s well-being (Altekar, 1956; Roy, 1996). Jain & Walter (1987) describe the independence and choice-based life style of women in the Vedic age. They note women’s brilliance in authorising Vedic hymns:

Women had a brilliant role to play in Vedic and pre-Vedic period. We come across a number of women in the Rigveda, who not only recited the Vedas but were actually the authors of the hymns in praise of deities. They were even allowed to perform the function of a priest at a sacrifice – a privilege denied to women at a later period (Jain & Walter, 1987, p.viii).

However, quite often the historical accounts do not represent what is now known about women's scholarship and women's status (Chakravarti, 1989; Roy, 1996; Thapar, 1975). The above quote presents a positive picture about women's status and position in the Vedic age. However, a part of the same quote – they were even allowed to perform the function of a priest at a sacrifice – illustrates that males controlled women's rights even in Vedic age. This may be the actual image of women, especially following Gargi's story which is given below.

It is quite a popular practice in India, during discussions on girls' and women's education, to praise the scholarly women of the Vedic age. Two such women scholars, Gargi and Maitreyi, are repeatedly quoted to point out how highly educated women were in that age. These two names are often given to newly born girls, to encourage the younger generation of girls to become educated.

Gargi was indeed a noted scholar of religious scripts and higher levels of Vedic knowledge. She was known as a *brahmavadini*, a female scholar of supreme Brahmanical knowledge. A male counterpart Yagnyavalkya, a highly respected one, challenged her to test if she could be called a *brahmavadini*, on a par with males, during a public competition amongst such scholars. Whilst she proved her high level of supreme Vedic knowledge, Yagnyavalkya admonished her and banned her from demonstrating her knowledge in public ever again, the reason being as a female she did not fit with knowledgeable males.

While people quote Gargi as a learned woman of the Vedic age, it is quite possible that most of them may not know the full story of Gargi's exclusion for her identity as a learned woman. This story, I believe, would be reproduced only in feminist-oriented books or historians with a critical perspective (Roy, 1996), not in the popular media. Gargi's story of exclusion has been present in my thoughts in recent years, in my pursuit of literature on women's educational experiences. Her experience, perhaps negated by the mainstream educational policy makers and planners, has implications for the educational experiences of girls and women in contemporary times.

2.4.2 Historical accounts of past centuries

Literature drawn from historical accounts reveals that the supposedly independent and empowered status of women gradually shifted with a changing mode of life. Changes were brought about by internal agencies within the society, restricting women in their mobility, access to information, education, expression and participation and from influences by foreign socio-cultural ways (Jain & Walter, 1987). Women were prevented from participation in the economic and public spheres; their inheritance rights were curtailed and thus their general status was reduced to a subservient position (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996). This included access to education and intellectual participation. The increasing practice of the caste system contributed more to this complex issue. Women, with 'low' caste people, were considered unfit to have a recognised status in society. Historical accounts show that this continued through centuries under different dynastic rules and changes brought about occasionally by radical rulers and later by various foreign sources. Brahman hypocrisy and bourgeois practices forced control over learning and sharing of knowledge. The innate desire of the ruling class to conquer land and people and the imposition of diverse cultures continued. However, volumes on women writers of India do illuminate women's participation and their voice (for example Tharu & Lalita, 1993). During the British colonial rule in India female education obtained more prominence partially due to the modern education system that was introduced but mainly due to the social reform movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

2.4.3 Women and education during the colonial era

Although formal education with equal access for both girls and boys started during the British colonial period, the colonial education system was cast in a British patriarchal male mould and encouraged Indian males to prepare for jobs. The British colonial administrators apparently reinforced female exclusion from the public sphere through an education system based upon the ideals of the Victorian era. Although English missionaries made efforts to educate all with an interest of religious conversion, women were restricted to the private sphere (Forbes, 1996). Discrimination within curriculum was evident during the British period, which offered more domestic subjects like home

science, music, needle and embroidery work to girls and discouraged women from studying masculine subjects like physics or mathematics. There was a particular preference among the upper middle class and the Indian elite for private schools and convents run by the missionaries.

A noteworthy western woman who heralded female education in South India was Dr Annie Besant. She asserted that in colonial India women were educated and they enjoyed much more freedom than in her times. Already identifying herself with women's emancipation since 1874 in England and having been influenced by Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, Dr Besant saw the contemporary social practices such as child marriage and *sati* as perversions of the original Hindu doctrine. Apparently she did not force western education on Indian women; rather she called upon them to draw the values from their own ancient culture where women were highly regarded with equality (Forbes, 1996).

"In 1854 there were approximately 626 girl's schools (Bengal: 288, Madras: 256, Bombay: 65, and NWFP and Oudh: 17) with a total of 21,755 students" (Forbes, 1996, p.41). Although the increase in number of girls' schools was a welcome change in the colonial scenario, the extent to which it led to the empowerment and development of girls remains questionable. Mary Hancock (2001) effectively describes how girls studying Home Science became a rhetoric combined with the early 20th century nationalist movement and projects of Anglo-Saxon feminists. She (Hancock, 2001, p.875) states that domestic sphere became equated with female agency and home was perceived as a site where "nationalist modernities, which appropriated and contested Eurowestern behaviours and material culture, were fashioned and displayed." My mother, who was in primary school at the end of British Raj in India, often told me that her older sisters, who studied in Christian missionary schools run by Catholic Sisters, were 'very well trained in moral discipline, home science, embroidery and Bible discourses, besides basic knowledge of English language. While her father liked this idea of discipline which he believed prepared the girls with obedience needed to be shown at their married homes, her mother was fearful of the influence of foreign culture on her daughters.

With some special grants-in-aid resulting from the recommendations of the Hunter Commission Report of 1882, female education in India changed dramatically by the turn of the century but only in terms of an increase in the number of schools. The Commission was especially set up to study the then existing educational scenario and to suggest improvements. The number of women in Indian universities increased from six in 1881-82 to 264 at the end of the 19th century and the secondary school enrolment number rose from 2,054 to 41,582. Besides these positive trends, the personal efforts of people like Pandita Ramabai, Mataji Maharani Tapaswini, Dhondo Keshav Karve, and scores of others led the female education movement into a more productive era (Chanana, 2001; Forbes, 1996).

These historical details accentuate the efforts of many individuals and schools of thought in increasing the opportunities of participation for Indian women. Most of the pioneers in this process of education for Indian women seem to be women themselves. Forbes (Forbes, 1996) underlines this development providing a different insight into female education of the pre-independent India³:

The first generation of educated women found a voice: they wrote about their lives and about the conditions of women. The second generation acted. They articulated the needs of women, critiqued their society and the foreign rulers, and developed their own institutions. That these institutions were often as conservative as those designed by men should not be taken as a sign that these women wished to preserve the status quo. Rather it should be taken as evidence that they understood their subordinate position very well (Forbes, 1996, p.61).

Even with the colonial encouragement towards education for developing the middle class in great numbers, there were big gaps such as the rural-urban division, social class and caste exclusion, religion, tradition and culture which acted as negative factors in women's access to education. The very issue of female education was a complex web of numerous issues stemming from religious practices, social belief system, sex segregation, seclusion, child marriage practice, the type of school and teacher as well as where and what would be taught, how long and so on (Chanana, 2001; Forbes, 1996).

It is noteworthy, yet ironical that it was men who introduced radical changes in the much downtrodden status of girls and women during the 19th century. Throughout our

primary and secondary education I was taught that Dayananda Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founders of Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj respectively, stand out among them. Their Samajs, socio-cultural organisations, were founded with the aim of bringing reforms to the prevailing class, caste and gender discriminatory conditions. The two reformists strove hard to improve women's status through positive changes in the lives of widows and girl children accessing higher education. In fact these two Samajs organized the first *mahila mandals* (women's groups), providing space for women's free participation in public life and more opportunities for their education (Altekar, 1956; Patel, 1998). Progressive thinkers like Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar and Jyotiba Phule of the 19th century perceived social oppression of women as the root cause for social inequality in a society dominated by high caste Hindus (Forbes, 1996; Mazumdar & Sharma, 1979). Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar and Dwarka Nath contributed heavily towards legalising widow remarriage (Banerjee, 1979; Gupta, 1976). These progressive changes, seen in the 19th century as bringing significant changes to women's oppressive conditions were once again initiated and heralded by men.

2.5 Education for girls and women: Social expectations vs internalised empowerment

When a girl enters a school, from a familial context of such strongly constructed gender-specific roles, her experiences as a learner remain different from that of a male learner. Within the Indian context, scant attention has been paid to the exploration of girls' experiences of their learning and education despite several writers raising the issue that girls and women remain as second class citizens. A general appraisal of the situation in relation to girls' education, their educational outcomes in the gendered nature of education has been the focus of several studies (Ghosh, 1986b; Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987; Mazumdar, 1987; Mazumdar & Sharma, 1979; Patel, 1998; Sharma, 1997; Unterhalter & Dutt, 2001), yet lived experience of being educated has not been prioritized for academic pursuit (Chanana 2001).

On the other hand, Indian educated women seem to have a restricted experience to express their knowledge with authority or demonstrate their power (Burra, 2001; Chanana, 2000; 2003; Mazumdar, 1987; Patel, 1998). Hindu religion dictates that a girl

should be a dependent of her father when she is a girl, of her husband when she is a wife and of her son when she is old. With such an attitudinal approach, education of girls remains limited in its value and outcomes (Reddy, 1991; Sharma, 2001; Singh, 2002a).

Traditionally the son preference inherent in the dominating Indian religions and culture generally excludes a daughter. When the girl is born it is said that parents are burdened, until she is married off and sent away to another family. The girl becomes the ‘other’ and is expected to adapt to the ways of the new family’s norms. The male as the head of the family invariably controls the expression of the female members of his family. To some extent mothers seem to be confidantes of daughters. Within Indian everyday life there are poems that originate from oral history, urging the married daughter never to visit her parental home after her mother dies as it is only a mother who can love a daughter unconditionally, not the male family members.

The male-dictated normative framework also directs and defines the female position, the space within the private and the public domains of life (Talbani, 2001). The parental investment towards a girl, including her education, to a large extent follows the internalised socio-cultural expectations (Burra, 2001; Sudarshan, 2000). The very attitude towards a girl’s education is with the expectation that she will carry on her role in the private sphere irrespective of her aspirations as an educated woman with or without a career. This has many socio-psychological effects on how a woman internalises her role and how she views the roles of other women (Nandy, 1976; Sen, 2005).

For some time, western educators have argued that women need to empower themselves to address the oppressive relations between men and women in patriarchal social set-ups. For example, Nelly Stromquist stated “women need any knowledge that will enable them to negotiate effectively with men” (1990b, p.107). Stromquist emphasised that women’s empowerment through education needed to take place in four dimensions: cognitive, psychological, economic and political. She points out that education makes women more analytical and it increases their assertiveness (Stromquist, 1990b; 1996). Viewing education as an avenue for “opening up the possibilities of change” as it

“exposes individuals to cosmopolitan ideas, rules of evidence, and ethical considerations” she notes, for education to empower people “you need supportive content and context to make these ideas flourish” (Stromquist, 2005, p.2). This is an important observation for any discussion of Indian girls’ and women’s education situation (McDougall, 2000).

The most popular framework to address female education in India in the last few decades has been the Women in Development (WID) approach, though it is now widely recognised that a Gender and Development (GAD) approach is more effective in addressing men’s unequal relations with women (Unterhalter, 2000; 2005) since a major concern for women lies in changing negative male attitude to women’s empowerment. Many grassroots organisations in India have made women and development their primary field of interest (pr. Documentation, 1992-2001). The prefix to the title of this chapter ‘education brings progress’ is the generalised outlook about education in Indian society. In the case of girls’ education it is said that if you ‘educate a girl, you educate the whole community’. The approach of the WID advocates supports this adage in that an increase in girls’ enrolment, in number of schools and the rate of retention of girls in schools are of primary concern. On the other hand, the GAD supporters, both at the grassroots and government levels, are keen to work with both men and women for development and change. Girls’ and women’s educational issues are not the sole focus of the GAD activists.

The biggest challenge to grassroots organisations concerned with encouraging greater participation in formal education is the prevalent skeptical attitude of parents about the value of education. A common view from parents in marginalised areas is that education may secure an upwardly mobile job for boys and a better husband for girls; otherwise, they ask, what is the use of education? They see little purpose in encouraging higher education for their daughters (personal documentation 1996-2001, Sharma 2001). Moreover, the schools themselves tend to reinforce traditional values through the curriculum and through teacher expectations; there is little scope to encourage assertiveness in girls (Bhola, 1994).

Outside the school, there are significant adult literacy programmes that NGOs conduct to empower women at the grassroots, in areas such as legal literacy, functional literacy, awareness related to issues of domestic violence and health (Ramachandran, 2000; Wazir, 2000a). The last two areas affect the well-being of women in their everyday life; their stories are often not shared with others. On the other hand, my personal experience in the field between 1996 and 2001 showed that the reality of empowering and educating women is different. Most adult women who participate in adult literacy programmes feel that they have little motivation to become literate as family management issues, power and authority relations, and everyday survival matters occupy their primary attention (Batliwala, 1994).

In my personal experience I also found out that most mothers agree that their daughters need to be educated – however for various personal, economic and social reasons their education gets limited to upper primary or in a better scenario up to Secondary School Leaving Certificate level (Sharma, 2001). Mothers view education as basic schooling. While literacy does not seem relevant to women at the grassroots, after they learn ‘how to sign their name on a paper’, they do show interest in schooling their daughters, carefully adding that the girls must be trained at home in family management. Getting a primary and secondary level schooling is now becoming important in my home state of Karnataka as a result of pressure from the government. However, parental interest in schooling originates from gaining social prestige and negotiating a groom from a better-placed family.

However this is not the same situation in urban and semi-urban populations. Economically disadvantaged families, living in semi-urban and urban areas tend to encourage their girls to achieve at least the secondary school leaving certificate as this creates the potential of getting jobs in factories with a better payment compared to the low daily wages that people receive in the rural areas. On the other hand, economically more prosperous families tend to encourage further education, including university degrees, to enhance their girls’ status in society and to widen the opportunities of having a better groom in marriage (Chanana, 2001). Thus urban and semi-urban people tend to view education for girls as positive for employment and marriage prospects, rather than

for empowerment in psychological or cognitive areas of development as discussed by Stromquist (1996). Education seems limited to economic and to a certain extent, political advances in women's life. These same women will continue to live in an environment of subordination in the private sphere (Bhasin, 1994). There has been little overall change from a generation ago when formal education of girls and women was promoted to enhance their skills in domestic life.

Vina Mazumdar (1987), stated:

... the assumption that Indian women are deprived of education because of purdah, or social seclusion, does not hold good any longer because the sections that confined their women to the home have taken the lead in educating them (a) because otherwise they could not find a suitable groom; and (b) to push them into the labour market when necessary to maintain or improve the family's standard of living (Mazumdar, 1987, p.201).

This observation indicates that education alone does not provide women with the necessary strategies and understandings that bring about desired attitudinal and social change towards equity and social justice (Bhasin, 1994, p.8).

Although Sen (2005) addresses the issues of women's subordination and gender inequalities at length, his arguments are weak in addressing the social and cultural position of women; women are still left with the idea "education of women is for others, not for themselves" (Unterhalter, 2005, p.18). This seems to be the real situation of girls' and women's education in India even though government policies and programmes are made female-friendly. The following section underlines this point in the light of two post-independent reports, which give a comparative picture of women's status in India.

2.6 Post-independence and the status of women

Along with the Nationalist movement before political independence of 1947, there were observable progressive changes in the status of women in India, emerging from 19th century radical thinking. Child marriage was legally abolished as early as 1929, and Indian women gained their voting rights in 1935. The Hindu Divorce Act came into

force in 1956, providing for divorce without the interference of a religious or social institution. This was the first legislation in the world in this respect (Gupta, 1976). Female participation in economic and educational fields leapt forward after Independence in 1947 (Sudarshan, 2000). India passed the equal rights amendment as early as 1951 (Nussbaum, 2000b).⁴

Many women leaders who participated in the Nationalist movement were pleased with the new democratic Constitutional provisions of the post-independent India that guaranteed equal rights and status to women. Unfortunately the women's organisations that they founded very soon became institutionalised and were run like mini-governments. The followers of Gandhian principles soon became highly disillusioned with the bureaucracies and centralised governance. In spite of having space for female agency and the politically favourable Constitution, the position of the majority of women changed little during the post-independent India. Apparently it had further deteriorated as the *Towards Equality* (India, 1974) report revealed.

The study behind the report was authorised by the Indian government in response to a United Nations request to all countries to prepare reports on the status of women for International Women's Year scheduled for 1975. The nine chapters of the published report with detailed sections within the chapters provide an exhaustive picture of Indian women's status as of that year. Several of the Committee members participating in the study such as Leela Dube, Lotika Sarkar and Vina Mazumdar are authorities on women's studies in India.

The study concluded that equality and justice had not been met for women despite being guaranteed in the Constitution. In their letter dated December 31st, 1974 the Committee states that "Our investigation has revealed that large masses of women in this country have remained unaffected by the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution and the laws enacted since Independence" (India, 1974). Chapter VI is a detailed appraisal of the educational development of women in India (pp. 234-281). One of the most significant recommendations that the Committee made in this chapter was the inculcation of equality of sexes as a major value through the educational process. In

fact several academic research studies (Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987; Mazumdar, 1987; Mazumdar & Sharma, 1979) commissioned after this report pointed at a certain reality: that most Indian women had not benefited from the modern socio-economic, technological and political changes. Their subordinated status continued. Several changes needed to be brought into practice in the country's educational system.

Vina Mazumdar (1987) raises three issues for debate about Indian women and their education. "There are, in fact, three major debates", she asserts:

(a) has education, instead of eliminating women's unequal roles and position in society, widened gender inequality, and added a new one—that between education and uneducated women? (b) should the education policy, which upheld non-discrimination/non-differentiation on the grounds of sex since Independence, be reversed to provide a special type of education which women would find more valuable? and (c) should education play a more prominent and active role in eliminating gender inequality and, if so, how? Who should be its target? (Mazumdar, 1987, p.199)

These debates continue to challenge policy makers. Her questions are also reflected in the findings of the more recent UN-commissioned report of girls' and women's status in India (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the International conference on Adult Education, Hamburg of 1997 both emphasise the need for people's democratic participation. The 2001 *Ocho Rios Declaration* stresses 'the informed and effective participation of men and women in every sphere of life...' (The Ocho Rios Declaration 2001). The Indian Constitution guarantees no discrimination based on sex or caste. The government authorities have ratified the 1948 Human Rights Charter, thereby guaranteeing human development in all areas.

However, the statistics and the details provided in the independent analytical report commissioned by the UN system, authorised by the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNDP Resident Representative (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001) show that women across all religions, castes, classes are still experiencing different forms of humiliation, discrimination and abuses. In the beginning of the report the authors observe: "... gaps still remain. While some women are emerging as strong and confident...others face a

very different reality, prompting the question: “Is the glass half full or half empty?”” (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001, p.14). The sample areas quoted may be compared with the previous documents such as UNESCO report *Women and Education* (UNESCO, 1953), the handbook *Women in India* brought out by the Research Unit of Women’s Studies of the SNDT University, Bombay (1975), the *Towards Equality* report that the Government of India published (1974), and the statistics given in *Indian Women: Education and Status* (Aggarwal, 1976). The section on education (pp.43-50) provides a comparison of female literacy rates in India and other Third World countries as well as a glimpse of girl child enrolment in school in India. The section concludes, observing “gender gap in literacy...remains intimidating” (Menon-Sen & Shiva Kumar, 2001, p.49). Although there are positive trends in statistics such as the enrolment of girl children in schools, and the number of women completing their bachelor’s degree, the above literature reveals that there is less change in the general qualitative life conditions of women.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established that the liberating purposes of education, from the ancient Sanskrit language adage, to the critical transformation theories in modern education, have had little effect on girls’ and women’s education in India. Social expectations are interwoven with a girl’s education even before she goes to school. Thus, girls and women internalise what their society intends them to practice in terms of empowerment. As a result there is little progress achieved in relation to women’s status.

I conclude from the research that there is an urgent need to study the lived experiences of educated women to understand and describe, what they feel, what they think, what they are experiencing in their life as educated women. From the evidence discussed in this chapter, it becomes imperative to inform the academic and non-academic worlds what it means to be an educated woman and what her everyday contestations are.

In the next chapter I elaborate on the above theme in the light of theories of human capabilities and human freedoms that are strongly linked to girls’ and women’s education in India. Two different standpoints of researchers from African countries will

highlight the status of women's education in other postcolonial countries. I draw from Indian-origin researchers studying various aspects of Indian women's lives emphasising my use of an insider/outsider lens in this research.

I am educated

Everybody went to school and college
they sent me too.
A good job, parents said, a better husband, a secure future,
Good marks, school said, good conduct, certified better.
So I believed.

Train well, they said, at home
A daughter trained well today
Good wife, daughter-in-law, mother tomorrow.
They all believed it,
So did I.

Learn maths, science, social studies
... oh, don't forget your two languages
A good citizen, takes our nation forward.
Everybody followed school,
So did I.

Go to college, get a degree
Learn Science & Commerce, some vocation
Get a decent job, a monthly salary;
On your legs, be independent.
So did I.

Homely girl, with a job, you are educated.
Time for marriage, chuck your CV.
This is the boy, the family,
Don't say anything, just nod yes.
So did I.

You are educated, he said later
Good for me, Good for my family,
Good for our children, with your skills
A learned mother, good for the nation.
So was I, with my image.

I went to college
My children know that
I earn a salary
My husband knows that
I am educated
They all know that.

I am yet to understand

How.

- (October 18, 2003)

¹ Kalia's study is pioneering in that it analyses the status of girls and women through text book imagery while an attempt by Jain & Walter (1987) describing women in Indian tales reads as a book not so much as an analytical study.

² My aim in this thesis is not to cover and critique the whole educational scenario of India through history and cultural studies. I have provided only a brief account on female education.

³ Karuna Chanana (2001 pp.83-126) also discusses women's education during the colonial era, specifically from 1921-47, in Chapter 1

⁴ Footnote 7, p.38; Footnote 10, p.39; Section IV in Introduction.

Chapter 3

Interrogating girls' and women's education: Significance of lived experiences

For me, starting from women's standpoint means that inquiry must begin in the everyday/everynight actualities of people's experiences; it means problematizing the objectified institutional order of large-scale corporations, of schooling and health care, of the professions, and of the academic, cultural, and scientific discourses, including the mass media.

(Smith, 2000, p.1147)

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I narrated my personal understanding of education empowering a person to critically analyse life's conditions for change and action. I pointed out that girls' and women's education in India is influenced more from social and internalised expectations than from critical transformation/liberation beliefs.

In the present chapter I aim to illuminate two theoretical perspectives, viz., the human capabilities framework of Martha Nussbaum (2000b) and the construct of human freedoms of Amartya Sen (1999) in relation to women's development through education. I begin by giving an account of the suicides of two 'educated' women, in order to show how the concepts of capability and freedom do not necessarily resonate with the actual experiences of educated women in India. In Section 3.4 I explore contexts of difference as documented by Indian academics. Section 3.5 compares the Indian context with other postcolonial societies, and explores the current debates that focus on women's experiences. Women's participation and their citizenship is discussed in Section 3.6. Section 3.7 illuminates Indian-origin researchers' perspective of using insider/outsider lens to study aspects of Indian women's lives, a perspective that locates my own place as an Indian researcher studying in Australia.

3.2 Narrating the deaths of two women

Sangeeta Sharma

Sangeeta Sharma, a woman lawyer aged 30 years, committed suicide in 1999 in the city of Hyderabad in India. She belonged to an upper caste and class, the Brahmins. She had postgraduate qualifications, including a degree in Law and was a practising junior lawyer in a metropolitan, first class city. Her family members were all well educated. She was divorced and had a little girl. She lived with her parents.

Sangeeta was working in a well-known law firm, under two successful seniors who were males. They belonged to an upper class but lower caste community. Their community and caste is highly dominant in the state of Andhra Pradesh to which the city of Hyderabad belongs.

Before taking her life Sangeeta left a suicide note which said that she was under constant threat and abuse from her two seniors in the law firm. She also said that this had been going on for a while and she had tried her best to resolve the situation and eventually failed. Out of sheer helplessness, failure to have peace of mind and lack of support in that situation, she chose death. She said that she had lodged police complaints in the past in connection with both her seniors' attempts to sexually harass her and that she had even complained to the State Bar Association about their threats.

Sangeeta detailed her colleagues' threats saying one of the two asked her repeatedly to have a sexual relationship with him and if she refused he would spoil her career and would jeopardise her personal life. The other male colleague often encouraged him and suggested that she should have sex with him too. Both looked down upon her and exploited her single status and the fact that she was divorced, which in their view lowered her personal dignity and value in society. She also said that her family members and many of her friends were aware of these threats, abuses and the constant harassment and that she desperately sought their help and intervention.

In her suicide note Sangeeta urged the police and the Bar Association to probe into her death, to investigate the cause in an effort to obtain justice. She hoped that other women in a situation like hers might then have a better future.

Kalavathi¹

Kalavathi was born and brought up in a village on the border of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. She was a very cheerful, bright and intelligent girl who found it easy to adapt to city life whenever she visited her relatives. She was the youngest in the family of three girls and two boys; her father was a high caste Brahman priest. He headed a joint family of three brothers, their wives and children. Kalavathi's eldest sister was a Sanskrit scholar and a lecturer; her middle brother was a high school teacher.

Kalavathi completed her college education and was married by her early twenties. Very soon she became the mother of a female child. Often she told her parents that her mother-in-law abused her a lot and her husband supported his mother. She also complained to her parents that her marital life was not good and she was harassed to bring more dowry.

When she became pregnant for the second time, her mother-in-law and husband threatened that she would not be allowed to come back to them if she delivered another female child; they wanted a male successor. Kalavathi went to her parents for the delivery when she was seven months pregnant. Her two-year-old daughter was with her. She often expressed her fear of getting another girl and becoming unacceptable in her husband's family.

Her parental village did not have built toilets inside the house; the entire village used the periphery of their village as their toilet. The usual practice for women living in such villages is to go to the toilet only in the night so that men could not see them. One such night Kalavathi collected the little 'toilet' pot, filled it with water, told her mother that she was going out. She took her little daughter with her. Her mother waited for her to return for a long time. A search was launched much later in the night; the dead bodies of

Kalavathi and her little girl were found in a nearby deep well. Police registered it as a case of suicide and the chapter called Kalavathi's life was closed forever.

3.2.1 Raising questions around the two women's deaths

Sangeeta and Kalavathi represent thousands of other women from India who are subjected to treatment that seems to be socially and culturally stereotyping. Their formal education, a good family background, sound mind and social status seem to have had little effect on their personal agency and life choices.

I would like to raise some questions about the deaths of Sangeeta Sharma and Kalavathi in the context of my research. Were these suicides willed and carried out solely by these two women? To what extent did the society and the system influence their decision to commit suicide? Sangeeta was a citizen of a liberal democracy, and had access to higher education and application of her learnings; what stopped Sangeeta from living her life to the fullest extent, experiencing the 'quality of life' as inferred by Nussbaum and Sen (1993)?

In the case of the second woman, the question one needs to ask is why was Kalavathi not treated fairly and equally by her husband's family and why was she harshly treated and victimised by her own mother-in-law? If one goes by the supposition that Hindu religion and culture worship women as Mother Goddess and respect them as Mother Nature, then why was her very existence silenced and why was justice for her, as a woman, denied? Living in a democratic country that guarantees every citizen's fundamental right to live and enjoy all other rights, with respect and dignity, in what ways was Kalavathi excluded?

In a society in which the men folk have no mercy, no religion, no sense of justice, no sense of good or bad, in which mere conventionality is considered the chief activity and the supreme religion, let no more women be born -Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Bengali Social Reformer, 1820-9 (cited in Nussbaum, 2000b).

While Sangeeta had a career as a practising lawyer, a sound formal education and an urban environment around her, Kalavathi had a college education but did not enter the paid workforce, lived in a town and did not appear to have many options. Despite these

obvious differences between the lives of Sangeeta and Kalavathi, there is an element of sameness in their stories. The sameness is that neither felt they had support to continue to live with a sense of equality or respect in their immediate family, friends and colleagues – their deaths signify the operation of external forces on their lives and the suppression of their own strengths. Their deaths and others like them have cemented my desire to carry out this research project. My particular interest is the exploration of how the women construct meaning around their education.

3.3 Education for enhancing human capabilities and human freedoms

The two perspectives of human capabilities (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) and human freedoms (Sen, 1999) as frameworks for theorising about education have engaged with the importance of the generalised, utilitarian value of educational outcomes with women and development as a major subject area. These frameworks are supposedly the foundation for enhancing the quality of life. They have made a significant impact on the reformulation of the Human Development Index model employed by the United Nations.

Education has been viewed as a key to a better quality of life and as an avenue that enhances those human capabilities that are a basic necessity in life (Nussbaum, 2000b; 1993; Sen, 1999; 2005). In their writings Nussbaum and Sen have individually maintained that education is most necessary for women not only for their progress in life but also for the overall progress of their society (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1999).

Nussbaum (1999; 2000b) developed the human capabilities framework as a human functional model, drawing upon the notion that she and Sen proposed (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) in relation to Sen's theoretical concept of the quality of life. In her book *Women and Human Development* (Nussbaum, 2000b) she supports the Constitutional rights of Indian citizens and argues that in a given political structure, one that is functioning the way it is meant to, every citizen should be able to practise her/his human capabilities. Nussbaum proposed her new and improved model of ten human capabilities and discussed it further from her case studies of marginalised Indian women (see Appendix A). She theorises from the standpoint of liberal feminism and calls for an

international feminism based on an ethical approach to development and policy. Interestingly, she observes that denial of human capabilities amplifies women's poverty and gender inequality. Her proposal, projecting political liberalism, is "a moral conception selected for political purposes only" (Nussbaum, 2000b, p.77). She sets the analysis of gender inequality in the background of state and family, religion and political systems, calling upon these agencies to take up an effective role in achieving gender justice and rights. Referring to the Indian context, she insists that political systems such as public education should give girls and women means, rights and opportunities packed with skills and information to remove gender inequality. Nussbaum identifies education as a strong intervention to remove gender inequalities.

Nussbaum's (2000b) emphasis on formal education for all children – both boys and girls – and her hope of social change lacks an in-depth analysis of the complexities involved in delivering the objectives either of formal education or nonformal education. Nussbaum's perspective tends to underestimate the influence of the traditional restrictions and influences on girls and women. Her proposal, while logical and passionately advocated, focuses on a functional framework that avoids addressing the lived experiences of education.

Promoters of women's literacy and education underline that a woman experiences an increased level of confidence and becomes more enabled as she becomes literate and acquires higher education. It is time and again emphasised that she can find better jobs; her capacity to earn better in a better job gets her more respect and a higher level of status in the society. Nussbaum (2003, p.332) states "if a woman can get work outside the home, she can stand on her own." Further on she emphasises "if she is illiterate, she will either remain in an abusive marriage for lack of options, or she may leave and have nothing to fall back on" (Nussbaum, 2003, p.332). Nussbaum's statement is a case in point when we are talking about women's oppression overall in the world, about women in general and the contribution of education to enhance their capabilities. However, there are examples wherein illiterate women and less educated women have achieved positive changes in their life through timely directions from grassroots organisations (Akhileshwari, 2001). Becoming literate in the sense of signing one's name on paper or

basic literacy may not result in enhanced power, authority and independence; often new forms of gender discrimination arise; and it does not easily lead to social justice and change (Mishra & Ghose, 1994; Prins, 2001; Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2001; 2002). My reading of Nussbaum's statement and emphasis indicates that she is not directly addressing the oppressive conditions of educated women, especially the experiences of the private sphere of life that are usually unspoken (Narayan, 1995; 1997).

The post-independence Constitution of India declares that all Indian citizens have the same rights and position, removing any provision for difference on the basis of religion, caste, race, class and sex (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Nussbaum, 2000b). To this extent the experiences of all citizens should be similar in all areas of participation. Such a supposed environment, founded on justice and equality within the Constitution, should therefore not exclude girls and women from equal participation. In other words, the expression of human capabilities that are grounded within the fullest practice of all human rights should be possible for all citizens. However, in reality, the subordinated positioning of women seems to be cemented strongly despite the gender-neutral political Constitutional structure. The inner currents of society, as recognised by a number of Indian researchers (for example Bordia, 2000; Burra, 2001; Reddy, 1991; Singh, 2002a) seem to alienate the experiences of a female learner in an environment that is supportive of the male citizen.

In his highly motivating work *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) discusses his five human freedoms, which are political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Given the circumstances of caste, class and gender discrimination, the education system cannot by itself ensure change. Sen's perspective of freedoms are also somewhat illusory compared with the social, religious and psychological perspectives (Beckley, 2002). In a society such as India where power relations are strongly operational, educational outcomes seem to be immensely heterogeneous and differential in nature. Research studies by Bhasin (1994), Bordia (2000), Ghosh (1986a; 1986b) and Talbani (2001) claim that both male and female

experiences arise from a thick environment of patriarchy and male hegemony that divide lived experiences as male or female.

It follows that the strength of a person's capabilities alone may not result in freedom to lead different types of life as Sen maintains (1999, p.33). Sen's understanding that education "...twinning with freedom or capabilities... will always be beneficial" (Unterhalter, 2003, p.11) in a social space devoid of power, control and authority does not take into account "... differences in form or outcome of education" (Unterhalter, 2003, p.8). Observing that gender inequalities appear in many different forms Amartya Sen (2005, pp.220-221) makes a very important distinction between well-being and agency: "The agency aspect refers to the pursuit of goals and objectives that a person has reason to value and advance, whether or not they are connected with the person's own well-being." It is open to further explication if educational policies and pedagogical processes are in fact advancing the notion of agency, especially for girls and women.

The expression of agency in everyday life seems to bring a differential experience for men and women as Sen himself notes in his recent book *The Argumentative Indian* (Sen, 2005). To a large extent people's agency is expressed in accordance with their social order, not so much as their own, autonomous expression of action. This includes abilities and agency in the private and the public domains. However, Sen's notion of capability as a pre-condition for 'equal opportunity' raises our thinking about human equality (Beckley, 2002). His promotion of education and his notion of human freedoms need consideration (Fox & Sharma, 2004; Unterhalter, 2003). Although he seems to equate education with schooling (Sen, 1999) he underlines the significance of freedom in having a free human mind that his teacher Tagore followed (Sen, 2005). After all "social change is powerfully linked with human agency, itself so central to the capabilities approach" (Unterhalter, 2003, p.19). Having a free human mind itself means having capabilities that include choice and change.

However, looking at the realities of women's lives from different parts of the world, women's choice of action still seems to be under many kinds of pressure arising from both external factors and internalised beliefs. In this light what Sara Hlupekile Longwe

(2001) said about educated women in modern, democratic structures in Africa makes a relevant point:

But from my long experience of working with African NGOs trying to push for women's equality under the law, and equal treatment by governments, women's education does not lead to women's advancement. Whereas I have plenty of experience of educated women getting ahead at the expense of their less educated sisters, I have much less experience of educated women getting ahead of their less educated brothers (Longwe, 2001, p.65).

Education, with an assumed social and economic value, offers girls and women the opportunity of enhancing their 'ability to do'; however, their choice is influenced by their everyday socio-cultural expectations. These forces seem to direct such ability more towards 'appropriate socialisation' in their relational world than living the maximum level of their human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000b) or living with all the human freedoms (Sen, 1999). In the case of Sangeeta and Kalavathi, whose deaths were narrated in the previous section, being formally educated and being a professional did not facilitate their being able to do or live. Here it seems that women's lived experience of being educated is different to idealistic capabilities.

In the following section I review research literature from within India that investigate girls' and women's education, women and development, and women and education. In my review I point out researchers' interest in providing predominating quantitative analyses of the situation, and emphasise the significance of further qualitative approaches to study lived experience.

3.4 Exploring the contexts of difference: The neglect of lived experiences

Traditional and cultural norms perpetuate divisions in the society, in particular the subordination of both girls and women. Such divisions:

... result in limiting the opportunities and choices that girl children may have both at the present and in the future. To use Amartya Sen's felicitous phrase, the capabilities of girls will be severely restricted by the denial of education (Burra, 2001, p.484).

Within the realm of education the experiences of boys and girls are situated in two primary institutions – family and school – that “communicate the binary opposition of femininity and masculinity and its evaluative component of inferior and superior to little girls and boys who grow up interiorising this difference” (Chanana, 2001, pp.19-20). There are deep divisions in accessing education, retention of educational outcomes and achieving higher education among boys and girls. Further on,

... while women’s and men’s choices are constrained by social expectations of feminine and masculine roles and behavioural patterns, the social explanations are easily forthcoming for women’s actions because social and cultural explanations are viewed as natural in their case (Chanana, 2001, p.20).

While social and cultural explanations have been offered time and again for women’s actions, women are rarely asked for their personal accounts of their experiences especially specific questions around their education.

Several writers from the Indian sub-continent have written extensively on women and development with education.² Most of these studies offer a sociological perspective highlighting gender inequalities, in order to argue for gender justice and improving women’s status. For example Iyer (1986) offers a sympathetic approach, emphasising the need for gender justice. While Iyer’s intention of placing such an argument for gender justice is much needed to create a general awareness, his book does not include the experiences of women themselves. However Iyer’s call for a change in the conscious awareness of both men and women towards changing women’s status is noteworthy. He observes that women must change their traditional hostile attitude towards women’s advancement.³ The work repeatedly quotes Karuna Ahmad’s research on women’s educational experiences, which stands out among compared quantitative studies.

A personal study by Tara Ali Baig (1976) provides a commentary on Indian women’s position from pre-historic times to the 1970s and interestingly also offers a small-scale comparative analysis of the global status of her time. The book is woven with quotes from religious texts, historical events, oral history stories, and post-independence policies created for the development of girls and women including the policies of the

UN. She calls for a balanced interdependence between man and woman for a psychologically healthy family which she hopes would happen with attitudinal changes (Baig, 1976, p.252).

Another collection edited by Kumar (1990) titled *Developing Women and Children in India* offers a profile of the status of women and children in India then includes quantitative data on women's education, their participation in the household and non-household industry, and employment. Although the two chapters on education provide a glimpse of the issues related to girls' and women's education they are generic and quantitative, discussing only government policies, plans and programmes. Analysing the absence of girls and women in education, the way women use their education later in life is only mentioned in passing.

In Indian academia the traditional research approach to women's studies tends to be restricted to the areas of health, employment and political participation. Kalia and Bajaj (1998) have edited a collection where the authors discuss women's presence in areas such as health, employment, religion, domestic violence, law and women's participation in *Panchayat Raj*. This again covers the issues from the top, not engaging the reader with a strong orientation of critically examining the role of state and society in addressing women's issues. The collection refers to the educational scenario with a general approach of commenting upon girls' access to schooling and the causal reasons for their discontinued participation which in turn impact on their future health and employment. Set on similar lines is another collection that Gupta and Gupta (1996) have edited. This also provides discussions and quantitative analysis of gender equality, women's participation in the employment sector and indicators of women's development. Adopting the Women in Development approach the authors argue for equal opportunities for unemployed, educated, female youth. Their observations are disappointing if one wishes to analyse female youth experiences of education and specific life circumstances where equal opportunities are denied.

While searching for literature that probes into lived conditions of Indian girls and women, I found that Mita Bhadra (2000) discussed the status of Indian girl child with

“aims at analyzing the situation under which Indian girl children are living and identifying the sexual inequalities within the household and society at large” (p.19). The work provides an in-depth analysis of the stigmas, prejudices and different forms of gender discrimination being practised against the girl child in Indian society. Bhadra (Bhadra, 2000), in her chapter on gender stereotyping and discrimination of the girl child, analyses many factors that seem to shape the experiences of girls. Although she presents a ray of hope for the girl child by highlighting the changing attitude of educated parents towards their daughters, she concludes that “the overview of the situation of education of girl child ...is grim and distressing. ... only education enables the girl child for further development and achieve the desired results” (Bhadra, 2000, p.88). At this point Bhadra fails to delineate the subjective experiences of girls being educated which are directed by life circumstances. This is a gap in the literature that this thesis attempts to fill.

Several other research studies from the sub-continent have focused on the changing role of women in Indian society. For example the Research Unit on Women’s Studies at SNDT University, Bombay, brought out a handbook in 1975 providing basic information on aspects of women’s life, now a generation ago. *The Handbook* (1975) provides both quantitative information and a general overview of the situation 30 years ago in relation to demography, education, employment, political participation, legal position and women’s organisations. Although the particular section on women’s education (pp.27-38) does not provide any suggestions for in-depth analysis, it reviews several socio-cultural factors affecting girls’ education. These include parental bias and socio-cultural discrimination. Interestingly the research team noted a growing parental encouragement towards their daughter’s education “... so that they may become more eligible as marriage partners” (p.29). However traditional norms governing division of labour and women’s roles are left uncritiqued. While much has changed, much has also remained the same. In recent times several researchers (Burra, 2001; Talbani, 2001) have studied the prevalence of similar factors.

Other researchers have analysed women’s situation from a human rights perspective. Ahuja (1992), for example, found that rural women had a lesser awareness than their

male counterparts about human rights. Ahuja's (1992) study notes that even though policies designed to ensure gender equality are in place, achieving the same in reality still needs a multi-dimensional approach. Using a survey method involving 753 women and 733 men he concluded that "Even though women's problems generally command a high priority in contemporary Indian society, rural women are still to liberate themselves from centuries of psychological, economic and social discrimination" (Ahuja, 1992, p.126). He stressed that change must happen within the family first of all for, "...it is here that the psychology of men and women is founded. Here is the source of their recognition and an identity. ... A profound social and cultural transformation is required before sexual equality could be realised" (Ahuja, 1992, p.170). Thus his observation is significant to my research.

Several reports and studies that have analysed women and changing patterns in society offer significant social, economic and political perspectives. Desai and Patel (1985) put forth an alternate Indian report on the impact of the International Decade for Women declared by the United Nations. The work was "an attempt to see the women's question in the larger context of the politico-economic situation in India" (1985, p.vii). The authors underline that "the unequal status of women ...is not a legacy of the past nor is it culture specific but rather it is a result of the complex operation of economic, political, social and other factors. ...the solution ... needs a total transformation of the social structure" (p.81). The authors further recommended a poverty-removal strategy as a possible solution to mobilise women for change. However such a complete transformation of social structure poses many practical challenges – where do we start from? What is the most practical area of life if one tries to achieve a transformation? In the contemporary democratic political structure why has such a transformation not been achieved yet? What do both men and women think about such structural changes in the current globalised Indian society? Keeping formal education as a channel that enables women to find employment (to remove their poverty), will the next step of transforming the structures and removing gender discrimination become easier in the newly emerging middle class in India (Scrase, 2006)? How do we ever know how women, who are educated and employed, experience equality or better status in their private sphere in contemporary Indian society?

Chakrapani and Kumar (1995) responded to the growing changes in women's status during the International Women's Decade (of the UN), 1975-1985. The contributors in their edited book have written from the background of increased awareness, education and efforts of government resulting in some change of attitude 'among women and on women.' This changed attitude resulted in redefining some of the roles women play in Indian society. This is evidenced by

increased women's participation in education, employment, polity, decision-making in health and family planning and raising voice against social issues such as dowry, amneocentis and more recently anti-liquor movement (Chakrapani & Kumar, 1995 , p.1).

The empirical research presented in the chapters shows the widespread research interests of academia in India working in women's studies. Some of them have documented the movements occurring in tribal and untouchable class women, including their resistance to an everyday issue of their men using liquor. Interestingly the tribal women's resistance to concepts of nation, national identity and citizenship are also discussed. Although this is about tribal women and their lives, the broader categories are related to women and development, women's participation in economic activities, their political participation, women and forms of victimisation, and health and education. Mahasweta Devi, a well-known Indian writer who is also an activist for the protection of tribal people's rights, makes the above mentioned issues the central themes of her short stories and books (Devi, 1995; 1997). Her themes are often used as academic references in cultural studies and as inspirational thoughts by academics like Gayatri Spivak who is widely quoted in studies related to Indian women's lives and the subaltern (Sharpe, 2003; Spivak, 1988; 1996). Over the last few years of doing this research I have found Mahasweta Devi's concern about women's voice very inspirational.

Two articles on women and education from Chakrapani and Kumar's (1995) edited volume are important for my research. One article discusses women entering male-dominated knowledge disciplines such as engineering while the other provides some insights to the factors that influence girls' and women's education. The authors, Pagnis and Verghese (1995), make a striking comment: "The results reported here demonstrate

that higher education per se does not liberalise sex-role attitudes. It is higher education that offers definite career opportunities that foster egalitarian sex-role attitudes” (1995, p.189).⁴ Their approach to women’s education and their empowerment seems to be economically based on the premise that education leads to good career opportunities and that equates to empowerment. The authors seem to pay little attention to what an educated woman experiences in terms of developing her identity, changes in power relations from being educated or control over her choices in matters relating to both public and private spheres.

Ranjana Kumari (1992), another important Indian author focuses on the potential for political participation by women. And the writers who team with her have analysed economic development and political empowerment approaches to address women’s overall participation levels and enhancing their decision-making capacity. Kumari’s point of departure from sociological studies notes that “women’s groups in India have focused almost exclusively on the social dimensions of women’s oppression to the detriment of the political...they have not seen women’s political participation as one route to overcoming these problems” (Kumari, 1992, pp.11-12).

Having a context of National Women’s Commission and its country-wide focus on women’s empowerment the editor treats all Indian women as one big electorate and discusses their political participation. She believes that only by “working simultaneously on public opinion, electoral politics and rural development will the women of India be awakened” (p.17). This approach, I believe, cannot in reality emerge as an inclusive one for women who are urban, educated and in employment. Women of the rural, grassroots millions or illiterate majorities may benefit from such a political-economic standpoint of empowerment. However the issues of women’s identity, personhood, power and control in the private sphere do not get much attention despite such emphasis. Sociological studies, which Kumari criticises as focusing too much on publicizing issues of dowry, sati and female poverty at least effectively problematise women’s role, identity and power in their public/private life spheres. It is my stand that both sociological and political-economic viewpoints need to look deeply into what women experience in everyday life, so that stories of cultural stereotypes, male

domination, and neglect of girls' and women's education and agency are heard more and more (for example Bordia, 2000; Burra, 2001; Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Talbani, 2001). This enhances the specific need for understanding women's lived experiences of receiving education and being educated.

A comprehensive discussion of aspects related to women, their education and educational development through governments' plans and programmes has been provided by Anita Arya (2000). In her book *Indian Women: Education and Empowerment* she has included good quantitative data and detailed observations of how much development has taken place through the Five Year Plans of governments and various national policies. She explains the differential representation of girls and boys in curriculum, parental and teachers' attitude towards gender relations, changes to be brought out in the context and organisation of education. Most chapters offer recommendations and strategies to address issues related to literacy, putting the developmental plans in practice, making curriculum inclusive for girls, and increasing participation levels for women in all domains of life.

The macro lens that Arya is using, looking at tens of millions of women, offers a good general perspective to critique the existing systems of gender discrimination, attitudes and set-backs in realising the goals of educating and empowering girls and women. The book is useful to researchers who may want to engage in macro-level studies, rates of access, enrolment, retention, and fulfillment of the minimum levels of learning including literacy.

The book, however, fails to motivate and enhance readers' critical understanding of what is going on in an educated woman's life once the intended goal of formal education is achieved. It also lacks an in-depth analysis beyond 'not-just-equality' which Arya uses as an indicator of educational achievement. There is a gap regarding the nature of educated women's identity, how they learn to negotiating control and power structures in their everyday world, and what is the depth of their participation in private and public spheres.

My intention, at this point, is not to dismiss either the sociological, legal or the political-economic perspectives that are offering analyses of gender relations. Research in India studying aspects of girls' and women's empowerment is engaged differently in theoretical frameworks such as, for example, postmodernism and postcolonial feminist theory, including being sensitive to black feminist theory (R. Kapur, 2001). Indian feminists tend strongly to either agree or disagree with approaches of sexual differences and gender relations. Their thoughts and arguments often either support or vehemently oppose some of the well-read feminists from the developed nations.⁵ It is my aim here to establish that while this thesis draws from postcolonial and black feminist theories, the problematic of this research – the experiences of being an educated woman – is analysed and discussed from an exploratory phenomenological framework, by describing and interpreting women's experiences.

Indian populations particularly girls and women have diverse webs of interlocation that strongly influence identity, power and control in everyday situations. These diversities and how individual women experience them are generally sidelined in the research (Taber, 2005); women's education mostly responds to state and civil society's needs. Hence this research turns to phenomenology that provides a unique space to describe and interpret experiences in a more specific and contextual analytical way. Their texts are the inner eyes for understanding and analysing women's experiences.

The following section takes up, as another important connection, Black feminist studies on women's educational experiences, their participation in the newly formed democratic political structures and how differently the writers view these experiences.

3.5 Women, education and participation in postcolonial societies

The claim that education makes no difference, to change women's life conditions and their status is often heard in many parts of the world (for example Bhasin, 1994; Longwe, 2001). Interestingly these voices emerging from postcolonial countries provide different viewpoints about the continuation of a formal education system introduced by colonial rulers. Many argue that a modern, western model of formal education is needed for women's voice to be heard in the new democratised processes along with the need

for concerted work on women's and human rights (for example, Afshar, 1998; Fox, 1999; Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Heward & Bunwaree, 1998; Howell, Carter, & Schied, 2002; Kabeer, 1999; Stromquist, 1998; Unterhalter, 2000; Wazir, 2000b). Others critique the formal education system in providing gender equality and equal citizenship experience. A case in point is Sarah Longwe (2001), a strong voice from Africa discussing the outcomes of education in women's lives, issues of educating women for political participation and educated women's stands about other women. She observes that educated women in reality conform to patriarchal systems and even as achievers (which she maintains is a small minority) holding high government positions they reinforce female subordination. Longwe calls them the "honorary members of a male club." She critiques the political system of democracy and educated women's participation in a democratic set-up:

The assumption that women need more education to be involved in politics is an insult to women. It assumes that there is something lacking in women which causes them to be missing from politics and from government. The assumption pronounces that it is 'women's own fault' if they get overlooked, and men get preference! It claims that women need more education! More assertiveness! More skills in political organisation! More skills in public speaking! (Longwe, 2001, p.67).

Longwe supports grassroots' women's active participation in the public sphere, women who she argues are kept out due to the prevalence of discriminatory practices. Those women who are allowed high levels on a par with men are women who have male patrons such as close family links.

Longwe's claims that Third World governance explicitly maintains patriarchal attitudes in their policies and practices seem to echo the alarm that Ivan Illich (1971) raised that in the west education functions as another oppressive governmental, subordinating institution. Her observations indicate that empowering people through education is in reality encouraging further discrimination among people. Longwe's thoughts reflect Illich's concern that schooling reinforces more conformity, especially for girls:

The purpose of schooling is to inculcate girls' acceptance of the 'normality' of male supremacy ... to believe it is 'traditional' and 'natural' for their role to be

confined to rearing children, looking after the home, and supporting their husbands (Longwe, 2001, p.68).

The striking demarcation between schooling and education, as Longwe notes, is what is believed and practised in terms of learning. While schooling, as commonly understood from a gender relations perspective, is the continuation of beliefs of conformity, education, as it is communicated as an ideological and philosophical understanding, carries the message of equality and dignity. She analysed the adult education scenario in Zambia where adult literacy centres focus on providing qualifications for women. Calling for a change in the attitude towards women's participation, Longwe underlines that "women's education for democratic governance needs to be concerned with *unlearning* (my italics) all the undemocratic and oppressive messages that were implicit within the beliefs and attitudes inculcated during schooling" (Longwe, 2001, p.71).

Longwe's call for *unlearning* stands as a contrast to the call of the literacy-movement, especially call for women's literacy. It also raises two pertinent questions. First, what kind of literacy can raise the awareness and knowledge level? Secondly, can basic literacy or basic education empower women to participate better and be equal citizens? There seem to be contrasting stands about women's literacy from this perspective. For example, Nelly Stromquist (Stromquist, 1990b; 1996; 2005) emphasises the outcome of literacy in advancing awareness and knowledge levels; many activists of the Third World such as Longwe (Longwe, 1997; 2001) and Bhasin (Bhasin, 1994) reveal, through their work at the grassroots, that women do not achieve equality and fuller participation as citizens merely by gaining basic education as Freire also explained. This research explores what knowledge the educated women gained from their schooling and what meaning they are making from their education as adults. This exploration will justify Elaine Unterhalter's concern of listening to the personal accounts of individual women (Unterhalter, 2005).

Examining what is gained through schooling and what is internalised as opposed to the proclaimed outcomes of education (personal development, freedom, equality and dignity) seems to be necessary for any studies that interrogate women's experiences of being educated. Such internalised knowledge of the system is understood through and in

the lived experiences of the private and public spheres of life. Several insightful theoretical studies have investigated women and their locations in the public as a citizen providing many diverse understandings of women, their identity and gender relations (Blackmore, 1995).

For example, some African women researchers, particularly those from South Africa, have challenged educators to look deeper into the problematic of gender dynamics that were evident during the Apartheid era and beyond. Whilst Longwe (1997; 2001) argued that women's strengths have been ignored in the power politics both by educated women, and men, Seidman (1999) traces the success of South African activists who made gender issues in the democratisation process become prominent. She reveals how the activists with the support of international feminist theory and resources managed to mobilise a process sympathetic to feminist claims, also asserting the legitimacy of gender issues within the democratic opposition and the negotiation process. She delineates the involvement of local concerns in building broad support to highlight 'women's interests' along with the newly formed Commission on Gender Equality' (Seidman, 2001).⁶ Similar to Indian situation of dowry, the practice of bridewealth is continuing in African countries (Davies, 1999; Enslin, 2003). Another example is studying women's experiences of law in Africa, which Ambreena Manji (1999) argues is ignored; she observes that the phallocentric theoretical system of legal centralism provides only a partial account of law. Women's experiences of law and power need elaboration (Manji, 1999).

A group of writers reviewing women's and gender studies in English-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Nijambi and Osirim (2004) state that African feminist scholars and activists are sensitive to the impact of imposed formal educational systems under colonialism (in a section discussing education). However the key issues for research include the effects of gender discrimination at various levels of schooling such as access, retention and completion; curriculum content; the feminisation of certain fields of employment (African women being underrepresented in high profile positions); and issues of sexual harassment. They point out that some researchers studying women and gender issues "argue that with the development of state-coordinated initiatives to

promote gender and development, these programs might lose their political force and end up servicing mainstream or conservative gender training and advocacy” (p.698). Even with affirmative programs, “education does not translate into equitable positions for women in the labour market” (p.698). In other words, education does not necessarily improve women’s chances in the public sphere.

On the other hand, writing about the Universal Basic Education program in Nigeria, Okiy (2004) emphasises the positive link between education and greater female participation in national development. She states that the poor attitude of society to the educational development of female children is the causal factor of their poor participation in national development. She concludes “the programme will produce educated women who have imbibed the reading culture through their use of school libraries ... thereby creating the necessary vehicle for accelerated national development” (2004, p.48). This statement seems to support the widely used public slogan in India, that an educated woman enhances a country’s well-being. The interesting issue that emerges from reading the above researchers’ observations is the confusion between what girls and women are expected to experience and what they actually experience.

Additionally, to make women’s experiences important and significant and hold their distinctiveness in postcolonial societies with an ancient tradition is both a challenge and a necessity in many ways. Researchers such as Mohanty (1991; 2003) have effectively questioned what she argues as the hegemony, the western feminist scholarship on the lives of Third World women (also see Afshar, 1998; Heward & Bunwaree, 1998; Jayawardena, 1986; S.Thiruchandran, 1999). The western academic research ‘appropriating’ Third World women’s lives is also the argument of many other Third World feminists (for example, Jeffery & Basu, 1998). Well-noted Black feminist writer bell hooks, like Mohanty, also shows the importance of examining the intersections of race, gender and class while researching women’s lives (hooks, 1994). Gail Kelly (1992; 1980) offers a good insight into researching the educational issues of Third World women, stressing the exploration of the particularities of women’s educational experiences rather than generalisations.

Some important observations need to be made at this point indicating the status of girls and women in Indian society despite the waves of change occurring in all other fields such as the economic, social and political arenas after a few decades of being free from colonial rule. Neera Burra (Burra, 2001) observes that “the subordination of the adult woman in the household runs parallel with a subordination of the girl child, socialising the latter into the pre-ordained fate that she will assume as an adult” (2001, p.484). Of equal significance is Karuna Chanana’s (2001) sharp observation that “social change is constantly occurring in Indian society but women are expected to be rooted in the past and tradition, to be a stable, unchanging element in a rapidly changing world” (p.20). These two studies are supported by a number of other studies that highlight not only the neglect towards and discrimination against girls’ and women’s education but also their position within the unequal socio-economic, religious and cultural structures (for example Agnihotri, 2001; Bordia, 2000; Ghosh, 1986b; Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Ramachandran, 2000; Reddy, 1991; Singh, 2002a; Sudarshan, 2000; Talbani, 2001; Wazir, 2000b). This is despite both society and state taking notice of the importance of female education for national development.

However, the need is all the more important to explore and understand the experiences of educated women in India in the light of pro-female education propaganda combined with that of the more realistic observation of Ratna Ghosh and colleagues (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987), and Karuna Chanana (2001). In such a background, as Chanana observes, achieving citizenship, participation and equality becomes shrouded in skepticism. While discussing the problems related to women’s education in India and Pakistan, Talbani (2001) titles his study as “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” In such a situation the culturally and traditionally encouraged asymmetry of power relations between men and women seems to contribute very little to improve the ability to realise the outcomes of education. Singh (2002a) concludes that “the man-woman relationships do not seem to have been based on the notion of equality and equity due to various cultural, social and economic factors” (Singh, 2002a, p.175).

Besides the socio-cultural pressures, educated women still tend not to assert themselves in the promotion of female education leading to equity and participation (Longwe, 2001; Narayan, 1997; Viswanathan, 2001). Many a time educated women prefer to continue to keep up the 'tradition' even when their family environment seems to uphold gender equality (pers. observation). In everyday life in Indian society people tend to place a significant amount of importance on formal education for various reasons like increasing their social status, irrespective of their doubts about education leading to a job. However, they seem to separate education from everyday culture and continue to follow their tradition. This tendency is quite contrary to what researchers and activists document and write about. From this perspective the question of how educated women in India define being educated gains more significance. The paradoxical nature of education in women's lived experiences needs to be interrogated.

3.6 Education building women's citizenship: Debating the ideal

The paradoxical nature of educational philosophy and purpose often may lead to contradictions in educated women's experiences. What do educated women perceive about themselves in relation to citizenship? Is it mere formal knowledge that is internalised from schooling? Or is it an intrinsic empowerment process through education? This section examines these questions with a review of global research literature on the role of education in shaping experiences of citizenship.

Research at the global level on girls, women and education has for some decades now had a multi-dimensional focus with studies being carried out related to schooling, curriculum content and pedagogy (for example Davies, 1989; Smith, 2000); higher education and women's participation levels in empowerment process (for example Medel-Anonuevo, 1996; Pagnis & Verghese, 1995); educational policies (Wallin, 2001); and the status of girls' and women's education (for example Oak, 1988). Many researchers in western countries have conducted a situation analysis on the educational status of girls and women of the Third World. Areas that they have discussed include opportunities, participation, barriers, existing inequalities and possible avenues for change (for example Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Bhola, 1994; Biraimah, 1997;

Geissinger, 1997; Kelly, 1992; Kelly & Lulat, 1980; King & Hill, 1993; Stromquist, 1990b; 1996; 2000). Country-specific studies addressing girls' and women's educational issues in particular have recommended what changes need to be brought out. For example Nussbaum in recent times has been vocal in supporting and improving female education in Asia, India in particular (Nussbaum, 2000a; 2000b; 2003). Amartya Sen has been promoting female education for India's progress as a nation (1999; 2005). The situational analysis of female education is also the topic of many studies in other parts of the world (for example Arigbede, 1994; Cabral Felix de Sousa, 1998; Ellis, 1995; English, 2002; Enslin, 2003; Fox, 1999). Concerns are also raised about girls' and women's citizenship in new democracies (Afshar, 1998; Davis & Werbner, 1999).

Studies investigating issues related to the influential role of education in the construction of women's citizenship have taken different approaches (for example Arnot & Dillabough, 2000). Such studies exploring questions relational to women, education and citizenship are subject-specific such as the study of women's voting status shaping their citizenship expression (Webster, 2000), strengthening the use of adult education for women's effective citizenship (Valdes, 1997), case studies on women's leadership and local governance (Sooryarmoorthy & Renjini, 2000; Tandon, 2000; Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2001; 2002), studying the situation of girls' education in Laos with recommendations for curriculum changes (Fox, 2003), and providing human rights education to grassroots women for empowerment (Guhathakurta & Lina, 1995).

One of the main concerns of research on women and higher education is the issue of higher education advancing the levels of women's authority and knowledge base but not their power and authority. Educated and career women's leadership, in this context, is an area of research interest to many academics across the world (Blackmore, 1999; 2000; Chanana, 2001; 2003; Hughes, 2002; Joyner & Preston, 1998; Rajan, 1993). Recent studies have pointed to this in the Indian academic environment. Karuna Chanana (2000; 2003) qualitatively explores a case study of gendered career patterns in an Indian university. Career women's invisibility in male colleagues' networks, their lower levels of participation in outside-the-office hours, work-related interactions which

male employees carry out with high interest levels directly affect their leadership expressions, which in most cases tends to be negative (Chanana, 2000; 2003). She details several levels of women's absences from career improvement opportunities along with increased leadership expressions, showing that "the organisational rules, regulations and procedures are not free of social and cultural constraints" (2003, p.381). She claims that decision-making bodies in higher institutions such as universities produce a differential gendered impact (2003, p.386).

Chanana's (2000; 2003) observations affirm what Moira Gatens (Gatens, 1991) contended that a dichotomy exists between the institutional organised claims of gender equality and the sociological research that indicates continued gendered discourses in everyday life. Gendered norms seem to have shifted ground in society's systems and acted out differently in influencing life contexts. In this sense women may be undergoing a shift in making sense of their own self which entails a clash, a tension and also an anxiety in not only realising identifications but also making sense of multiple identities (Butler, 1990; Komulainen, 2000; Riessman, 2000a; 2000b). This process, even for an educated woman, may result in a contradiction of roles, identities and identifications, and a clash between tradition and modernity.

On the other hand specific questions that studies exploring democratic processes, liberal education policies, girls' and women's participation have asked are: What factors within formal education direct/shape women's construction of citizenship? What are the processes involved in those processes? How do educated women conceptualise the notion of citizenship in relation to gender and the role of education in bringing changes in their everyday life? Feminist educationists who have explored the above questions have challenged liberal democratic education. For example, in the collection edited by Arnot and Dillabough (2000) themes that are explored in different national education contexts are contemporary definitions of democracy and citizenship, gender relations, analysing citizenship and liberal democratic schooling, and the role of education framing citizenship identities and identifications. Authors' explorations in this collection are based on the stand that educational experiences are gendered. The analyses presented in the edited collection also start from Benhabib's understanding of

female citizen's experiences of tensions and struggles within "the exclusive elements of liberal democratic citizenship" (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000, p.2).

The aim, in this important collection, is to move on from studies of gender relations in schooling to the feminist study of citizenship in education. The collection brings to mind the fundamental question that de Beauvoir (1988) asked about women's identity and the democratic, participative process.

Making the woman question distinctive is the concern of many feminists at the global level as feminist research perspective places paramount importance on inquiring into women's lives addressing issues of oppression and liberation. Harding (1987; 2000; 2005) stresses researching women's experiences from within social sciences; she reflects upon the continuing urgency in paying attention to women's time through all the community, national and international settings negotiating the term feminist. Irrespective of such ponderings and political-negotiations, she urges, the focus needs to be on researching "women's experiences" (Harding, 2000, pp.1043-1044). As a response to developing new feminist approaches within social science research Harding, with Norberg, states that "the point of good research, for feminists as well as for many conventionalists, has always been to advance social progress" (2005, pp.2010-2011). In the past Harding has also recommended using phenomenological approaches to interpret women's lived worlds (Harding, 1987).

For this research Harding's work provides a strong base. Advancing the social, academic and personal/political knowledge on Third World/postcolonial women's experiences as well as progressing research attempts to ask questions and to recognise meaning and voice in such experiences is the base of this research. However, as Harding notes many heroic attempts to keep academic research power-neutral, theory-neutral do not always remain so; they have proved impossible (Harding & Norberg, 2005, p.2012). Many other researchers have raised questions about power relations between the researcher and the participant (for example Lather, 2001; Presser, 2005).

Questions that are asked of Third World women's citizenship in India take a different dimension especially in the context of education and citizenship. After the National Policy on Education, 1966 and New Educational Policy of 1986 and 1992 (India, 1986 & 1992), the Government of India took affirmative policy decisions in favour of girls' and women's educational participation levels. Several significant changes in curriculum content were made including citizenship education in a subject called 'Civics' under the main subject of Social Studies. However representation of girls and women in the main curriculum content, teachers' bias reflected in pedagogy, failure of girl child-friendly educational policies in reaching girls and women, and continuation of gender discrimination remain everyday educational problems across India. Studies related to the above point to socio-cultural factorial causes, the mind set of educational stakeholders and the country's paradoxical political structure (Nussbaum, 2000b; Scrase, 1993). Once more, the contradiction between intentions of existing educational policies and the actual educational experience of girls and women appears to be under-investigated. This research opens an explanatory space to see if these questions, claims, assumptions and the realities exist in the participants' lives and if they do, how they are experiencing them.

Debate on the qualitative impact of education shaping women's citizenship is not complete unless the claim that education is indeed a masculine construction is examined. Feminist philosophy provides fascinating arguments on the dominance of a masculine paradigm that excludes girls and women in many ways. For example, Gross (1986) writing on the indulgence of phallocentrism, Code (1991) on the prevalence of male dominance in knowledge construction, and Gatens (1991) on the difference in the male supreme value over the female being devalued.

Of particular significance to this section is Jane Roland Martin's (1985; 1991) inspirational work. Martin provided a pioneering philosophical analysis of the very nature of women *receiving* education. Martin investigated the gendered nature of education and its masculine paradigm which excludes the experiences of girls and women. She discussed the layers of contradictions surrounding the notion of an 'educated woman' arguing that women's educational experiences are lost in the

masculine paradigm. Her argument centres on the ideal of education being historically shaped by masculine ideas, thoughts and decisions that always value male experiences over female experiences. From her fascinating perspective, the ideal of an educated woman is to be the ideal educated man, not a woman her self. She explores the exclusion of women from the construction of formal knowledge which also denies her the right to experience such knowledge in her own way, without imposed expectations. Hence male supremacy is noted and valued more in the lost world of women's educational experiences.

Martin's profound argument to reclaim a conversation on the ideal of an educated woman (Martin, 1985) brings to light the citizenship experiences of women, particularly in a seemingly male-dominated culture of Indian society. Where society defines how to view a woman's knowledge (*A woman's knowledge is below her knees*) the reach of modern educational women-friendly policies becomes questionable. Thus the foundational educational space to study any experiences seems to be thick with inequalities. Despite the widely used policy frameworks of Women In Development and Gender and Development, popularly used at practice level, the gap where "the concerns of individual women are not to be taken into account" (Unterhalter, 2005, p.18) has remained. This research not only studies that gap but also fills the gap by providing and discussing lived experiences of women being educated.

Many women activists working in the area of human and women's development in India have argued that 'developing' is a male-centred approach to address issues related to changes in women's life conditions. Kamla Bhasin (1994) writing as an insider on development, education and women clearly questions any attempts to develop women from that base. In fact she condemns the use of mainstream paradigm of development to improve marginalised women's life conditions, calling it patriarchal and elitist. She warns the readers against imposing any such attempt to develop women, ignoring their knowledge, their experiences and their contributions among others. She vehemently maintains that education has not had any effect in changing women's subordinated position. This also provides support to the investigation of Martin's claim that the

educated ideal is a male-centred ideal. It also mirrors Elaine Unterhalter's (2005) concern that women's education is for others, not for women themselves.

The following section establishes the significance of analysing lived experience as insiders with an outsider lens. It reviews relevant research studies that critique the intended elite goals of education as against the nature of state and democratic machineries that perpetuate gender divisions. The tone of this section is mainly of highlighting the insights, in other words, a different dimension that these Indian-origin researchers have provided while studying women's lives, and women's education. Notably these researchers interrogate aspects related to identity, power, image, ideology and lived experiences.

3.7 Studying women's lives: The lens of insider/outsider perspective

Many researchers having Indian origin, living overseas (mainly migrants writing on women from Canada, UK, USA and Australia) have provided significant insider/outsider perspectives in their research on Indian girls and women. Their critical perspectives emerge from diverse backgrounds such as sociological, political, educational, cultural and feminist research. They deconstruct the authenticity of the high cultures within the insider cultural locations that are seen as directing the ways of knowing and living of men and women. Such deconstructions not only 'expose' the insider cultures to the eyes of the critic by providing a new lens to view them from outsider locations but also provide important locations for researching lived experiences of the insider/outsider still reflecting from within the insider locations.

One such researcher is Uma Narayan (1997) who writes remarkably on the positioning of Third World feminism:

Many feminists from Third-World contexts confront voices that are eager to convert any feminist criticism they make of their culture into a mere symptom of their "lack of respect for their culture," rooted in the "Westernization" that they seem to have caught like a disease (Narayan, 1997, p.6).

Critiquing the role of Third World persons of being an Emissary and a Mirror to the West, Narayan provides a neat and legitimate frame for the Third World insider researcher to act as authentic outsider also.

The “Authentic Insider” position permits and sanctions the articulation of political analyses and criticisms of Third World institutions and practices, while the two others work primarily to deflect and silence them. ... Criticism of Third-World contexts and practices by “Insiders” might often work to ensure accurately critical representations of an Other culture rather than misrepresentations based on “presumptive knowledge” (Narayan, 1997, pp.142-143).

Placing the Authentic Insider position as the central focus Narayan also posits a note of caution for the Insider either to represent or be representative of the accounts of the ‘home’ culture. However,

Part of the value ... seems to lie in the “Authentic Insider’s” capacity to produce accounts that are widely shared by those at “home” and to produce an account that “gives voice to” these shared accounts, thus conferring upon her the authoritative status of “being a representative” of her community or nation (Narayan, 1997, p.147).

Narayan’s reminder to academia that many Third-World women researchers do reflect upon the experiences of women who have confronted gender discrimination and asymmetrical sexual relations makes a striking case in point for this thesis. For, “sometimes, but not always, they have personally confronted an issue, or have relatives or friends who have” (Narayan, 1997, p.146). Having lived in Indian society as an educated woman until 2001, it is now my commitment and also a contestation to offer what Narayan calls “an understanding or analysis of the phenomenon in question, not simply a summary report of what women who are actually subject to these phenomenon think or feel” (Narayan, 1997, p.146). In the following paragraphs I examine a sample of research studies, conducted from offshore, on Indian women to see if they are ‘an analysis’ or ‘a summary account.’ Nevertheless, the point here is the significance of those researchers’ concern about Indian women’s voice.

One of the researchers writing about Indian women’s educational issues consistently from Canada is Ratna Ghosh. Her research and critique of education of Indian girls and women span over few decades.⁷ Ghosh (1986a; Ghosh, 1986b) initially examined

ancient Sanskrit language adage that education is that which liberates against Indian educational policies and statistics.⁸ She pointed out that despite inclusive policies, education is still catering for the elitist and urban population (Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987). Making critical observations on girls' and women's educational access and participation in the public sphere she states, "The educated minority has improved its social position in the present structure, not changed it. So women continue to fulfill their traditional roles, and take on the additional occupational role" (Ghosh, 1986a, p.59). Through an extensive study of the educational policies with an overview of the prevalent socio-cultural aspects she consistently argues that being educated has not become a liberating experience for girls and women in India (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987). Living as an Indian/outsider reflecting strongly as an insider on cultural influences constructing the identity of girls from a minority culture Ghosh has offered a critical insight into the dilemmas that girls experience, a clash between their home culture and pressure of liberal education (Ghosh, 2000). Ghosh's arguments and discussions of policies with statistics in her studies provide a good base for quantitative analysis of the situation. While taking note of her call for change in the education of girls and women in India I reiterate the need for researching their lived experiences to emphatically assess the qualitative situation of female education in India as well as critically analyse the influences of both state and civil society's influences upon the participants' educational experiences.

Kalwant Bhopal, (1997; 2000) writing from the United Kingdom, studied a sample of 60 South Asian women's experiences from different religious backgrounds living in Britain (East London) in relation to race, patriarchy, education, employment and family. She observed that highly educated women with a bachelor's or a master's degree (independent women) were better positioned in the labour market and were less inclined than traditional women to maintain their cultural beliefs about gender relations. Interestingly,

Even though some women are moving away from a private form of patriarchy, they are included in the public world but are subordinated within it (social closure, segregation). ... 'Independent' South Asian women become highly educated and enter the labour market, they no longer want to have arranged marriages, instead they want to co-habit with their partners (Bhopal, 1997, p.153).

Although this was a quantitative study it has raised important questions as to how the social, cultural, labour market and educational dynamics influence the formation of women's attitudes and their participation in the private and the public forms of patriarchy.⁹ The noteworthy point in Bhopal's study is that single educated and employed women do wish to have a control over their private sphere; it remains a question if they can continue to exercise their power control even after entering into a relationship. It is here that most women turn to keep their tradition and choose acceptance over resistance.

Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase (2002; 2003), writing from Australia, is researching women's self-perceptions in changing contexts of Indian society. Her research particularly focuses on the impact of globalisation and economic liberalisation on the everyday lives of Indian women. Studying lived experiences of her focus groups in West Bengal state of India she examines and documents "prevailing attitudes toward gender equality" and "lived experience of an underresearched segment of society and account for an emerging paradox" (2003, p.545). Although her research focus is on ethnography and women's lives under globalisation, it recognises and records social, cultural and economic factors influencing women's everyday lives. Of particular interest to this thesis is her concern of attending to the lived realities of women's lives. She offers significant observations related to the changes in men's attitude towards their girls' and women's education and also the improved situation of educational access and achievement for women:

Parents frequently provide positive encouragement to girls to study so that a good education would better equip them to enter the workforce. Such expectations were previously absent among lower-middle-class families. Nowadays, not only is women's education a source of pride for parents, it also stands as a safety net: an insurance against a daughter's failed marriage or widowhood (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003, p.554).

This situation itself seems to be a paradox in that the ideologies of education in developing a person are not realised in girls' and women's lives – they merely are expected to make use of their education for employment and/or as life's safety net. The situation that was beginning to unfold with the middle-class girls and women in the immediate post-colonial era is now a trend among the lower-middle-class population.

My research explores this normalised, preconceived notion of girls' and women's education while intending to move beyond and probe deeper into the lived experiences of educated women. It is to explore and analyse what meaning the educated women are making from being educated in all realms of life.

Many Indian researchers in America have raised an array of questions and provided important insights on the woman question with particular focus on the Indian situation. In their partial review of the study of gender in India, Purkayastha et al. (2003) critically reflect on the inequalities of global knowledge production and consumption as well as the role that the U.S. academia plays in that process. The authors point out that many contemporary debates on gender in India have at least three overlapping dimensions – the tension between scholars foregrounding gender and those adopting intersectional approaches; different grounds available for epistemological roots of work on gender; and gender inequalities being fostered by nation-state and international structures.

Their brief delineation of these three dimensions in the first section of the article offers a significant base either to review or to research the woman question. Their collective stand is that, just as the diversities of multiple internal-cultures and languages make the question what constitutes India more complex, so also is the complexity of understanding the gender subject in India. The debates generated from the feminist and public intellectual platform and from an academic and non-academic forum will be further discussed in the following section. Further to Indian-American scholarship, researchers such as Lata Mani (1998) researching on women, the *sati* phenomenon and their identity, Tanika Sarkar (Sarkar, 1996; Sarkar & Butalia, 1996), and Ratna Kapur (Kapur & Cossman, 1996) have provided different lenses for illuminating Indian women's lives through their studies of the issue of women's position in the private sphere, and the society's perceptions of women's bodies, sexuality and their legal status and rights in the public sphere.

Uma Narayan (1995; 1997) discussed the multiple problems of identity loss, dislocation and domestic violence involving highly educated immigrant Indian women in the U.S.. Many others have written on quite different subjects that still fall within the broader

area of women studies/feminism with a focus on Indian women's lives. Some examples are issues of studying Third World women, their history, colonial history, globalisation, women in media, women cast in nationalist roles, women's everyday lives in the development movement (Bardhan, 1990; Chakravarti, 1989; Kapadia, 1995; Mankekar, 1999; Mohanty, 1991; 2003; Oza, 2001; Parameswaran, 2001; Sangari, 1999; Sangari & Vaid, 1990; Sharpe, 2003; Sinha, 2000a; 2000b; Spivak, 1988; 1996; Subramaniam, 2000). They speak both with authority and a firm analytical ground as insiders.

While I consider these individual writers important for a researcher studying other Indian women's lives, my concern in this thesis is to combine the experience of being an insider and outsider. This concern is further detailed in the following section.

3.8 Conclusion

Education is normally viewed as a positive process for a person's development and critical appraisal of life's conditions to make suitable changes. In the area of education of girls and women, the current approach is to hypothetically include all girls in schooling and higher education, and provide basic literacy to adult women if they are not literate. The normalised belief is that education transforms the realities of women's life in Third World countries from economic, social and political development. In this chapter I have briefly discussed two important theoretical perspectives of human development that are strongly linked to girls' and women's education. I have critiqued those human capabilities and human freedoms perspectives observing that both remain outside girls' and women's lived experience in a thick atmosphere of socio-cultural forces. To point this out effectively I discussed two educated women's deaths. While discussing relevant postcolonial literature I illustrated what researchers from African countries are investigating in regards to women's issues, women's education and development. I have also discussed what researchers of Indian origin have investigated in relation to girls' and women's education and development. Drawing from these researchers' works I have stressed the significance of using insider/outsider lens which I have adopted in my research to illuminate the importance of studying women's lived experience of 'being an educated woman.'

From the context of the research illustrated thus far, the need to address the ‘being educated woman’ experience becomes significantly distinctive. Traditional phenomenology insists upon human experience, not approaching men and women separately. However, this thesis has taken the stand of approaching men and women as gendered beings following what Grumet said: “women need a dialectical phenomenology” (1988, p.65). The experiences of women throw out different meanings in different contexts that cannot be compared parallel to that of men’s or combined with those of men’s as ‘just human.’ This research draws from ‘listening to women themselves’, thereby grounding the thesis in interpretative phenomenology and women’s lived experience with a feminist research perspective. That is studying human experience without any assumed framework, compared to studying women’s experiences within an assumed framework of inequalities. It neither ignores men and women sexual division nor assumes the stand of patriarchy (Eichler, 1991).

In the next chapter I discuss two main processes, the methodological process of using interpretive phenomenology and the research process involved in conducting research interviews in the field and later analysing them. While doing the latter I introduce the ten women who participated in this research sharing their experience.

¹ I have used a pseudonym here. I personally knew her when she was a young girl and later as an adolescent. My sister narrated the details of her death to me in 2001 when I was writing my Masters thesis on gender inequalities practiced in India. I am re-narrating it here.

² However, some earlier edited collections discuss the sociological context of Indian education but they do not discuss gender issues at all. For example Ruhela (1969) has edited a collection in which sociologists, educationists, psychologists have discussed the social determinants of educability in India. Interestingly authors writing from the U.S. and the U.K. in this book have commented upon the racial and class issues but not so much on gender.

³ It is alarming that researchers are still observing the women against women tendency. For example Amartya Sen (2005) writes about it in Chapter 11 *Women and men*.

⁴ Arnot et. al. (Arnot et al., 2000) observe that “the EU appears to be favouring the rapid adoption of the egalitarian symmetrical role model of the family developed, for example, in Sweden” (2000, p.150). Several newspaper and magazine articles appearing in the Indian Press point out that young university-educated, professional couples are showing a preference for egalitarian symmetrical role model of the family.

⁵ For example Ratna Kapur (2001) takes a supportive stand with Judith Butler whom, she states, Martha Nussbaum unfairly accuses while discussing feminist philosophy. However, she also points out that Indian feminists “do not draw exclusively on one theory” (2001, p.79).

⁶ Several research studies have also focused on women’s experiences in the context of globalization addressing its negative effects and changes on women’s lives. For example see Osirim (2003) writing about Sub-Saharan women’s experiences. My particular interest in reading this article is from the point of view of researching the exclusion of their experiences, as they are Third World women.

⁷ Aziz Talbani (Ghosh & Talbani, 1996; Talbani, 2001) has also written about the socio-cultural situations of girls’ and women’s education in India and Pakistan. Although Vanaja Dhruvarajan (2002) has written about the experiences of Hindu women within and outside the Indian sub-continent, her research focus is more on gender relations, gender and racial inequalities, and the location of women of colour. Within her research studies I am interested in recognizing the unequal positions of educated women arising from the gender question.

⁸ Aggarwal (1976) also offers a personal review of girls’ and women’s education commenting on the philosophy, history and educational details. His work is useful in that it looks into the actual curriculum details and also quotes some of the recommendations from the report of the National Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971-74). Recommendations include increasing girls’ access to education, free schooling for girls, running special classes for girls who might not be able to attend regular school and improved curriculum content.

⁹ Many women researchers of Indian origin, for example Geeta Kingdon, Nitya Rao, and Shailaja Fennel, are also writing on issues of gender, education, the labour market and women’s participation. Although their focus is on various gender-related issues their research is inclusive of Indian girls’ and women’s education.

Chapter 4

Setting the Stage: Using interpretive phenomenology

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I drew an outline of what has been researched about women and education. I considered some theoretical approaches that may be used to study the broader areas of women and education, women and their education for development. I pointed out that none of those frameworks actually provided the scope to interrogate, examine and study Indian women's lived experiences of being educated. While feminist theories offer a rich range of methodological approaches to the woman question, I have not chosen a particular feminist theoretical framework for this thesis. I wish to specifically expand the interpretation of women's lived experiences from a phenomenological framework. This is needed to explore, describe and understand the individual educated women's experiences. This provides a stronger, realistic interpretive ground to emphasise and explicate the notion of being an educated woman. Such a framework is effective in delineating commonalities and specific differences in women's 'being an educated woman' experience.

This chapter details the selection and application of interpretive phenomenology. I present a brief discussion of philosophy of phenomenology as an important preface to outline my understanding of phenomenology. It is not my aim to detail the historical roots of phenomenology or its adaption by different researchers in their study of human experience. Phenomenology is still a growing field of study that is used differently in the areas of, to name a few, interpretive, transpersonal, neuro and social phenomenology (Laughlin, 1988; 2001; Sokolowski, 2000). My intention is only to delineate how I studied phenomenology and how I have applied one of its branches, interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology, in this thesis.

4.2 The philosophical foundations of phenomenology

Ideas and practices that are akin to phenomenological philosophy seem to have been popular among the ancient wisdom traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism (Smith, 2003). However, as Sokolowski (2000) states Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* published in 1900/1901 is considered as the "first true phenomenological work" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.211). Husserl's brilliance in demonstrating the essence of phenomenology was towards understanding the world as it is experienced in its immediacy (Husserl, 1977). Sokolowski sums up Husserl's presentation of realism: "We experience and perceive things...Things appear to us through a manifold of presentations" (Sokolowski, 2000, p.216). Tracing the development of phenomenology in Germany and later France and world-wide in the last one hundred years, Sokolowski observes that the current, different fields of its application also reflect the applicant's worldview. Crotty (1996a), on the other hand, tends to put all the fields of phenomenology into just two categories, traditional and new.

In short, traditional phenomenology emphasises the importance of understanding phenomena by going back "to the things themselves" (Spinelli, 1989, p.16), the things themselves being the essence of the experience being studied. New phenomenology removes the original, traditional emphasis: "that so-called phenomenology simply describes the state of affairs instead of problematising it. It looks to what is taken for granted but fails to call it into question..." (Crotty, 1996b, p.7).

What becomes clear in the works of Sokolowski (2000), Crotty (1996b) and van Manen (1990) is that it is easier to recognise the structures of an essence on a continuum of traditional and new. For, phenomenology's philosophical essence calls into question our becoming conscious of the consciousness of something (Merleau-Ponty, 1999). Studying both what we are conscious of and the consciousness behind that at least puts us on the journey towards living the philosophy. Phenomenological intentionality lies in a clear grasping of reality wherein both the object and subject are connected. This is the supreme feature of our human world. After all, our world is a common world. An important consideration in that we are not looking at the subjective

perspectives/constructs; rather through the subjective to understand the essence of the experience itself.

Our experiences sometimes are intended by us, at other times experiences may be present within our internal worlds and not recognised by our outer consciousness. Retrieving those moments, reliving our experiences taps into those hidden experiences, and makes them re-appear to our consciousness, bringing them into the present perception and understanding (Rinofner, 2002).

This process of engagement with our own experiences effectively reaches ‘the things’ themselves. Ideally, such a reflexive engagement leads to the description of the pure experience and keeps at bay the tendency to judge (Sokolowski, 2000), free from intellectual reflection upon the experience (Balaban, 2002), so as to make an honest attempt to bracket our own beliefs, attitudes, and judgements to the best of our ability (Luft, 2002). However, it is during this stage of describing the relived experience that a considerable challenge arises that may hinder the understanding of an experience. This challenge relates to the insufficiency of language. That is descriptions and descriptive words often have specific connotations, representing the describer’s and ‘listeners’ worldview (Churchill, 2002; Gergen, 1990; 2003; Rothberg, 1986). This requires careful unpacking by the researcher.

4.3 Phenomenology, language and experience

For a phenomenological researcher studying human experience the goal is to be open and explorative. This invariably calls for shelving their own meaning systems as their job is to recognise the already existing meaning in the participant’s experiences. However, as already mentioned we are humans, living in a common world that connects both subject and object. I believe that keeping absolute open-mindedness, totally free of a belief system or a valuation, is almost impossible. At least not so when we *speak*. Nietzsche (cited in van Manen, 1990) viewed language as a metaphorical representation of an image with features of uncertainty and non-precision. Language is thought to restrict and falsify experience, a description of the real experience becoming fictitious (Rothberg, 1986).

Linguistic limitations tend to dilute our experiences because of the language abilities of the person as well as the specific cultural evolution of a particular language in use. For a person like me, coming from an inland city in India to an Australian coastal town, my ability to use language related to the sea is restricted; thus it restricts the description of my experience of the sea. Thus the language for “speaking of ocean waves and candle flames” (Gergen, 1990, p.41) may be representative of the limitations in linguistic expressions whereas human experiences differ like ocean waves and candle flames.

In the ancient wisdom cultures such as Hinduism it is often emphasised that some experiences (spiritual) are only to be lived, not to be verbalised. True to this, when I listen to the tapes of highly evolved tunes of classical Hindustani music I am conscious of the hair-raising experience; I just cannot describe that in words. Similarly many women’s stories, representing traditional and cultural dynamics, might get diluted when an attempt to describe them is made. Also, intellectual exercises sometimes suffer the limitations of language (Moi, 2002). In the case of this thesis, participants using Kannada language to describe their experiences and I translating them to and interpreting them in English language have been a challenge. Besides verbal descriptions of experiences, many researchers also recommend the study of facial expressions, bodily knowing, gestures and even artistic expressions (Braud, 1998). At times, many people’s ways of knowing might not be effectively captured in words (Watts, 1982; Wilshire, 1997). Many women’s ‘silences’ can never be described in words either verbally or in print. They need only to be understood and acted upon (Narayan, 1995; 1997).

It is also possible that experiences may already be diluted before description. Participants supplying the data may “have their own ideas, models, or frameworks for attributing meaning and explanations to the world they experience” (Elden & Levin, 1991, p.131). Influence of interviewer power and importance of effectively negotiating the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee are commonly addressed in feminist research studies (Kirsch, 2005; Parameswaran, 2001; Presser, 2005). A crucial realisation necessary for a phenomenological researcher who is interested in getting back to the things themselves, is that they need to let go of preconceptions before they

start the interview process, for, it is encumbant on the researcher to shelve their existing belief and meaning systems before they ask questions of the participants.

However, despite these concerns van Manen (1990) considers language expression the strength of hermeneutic phenomenology where the exploration of experience is linked very strongly to language. Thus, while it is important to be aware of the potential limitations, language is a window to reaching understanding, a meeting of horizons of researcher and participant.

4.4 Hermeneutic phenomenology and women's experiences

Hermeneutic phenomenology is inclusive of the “constructivist and interpretive view of human consciousness” (Willis, 2001, p.14). As such it was developed from interpretation of Heidegger's thoughts (Lavery, 2003). Ricoeur placed importance on the experience texts and those living the texts to truly understand the phenomenon (Ricoeur, 1966; Sweeney, 2002). His hermeneutic phenomenology is seen as emphasising the “creative power of language” (Jervolino, 2002, p.394). Gadamer's view on hermeneutic phenomenology points out that experience is always linguistic (Aylesworth, 1991). Summing up Gadamer's thoughts Moran (2000, p.270) states “language does not just reflect human being but actually makes humans be, brings about human existence as communal understanding and self-understanding.”

The authentic way of researching women's lives, I believe, is to explore their everyday/everynight experiences in the framework of deep engagement, co-operation and mutual respect between the researcher and the participant, and a non-assumptive questioning ground. Phenomenology in its primary sense studies human experience without any preconceptions. The phenomenological application to study the experience of being an educated woman provides the exploratory ground to understand how educated women construct their images. The probing questions that are asked of the participants further develop the details. Thus the process of re-living the past, re-viewing the experience in the present with mutual reflections calls for a mutual deep engagement.

Researching experiences of everyday life is about questioning ourselves about the ways we experience everyday phenomena that surround us day and night by exploring our inner worlds. It is "... the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world" (van Manen, 1990, p.5). Studying how each woman experiences her lifeworld in its multi-layers, width and depth, engages the researcher with her texts, the speech, the narrative on her life. The narrative becomes a deep textual reflection on her lived experiences, her hermeneutic interpretive texts of life. On the other hand the researcher writing the reflection and reflecting upon "the meanings and significances of phenomena of daily life" (van Manen, 1990, p.4) tends to lift the research into pedagogic research.

Several researchers have stressed the importance of practising a dialogic framework while researching women's lives (for example Reinharz, 1992). Lather's (1992) observation that feminist research is a dialectically educative encounter between researcher and participant suits my intention in this study. While exploring the 'being educated woman' notion the phenomenological interview may trigger a re-discovering of their self, an education for them at a conscious level. For the researcher it is a new learning, an education every moment!

Such a phenomenological orientation increases the possibilities of both the researcher and the research participants to better understand their question of how and why we experience what. While there are no causal explanations or fixed answers/solutions to those questions, newer and different ways of viewing women's experiences through different lenses can be achieved by attempting an in-depth description. In agreement with Grumet (1988) I believe that women

...need a mediating method that stretches between lived phenomena and an ideology of family life to help us diminish the distance between the private and public poles of our experience. For the world we feel, the world we remember, is also the world we make up. The place that is familiar can be the place where we are most lost (Grumet, 1988, p.65).

For the reader of this research thesis the texts of the women and the researcher provide a firm ground to orient themselves to the process which illuminates women's dilemmas, voices of celebration, tensions, conflicting thoughts and feelings, and contradiction.

Given that the women's texts are unique and irreplaceable experiences, the research in this hermeneutic phenomenological framework tends to remain the lived "curriculum of being and becoming" (van Manen, 1990, p.7), encouraging attention and awareness to the hidden dimensions of life texts.

This thesis interprets and describes educated women's lived experiences providing a richer understanding of the meanings present in those experiences. "The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation" (Heidegger, 1962, p.37). As the experience is lived the woman interprets the meaning. The act of reflection (Freire, 1972, p.13) enriches the recognition of already existing meaning. The act of interpretation is an act of pointing to something; and it is also an act of "pointing out the meaning of something" (Gadamer, 1986, cited in van Manen, 1990). As Alfred Schutz (Schutz 1973, cited in Levesque-Lopman, 1988, p.27) said,

the "meaning" of a lived experience can be reduced to a turning of the attention to an already elapsed experience, in the course of which the latter is lifted out of the stream of consciousness and identified as an experience constituted in such a way and in no other (Levesque-Lopman, 1988, p.27).

The reflective process wherein the ten women describe their experiences of being educated involves a deep engagement of pointing to something, turning the researcher's and the reader's attention to an already lapsed experience. My interest is to point out and identify the meanings existing in that experience.

The act of sharing life texts with others is somewhat "a risky business" (Grumet, 1991, p.69) for, the better the reader is oriented to reading and making meaning in women's texts from a particular perspective "the riskier the business" (Grumet, 1991, p.69). The risk in the business of women describing their experiences of being educated and I as the researcher/writer of the study interpreting their experiences is reduced in this thesis as it does not problem-solve. My reflections on their experiences are to grasp the already meaningful experiences which otherwise could never reach our conscious awareness. It is also to come to understand the possibilities of being revealed by life's text, through description and interpretation carried out at various levels with thickening layers. That is letting the text of the experience speak for itself (the text speaking in a

specific context is an interpretation by itself), capturing the same in language using it for a particular context which is an interpretive process (van Manen, 1990).

Thus the interpretive process is an interactive experience for the speaker and the writer resonating with the sense of living the speech and recollecting the accounts of lived experience. It is a “validating circle of inquiry” (van Manen, 1990, p.27). Therefore the thesis reflects the tone of a single-minded thoughtfulness around a thought, an inquiry, a quest. The quest that enthalls this researcher is to make known the experiences of being an educated woman. I, the researcher, am investigating the experiences as I am living them. The process of investigation that the reader witnesses in this thesis makes possible for them “to live their way into” (Denzin, 1994, p.506) the experiences.

Understanding women’s experiences means an understanding of their particular contexts of the private and the public spheres, seeking an understanding of the ways of the private lives of women lying unopened for a public understanding. “To inquire into understanding means to seek understanding of understanding” (Rogers, 1983, p. 139). As women we learn to identify, through living such a process of seeking an understanding, that we have several perspectives about our lived worlds; we have multiple lenses to view the world. In an interpretive process these perspectives and lenses get highlighted. We come to recast our lives and carry our own [re]interrogation of the “woman question” (Evans, 1994). The everyday familiar (or unfamiliar) becomes the singular focus, seen for the first time through different lenses, thus making public the personal particular. Or on the other hand, what has been generalised about the woman question/s can be interpreted by the individual woman. Each such individual woman can re-orient herself to her lived world. The generalised notions may/can be unpacked with the provision of alternative analysis and viewing. This act in itself is profoundly meaningful for a woman who is for the first time asked to question herself, interrogating her lived experiences by engaging in a deeply reflective process. What could otherwise have been considered endings in a woman’s life after completing educational life, can be reopened in the reflective process to make a new beginning based on enriched self-understanding and self-awareness.

In particular, hermeneutic phenomenology provides such ground, expanding the theoretical possibilities of using language, analysing texts to recognise the existing meaning along with the underlying tones of the texts. These meanings in turn throw light on the objectified structures and systems of their life. Thus hermeneutic phenomenology makes the participants richly humane with their voices narrating and interpreting their individual experiences. The recognition of the importance of lived experience, the narration of subjective experiences, the registration of individually unique voice and the (re)interpretation of meanings within those experiences provide the most suitable theoretical framework for this study.

Educational research carried out in India is mostly quantitative (Chanana, 2001; Patel, 1998; Scrase, 1993) and documents the quantitative analysis of the educated status of girls and women collectively. Phenomenology validates individual experience. Exploring that individual experience is the intention of phenomenological theory applied as a practice. Women's experiences as learners, women using their education in particular socio-cultural settings, women constructing their identities as educated human beings in their workplace, women interpreting their life in the private sphere can be explored without a bias, described and interpreted for further analysis most effectively through the application of phenomenology. First it takes up the participant's standpoint in the exploration of meanings. Then the researcher has the potential to understand the meanings better. Notably the participants as women may, while reflecting and re-constructing their experiences, offer collective meanings, using the 'we women' expression, to voice a different level of understanding of their society. Such expressions, women's standpoints, are much closer to claiming reality (Levesque-Lopman, 1988) than the claims of 'education empowers women.'

The scope of phenomenology supports women reflecting upon the objective conditions of life and the subjective experiences surrounding those conditions, re-lived and re-interpreted in their text. With its emphasis on engaged detachment, as opposed to imposition of the researcher's standpoints, phenomenology enquires into the educational experiences with what and how questions. Moving beyond the concern of many feminists whose research voices emphasise the inequalities of schooling and the power

dimensions in girls' experiences of schooling (for example Smith, 2000), the application of phenomenology begins the exploration of such experiences without preconceptions. Through interpretation it suggests what the meanings of such experiences are from the women's standpoints through their own voices. This, I believe, is the supreme strength of interpretive phenomenology. Secondly, seeking meaning already existing in experience provides an explanatory framework, which this thesis is developing. Thus this research begins with and from lived experiences.

Another significant point that needs to be made here is the application of interpretive phenomenology to study women's lives and the everyday aspects of their experiences. Feminist research has paid particular attention to issues of women's everyday life aspects, from the standpoint of power, control, authority and voice in a male-dominated world. Such feminist research approaches try to employ an already-formed standpoint, assuming that these are the experiences of women. However, in her later works Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990) calls for a method that addresses the practices of women's social worlds. Her call is in line with Grumet's words, "...women need a dialectical phenomenology" (1988, p.65), which I reiterated in the beginning of the previous section. Although Catherine Riessman uses narrative theory and analysis in her studies on women's lives, her point that "it is necessary to listen with a minimum of interruptions" (Riessman, 1987, p.191) for a collaborative research project is immensely valuable for this research. That is what interpretive phenomenology encourages. Thus interpretive phenomenology is better able to handle the focus of this thesis, the experience of being an educated woman.

4.5 Application of interpretive phenomenology

This research inquires into lived experience. I planned to interpret these experiences as a researcher honouring the words, meanings and the voices of my participants. My constant dilemmatic thought was would this interpretation justify the experiences of these participants as they continue to live them in everyday life? The dilemma was also related to my values, valuing their knowing, the level of my knowledge and scholarship that they would measure up against their own, and most importantly my position as a

researcher living in an overseas, western country, although I was born and brought up in the same city as theirs. Engaging myself in this perplexing yet “passionate scholarship” journey was indeed a rewarding experience (DuBois, 1983).

Focusing on the main question I engaged my participants in long conversations, academically called in-depth interviews. Many researchers have discussed complexities in engaging a research participant in a conversation which is a formal interview from the researcher’s perspective (Kvale, 1996; McCormack, 2001; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1987; 2005). van Manen (1990) claims conversations facilitate thematic analysis. In this study, each interview consists of two interview sessions that were conducted with an average gap of at least one month. Total average hours of each interview are about four. All of them provided rich ‘data’; we engaged ourselves in rich discussions about our specific interpretations on our lived worlds (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

However, despite coming from a culture with rich oral history, women in Indian society hesitate to provide a deeper space in which to open up to their self. In this case Benhabib’s (1999) feeling sounds apt:

We are born into webs of interlocution or into webs of narrative—from the familial and gender narratives to the linguistic one to the macronarrative of one’s collective identity. We become who we are by learning to be a conversation partner in these narratives. Although we do not choose the webs in whose nets we are initially caught or select those with whom we wish to converse, our agency consists in our capacity to weave out of those narratives and fragments of narratives a life story that makes sense for us, as unique individual selves (Benhabib, 1999, p.344).

Sharing personal experience for public knowledge was not easy for many of my research participants at least to begin with. Sometimes I personally became conscious of the typical researcher’s frame of mind “... the listener may not ‘hear’ what is important to the narrator” (Riessman, 1987, p.172). However, I tried my best to open up that (for myself and participants) that ‘hearing’ space. It was a collaborative process that “was aided by gender, class, and cultural congruity” as we both “implicitly agreed about how” (Riessman, 1987, p.190) a text describing the experience of ‘being an educated woman’ should be organised. Besides gathering ‘data’, in the form of participants’ texts, I drew up a profile of each participant from her biographical information. I presented

them to my participants before the second interview. I adopted a phenomenological position and rooted the research topic in “autobiographical meanings and values” (Moustakas, 1994, p.103).

In the end participants conveyed that this process was emancipating and empowering as it provided a special space for their thoughts and feelings. This feeling was quite similar to what the women participants told Catherine Riessman during her field studies in South India (Riessman, 2000b; 2005). In fact we both found those lived moments being with ourselves as women, enriching (Braud, 1998; Cranney, 2001; Gilligan, 1982; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Helle, 1991). Learning to respond to such a space, sharing our lives and personal experiences was stimulating, in particular for the women as they were able to find voice (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). It became a journey of many women, including myself, which resulted in a process of transformation (Clements et al., 1998; Paranjpe, 1987). As Witherell and Noddings wrote:

They (stories and narrative) attach us to others and to our won histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and our being known (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p.1).

However, many questions inevitably concerned me; would the participating women narrate their position in the private and public spheres and their status in society as women? How often are women asked such questions for academic purposes and how close can an academic study get to the inner experiences of women; especially women from a thick culture and tradition such as Indian society? How do I, as a researcher, ask these women questions related to their private sphere (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995; Riessman, 2005)? I was also aware that “our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can (Grumet, 1991, p.69).

Still in the same way that Foster (1994) and Grumet (1988; 1991; 1992) claimed phenomenology for their studies on educational theory and practice, I was confident that phenomenology would prove an effective framework to explore Indian women’s experiences. Still it was only after speaking to the women about their educational

experiences that the importance of a phenomenological perspective became even clearer.

Reading about different aspects of phenomenology I soon started to question an appropriate pathway (Devenish, 2002; Willis, 2001). Would I be following the traditional phenomenology (Crotty, 1996a; 1996b; Moran, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; Spinelli, 1989) as a philosophical framework to investigate and interpret human experience or would I use phenomenology as a theoretical framework to interpret my participants' experiences and as a method to draw the thematic analysis? I found that other researchers (for example Brymer, 2005; Devenish, 2002; Hayllar, 2000) also had such conflicting moments during their research journeys. And they chose to create their own paths:

In order to facilitate my research, I realised I was going to have to become very clear about the process of how to apply phenomenological explication as well as the theoretical aspects of phenomenological philosophy, and make the decision to feel my way towards a model suited to my research. I did so by beginning at the beginning, by borrowing what I felt was necessary from other scholars, and by trusting my own sense of what was needed (Devenish, 2002, p.3).

In contrast to the philosophical understanding of the human experience in its essence, following both scientific and philosophical approaches, I chose to follow what van Manen (1990; 1997; 2002) suggests of attributing more importance to writing as an activity. This gave me an expanded scope to apply phenomenology as a method to collect data and later using various sources for interpretation and discussion, providing me with ample opportunities for interpreting the 'texts' of women's life (van Manen, 1990, p.4). I saw and felt the significance of linking my research with 'writing the process of researching women's lived experience', to get as close as possible to the things themselves.

4.5.1 The question: What is the experience of being an educated Indian woman?

Phenomenological research places a profound emphasis on the formulation of an effective research question which has personal and social meaning (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The experience that I am studying in this research is being an

educated woman in Indian society. The participants of this research were all university graduates with a minimum bachelor's degree. By educated I mean women who completed their formal studies of at least a bachelor's degree. The Indian Constitution considers basic, formal schooling as completion of a Secondary School Leaving Certificate level which is matriculation; however, Indian society considers an educated person is one who has a bachelor's degree qualification and places higher value on that 'educated' person. The latter is in fact mentioned with emphasis and pride as well as a benchmark for being well educated. This as a social phenomenon is bigger than any formal/Constitutional definitions of an educated person (Chanana, 2001).

4.5.2 Selecting participants

Research participants play a significant part in directing research at every stage by offering their experiences for an analysis. A careful selection of my participants was, therefore, necessary before I went to the 'field'. It would be a phenomenological research as "we gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (van Manen, 1990, p.62). That I could learn about and from others' lived experiences (Gergen, 1990; 2003; White, 1998) is a journey of self-inquiry as well as growth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; McCormack, 2001).

This research presents the experiences of Kanaka, Ganga, Vinoda, Mani, Kavitha, Rani, Shubha, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinathe. Although they all belong to Hindu religion their individual caste is not considered as a criterion for this research. I did not look for a participant outside Hindu religion for two reasons: in this thesis I narrate and explore my own lived experience of being an educated woman. Although I am not consciously practising any religion, my family's influence as a Hindu Brahman family is still noticeable in my thinking and researching women's lives. So I felt as an 'authentic insider' while quoting from Hindu religion. Secondly, as I have not familiarised myself well enough with other religions practised in Indian society I did not assume the position of an 'insider.' I consider "woman caste" as a positive term (Bagwe, 1995, p.vii). Each woman's experience is uniquely different "with regard to experience" (Gulati, 1993). The phenomenological question 'what is your experience of being an educated woman' can be asked to any Indian woman who, within my chosen criteria,

has educational qualification of a bachelor's degree from an Indian university in India. Such a level of formal education includes ten years of basic schooling, two years of either advanced schooling or pre-university education and three years of bachelor's degree education.

At the time of the interviews all ten women were aged between 21 and 45 years – by 21 they are legally adults; 45 because they went to school after the recommendations of the first National Education policy of 1968. Their first language was Kannada, the regional language of Karnataka State in South India, which was the language we used during the interviews. I always invited the participant to decide about the place of our interviews to minimise the effect of researcher's power. While all nominated a place of their choice, several of them had me as their guest, affirming studies conducted in this direction (for example, Finch, 1984). Although some of them said I could use their real names, I chose pseudonyms for all except Vinathe.

I obtained Human Ethics Committee approval from the university in October/November, 2002. This facilitated the process to contact potential research participants in accordance with the university's research guidelines (Appendix B). As an initial step I started to develop a 'network' of women having bachelor's degree qualification. I began contacting potential participants by firstly contacting women known to me, such as relatives and friends via email or by telephone. Some of these known women suggested their friends/acquaintances as potential participants. Within a couple of days of arriving in Bangalore on the 28th of February, 2003, I made a direct contact with about ten initial participants. Their interest resulted in a 'snowball effect' (Taber, 2005), whereby I soon had 30 women, as a 'sample', interested in taking part in my research. The selection was based on their age (21 to 43 years) and having a bachelor's degree. From this initial 30, I was able to interview 15 women as per my research criteria. With a few others I could only have informal discussions about my research topic. For several reasons I ended up with 12 full interviews that I considered usable. By full interviews I mean full two interview sessions. At the final stage of analysing interview transcripts I used 9 interviews and included myself as the tenth participant. These reasons will be mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Of the 15 potential participants who were not interviewed some felt they could not continue with my interview criteria – they either felt uncomfortable that their words would be tape-recorded or their personal experiences would be used by someone else. Some said they couldn't sign the consent form without their husband's permission. Others said 'No, I don't have anything to say about myself as an educated woman' or 'No one has asked me a question like this, I can not understand or think about it' or 'I have only bitter feelings about this education system and the way I got my education, I don't feel myself as a truly educated woman, so I don't want to participate.' In some cases we faced family interference. Often when I arrived to take part in a pre-organised meeting I found myself in front of the whole family who all wanted to talk to me about the topic. Or when we started the interview we were interrupted by elderly women, husbands or sons intervening and insisting that the interview took a certain direction. In some cases the participating woman was visibly uncomfortable and hesitant while her family members were prompting her. Still others were too busy with their children's school exams and later summer holidays.

In many ways the above experiences were quite similar to what Catherine Riessman experienced in her field work and questions she raises with Cheryl Mattingly on ethics and social research (Riessman, 2000b; 2005; Riessman & Mattingly, 2005). Her narrative on using research ethics forms – prescribed in the universities of the U.S. to conduct human research – during her field studies with Keralite women of South India illuminates how such formalities can become sources of a threat/alienation/suspicion. It also sends clear but untold messages to the participants of the interviewer's power and control. In Riessman's example "they were suspicious, not about interviewing or taping, but about the form" (Riessman, 2005, p.478). In my field studies several women were suspicious of the forms as well as the tape recorder that I carried with me to record the interview.

Of the 15 interviewed all were given prior information about my research project, my Ph.D. student candidature, details of the Ethics Forms and how the recorded interviews would be used in this research and elsewhere. Care was taken to ensure that they asked questions and clarified any doubts and they felt totally comfortable with my research

intentions. These 15 women were very surprised that somebody could interview them about themselves and their experiences as educated women with questions like ‘In what ways do you think of yourself as an educated woman?’; ‘What do you come up with when asked to describe an educated woman of this country?’; ‘In what ways?’ and so on. Some were amused that ‘ordinary’ women like them could become sources of information for an academic research project that was being conducted in a foreign country. Some laughed, some joked, some were reluctant, some were honoured and some were actually apprehensive. I encountered answers like ‘Oh, yes, definitely, please do come and visit me ... I will answer any of your questions’, ‘No one before has asked me a question about how do I feel about ... I like your questions, I feel important’ and ‘I think I have to consult my husband before I answer your questions; he is better informed.’

Before I left India I had tapes of 12 full interviews and three half interviews. Later one of the 12 participants requested to withdraw her interview. The three half interviews were rejected as they were incomplete from my research perspective. Thus after transcribing all the recorded tapes of 11 participants and then reading their transcripts I decided not to use two participants’ interviews, leaving 9 interviewed participants and myself as the tenth participant. However, all the participants, at the time of explaining about consent forms, were told that their interviews might be used for this Ph.D. research as well as/and/or for other research projects of similar nature.

The reason for not using two participants’ full interviews was related to my own ethical dilemma. While interviewing those two participants I had a ‘nagging’ feeling that somebody was listening to our conversations. Both the interviews were conducted in the office space of the NGO whose two staff members were among my participants. My suspicion was later confirmed by the other staff. Privacy is an ethical problem that Riessman discusses among others: “...Family members – her parents, sisters, husband (Rajiv) – expanded upon Celine’s brief answers. Nieces and neighbours clustered about the door, watching and listening” (Riessman, 2005, p.478). Raising serious questions about the validity of research ethics and potential misunderstandings between the interviewer and the interviewee, Riessman asks, “does the potential good that might

come out of a project, in spite of ruptured understandings, compensate for the absence of ‘truly’ informed consent” (Riessman, 2005, p.480)? Unlike Riessman, I did remove the two interviews from the sample as the ‘listeners’ later told me that both the women gave a ‘nice account’ of their life story as educated women, not a true one that I asked for. This in fact increased my uncomfortable feeling about using those two interviews. A few months later, after transcribing, translating and reading the transcripts I decided not to use them in this thesis.

4.5.3 The curtain-raisers: The ten women participants

I am introducing the participants - Kanaka, Ganga, Vinoda, Mani, Kavitha, Rani, Shubha, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinathe – with feelings of pride and collegiality. Especially the nine women who opened up their life stories, turned the milestones of their journey as educated women and shared their moments of evocations for the purpose of this study. It is their experiences, which further guided the course of this thesis. All names except Vinathe’s have been changed for ethical reasons.

Kanaka: Kanaka is a teacher working in a private school close to her house. She mainly teaches Hindi language and also other subjects to the primary and the higher primary school children. She has a bachelor’s degree in Arts. She is 43, married with two daughters and a son. Her eldest daughter is 22 years old and has started working recently in a private company. Her younger daughter is studying in the second year of pre-university course while her only son is in Class VII in a private school where she previously taught. Her husband works in the public sector telephone factory.

Ganga: Ganga is an upper primary school teacher, working in a government school. She teaches mathematics to the upper primary grade children and science to the lower primary. She has a Teachers’ Training Diploma as well as a B.A. degree. Ganga is 36, married with two sons aged 10 and 2 1/2 years. Her husband is a language teacher in a government-aided school.

Vinoda: Vinoda is a Hindi language teacher in a government aided high school. She has a bachelor’s degree, a B.Ed. and an M.A. with Hindi language as a major subject. She

says her real age is 32 but in official records it is 35 years. She is married to her sister's husband and has a 3-year-old son.

Mani: Mani is the founder of an Non-Government Organisation, working on social and educational issues with women and children. She has a B.A., M.A., in rural sociology. She is the second youngest among 7 children. She is 40, married to a well-known writer. They have a 14-year-old daughter.

Kavitha: Kavitha is a community organiser with an NGO working for women's empowerment and education, based on the outskirts of Bangalore. She is 23, has a Bachelor's degree in Commerce. She is the eldest child, followed by two younger sisters and a brother. Her father is a Constable with the State Police. Mother is a housewife. Her middle sister is doing a diploma in Computer Applications; her younger sister is repeating her Class X exams. Her young brother is in Class IX. Kavitha is the first girl on both family sides to have earned a bachelor's degree.

Rani: Rani is the founder lecturer and also head of the department of Physics in an undergraduate private college. She is 36 and is single; she has a Master's degree in Physics. Rani is the eldest child in her family followed by a sister and two brothers. All are bachelor's degree holders and employed; her middle brother has an additional bachelor's degree in education and is a high school teacher. Her father is a retired primary school teacher, mother a housewife. They both live in their ancestral village where they have lands and with their children in Bangalore city. Rani's younger sister got married in 2004. Brothers are unmarried yet.

Shubha: Shubha is a theatre professional, working as a freelancer. She is also a Television actress. She is 39, has a B.A. and an M.A. in Kannada literature. She is the youngest among four children. Her brother is a High Court judge, eldest sister, an officer at the Reserve Bank and middle sister, a housewife. Shubha married her own colleague who is now an established actor in Television programmes and feature films. They have a 4-year-old daughter.

Nirmala: Nirmala is a 39 year old woman, married with a son and a daughter. Her son is aged 14 years and daughter is aged 8 years. After her three years' diploma course in Secretarial Practice, Nirmala studied for and got a bachelor's degree in commerce and accountancy. She was employed in administrative posts for about 17 years. She resigned her job in 2000 as she and her husband decided that their children needed more attention. Her husband is employed with the Central government in a high post.

Deepa: Deepa is 31, married with a 7-year-old son. She has never been in paid employment. Her husband is a qualified engineer; he re-trained later as a software engineer, is now working for an IT company. She hails from a nearby town; she moved to Bangalore after marriage. She has a bachelor's degree in Commerce. Her parents were school teachers. Her elder sister is married and works in the public sector in Bangalore; her younger brother, a stenographer at the State High Court, is married with a son. Her parents-in-law are living with them.

Vinathe: Vinathe is a doctoral degree student, studying in an Australian university. She was born and brought up in Bangalore. She did a B.A. and an M.A. degree in India before coming to Australia in 2001 for a research degree in Education. She has worked as a journalist, as a lecturer of psychology, and a social worker. She is 36. She married a white westerner and had a son while doing her Ph.D.. Her mother was a school teacher. Her father was initially a school teacher then a junior college lecturer when he retired. She has two elder sisters and a younger brother. They are all married and have two children each.

4.6 Conducting the interviews: Recording, listening, identifying insights

Exploring any human action is “an intriguing quest into the unknown” (Gergen, 1990, p.29). My initial question, ‘what is your experience of being an educated woman’ was confusing to the participants and they said so. Some of them said they did not understand the question. Some asked me to repeat the question. At times they stopped talking and reflected on their experiences quietly. My role was to respect that reflective space while they were “self-interpreting when providing the text” (Rennie, 1999, p.7).

All of them preferred to talk about their schooling and college experiences. They used two different narrative genres to describe their experiences – temporal and episodic (Riessman, 1987). Mani, a participant, underlined the necessity of using these two genres. As she pointed out ‘being an educated woman’ experience was narrating a life’s story and involved re-visiting episodes, i.e., milestones and turning points. To begin with they focused on their schooling and college education, their teachers, subjects, curriculum, friends, influences, their family and its involvement in their education, and their viewpoints of their education. This was a re-construction of episodes travelling through time. Only later, encouraged by my sub-questions, did they turn to their experiences of being educated women. At this stage it became only episodic. I sometimes asked for clarifications and/or asked a supportive question to continue the flow. Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured in the first session which lasted from two to three hours. The initial few minutes were spent on giving details of their profile. After the first interviews I had many opportunities of discussing my research with a few gender researchers, retired school teachers/principals and NGO professionals working on gender issues in Bangalore. I found some of the suggestions of these experts valuable to my research. I drew from these suggestions and ‘prepared’ a few questions, which were again open-ended, for the second interview, in addition to my own reflections on the first interview question/s. The second interview session lasted from 40 minutes to an hour.

I listened to the interview tapes soon after the interviews and wrote down my reflections in my journal. They discussed people, events, turning points, their emotions and their tensions during their journey of becoming educated. Although interpreting women’s experiences evokes emotion they call for a rational thinking resulting in agency. Burdell and Swadener (1999) in their reflective article on personal narrative and autoethnography bring out this necessity:

Available critical narratives and autoethnographic texts provide vehicles for talking to each other, often across the borders or discipline and identity locations. For those of us located inside pragmatic, credential-oriented, and technology-driven corporate university settings, opening such spaces for dialogue creates possibilities for re-engagement, resistance, and reading ourselves into the process educational and social change (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p.26).

However, I have to admit at this point that maintaining a rational mind while listening to emotional accounts of women's experiences was indeed a struggle (Riessman, 2005). As such the interviews were open-ended (Howe, 1991), my 'role' was to focus on the depth of the responses, often assisting in the process of verbalising their thoughts (Vermersch, 1999). I felt honoured by the participant's openness and the depth of their sharing in addition to their trust. I assisted them to re-live the experience, turning the internal act into representational knowledge (Petitmengin-Peugeot, 1999). Although I did attend to body language, facial expressions and gestures, I did not choose to carry these into the analysis stage. Instead I focused on the interview "as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material" (van Manen, 1990, p.66) that serves as a "resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (van Manen, 1990, p.66). My sincere and best attempt was to respect the participants' texts (Braud, 1998), to accept their realities (Mishler, 1986; 2005) and to pay utmost attention to their words and meaning by ensuring integrity (Kvale, 1996).

Besides being a participant in this research, I also speak in the first person as a researcher throughout this thesis. This was a little difficult as I had my own dilemmas and experiences. Still, since this was an applied phenomenological study where women's experiences were interpreted from the hermeneutic phenomenological lens I attempted to bracket my own viewpoints to the best of my abilities by staying open to participant words. As recommended by Depraz, Varela and Vermesche (1999), I found focusing and being receptive to the internal an essential skill throughout. The whole journey was a process of understanding meaning, from attending to the participants at the time of the interviews through active listening and writing the analysis of their experience.

4.6.1 Transcribing the tapes

In 2003-04, in Australia, I transcribed and simultaneously translated all the taped interviews as they were in Kannada language. This meant going over the tapes a few times to get the word to word transcription including pauses and then translating them, whilst trying to stay true to the participant's 'authentic' voice. I have tried my best to quote the women verbatim. However I am aware that English and Kannada language

expressions including cultural connotations and grammar are quite different to each other. In my translation I did minor corrections/changes and paraphrasing in order to make the intended message clear for an English-language reader (first language English); but without changing the meaning of the message. The texts presented in Chapter 5 sometimes may read differently than what the English-language reader is used to. I have included laughs and pauses wherever they emphatically supported the texts. During interviews some participants spoke elaborately and were quite articulate; some others halted, reflected, paused and did not speak so elaborately. This also has impacted on re-constructing the texts for the reader. Some participants' texts are lengthy; some others' are not. Some texts read independent and individual as they were narrated as episodes of experience.

4.6.2 Reflecting on transcript texts

Once words are out, they become a story, a text. People become texts; texts become the voice (Gergen, 1990). It is these texts that enable the fuller comprehension of a point otherwise hidden in its essential meaning. They provide a human link bonding together words of the participants and writings of the researcher for an effective experience for a reader. Texts may be what was not said or written but could be "generally acknowledged truths" (van Manen, 1990, p.120). As Willis (2002) also appreciated I found that at times these texts were more aesthetic than might be considered acceptable in mainstream academia but at the same time the chosen media provided an authentic voice for the participant,. For example, two of my participants wrote poetry between our two interviews, read poetry, recited proverbs and oral history to me during our interviews. They related these to their experiences of being women, being educated and being educated women in India.

At the end of the research interviews the participants summarised, with some assistance from me and organised their experiences of being educated. This, they said, was quite relevant to their understanding of themselves as educated women.

I re-read the interview transcripts after a few months of active listening and reflecting on the tapes and the texts in a meditative state of mind (Ettling, 1998). I was determined

to reach the “profound depth” of the experiences (Gergen, 1990, p.31). As I read each transcript, each participant’s experience of being an educated woman appeared to be similar in some particular moments and contexts yet I observed specific differences in some areas while they talked about people, events, beliefs, turning points, emotions, feelings, tensions, conflicts and dilemmas in the journey of their education. This process was again deeply engaging, as I read and re-read the texts, identifying surface and in-depth patterns, I had to stop and re-start several times. Many a time it became a struggle when texts described emotional, conflicting and dilemmatic experiences (Riessman, 2005). Yet I made a sincere attempt to understand the whole.

While re-constructing the texts in Chapter 5 I have followed the same ‘flow’ that the participants chose – temporal and episodic. However, I have not produced the whole transcript/texts of either the life’s story narrated temporally or the whole of an episode. I have re-presented relevant texts, which I felt were significant in their temporal and episodic quality. Thus some texts may stand out and read as independent texts.

The participants’ texts are followed by my reflections, which is the first-level interpretation. I have these reflections in brackets – () – signifying my intention of bracketing my analysis at this stage of presenting the experiences. I felt this was necessary as I had to repeatedly ask myself ‘was I doing the right thing’ to ‘get back to the things themselves?’

I highlighted the commonalities and differences emerging through the texts by reflecting on them as I read the texts of each individual participant. Later I read the whole text of the participant, reflected on it again and drew a summary of what was highlighted. These became patterns across all the participants. I called them first-order reflective themes. They were spread across the research landscape, providing initial guidelines to analyse the texts with more depth for a further thematic interpretation.

4.6.3 Initial themes

Themes, according to van Manen (1990; 1997), are a focus of meaning (meaning making or hermeneutic); they are summaries simplified, descriptions of aspects of the

phenomenon. Themes speak the text/s of women, as Freire (1972) calls, reading the world. They develop as a way of organising the text and as a result of “insightful invention, discovery and disclosure” (Willis 2001, p.13) about an aspect of the experience source.

Themes emerge after formulating phrases from the whole text, expressing the essence of the text. Themes can be phrases or sentences, woven by the researcher taking the text as a whole to the heart and getting intimate with it after much reading and re-reading into the text and the voices. The researcher composes a “linguistic transformation” in the final analysis as van Manen states (1990) to explicate the experience.

The process of recognising differences and similarities as patterns in each participant’s description of the experience also provided many insights as to how to interpret them. Often I also took cues from Devenish (2002) and benefited profoundly from discussions held with colleagues and friends. I also read relevant chapters from other Ph.D. theses to learn how they have used interpretive phenomenology (for example, Brymer, 2005; Hayllar, 2000). However, quite different to their traditional interpretations, differences and commonalities were key insights of the participants in my research (see Appendices B and C). Notably these insights mainly reflected upon the normalised beliefs and processes involved in a girl’s education in the Indian middle-income class. From the stage of highlighting patterns in the commonalities and differences in the texts, I moved on to drawing out initial themes more specifically. Following is an example of this stage (Appendix C and D).

As I read the transcripts I initially marked the key words, phrases and sentences in each text of the transcript and later during the third reading, across transcripts. For example I noted ‘they sent us to school so we went; education was important to get a job’ in an individual’s transcript and highlighted it. If this came up repeatedly in the transcript it was considered as a potential thematic unit based on its meaning context rather than as a sentence. If I came across this in another transcript also then it was noted down as an emerging initial theme, of the next level. In the second layering if the key expression for each transcript was ‘education was meant for future jobs’ and was connected to

‘marriage and better life’ that was noted down as an emerging initial thematic connection. In the third layer if the key expression was ‘our schooling was necessary for a good husband and a job’, it was considered as a layer of interpretation for the individual participant and across other participants’ transcripts. During my discussion the initial theme became ‘education for a better job, better husband and a better future.’ While interpreting this in my discussion and analysis it became another level of interpretation. Thus the stages involved reading, reflections, classification of levels and layers of interpretation.

At the next level I went beyond the descriptive level themes to look for evidence of deeper, personal feelings and reflections, in relation to their inner meanings that did not appear on the surface level. These were the second-order level of thematic development and interpretation.

They were checked across all the transcripts to see if they were experienced by each participant and to ensure I was accurately reflecting their accounts. During this process time and again I verified the order of thematic development with individual texts, the whole transcript of each individual participant and across the transcripts of all participants.

Time and again I needed to ‘look behind and go beyond’ those first and second-order themes. These themes were also what the participant was ‘telling’ while I needed to interpret what the experience was ‘telling me.’ The texts themselves helped me at this stage. What the participants said was their experience initially was actually contradicting the later texts narrated by them. I interpreted these experiences as ‘third-order themes.’ To arrive at these themes, it involved immense self-reflection, meditation, my own conflicts and turmoils of doing ‘justice’ to the participants’ voice while retaining my integrity. I asked myself repeatedly *am I doing the right thing?*

After stages of such conflicting moments, the third level reached to the heart of interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenology, an attempt to reach a level of understanding the experience itself, the voices of the women.

4.7 Writing ‘being educated’ experience texts

It was while listening to the tapes, reading the transcripts and making notes on first and second-order themes that I started sensing the importance of writing ‘the text’ rather than a detached analysis. I wanted to capture the essence of what and how of the experience texts as suggested by van Manen (1990). The interview process included many unwritten words, sometimes in the form of a non-verbal question to the interviewer, a pause, a shrug, a sign that raised a question. Sometimes there were signs of an unspoken emotion, combined with a stated agreement with their perceived situation or a feeling of resistance to the system. In the first interview they would indicate their agreement with my identification of major areas of experiences. In the second interview when I summarised what was said in the previous interview and asked them ‘did you mean it this way’ or ‘what did you mean here’, they would take time to reflect. Then they would subtly respond with gestures, facial expressions and body language, involving very few words. This level was not readily observable on paper, but was indicative in nature. This suggested the participant’s dilemma in either affirming their sub-texts or denying them completely. Their physical voice on the tapes, during such hesitant phases, was halting, murmuring and at the same time compelling me to listen carefully. I interpreted this as the desire to be heard, yet remaining dilemmatic of its effect and consequence. There was a sense of a need to be acknowledged in the very vague, unstructured and halting intonation. These, for a researcher, were richly describing the “whatness” of the experience (van Manen, 1990, p.46).

While reflecting on the participants’ texts I felt the need to put them in brackets. This ‘bracketing’ is in a sense metaphorical for me. I was reading the texts, reflected and interpreted them; as I wrote them, I put them in brackets; signifying that I remained with the texts as an interpreter.

The interpretive phenomenologist is interested in knowing the ways people interpret and make sense of their experiences, usually using a language to interpret and narrate as they experience. It calls into question what is taken for granted and opens our inner self to the experiences of the phenomenon. As such, “...hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of

an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social” (van Manen, 1990, p.7).

After the ‘mundane practical issues of methods, techniques, form, and style’, themes emerge from interpretations of the text with phenomenological meaning. Often writing, an essential feature of hermeneutics, bonds and unites the researcher with her life world; it may also distance her. It is both abstracting and concretising but it remains the core, important skill of a phenomenological researcher. The writing activity is of paramount importance to hermeneutic phenomenology, van Manen (1990) suggests; as such the particular research study aims to create a phenomenological text:

Writing is not just externalizing internal knowledge, rather it is the very act of making contact with the things of our world. In this sense to do research is to write, and the insights achieved depend on the right words and phrases, on styles, and traditions, on metaphor and figures of speech, on argument and poetic image. Even then writing can mean both insight and illusion (van Manen, 1990, p.237).

Drawing from him, I have made specific adaptations to write the phenomenological text, in a way that suits this research study. However, as I described in the earlier sections I ‘listened’ to the text, ‘read’ the text, and ‘wrote’ the text. This, I hoped, would open up human understanding and evoke “a sense of questioning wonder” as van Manen wrote (2002, p.5) in the reader. Further, it connects the reader by maintaining an oriented relation (van Manen, 1990). By doing so I as the researcher honoured my participants’ relationship with this research and found the whole process transforming within myself.

van Manen (1997) outlines five textual features to delineate how a phenomenological text speaks. A phenomenological text would pay particular attention to the expressive-mantic aspects – lived throughness, evocation, intensity, tone, epiphany (van Manen, 1997). The researcher authors the text that depicts and connects to the lived world with the five aspects. In writing the phenomenological text for this thesis I have considered two aspects – evocation and tone – to interpret the ‘being an educated woman’ phenomenon.

What are the necessities behind reading women's experiences through expressive-mantic dimensions? One is that this could be a "mediating method" through which we can read women's texts of life (Grumet, 1988, p.65). Another is that "the point of method is not to claim that, above others, there is one correct or superior mode of inquiry to discover and ascertain the truth or the true meaning of something" (van Manen, 1997, p.346). Being aware that there is no one single recipe to read women's life texts this mediating method could only "hope to become sensitive to some of the principles that may guide" (van Manen, 1997, p.346) my inquiry. The necessity is also that to read women's texts of life we require a space, a space that is totally clear, unoccupied, non-littered. Our space for viewing the texts to recognise the meaning of how the text is speaking we need to bracket out – only to come closer to that meaning by feeling the text as deeply as possible. The strands that draw us closer and closer towards that meaning are our everyday life's evocations and tones. These strands, used to interpret women's texts, make it possible to apply phenomenology as a reflective method not as a philosophically rigorous scientific method, thus making this an effective method for the study of women's everyday life experiences.

4.7.1 Evocations

We travel in our space together to view those experiences that stir us from within, that transform us, that teach us. As humans we need evocations, intensified moments and tones to guide us further and further. "Evocation calls forth, or brings to immediate presence, images and sensibilities that are so crisp and real that they in turn evoke reflective responses such as wondering, questioning, or understanding" (van Manen, 1997, pp.353-354). Each woman participant of this study is also viewing herself in that space locating herself with a dialogic narrative with herself, the researcher, the research moment, and feeling the webs of her life's interlocution (Benhabib 1999) with certain intensities, emotions and underlying tones in her narratives. When she re-lives a particular turning point of her life or reflects upon a certain person of her life, or a moment her facial expressions and the body language evoke certain images, sensibilities, which do raise questions. These are questions of wonder not only in the researcher's mind but also in the participant's mind that gives out a newer understanding of the same experience lived a long time ago, or a newer approach, an

outlook, a resolution to an event or towards a relationship or to her self. Sometimes evocations can also turn into metaphors evoking a vivid association, making new sense out of the already existing meaning.

4.7.2 Textual tones

Van Manen (1997, p.362) deliberates on the nature of a text's tone.

... on closer inspection what we see in a face or what we find present in a text is less the outward particularities than the dawning experience of recognition that the external appearance makes possible. This dawning of meaning due to the special textual appearance is the tone of the text. ... Of course, the experience of dawning of meaning can involve an entire sentence, a phrase, a passage, a stanza, or an entire poem or story.

The tones of such dialogues are presented within the texts of each woman's experiences; as such, as we read the texts, tones speak to us with a deeper meaning, "making an edifying appeal to the self of the reader" bringing a transformative effect (van Manen, 1997, p.365). In this sense my aim in this thesis is to attempt a phenomenological interpretation to understand women's experiences. During the process of interpretation I came to realise that the framework of interpreting lived experiences as being an educated myself was more useful than the structural interpretive model suggested by van Manen (1990). However, I did make my best effort to recognise the already existing meaning in the women's texts and interpret them within their contexts of evocation and tones.

4.7.3 Interpreting and writing the text

In Chapter 6, I have interpreted the experiences of 'being an educated woman' under the image of 'being an ideal' that was constructed by the participants. In using the term 'ideal' for synthesising the ten women's experiences, I am grateful to Jane Roland Martin's philosophical analysis of women's exclusion in theoretical constructions of education (1985; 1991). Although the participants of this research claimed that being an educated woman was their preferred 'ideal', they themselves, and at later stages my interpretation, challenged this 'ideal' image. The following paragraphs make this clearer.

Keeping my focus on interpreting the experience texts by merging the first and second order themes I entered the third level interpretation. Thus in Chapter 6 I bring together what the participants described as their experience of being an educated woman. I combine the two levels of themes and discuss them under the title ‘being the confident ideal.’ In part this also acts as a response to the popular myth, and sometimes a perception that an educated woman is an ideal, a confident woman. I examine these in the light of comparing and contrasting the individual texts, finally drawing out the conflictual experience of being the confident ideal vs living the social/traditional ideal. This responds to the illuminated evocations and tones of their texts. This recognises the experience of being an educated woman within her own conflicts and contradictions.

4.7.4 The phenomenological theme

I returned to Bangalore in 2005 with the intention of conducting the final, half-an-hour interviews with the participants to share what I had identified in their texts and sub-texts, and also, to check with them my interpretations on their insider perspectives, voice and my analysis as both an insider/outsider. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7. Although I tried to contact all the nine participants, I could only talk to seven of them. Four of the participants – Deepa, Nirmala, Rani and Kavitha – agreed to the identification of sub-texts, my interpretation of their insights, voice and my further analysis. Two other participants – Ganga and Shubha – did not wish to discuss their experiences any further. Lastly, though I met Mani in her home she treated it as a personal visit. I could not have another brief interview with her.

In many research studies participants’ voices seek, they tell, they become to be and they teach – the voices that were unheard before, hidden and unlocated. As Maxine Greene says (1991, p.xi), “it may be that education can only take place when we can be the friends of one another’s minds.” The interpreted themes, in this study, register the participants’ voices of acceptance, resistance, dissidence and recognition of difference in women’s lives, bringing to focus their everyday confrontation and contestations. All the nine women participants of this study felt that the two interviews were an educative experience; that they really could re-visit many turning points of their life. Otherwise normally as they said *when and how can we ask about ourselves? Where is the time,*

where is the space? Who listens to us in this male-dominated society? At least four of the women said they felt a relief after sharing their experiences (Riessman, 2000a; 2005); that they felt special.

Anderson (2001) asks of researchers, who are exploring human experience, to slow down and attend to the subtle whispers/conversations that are beyond the normal human vocal ability. Here are the hidden, unspoken words and meanings. Among the voiceless and powerless people it is the subaltern speaking (Spivak, 1996). Following Anderson (2001), I stopped, reflected and tried to 'listen'; I tried to interpret what I heard in that conflictual space in the nine women's experiences and in my own. This final, phenomenological interpretation which identifies the already existing meaning in 'being an educated woman' experiences is discussed in the final chapter.

4.8 Conclusion

Researching human lives is also a rich process of "collective self-education for change" (Joyappa & Self, 1996). My heroic attempt, in this thesis, is employing a different theoretical framework to explore women's voices, stepping aside from existing theories. Hence my attempt is to begin my inquiry in the everyday/everynight realities of women's experiences; problematising, not institutions or structures or systems but the gaps in listening to women's voices that may reveal different stories about life engulfing them.¹ The concern of this research is to explicate women's knowing of their educated being and also to formalise my exploration in the academic knowledge world, reiterating the known by knowing more about it in depth, the understanding of which will fill the gap in that formal knowledge. There is a strong possibility that there may be new levels of interpretation, without strictly following the category of being only 'human' or locating ourselves only within feminism. This necessitates a new dialogue, use of fresh terms to understand women's experiences. Hence this research has chosen to employ hermeneutics/interpretive phenomenology.

In this chapter I have outlined briefly the philosophical foundations of phenomenology, the place of language in the phenomenological understanding of human experience, how hermeneutics can be linked to study women's lived experience and how I have used

interpretive phenomenology in this research. Further I narrated how I formulated the research question, selection of my research participants and a brief profile of the ten participants. While explaining the research process I narrated how I conducted the interviews, the tensions involved in that process, my reflections related to the taped interviews, transcription and translation and my repeated attempts to listen to the women's experiences on the tapes and from the transcript texts. I described how I arrived at the themes through layers of interpretation and then I narrated how I was going to write the text of 'being an educated woman' experience. The next chapter outlines the ten women participants' experiences of 'being an educated woman.' Incorporated with their experience texts are my 'bracketed' reflections.

¹ I have slightly adapted Dorothy Smith's expression here. Smith insists upon women's standpoint to question male knowledge and must demand a sociological interrogation. Smith (2000, p.1147) while noting the importance of beginning from the everyday/everynight experiences, calls for problematizing the institutions, systems and structures, in other words the life webs that surround women.

Chapter 5

Experiences of being educated

“A woman’s intelligence is below her knees”

“A learned woman is treasure for a family”

(Indian proverbs)

‘ ... To be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocation; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed; in turn, it is learning how to address others. Of course, we never really “insert” ourselves but rather are thrown into these webs of interlocation, in the Heideggerian sense of *Geworfenheit*’

(Benhabib, 1999, p.344).

5.1 Introducing the experiences

This chapter presents the experiences of ten women of ‘being an educated woman.’ They are present here as a voice, in the form of a storyline, a narrative, a dialogue and through their texts of life. I as the researcher have both co-constructed and re-constructed their experiences as texts to share with the reader/s. The experiences are relived through these texts. They represent the multiple dimensions of each participant’s life re-visited temporally and episodically. Their experiences have been interpreted in three levels. The first level, appearing immediately after the text or texts, highlights the emerging thematic areas at this stage leading to the next levels of interpretation. The second and the third level interpretations draw together these thematic areas, illuminate the layers of experience and layers of interpretations. These two levels of interpretation discuss three main themes presented in Chapter 6.

I am presenting the experiences of Kanaka, Ganga, Vinoda, Mani, Kavitha, Rani, Shubha, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinathe with selected text captions that capture their experiences.

Kanaka

What you study cannot be applied successfully in life. Not all of it.
We women construct our worlds within four walls.
Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very less for us.
Immense satisfaction for myself, and my service to the people. I am very happy.
No, I have not been able to be what I wanted to be.

Ganga

Only through education we could go forward in life.
Education has been useful. It gave me peace of mind.
Patience: the quality of an educated woman.

Vinoda

My values come from my childhood experiences.
I am confident with my position.
Whatever is the destiny that will happen, so I keep myself light-hearted.
Education paves the way for women to live.

Mani

My values come from my childhood experiences.
My home environment lacked motivation for education.
I don't know what exactly I learnt or got from education.
Shankar has influenced me more than my education.

Kavitha

I was not confident even after a bachelor's degree. I lacked experience.
I get the picture that I am not a shy, timid girl now.
It is important for girls to feel they are educated.
I have to get married due to this society's pressure too.

Rani

I am confident and proud.
I can't hurt my family just because I am highly educated.

A woman's failure in life comes only if she is not married.
I welcome certain changes, not all.

Shubha

That discipline, commitment came from my schooling days... shaped my values.
... a new world of experiences. Lots of questions and answers were interwoven.
Education is my base to progress my thoughts and thinking.
Being an educated woman means being confident.

Nirmala

What do you call education as?
Linked to my job, job to a good husband, then good life.
Me, an educated person? ... just for namesake. I am becoming educated now.
Experience wise I think I am better educated now.

Deepa

I feel happy ... wherever I go, I can manage things confidently.
It is not like those subjects didn't give me any kind of knowledge or they gave me
full knowledge.
I am trying to give my son good values.
Being educated depends on what level of education, how they apply.
It is very special, talking only about myself, having this kind of special space.

Vinathe

I have had a different parental approach in my upbringing.
I took a long time to understand the realities of this world.
I keep my container open, I like the little rain drops falling in.

Kanaka

We women construct our worlds within four walls ...

Kanaka

I have known Kanaka for more than two decades now, most of the times hearing about her and her family through relatives. Kanaka was one of the 30 women whom I contacted, inviting them to become participants of my study, on my arrival in Bangalore city in 2003. I talked to her over the phone. When I explained the research topic to her, she expressed enthusiasm and promised to participate. She said she would tell her experience story like an open book. We decided to meet on March 16th for the first interview. She asked me to go to her house.

Her children were excited to see me, especially her two grown up girls, as I was living abroad. They asked all sorts of questions about my life in Australia, and about the country itself. When we were conversing two neighbours came to visit them. They stayed back, for an extra half an hour, showing interest in how I looked and talked, and also what was being discussed about Australia. Kanaka's school-going son kept looking at my short hair style. As evening came by, Kanaka gently asked her husband and children not to disturb us until she signalled to them. She put her eldest daughter in charge of the house while she was with me for the interview. We went upstairs to the terrace to a cool breeze avoiding the summer heat. Our conversation lasted for about two and a half hours.

Kanaka said she might not be available to meet me for the second interview. It was summer holidays, personal engagements such as arranging marriage alliances for her eldest daughter and dealing with her husband's illness. I asked Kanaka if she could write down more on her experiences of being an educated woman and gave her a few lead questions as examples. I requested her to write as much as possible, not limiting herself to a few pages. She took interest and time to write, wrote the response dated 26th April, 2003. I treated her written responses as the data of our second interview.

See what you study cannot be applied successfully in life. Not all of it.

Kanaka smiles when I ask her to tell me what is her experience of being an educated woman. She begins her narrative giving me a picture of her childhood, her family, her school days and aspects that were involved in her school and college education. While doing this she draws connections, associations between how she was affected by certain events, certain people, and her experiences of education. She says they are important connections to her experiences of being an adult, educated woman.

From a very early age Kanaka's parents told their children that education was important. Even more important for girls, to get a job and thereby to gain financial independence. In her school days she dreamt of doing something worthwhile. She loved music. Even though she wanted to study science in her undergraduate courses, she followed her mother's directions of studying for a B.A. degree. She thinks women in Indian society have several obstacles to achieve their dreams. Family and social pressures are telling strongly, upon her.

I think we are lucky when compared to our parents. They had a hard time in their lives. Their education was limited. Father did his SSLC and mother at that time did pass VII Class. But they always said, one has to get education, and a job and earn one's own living. So they believed giving education to their daughters. And said it was important for girls. This was always there in the air and in everybody's head. When I was going to school, you know during school functions, when we had eminent guests, I used to think that I also should get higher education, go up to their level, do something worthwhile. You know what to tell really, when we take this Indian woman's situation, take me for example and my experience, this economic situation of a woman becomes a huge obstacle in her life for her progress. This is one; and the other is everybody including parents, when the daughters go out of the family, step outside... leave today's society aside. It is different now. But then during my period, 1960s, 70s and up to the 80s, the then society was like that – girls should not go outside. Even catching a bus and going to the college was considered a taboo. Even my mother used to express that.

My school education was very good. I enjoyed it very much. Studied the usual subjects like science, maths, social studies, languages and drawing, music. Then pre-university also was good. But when it came to the degree enrolment, my parents hesitated a lot to enrol me in a co-education college. In my case, I wanted to study science very much. But my mother said girls should study only the arts subjects. So let Kanaka do a B.A. degree. I wanted to do a B.Sc. degree... even now I have grievances about this, dissatisfaction. When I think of this I feel sad even now. I wanted to study science and achieve something. And I loved music. I wanted to study music. I participated very well in the competitions in school, college; and wanted to continue in music field also. But then, it was not realised.

I have two sisters; the younger sister is now 40 and the youngest is now 37. Both are teachers. They watched me and my life; and learnt from my case. So they got a bit more, higher education, and fixed their lives themselves. They learnt from my suffering. They saw what happened to their elder sister and didn't want to undergo a similar experience. They chose their life conditions. First one got her BA, B.Ed. degrees. She selected her life partner; she set the criteria for that boy and chose him as her husband because she saw my case. She is good, strategic. Why didn't that happen in my life?

I was the eldest in the family; may be I lacked my own thinking ability. My parents were different with me. Their influence on me was greater than on the other two girls. They said the first things to this first girl. So it got fixed in my mind. From my childhood I got this feeling in which I believed strongly that whatever I wished for, I won't get it; my desires would never be fulfilled. The circumstances and my personal experiences were like that. Do you understand this subtle feeling? So even today I don't ask for anything even with my husband. I don't ask anybody... so mostly it has been like that. I never ask for anything, never oppose anything; just accept everything. All my life, it is like this.

And another reason is that if I say something, oppose somebody that ruins the mental peace; so why that? Why ruin mental peace?

(Kanaka appears to be very responsible towards her family and her **roles** within her family. She is sharing her feeling of being responsive to family needs, family members, parents' feelings, being a role model, and being sensitive towards family conditions. She believes in and is living the expectations of sacrifice, **compromise** and **acceptance**.)

Kanaka remembers during her school days studying languages and her readings outside the syllabus influenced her thinking, besides some of her teachers. She talks about them with enthusiasm and good recollection. However, she concludes that what women study in their academic life they cannot apply that practically to their life situations. She thinks the life realities are different.

School subjects? Subjects... Kannada language and grammar – I liked grammar very much - and what I read because of my language ability... these had a good influence on me and my thinking. See what you study cannot be applied successfully in life. Not all of it. Whatever you study in the curriculum in the school and college may influence your mind and set you thinking. This, we may apply in our work; that too if we have opportunities of doing so. But in practical life they may not have much influence. But what if we don't get opportunities at all? Then realities are different...

Going back to school again, in my high school I had this teacher who taught English language grammar so very well that made me like it so much; today when I take English classes in the school, I remember her. And then I had another teacher who taught us Biology; a very good teacher. And then this master who taught Mathematics so effectively that even today when I teach simultaneous equation, I remember him as I learnt this from him. In my primary school this particular teacher who taught me in my I, II and III classes; she has a great influence on me. If I am a teacher today probably it is because of her influence as a teacher. Yes, very much.

... as I said before there was some influence from the subjects. But in my case it is more teachers. That teacher taught me the map-reading. I remember those days quite vividly. I had shifted from Kannada medium to English medium when I came to VIII Class. She was teaching the continents. But I didn't even know the English spelling for these names; you know, English was just a subject that I had studied in my upper middle school level, otherwise I didn't know the language. So my spellings were all wrong. She used to very patiently correct me, the whole class... see these influences are strong.

Umm, subject's influence on my personality... it was Kannada language. Because I came to know that language well, I could read well; so I read a lot and discovered many things through that language ability. But once again, I have to say here that more than the subjects themselves, it was my teachers who influence me and my personality. Yes, that it true, my teachers. Even today I remember them, I recall my interactions, what and how I learnt... they showed us many paths, they led us... they taught us how girls should be...

I studied in a girls' high school. They used to encourage us girls so much by saying we girls should oppose the domination; we should stand up ourselves; participate boldly in debates, competitions etc; collect the information and speak out etc. We learnt a lot.

In my college, pre-university, again my Kannada teacher influenced me a lot. I studied sociology, history, economics and political science. This PS was dear to me, I liked it very much. Constitution, the laws and the governance...

I didn't benefit in any way, it didn't help me (laughs). Just for knowledge sake, that's all. Nothing changed in my status as a woman. But I liked the subject very much. During my degree, I studied in a co-ed college; my family was very orthodox. And I didn't have many friends. Only one friend I had. Then when I came to final year degree, I got four or five friends having my kind of mentality. My kind of similar orthodox background. Our thinking pattern was also the same – the same submissive thinking hidden inside our brains. So, nothing better or exciting than this.

V- So after all these five years of that subject and during your studies, did you feel any change in yourself or life...?

No, I didn't feel anything. Just that the subject was very interesting. What was more interesting in that subject was getting to know about other countries... like America, Britain, European nations... it was very exciting... I used to borrow books from our college library and read a lot ... it sounds so odd now (laughs loudly). But then, I never applied anything from that subject to my life, I couldn't... or it didn't help me in my life realities.

(Subjects, teachers, friends, learning atmosphere. But the end feeling is nothing actually changes a girl's life that is **controlled** by others. Some teachers had a strong influence. She is using them in her teacher's role today. But the subjects didn't help. The feeling is what is the use, you can't apply them in real life. There is a **tension**. It didn't help her much in her life. Gaining formal knowledge did not help much in her personal life.)

We women construct our worlds within four walls ...

Then she moves on to the next important phase of her life, revealing important milestones and episodes. She got married. She moved to her mother-in-law's family after her marriage, became unhappy there in many ways. She did not get support to realise her dreams in their family, she recalls. Her mother-in-law forced her to resign from her teacher's job, which she loved. They wanted her to stay home. As she had learnt to keep her desires and ambitions suppressed from her childhood, she continued this into her married life also when she realised that her husband was not supportive towards her. She learnt to be silent soon after her marriage and again when her first daughter was born as she was conscious that bearing a daughter was a lifelong burden. She feared that if she found her voice and talked, her daughters would suffer in the family and the larger society; that she would be held responsible if her daughters' future life was affected. She says a woman's life is controlled that way.

After this I got married. I mean after my B.A. degree. I didn't get any kind of support from my mother-in-law's family. I am very unlucky when it comes to that matter including my husband's support. So my talent stopped there, my dreams gone... and when my daughter was born it all stopped completely. I got married at the age of 21 years and she was born when I was 22.

It was an arranged marriage. I never had the faintest imagination for marriage. It was such an innocent age. I was least prepared for my marriage. No thoughts, no imagination. So as they say blindly it was fate's intervention, I and this man had to be a couple... that way. So I got married to this man. And I never got support

from my husband. I was very upset, felt terrible. Life got miserable, a lot of mental torture and harassment.

Actually when I completed my degree, I started working as a teacher in a convent. I wanted to continue. I loved it. But when this marriage proposal came, they said I had to give up my job, never work or have a career. In fact I was quite surprised when this proposal came up... they were financially well off, we were lower income people... They wanted a non-working girl, to be at home, to look after my sick mother-in-law. They wanted a homely, obedient girl. For me the feeling that I was working, as a teacher, that satisfaction was great. I loved to be a teacher. April 10 was the last working day at school. My mother-in-law said 'resign the job before you come home today.' I wept a lot when I resigned my job. My husband was not sympathetic or supportive. He has never been supportive. In any matter.

... The reason why I am telling you all this is you see, how the woman is put under these conditions regardless of her education; such are life's realities. Then, it took me almost more than two years to re-adjust to my mother-in-law's family environment. I was there in their house, as a house-wife; trying hard to adjust to alter my ways, to change myself for them.

See, that is only one way of thinking, this educated woman's picture and that talk. Here I was with a daughter. I was an educated woman there, but what was its use in my situation? I placed her first in my world. If I took one bad opposing step then I was sure it would affect my daughter drastically. The step that I take... see my parents' step influenced my life... my step would influence my daughter and her life. So I didn't want that to happen... nothing should go wrong with my daughter's life. So I learnt to keep quiet. No support from anybody... not parents, not in-laws. I suffered. No, I didn't get any support either from my husband or from anybody else. He was supportive of his mother.

No, I have never got anything even when I have opposed... no., not even when I asked for something.

V- Could you give an example, like when was that?

My marriage. My wish that was expressed to my husband in the beginning of our married life itself... that I wanted to work. I wanted to continue as a teacher. But he said no, that they wanted a girl to be a housewife; to obey them and their words; to look after his mother; that was the reason why they chose a girl from a poorer family; because they thought the girl from a poorer family would obey them without a word or opinion; so he insisted that I obey him and his mother at any cost; so quit the job. Where was my word? He said he got many marriage offers from financially well off, rich families; but they didn't want those because they thought a girl from lower middle class family with a weak financial condition would obey them. That was their plan and feeling. And they got me, a victim. People like us, scapegoats, so this system continues. So no opposition, no opinion, no individuality. I had got it in my mind by that time that by opposing I would invite more problems and how do I face these new problems. At least the

problems that I was having could be solved by my silence, they could be solved then and there by that way. Life at least moves on that way. So I kept silent; I learnt that. And it continued. My mentality is also like that, I can't oppose even now. Now for example in my children's case also I don't say no to them in most matters. See, when they say Mummy, it can't be done that way, no, I can't... then I think yes, they could be right. I don't say no, you are wrong... See the things that I faced by my silence, they don't have to follow my example. So I don't prevent them. I let them express their viewpoints. For example my daughter when she got this job I said to her, look, don't accept this job, in the call centre, and a night shift. In our society people talk hundred things about a girl. But she insisted that she wanted to take up the job. Then I said yes. See? She should not experience the same thing that I experienced in my life.

See, this is the only thing from my education that is being used now. (laughs). That's all I have to say about me being educated. What more do you want to ask about my education and its experience?

(Kanakan is telling me little stories of her life with a smile on her face. Sometimes I feel the need to respond in some way. I smile back, nod my head resonating her emotions, occasionally feelings cross my face. But with some mental exercises I do not say anything that puts those feelings in words. I only ask questions to continue the threads that are weaving the experiences together. To me, while I am listening to her, Kanakan's acceptance to live by social expectations and fulfilling family roles reveals a deeper side of awareness with a suppressed rejection. She has come across several **turning points** at the time of her marriage and afterwards. She has forced herself to give up her dreams and choices. Again **tension**. Wanting, not wanting, accepting, rejecting, compromising, adjusting, giving up, sacrificing. Feeling her self, being there for **others**. A big **contradiction**. I ask myself if this is a woman's experience, regardless of her education or if this is an educated woman's experience.)

Kanakan continues. She says women construct their worlds within the four walls of their house, around their family. Indian women, especially, have their confined boundaries. They are born into them, their parents construct more walls around them and later they themselves continue these restrictions to maintain their family's peace and well-being. Their family roles become prominent in their lives more than their self. Parental attitudes towards girls' education are also discriminating, she feels. They prefer to marry her off sooner rather than give her higher education, and they do not value or acknowledge the significance of her education, she says.

We women construct our worlds within four walls of the house; anything outside this is the outside world or society. Even now parents bring up their children, speaking from my own experience, with the same attitude. Like transferring their experience. That same influence, from parents to children. Some small changes are there.

Another thing is that an Indian woman has her own boundaries. How do I express this to you? See, she has these limits. Within the family there is this peace of mind. If she has to keep this going, maintain this, she has to follow others. If at all she opposes anybody, mostly elders of the family, this family peace is ruined. So without opposing them, she tries to keep the peace; by following others; and slowly this becomes a practice in her life; throughout her life. She changes herself. Most of the time she is not her self. So this continues. This is the family woman of our society. This is my experience and my mentality. I had my restrictions that my parents set up for me as soon as I was born... then my own barriers... So I tend to think of a woman like this, confined and bounded by her circumstances. And another reason why she cannot apply her education fully to her life is when she becomes a mother. When she gets her child she has to sacrifice a lot. She has to discontinue her plans for herself. She may think that later she would pick up what she left behind; you know, making use of her education for a job, but it is never the same ... This is my experience.

But then there is a difference with girls' education. Parents don't have this feeling 'let my girl get higher education to find some meaning, let her achieve something'. No they don't have this attitude about her achievement. They say, even from my point of view, girls can get education at some level, up to some age; that is sufficient. Nobody likes her going outside that. Marrying her off is important. But this is different in a boy's case. Parents want him to get more education, even if he is below average, not interested in education, they want to push him, give donations, try hard for loans, to get him more opportunities and get him some higher education. This is what I have seen. See I am a school teacher, right? I see this happening everyday in the school. I am forced to participate in this process. As a teacher, as an educated person... as what else... I don't know?

(I am surprised when she tells me this. How smoothly, how calmly Kanaka is telling me a profound reality of women's lives. Her life and a lot of other women's too. **The boundaries.** I recognise the **tension**, the **turning point** and the struggle. Between acceptance and rejection of her roles, being conscious of her suffering yet **choosing to stand by the traditional values**; they direct a woman's life after she is married, for her family's welfare. Or does she choose them herself as a married woman and for her family? **Not for herself, but for others**... or subconsciously for herself too, besides for others... Is this the experience? I feel I need to think about this more later. Listening more to the tapes, reading more from the transcript. The most illuminating experience

seems to be her expression on women constructing and continuing their limitations. Why do they continue to abide by these barriers, these boundaries? Their education, knowledge, awareness, abilities, choices... what about these?)

Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very less for us...

What about knowledge, awareness, abilities, choices, decision-making capacity, strengths... learnt from your education? I ask Kanaka ... so what is your experience of being an educated woman? Kanaka replies, with a laugh, that Indian women can make use of their education only up to 50% level. That is her experience. She says it is a patriarchal society, hence women remain submissive even in the public domain of life. Of course she is submissive in her private life too. Even though she is educated, she may not be too liberal with her daughters; they have to remain traditional only with a little more space allowed in their dressing habits and so on. But the decisions about their life will be taken by their parents keeping in view the entire family's well-being.

According to me, in our India, how girls can use their degree or formal college education or you may call it higher education – this is from my experience, I am telling. A girl in our society can use or make use of her education only 50% in her life for various things... such as for herself. She can be an educated woman only some 50% as herself... you know what I mean... She can make complete use of her education only at the time of bringing up her children. Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very little for us... that is what I am as an educated woman!

. ... You know what? No, it is not used fully...Formally speaking, like you are asking, scientifically we can point out the benefits of education, how it helps, how it benefits... we can apply; but our real experience is different. Because mainly you see, we live in this society; our tradition, culture is still there. So we cannot go beyond this, can we? So we cannot apply our education completely. No we cannot apply fully.

And another reason is for financial benefit. Only to improve the financial conditions, girl's education is being made use of. Only for that reason. They say generally now, that women should be financially independent so that others don't dominate her. When she is working outside, earning, at least from my experience, there is a big difference between what she is doing in her job and what she studied in her education. I think that an educated woman in our society has still not experienced that complete equality. Because of the society, outside society is mainly a male-dominated society. So that equality is absent. We are living in this society...

To tell you honestly, what we learn in our education, we cannot apply everything to our life situations. We cannot apply that even in our own life. Even in our children, for their life, we cannot apply. We might be knowing about applying our education; but we cannot. Because you know we see the society. The social situations, life around us... those become the focus when we live, not our education. This is what I have experienced throughout my life after my bachelor's degree education.

My daughter... once again it is the question of our tradition and culture. See she can select her own life partner, we don't say no. But she has to choose from within our social, our cultural, our traditional frame, not from outside. Because I have grown up like this, my husband's preference and thinking is the same and well, it is in a way, again male-dominated environment. But then she also... is compromising.

Kanaka says if a girl wants to go forward in her life, she has to be supported by a male family member throughout her life. That is the society in which she is living. Even an educated woman needs a male's support if she wants to progress in life. The use of her education is expressed in how ably she fits into the social world.

If a girl wants to go forward in her life, she has to have her father's support, then husband's support, her in-law's family ... only then she can achieve something. It is so in our society. Even to go forward as an educated woman she needs males' support. Her identity comes through their support. So, how she fits into that social world is her use of her education. That is our society. You see my point? Her education helps her only up to that level, but that is also her whole life, you see. She cannot be totally an independent woman, even as educated.

Our society is difficult. We cannot go beyond these societal norms. So we have to adjust. We have to think that we are doing this for our family. I have to think for everybody's welfare here. See 90% of the economic support comes from him. My husband. So he is doing the major bit. That also is very important. I cannot neglect that, so I support him by doing the rest for the family... I join my hands with him; So if I understood these matters, things at home would become balanced. If a wife is good, if she is adjustable in nature, peace is maintained, harmony is there. These are important. Aren't they? This is my feeling and opinion. I am not sure if education has anything to do with all this, didn't our mothers manage all these well?

(Women can make use of their education **only 50 per cent of the time** in their life. What a strong, revealing statement! Family members', mainly a male's support is needed to progress in life. Is a woman's **role complementary**? Is it secondary? For family's welfare, peace, harmony. Only she understands that. Not sure how education contributes? What about the popular belief about education in India that it liberates a

human being? That it empowers one in all their abilities? Is it only for getting a better job, a better husband? Is that Kanaka's experience of being educated?)

Immense satisfaction for myself, and my service to the people... I am very happy.

So, I ask her again, the same question: So, what is it that you feel when you think of yourself as an educated woman? You know... what is the image you get of yourself? She takes me into another story of her life. She started feeling her talents and intellectual expressions again only after a decade of her marriage in the last few years of her mother-in-law's life. There were some changes in the family relationships and her position. She completed a bachelor's degree in Hindi language; later the couple moved out of the family house with their children. This changed her life qualitatively as she started working again. Kanaka says she could feel her self again. Her feelings of confidence and abilities returned with those positive changes in her life quality. She says she is very happy with immense satisfaction about her role as a teacher.

So, I continued to suppress myself for the next two years. And then I decided to focus my mind on something else. So I took the Hindi language higher exams. Between 1984 and 86, I completed Ratna Hindi exam. By that time, our financial conditions had improved, there was some settling down feeling. At the same time my younger brother-in-law got married. He selected his own colleague as his life partner. My co-sister was economically well off. They both earned well. And this my brother-in-law had seen how I was tortured mentally in his family. So he took some strategic steps to protect his wife so as not to get her in the same vicious circle. And then, my mother-in-law's mentality slightly changed towards me; she might have repented what she did to me. She realised that I was good; she repented. A lot. She changed completely. She became good and treated me well; She treated me like her own daughter afterwards; yes, she became good. That was 1986. I got my second daughter. I was happy.

By that time my husband also changed a bit. His mentality changed. He thought well of me; paid attention towards me as a person; saw how others treated me badly. He started treating me well. Then onwards, I started feeling alive again. I started realising that I was alive, I was there, the 'me' was still there. After nearly 10 years. There were slight changes in my life. By 1987 we both, husband and wife together, for the first time started thinking about our future. We felt that we should plan something for our life; thought about it seriously. Since when... from 1987 onwards, after we saw the togetherness of my brother-in-law and his wife... how they planned their life. My husband too felt it.

See even to talk to my husband heart to heart, counsel him it took me 12 years after our marriage...until that time I didn't have the confidence that my words said to him would bring out a good response from him, so I was silent. Even afterwards, after 12 years, opposing him means, not tit for tat kind of behaviour... slow, very gently... soft and nice... take for example our joint family problems at that time. I used to tell my husband look at your younger brother – his wife, they are economically well-off and stable. They get good respect from the society and at home also because of that economic position. They are able to get things that they want to. We have been married for 12 years and not achieved anything yet in terms of property, our own things, don't you feel anything about this? I used to share my own thoughts about my own family...whether he listened to me attentively, patiently or cursed me for my words, that is secondary. But he took 3 years to listen to these words. And it influenced him gradually.

So we thought about what and how, plans etc. Got to do something for our life. Then in 1989 we left the family house, that joint family., and went to live with our own children. From 1990, after my son was born, I started working as a teacher once again and am continuing even now. So back now to my aspirations, my dreams. I am working in a private school. So salary wise, money wise there is not much benefit. But that immense satisfaction for myself, and my service to the people... that is giving me so much happiness. Social service, mingling with children, we work for a cause, give them education, ... all these things, the service mind. I am very happy. This gave me so much satisfaction.

My education finally came to be of use here, through this kind of service. Economically, there is nothing.

As an educated woman, myself and my experience... umm... as I said before only 50% of my education came to be used in my life... much later. Speaking about education and its value itself, in our country India, education is still not realised in its true sense.

Our parental generation was different, conservative in thinking. Their thinking about education was something...But then in my generation probably because of what we have studied and what we have observed around us, we tend to think- oh, this is not right. We need not transfer the same socialization to our children. See, I start making use of my education here. Some broadmindedness if we consciously decide not to bring the same pressure...

So I am using my education for my children. Isn't this an educated woman's experience?

... Otherwise, if I have to tell you about my education and how I am living as an educated woman, it is only now, that too 50 per cent is being used when I am teaching in the school. But then, I also work hard for our family, struggle hard. But mostly this hard work doesn't count. You know why? It is not measured or evaluated in terms of this much time or money. When you are working outside, job-wise there is some time frame. And money paid for that time frame and service. Where is it within the family for the work I do? How does it count? So all

the work that I do goes unnoticed. Well, unrecognised because it is my family. I can't be an educated woman here!

Aha, you are asking me about my husband's daily schedule? You know they say one word to describe a man's involvement in the family – irresponsibility. But I feel even that word doesn't fully describe his attitude and behaviour. Yes, that is true. He gives the salary to wife and expects her to run the whole show herself, all alone. It is her duty to look after everything. And then he is free.

He gives most of his salary to me to run the family because he has few commitments like house loan etc. He realised in the early 1990s when we left the joint family to set up our own house that his wife's employment and the salary that she earns could be of tremendous help to the family. So whatever I earned thereafter was of so much use. Even a few hundred rupees...

I distribute the money for all the bills, expenditure, extra spending... you know I have to be all eyes, careful about money spending. I have to balance everything. Once he gives part of his salary to me, he doesn't enquire again what is happening. I keep the accounts. He doesn't even ask if that money was enough for that month; did I require more... No. He doesn't take any responsibility. So automatically for all the extra expenses, I would spend all my salary. Until now I have not saved a single rupee for myself. No, it is just not there. All the burdens, all the duties, responsibilities are mine. I carry everything on my shoulders. And I don't complain, I don't oppose anybody. It is my life. It has been like this. Until now our family cart is running okay. We don't know much about the future.

See, looking from your point of view how do I manage things? Yes, how do I cope? My education has given me this courage... indirectly it is helping me. It has instilled this confidence in me. Not directly. So I face everything.

(The changes in her life quality, with changed relationships and situations, created a scope in Kanaka's life to express herself as an educated woman. In her role as a teacher once again, Kanaka is confident and able. But again, only when she is a teacher at school does she believe her education is being used. Is this what she means? Her values seem not in agreement with the school management. **Contradiction?** Otherwise she is the same dutiful, responsible person in her family roles. Her work there doesn't count, she says. She manages everything alone. She thinks her education has given her courage and confidence, though indirectly. What is it... managing skills, coping abilities, efficiency, thinking that her income is only secondary but is of great value to the family... what is it... **is this the experience** of an educated woman? During the interview I asked her, alright, so... what have you got for yourself then...)

No, I have not been able to be what I wanted to be.

I ask her the question: have you been able to do what you have wanted to do? She laughs again. Looks at me and again laughs. I feel curious. What is she going to say? Kanaka underlines that formal education doesn't give much to girls/women in a male-dominated society. Nothing has changed from her times of being a young girl to this day of her daughters' times, herself being a mature age adult woman. She thinks formal education and obtaining a bachelor's degree, which is the minimum if parents are also educated to some level, is only for securing a job and a better husband. Even if the girl is more educated she is expected to fulfill her roles as a woman. So how does a girl experience her education? Kanaka says what is now called formal education is only literacy and basic knowledge in subjects like mathematics and science. Only if the girl is determined about using her education for her own growth, then education becomes a meaningful experience to her in some way and also valuable. She can achieve something, visible to others in the society. In public life. But, Kanaka asks, would the society like this, tolerate such a woman, making use of her formal education to develop herself with her own identity and sense of self?

See, I have been talking about me as an educated woman, about my life; all the time I am thinking of only one thing – that is if not for my education how else I could have got this balance, stamina and confidence. Okay, there are other factors also. Like what I didn't get in my childhood, what I couldn't have in my life all these days, my children should have them; they should not suffer like me. That feeling that my education may be helping me. But not directly. People may say that she is working and earning so things automatically move. No, my education is backing me for this confidence, this stamina. This is what I feel. I am an educated woman in this sense. To face all these, to manage a daily routine from 4 in the morning to 10 in the night, for years with children, and I don't have regrets; I don't have aches in the chest or feelings that I am the only one doing these things. I manage things with a smile; no hurt feelings that oh, it is only I that is slaving like this... I don't think I will ever get that feeling.

V-. Have you been able to achieve all that you wanted to achieve? In other words, have you been able to be what you wanted to be?

No, I have not been able to be what I wanted to be. No, nothing has happened. Not even a little. I had dreams of achieving something. When I was in college I used to think that I would achieve this; I would get a husband who thought like me; same mental set up; both would be complementary to each other; see, when I saw a pair, you know a husband and a wife who were working, I used to imagine

myself like that; both of us working, both of us achieving something in life; then we should have our own family. But then...when I got married...

When I realised what position I had in my mother-in-law's house, I decided to forget my dreams of achieving anything in my life. I told myself to forget my dreams; so I compromised in my life. Now, there is some satisfaction in this life for me. I must not lie about it; my husband, my children, my family... some good satisfaction.

I have the satisfaction that I brought the children up well... though I sacrificed, I think, I believe my welfare, my being is there in their well being. I am more or less convinced now that my life's goal is in that in helping my children reach that goal in their life. I have believed that this is my life. I am satisfied this way. This is my goal. I have believed in that.

Isn't this my life? This is my life. What other life can be there for me? If I strove for the happiness of the people around me, for their well-being, my happiness, my achievement is there, that is what I feel now.

... See, how it happens is like that. How and when do we start thinking broadly? Only when we are educated further on. Our education influences our thinking capacity a lot. You see my point? We develop our thinking capacity only because of our education. If we don't get education, then our thinking capacity is restricted. Thinking capacity, a better worldview, and to think what happens to the future, the plans... all these are because of our education. See, only then I think. So that thinking capacity, that broadmindedness came because of my education. I am an educated woman there!

(She is asking me isn't that her life... husband, children, caring, sacrificing, **her welfare** is in **their welfare**. Is it her life? Really? May be. May not be. I don't know. Kanaka's experiences of **confidence, courage, stamina, happiness, satisfaction** of being an educated woman are associated with managing her life efficiently, fulfilling role expectations. Is this the experience of being an educated woman? I recognise just then as I am reading her words on paper, probably for the third time or fourth, a tension showing up when she says she has not been able to do what she wanted to do. I can also feel in her feelings and words, a contradiction being opened up. May be this is her experience as an educated woman. **Turning points, tensions, insights, contradictions.**)

Epilogue

Kanaka's narrative on the experiences of being an educated woman constructs her life story. Of knowing, of being, of living, and of continuing. While she talks about herself

as an educated woman, Kanaka reflects upon her life, weaving the threads of feelings, events, changes and beliefs. All along are tensions, struggle, acceptance, rejection, contradiction, all interwoven, interconnected with each other in an ongoing journey. That is life, she says. Isn't life a work in progress, she asks.

By reading Kanaka's narratives from the transcripts I arrived at the major insights that describe her experiences. The quotes that I have chosen in the table below support these insights. They are in relation to her experience of living within confined boundaries, constructing her world within four walls, following the stereotype, the benefits from her education, and its application, gaining skills, confidence and balance and qualities. The insights which are her experiences also point to what Kanaka experienced as the social attitude towards girls' education, the influences upon her from her school and college years. These insights are also the emerging themes at this stage.

Attitude towards girls' education	I wanted to study science very much. But my mother said girls should study only the arts subjects. So let Kanaka do a B.A. degree. I wanted to do a B.Sc. degree... even now I have grievances about this, dissatisfaction. When I think of this I feel sad even now. I wanted to study science and achieve something. And I loved music. I wanted to study music. I participated very well in the competitions in school, college; and wanted to continue in music field also. But then, it was not realised.
Influences: Teachers	And then this master who taught Mathematics so effectively that even today when I teach simultaneous equation, I remember him as I learnt this from him. In my primary school this particular teacher who taught me in my I, II and III classes; she had a great influence on me. If I am a teacher today probably it is because of her influence as a teacher. Yes, very much.
Subjects	Umm, subject's influence on my personality... it was Kannada language. Because I came to know that language well, I could read well; so I read a lot and discovered many things through that language ability.
Marriage	It was an arranged marriage. I never had the faintest imagination for marriage. It was such an innocent age. I was least prepared for my marriage. No thoughts, no imagination. So as they say blindly it was fate's intervention, I and this boy had to be a couple... that way. So I got married. And I never got support from my husband. I was very upset, felt bad.
Learning about	Another thing is that Indian woman has her own boundaries... See,

boundaries Constructing my own restrictions Continuing those boundaries Following the stereotype	she has these limits. Within the family there is this peace of mind. If she has to keep this going, maintain this, she has to follow others. If at all she opposes anybody, mostly elders of the family this family peace is ruined. So without opposing them, she tries to keep up the peace; by following others; and slowly this becomes a practice in her life; throughout her life. She changes herself. So this continues. This is the family woman of our society. This is my experience and my mentality.
Educated woman, only half of the time ...	A girl in our society can use or make use of her education only 50% in her life for various things... another 50% for own... such as for herself. She can be an educated woman only some 50% for herself...
Financial benefits	Only to improve the financial conditions, girl's education is being made use of.
Something for others	... we can apply; but our real experience is different. Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very less for us... may be that is what I am as an educated woman!
Not for herself	No, I have not been able to be what I wanted to be. No, nothing has happened. Not even a little. I had dreams of achieving something. When I was in college I used to think that I would achieve this; I would get a husband who thought like me; same mental set up; both would be complementary to each other; But then...when I got married...
For her children's well-being	I have the satisfaction that I brought the children up well... though I sacrificed, I think, I believe my welfare, my being is there in their well being. I am more or less convinced now that my life's goal is in that – that is helping my children reach that shore in their life. I have believed that this is my life. I am satisfied this way. This is my goal. I have believed in that.
Satisfaction Happiness	I am working in a private school. So salary wise, money wise there is not much benefit. But that immense satisfaction for myself, and my service to the people... that is giving me so much happiness. Social service, mingling with children, we work for a cause, give them education, ... all these things, the service mind. I am very happy. This gave so much satisfaction.
Better skills with courage	But how do I cope up all this? My education has given me this courage... indirectly it is helping me. It has instilled this confidence in me. Not directly... So I face everything.
Having stamina, balance, confidence	...all the time I am thinking of only one thing – that is if not for my education how else I could have got this balance, stamina and confidence.
Broadminded	So that thinking capacity, that broadmindedness came because of my education. I am an educated woman there!

Ganga

Education has been useful. It gave me peace of mind.

Ganga

Bangalore city. March 2003. I was contacting friends to select participants for my study. A common friend introduced me to Ganga who lived in the same suburb that I was in. I took the address and went to her house to meet her in person. Ganga hesitated when I explained my research study and my invitation to university-educated women to be participants of the study. She asked for time to think it over. I called on her twice afterwards, to know if she would participate. On a third attempt Ganga said she would participate in the interviews; however, she stressed she was not knowledgeable in the topic and might not say much. She felt a bit nervous to talk about herself. She felt her words might be wrong. I said there was no wrong or right aspect here, it was only sharing her experiences. Everything was valid. I encouraged her to share her experiences as much as possible. First time she came over to my sister's house where I had set up a temporary office. She talked slowly, haltingly, often taking time to think. With long pauses. Measuring her words. For the second interview I had to contact her several times as it was school holidays. And they were constructing their own house. She was busy. After a few unsuccessful visits, I met her, asked her for an appointment. She asked me to go to her house for the second interview, only a day before she was leaving for her native place. She was going away for a few weeks. I felt lucky to have a second interview with her. Interviews were recorded on March 14 and May 1.

Only through education can we progress in life.

I explain the formalities. Ganga needs to sign the ethics forms. She confirms with me that it would all be safely guarded. I try to make it comfortable for her. Then I ask her my question: Tell me about yourself. In what ways do you feel yourself as an educated woman? Ganga asks if she can start from the beginning of her early childhood. I say yes, why not. She begins her narrative by describing her parental family, her childhood days.

Ganga says when she was young the elders in her family told the children what education would give them in terms of a job, materials and then a good life. They did

not show much interest in their educational opportunities, but gave them ‘good culture and tradition which is being followed even now.’

When we were young, elders in the family used to say that education gets us prosperity. In our family, my father was not happy that he got only daughters, that there were three of us. He used to share this feeling with the neighbours, he felt it was a burden. When we listened to him, we used to feel sad about ourselves... like how are we going to live in our future, what is there for us... we were a bit scared of the future too as we were poor. We three girls studied well in the school. I used to tell my younger sister that she should not be stubborn, pay more attention to her studies if she wanted a better future. So we had this goal that only through our education we could progress in life. I actually had to concentrate more than the others did, because things wouldn't enter my head at the first go. I used to struggle, do hard work, studying all morning and night... I had to pass the exams. My eldest cousin brother helped us a lot with finances as he was already in a teacher's job... they, the cousin brothers encouraged us a lot... they guided us in our higher education, what will be beneficial to our life like getting jobs.

I was aware that people from our surroundings got government jobs only through their education. At that time Posts & Telegraph Department used to employ a lot of people; so we used to think, look at them, they passed exams, college, got good jobs now and are progressing well in life and we all must do the same. So they were our role models.

Ganga says parents of their joint family tried to stop their elder girls (one was a cousin) from enrolling in college education, fearing that finding husbands for the college educated girls would be hard. Ganga is proud of her family that all of them are employed today and most are teachers. All the girls developed a purpose for their future – to study well, get a government job.

My two sisters, my own and my cousin sister are like 10 years older than me. They were not allowed to go to college. They prevented these two from college education because they were afraid that they won't be able to get educated husbands for them. But my cousin sister was strong, she went ahead and did her graduation. Later she went ahead and did her Teachers' Training course, she became a teacher. My sister also graduated. Overall there was no encouragement for their education. The elders, you know my parents and my uncle, always said no to these older girls. And they were beaten up also when the girls were stubborn about going to school. Even 10 rupees were like 100 rupees as there was poverty. My sister got a job in the Posts & Telegraph Department in Bangalore. Everybody is employed including my sisters-in-law. Most of them are teachers.

Our parents were never interested in girls' education. They didn't even tell us education was important for girls, they gave importance to boys' education. They sent them to college, took care of their future. But then, they also feared the

society's comments about girls having higher education. Like if somebody said bad things about our girls, their future like marriage may be in trouble, they themselves may commit suicide ... So they didn't want girls to go to college in a strange place. Like you know, bad behaviour from the society, bad boys, ragging... girls are delicate and society treated them very traditionally. Fingers were easily pointed at the girls, many superstitions about girls, their education, hardships in their marriages, finding bridegrooms, education gives girls a voice, they may demand a better groom... So their attitude was to give some schooling to the girls, get them married to somebody that's all.

When I was growing up, my two cousin brothers got jobs, there was an improvement in the family overall. So they said to me you study whatever you want to study and helped me a little. But not a particular direction or particular guidance. I just continued on my own, selected that teacher's training education subjects in Pre-university course. But at least I was not discouraged by anybody. Elders kept quiet because my cousin brothers were helping financially and they said times are changing. Only to me and my younger sister.

I selected the subjects myself. We selected something within our limits. Easy and useful, a closer college. There wasn't much planning. But I chose the teacher's training course as a teacher's job is always in demand as we need teachers to teach children everywhere. So I chose that area. I was not very interested in other courses. I advised my sister also to do the same. I did the admissions for her, took interest to get her everything needed for that course like applications etc. She is a government teacher in Bangalore like me. Married and has two children. Another reason for choosing this teacher's course is that as a Brahman, I could get the job easily. Because Brahmans are general category people in the government caste list, it is very hard to get other jobs. But here in the teaching area, with the Teachers' Training certificate if you get good points under the general merit category then there is a good chance of getting the job as only in this job area govt. goes according to the merit, without much push for the caste reservation. So I thought I might get the job in the teaching area easily.

(The message I was getting from Ganga was that only their education would get them a government job. Education alleviates their impoverished economic condition. Brahman caste, so teacher's job preferred. Girls' education was not encouraged. Social expectations. Perceived **goal of education** was to get a **government job**.)

Ganga talks about parental and social attitude about girls' education giving an example from her own life and the current picture that she describes as a teacher.

It was a joint family. Both mothers were housewives, looked after cooking and house work. We youngsters returned from the school, played a bit too much outdoors and helped a little in the harvest season like serving the employed coolies with tea. Sometimes we were asked to keep a watch on the harvest in the

season. But we carried our books to the fields to study. Our cousin brothers would return from their work and join us in the field work.. Girls were always given domestic work, like home-related work, considered as girls' work. There were superstitions too surrounding us, a lot related to females' life. And we were to keep them up. And there were always comments about us girls getting education, going to college, higher education... general comments were why does a girl require higher education? It's better to get her married, why spend on her, it is extra spending... Girls' education was considered a waste of money. But we were also a bit strong, competing against the boys in the family and getting college education.

I am working in a government school in a semi-rural area. Most parents are uneducated; almost all the mothers are uneducated. So these children just come to school, that's all, without any motivation or encouragement from their parents. Mothers are also working, fathers are drunkards. Mothers train their daughters in domestic work, as they themselves have to work from early morning. These daughters baby-sit their younger siblings. Overall their family background is not good, no sense of hygiene, cleanliness, no knowledge about diseases, no plans for future... So children suffer. We teachers educate children and also parents; but most of them don't attend our meetings. Government has made it compulsory that children in the age group of 6 to 14 must be enrolled in school; so every Monday we pay home visits to check on children, enrolment, child labourers. And we pay special attention for girls' enrolment.

Now actually more attention is being given to girls' education. However, parents still show lack of interest in education. That general apathy is continuing. So we get only the very low income category people like coolies' children in our schools. It is tough for us to deal with the parents. After Class VII, usually girl children drop out of school and take up garment factory jobs for a bit of money. Factory labour work... Because parents are unable to continue their education by paying fees. Boys drop out and become petty shop attenders, garage workers, factory workers. With a lot of encouragement, now the percentage is increased at the Secondary School Leaving Certificate level. Even then only some 10% pass the SSLC exams.

(Ganga sounds sensitive towards girls' education and the issues that are related. It shows her awareness and positive attitude towards girls' education. The general apathy, lack of support and encouragement... she is glad that girls from her own family worked their way towards higher education and obtaining jobs. However is girls' education meant only for economic prosperity? What does Ganga really expect her girl students to achieve in life? How do they nurture their **identity**?)

She describes her experiences with the school curriculum, influence of subjects.

We used to like the subjects as everybody did. But there was not much focus on education then. As my mother was not educated, she never placed importance on our education or encouraged us to study. And it was a village school, so there was more outdoor playing than school studies. Nobody was serious. But we all did well in school, exams and progressed naturally into higher classes. No stress, it was easy and nice.

In school, subjects like science from the primary school are useful. Like nutrition for example, teachers used to tell us about it, our food, diet, nutrition and we got knowledge about our own food habits. We shared this with our parents too. Maths also, was generally useful in life. In Social Studies... what to say? (long pause)... have forgotten... history, civics, geography, continents, people, countries. What else was there? In Civics there was Constitution, rights... Houses, ministers, governance, citizens.... In college, for my Bachelors degree, I studied on my own without any coaching as I was an external student. History was okay, just with the text books and reference books. These main subjects are useful to me as I am a teacher; I can give extra information to the children in school and my own at home. I am actually fond of Maths more than other subjects. I remember Maths that I studied in school. So I give school children an extra push. And also tutor my children better.

Besides history I had political science and languages in my bachelor's degree. It was not that easy. I have almost forgotten what I studied in political science... three years for my degree. Something was there...some arguments... I am out of touch. More than ten years. Whatever you study in school at a young age remains with you. That is more in my memory than what I studied in college.

(Ganga recognises the retention of **subject knowledge** that she gained in school. She doesn't have much use for the subjects that she studied in college. She is carrying on with her liking for Maths subject by paying special attention to it while she is teaching at school and tutoring her children at home. Her words indicate her interest in her career with a commitment to educating girls to education for a job and to help her children.)

Education has been useful. It gave me peace of mind.

I ask her what does she feel about herself as an educated woman. Ganga feels her education got her a good life as it gave her a job, economic security. With these, she says, she developed better as a person having confidence.

First of all, from my education I have been able to stand on my own legs; independently. That gave me confidence. I studied well, I got a good job. One requires everything else also in this society to be successful. But because I studied well, and got qualifications, I got a better job and am not financially dependent.

Job gives me money. And then we can participate in our children's life. Because of education I got this teachers job which is satisfying to me as it gives peace of mind. Then education helped me economically. I can lead a good life, with my family, without problems.

May be it is helping me reach my goals... I wanted to become a teacher, and did those relevant subjects, that is my education, and because of that education I got this teachers' post. So I reached my goal. What else? All I can think of is self-reliance and independence in economic matters. I don't know what else to say (long pause).

Through education families improve. They say that educated woman is an asset to the family. So an educated woman can bring up the family well, educate her children better. Make them good citizens... what else then?

She focuses strongly on participating in her children's upbringing. She is capable of giving them good knowledge and awareness. She can bring them up as better citizens, she says. She says she did not get anything special only for herself.

What I studied in my education I applied that in my later life. And I want to continue to give that to my children also to make them good citizens. And in the school also where I am teaching.

As for myself... what to say? Nothing special for myself. Maybe I can do more good to children, bring up my own children better, give them more awareness. But nothing is guaranteed these days, whatever education one gets, it is not enough. But I can give them good knowledge, even if I don't know that knowledge base, with my awareness I can get others to give them knowledge and learning. And bring them up as good citizens. Not only my children, other children too. Good citizens knowing their duties and responsibilities. Also knowing that they should respect the rules, regulations, environment...be good to the society.

About myself to say... if we are educated women, we are better. Usually educated parents think a lot about their children's education and take interest. If a mother is educated, she takes more interest in her children like guiding them ably in their schooling etc. For example upto Class X at least educated mothers can guide. And on top of that if we are teachers by profession, naturally we strive hard to teach children at school, know the quality of education, push them to get good marks... so all this will reflect upon our children too. We take more interest with our children.

(Educational qualifications, getting **a good job, financial security**. These seem to be the experiences that Ganga recognises as an educated woman. Nothing special for herself. Investment in children for good citizenship. Citizens who respect the State and

participate in the civil society continuing the systems. Her experience seems to be that of following the **systems, structures and conventions**. She is recommending the same for her children and the children she teaches at her school. Is this an educated woman's preferred way of life, of her identity and her approach towards girls of future generation?)

Ganga takes some time to think again about her experiences. There is a long pause. Then she talks. She says education gave her peace of mind as she got a job. At least she would not be a housewife, exploited by a man. Because she is educated and has a job, she got a good husband and is happy in her personal life. It gave her more courage, good status and society's recognition, respect. She goes on to talk about her dreams, wants, and preferences.

See suppose I didn't have this job, I would have to ask men for money, to look after me and become dependent. Then what happens is... we don't know what they are thinking about us. But we women always tend to think oh, my god, I have to ask him for this, I don't know what he says, how should I approach him, afraid of his control ... these constant worries are there inside our minds. Money is important, especially living in this big city. So I might have always been shy and feeling inferior worrying about money... you know, if I was not in a good paying job. We come across women in rural areas who don't earn money. When we see them I think poor women, they don't have money of their own, I can sense their feelings of dependency. At least in my life, it is not like that. You know, that kind of dependency.

Now for example if I had not studied this much, I wouldn't have got an opportunity to work, become a teacher. At the most I would have finished my SSLC, be at home, doing nothing. Get married to some man, who knows whether he has a job or not, somebody... just to get married, not a decently settled man. I would be married, have children, do all the house chores, be a slave at home, to the husband, depend on him for everything. If I didn't do well at home as a wife, he would punish me for that, who knows what might happen to me in such circumstances, no safety there... so it would have continued like that. But it is not like that now in my life. I am in a city, married to a good person, have a good family life, have a good job. See, all these came only because of my education. I think this is my experience.

And respect from the society. If we are educated society recognises and respects us. Some status there.

(Satisfied with a government teacher's job. Feeling secure that she is not dependent on a male. **Good job, good husband, good family life.** Fulfilling expectations in her

children's upbringing. Is she independent or is she not just depending upon her husband for money? Is being independent her experience? She says society respects an educated person. Status level increases. Just an educated person or an educated person with a good job?)

I explore what Ganga believes she wants for herself, what her dreams are...tell me about them. I ask her to share more about herself as an educated woman. Ganga has a dream of doing a B.Ed. course and to become a high school teacher. She sees women scientists, who work hard with goals and having a high IQ, as her role models. She wants to teach better, teach in a high school, get a good name as a teacher. She believes in values like 'do your duty first'.

I believe in that very much, as a value. Yes, definitely. If we do our duty honestly we get praise and appreciation. I get this often from my work in school. The school Inspector has appreciated me. Higher officers of the state education department have praised my efforts.

It has been there with me as a value from childhood. Everybody was honestly working hard. Only if we worked hard and honestly we would get the fruits of our labour, that was the family philosophy too. So it was an inherent quality. Those early life values and education. From education, yes, we get something. Because I am educated I am in this field. And I get the recognition. So education gives us opportunities to practice your values. And it helps in many other ways too. Financially there are benefits. Like building our own house. Some of the desires that we have can be fulfilled.

Society doesn't give special recognition to our work, as such, directly. But it is there, that feeling. For example, when a community education school activity is organised in the school, parents come and attend; they appreciate our work, then that is a recognition. It came through my job, through my education. It gives me that good feeling. Both as a teacher and as an educated person. I feel good, in the sense, I get this good feeling that I studied hard, I strove hard to get my education, and then this job, I am getting the results now. When people ask me how did I get the job, I tell them I studied hard, got education, got the job. I worked hard to achieve this.

V- So you have a good feeling about yourself being educated?

Yes, definitely there is a good feeling. And I feel often that I should have studied more. I didn't know at that time. If I had done Pre-university course, degree and then a B.Ed., then I would have got a job in the high school straight away, I could have taught high school children.

I don't know what I want for myself. I want to teach better in the school, especially Maths and see that at least one student gets 100 out of 100 marks in that subject. Then tutor my children better in future... what else... we wanted to build a house of our own, that is being done now... only for me, hard to say... yeah, my health, I want to keep up good health and live a long life. I sometimes get headaches and wonder and worry why I am getting headaches now itself... (laughs). It is only my health, that's all. I don't have any desires for myself. As a teacher I have better awareness of our hygiene and nutrition. This helps me also.

If I get a chance from the government, that is government seat, I will do B.Ed. I want to teach in high school. Nowadays we hardly get any promotions in our teaching career even though we have qualifications. So I want to wait until the government asks me to do a B.Ed. degree for promotion to high school grade. I think I want that to happen. That is only for myself, isn't it? (laughs again).

I don't think I ever place importance on what and how I want to be. I want to be like this or that... because whatever is my capacity, I go by that and don't wish for more. I don't have strict desires that I have to be like this or that. And I know why or what reason, I get what I wish for even though I don't wish big for anything. So desire less, it becomes true and more than what I aspired for I get. I had a secret desire to wear trousers when I was a teenager. No, it was not realised. Those days are gone, now I am old, fat after two children (smiles)... I can't wear them now. People will laugh at me. We want to follow what society thinks of us, don't we?

I don't have belief in any superstitions. But tradition is important and we must continue the tradition. On top of that we are Brahmins. If we didn't practice the Brahmin way, it will vanish. So we have to continue our tradition. No non-vegetarian food, our traditions and customs... we have to follow. I want to follow these. And values are also important. Whatever we do we must do it sincerely, with love for that, hard work and full efforts. Only then we will get good results.

I want to do a B.Ed. degree... and become a high school teacher. That dream is there but I don't know when I can find an opportunity. Otherwise I don't have many plans or ambitions for myself. I want to be simple. About achieving anything or dreaming... I don't know. I don't have such ambitions. But I admire women scientists a lot... Marie Curie, that Kalpana Chawla who went to space... some dreams there. But I want to follow their examples, like working hard to reach a goal.

But I am not like them, I can't be like them also. I am not that intelligent. We just read about them. Then there are others. Like a good housewife who builds her family and brings up children so ideally... that kind of a good woman, you know what I mean... when I look at all these women, I think why am I not like that... see women like these (names a few in that neighbourhood), they are so sharp, active, smart and outgoing... I am not like them, I don't know why... even if I think hard also I can't point out why. I am not smart.

(She is saying she **doesn't know** what she specifically wants for herself. Her dream is to do a B.Ed. degree and teach high school children. Get a good name as a teacher. She seems to be having a very few wants. She admires women who are efficient, capable and achievers. She thinks she is not smart. Her texts reveal her **confusions** around what she wants, who she would like to be, what she is. Many **contradictions** in her statements highlight a tension between herself as a good woman, as a dutiful citizen, as an individual and the society.)

While reading the transcript I found that during our interview I did ask her why does she think of herself not smart? What are the different things that she does besides teaching at school? How does she involve herself in the family matters?

V- Do you manage all the work that needs to be done outside the house related to the family... managing them alone?

No, I can't manage all these things. I just sign on the blank cheque and give it to my husband, he does everything. I am not involved in all that.

V- What about a situation like suppose you are on your own in the city, with both the kids, some unexpected situation happens...?

I haven't got any such situation until now in my life. But I think I have the confidence that I will handle such a situation myself. And also helping others in an emergency... but sometimes you see what they say may be right, we should have that in our minds, that you yourself will end up in trouble. And as a woman a lot depends on our behaviour also, we should not invite trouble. I am usually serious-faced. Even if a man is not giving me a seat in the public bus, I ask for the seat and ask that man to sit properly because a lady is sitting next to him. You get that confidence as you are educated, isn't that right?

And then...mostly in the daily chores... suppose the cooking gas stove that we use... to an uneducated woman she doesn't know from where we get gas, how to use it, it is an exhaustible resource, we have to use it carefully ... these things she won't know. But an educated woman manages the gas stove well, she knows its use, and other things also, all the house chores she plans well. About the family also she knows what is going on, participates, the couple can take joint decisions about big matters like building a house... (long pause) what else to say here?

V- When you think of yourself as an educated woman what kind of an image comes to your mind...

To me I am... I am not very old-fashioned, not very modern; but I practise all the traditional customs and religion... not too modern.

I mean going to the social clubs, parties, socialising too much with a class of people...I am not like that. I am always with my husband, when we get relatives from the native place, we go to places, picnicking, and mix with selected friends. Not this craze for movies, restaurants, free behaviour...whatever we do we do that as a family, with the family. I don't go to restaurants alone, if some occasion comes like travelling, I carry home-cooked food with me.

I don't get involved much in the family affairs. My role is limited to cooking. I am okay that way. Even the salary that I get I give to my husband, he manages the family affairs. He looks after my personal spending also, I don't get into all that. So he manages everything. He gives me everything that I need. I don't want to get involved in the management. It has been like that from my parental side. Men do the ruling, management, we accept it. I know in some places women do all the family management, but I go by the man's ruling. I prefer that, as he is good and efficient. I don't even feel like taking an interest. If he does something wrong, or goes in a wrong direction then I would be forced to look into the family matters. But he is good anyway and I am free that way.

I just give suggestions and sometimes he thinks I am right and adopts that. If he thinks what I suggested was not appropriate to the situation he keeps quiet and after some days whatever is appropriate and best, that will be adopted. We do come across disagreements sometimes, but generally not so much. It is not even a fight. I would say some excited discussion that's all. Our relationship is good. At times of doing something big, we both discuss the plan at length and take the best decision for our common good. Mostly I leave the decisions to him because he anyway does good things. Why should I unnecessarily be stressed? I work at home, and then in school there are enough tensions there, so why take yet another on my shoulders. So I rely on him, leave everything to him.

He likes to take responsibilities and do all the work himself. He doesn't say anything to me for not taking any responsibility, he just carries doing everything himself. I keep quiet, knowing what he is up to. I am in a way relieved (laughs).

(Ganga expresses herself as a confident woman in public life, she says. Such as when traveling in a public transport. She also gives an example to differentiate between educated and uneducated women's experiences. Ganga is relieved about not taking on too much with her family management matters. She believes her husband is more capable and he is managing everything well. She trusts his abilities, judgment and decisions. She has accepted his role as the family head, which actually comes from her parental side; accepting a male's authority. She is happy about her family, her life. All these statements show an **interesting association** of ideas that highlight what she believes her abilities are in the **public and the private** sphere. Many such beliefs, which she describes are her experiences, are **contradictory**, showing a **dilemma** in

identifying what is accepted and what is needed in terms of a change. Her beliefs are centred around tradition, acceptance, following the stereotype.)

Patience: the quality of an educated woman.

An educated woman's family will be better than an uneducated woman's, Ganga thinks. They are different in a lot of ways. Economic benefits are much better with education. An illiterate woman may earn a living but she doesn't develop a better worldview, doesn't have much awareness about life matters, is not as courageous as an educated woman. An educated mother can bring up her children better, give them guidance and more awareness. Educated women have better chances of scientific awareness. However, she notes, not all educated women apply their learning to better their life quality.

... if we are educated women, we are better in our abilities and worldview. That is what I believe. We get a lot from education too. But travelling alone between cities, going here and there. What is there after all if you want to go somewhere, you take some sort of transport a bus or a train and reach your destination. But I must say education also helps a lot for women in this regard. It gives courage in many ways...

Usually educated parents think a lot about their children's education and take interest. If a mother is educated, she takes more interest in her children like guiding them ably in their schooling etc. For example up to Class X at least educated mothers can guide. And on top of that if we are teachers by profession, as it is we strive hard to teach the children in schools, know the quality of education, push them to get good marks... so all this will reflect upon our children too. We take more interest.

... from education a lot of our mis-conceptions and superstitions are removed because we come to know certain things. These can be applied to our life otherwise, if we are not educated we have to go by others, saying is it like that, I better follow it... but with education we can raise questions why, how, what is the reason behind this, how does it happen... whatever is the situation I say.

Through education families improve. They say that educated woman is the asset to the family. So educated woman can bring up the family well, educate her children better. Make them good citizens... what else?

Economic benefits, some sort of independence that way, earning better, respectable job... there is a difference with a uneducated woman there... knowledge we get and we will come to know how to use that knowledge

according to situations for our life's good, that practical knowledge of applying... that is important for life.

Educated woman, married... she should be good to all, adjust to the in laws, be nice to everybody, manage everything efficiently, she should get some help from the in laws also if possible, I am not saying no that... she should be efficient. If she didn't get any help, she should practice patience. That is her quality as an educated woman. Even I lose my patience sometimes, but I sit back and reflect and think it was wrong. I should have more patience. If the woman loses patience there is no peace at home. So balance is important for her.

(Ganga says educated women have better abilities, courage, improved worldview. Education removes superstitions. An educated woman **can raise questions** of why and how, about her life. As an educated woman she is definitely raising her children as good citizens. More importantly, as an educated woman she has more patience, is more adjustable. Again all these statements are highlighting her **dilemmas** as to what she thinks are her experiences as an educated woman and what she is continuing as a **traditional good woman**. She thinks as an educated woman she can raise questions but she accepts her husband's authority in their family life. Acceptance of her husband's agency and thereby saying she is free! Denial of her own agency. Again, **contradictions**. Her experiences include being a good housewife, acceptance of men's ruling, devaluing the self in favour of the good of society and following what society thinks.

Ganga's experiences also affirm women's tendency to deny their **personal agency**, deny their desire of doing something for their happiness and **personal satisfaction**; the **dilemma** appears when Ganga says she admires other women who do things for themselves – 'why am I not like them' – hoping someone will give them a chance. The **contradictions and tensions** in her texts are also related strongly to the good woman, between the society and the individual. A woman's context, a **woman's place** and a woman living in relation to others. A woman hesitating to take a chance, think of a **change and action**.)

Epilogue

Ganga's texts indicate that for her the experience of being an educated woman is having peace of mind; that comes from respectable government job and a good family life. She points out that the belief and goal of her education as she grew up was towards achieving that, which she did. Besides that, she thinks being an educated woman can enhance abilities to bring up her children, make them good citizens. Ganga's story provides some insights into her beliefs about being an educated woman like moving ahead in life, education for a government job, financial security, a good husband, better participation in children's upbringing, achieving peace of mind, respect from society, gaining courage, developing qualities and better awareness. The following summary identifies these insights.

Beliefs about education:

Moving forward in life

In our family my father was not happy that he got only daughters that too three of us. ... we were a bit scared of the future too as we were poor. We three girls studied well in the school ... So we had this goal that only through our education we could go forward in life.

Securing a government job

I was aware that people from our surroundings got government jobs only through their education. At that time Posts & Telegraph department used to employ a lot of people; so we used to think, look at them, they passed exams, college, got good jobs now and are progressing well in life and we all must do the same. So they were our role models.

Achievements through education:

Job, money

First of all, from my education I have been able to stand on my own legs; independently. I studied well, I got a good job. One requires everything else also in this society to be successful. But because I studied well, and got qualifications, I got a better job and am independent. Job gives me money.

Good husband

... if I had not studied this much, I wouldn't have got an opportunity to work, become a teacher. ... Get married to some man, ... be a slave at home, to the husband. But it is not like that now in my life. I am in a city, married to a good person, have a good family life, have a good job. See, all these came only because of my education.

Respect from society

And respect from the society. If we are educated society recognises and respects us. Some status there.

Children's upbringing

But I can give them good knowledge, even if I don't know that knowledge base, with my awareness I can get others to

	give them knowledge and learning. And bring them up as good citizens. Not only my children, other children too.
Peace of mind	Because of education I got this teacher's job which is satisfying to me as it gives peace of mind. ...It has been useful. It gave me peace of mind. See suppose I didn't have this job, I had to ask men for money, to look after me and become dependent. ...At least in my life, it is not like that.
Profile of educated women:	... if we are educated women, we are better. That is what I believe. Gives courage in many ways...
Better courage	Usually educated parents think a lot about their children's education and take interest. If a mother is educated, she takes more interest in her children like guiding them ably in their schooling etc.
Making children better citizens	if we are not educated we have to go by others, saying is it like that, I better follow it... but with education we can raise questions why, how, what is the reason behind this, how does it happen... whatever is the situation I say.
Better awareness	Economic benefits, some sort of independence that way, earning better, respectable job... there is a difference with a uneducated woman there...
Improved economic benefits	Educated woman, married... she should be good to all, adjust to the in laws, be nice to everybody, manage everything efficiently, she should be efficient. If she didn't get any help, she should practice patience. That is her quality as an educated woman.
Following the society	

Vinoda

Whatever is the destiny that will happen, I keep myself light-hearted.

Vinoda

My sister introduced me to Vinoda, who knew my sister as a colleague previously. When I met Vinoda for the first time, she wanted to know what I was studying, why I went to Australia, how my study would contribute to a woman's life in India. After we discussed these issues, she agreed to become a participant in the research and asked me to arrange for an interview date soon. She wanted us to meet at her residence. She said she had more privacy there and also felt comfortable. She said there was only her mother at home, no one else to disturb us. Her mother was present at the first interview. They wanted me to have a meal with them after the interview, cooked by her mother. Vinoda asked me to come out of my researcher's shell and mix with them as a friend. All through the interview I actually felt quite comfortable talking to her. After the interview, on April 7, the mother said she also had a lot to share about the topic. Her experiences and her story, but only as a woman. Not as an educated woman. She said her story would also be interesting as her daughter's. I felt her urge to share her inner world. I promised to return another time, with another study. Before our second interview on April 23 Vinoda said her mother had gone to their native place. So she had her niece and nephew staying with her. She got them to babysit her infant son while we talked. I feared there may be a lack of openness and less depth to our conversation. Vinoda laughed at me and said 'they are only kids, they don't know anything. Don't worry, they won't listen to us.' Then we went on with the interview.

My values come from my childhood experiences

Vinoda says she has a lot of influences from her childhood. In spite of their low- income condition, her mother thought seriously about her girls' education. Her mother enrolled her girls at school. She took more interest in their upbringing than their father who did paid jobs on and off. She recalls that there were other influences too such as community living.

We are Marathi speaking people, from Katabara community. That means, they are wanderers, from place to place, singing the folklore, the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharatha, like gypsies. But nowadays everything is changed. They belong to

Scheduled Tribe category on the government list. My mother tells us more about our community background. But in my generation we don't know that much. Her parents, and their parents' generation people were practising the family occupation, they were given rewards by big people, like free land.

Somehow, with great difficulty, doing a lot of physical labour work, daily wages etc, you know manual work, my parents earned their livelihood... My mother felt we two girls roaming around in the village doing nothing, was not good ... decided that we girls should go to school and learn something. So we were enrolled at a school in the town. My father was on and off with jobs, didn't earn a proper living... mother got a good support from her side of the family...

Yes, mother's role is more there. She took more interest. At that time we lived in a community dwelling called *vathara*... where several families live in small houses attached to each other, sharing the toilet and other resources. In that *vathara*, every family was different to the other, some were running cafes, some were manual labourers, some had live stock... some type of unique life style. My father also was doing a similar kind of business, buying groceries from the wholesale shop and selling them in small quantities, retail business, petty business. Different life styles, occupations... selling snacks by the road side, selling food in a small hut...but there was some kind of liveliness, life there, people doing different things for their livelihood, yet living in that compact dwelling. We children were all growing up together, we were happy, it was like a big extended family. We never thought of relatives. Because we had people around us, community living, sharing from every family, participating... those were happy days. So like this we went through Class I, II, it was never a hard work learning, or any serious awareness about school studies... it was a jolly time, we don't know how we grew up, easy days... School was also an extension of our life. It was not different. The seriousness of studying did not arise until I reached Class VII.

At school what the teachers taught us, we followed. Do this, we did. It was not serious. I was interested in sports. Like kho kho, running... We had this master. Then there was a sports period, we would just participate eagerly... he was good as a sports teacher, used to teach us a lot of games. More than academic subjects, sports were more interesting to me. Mostly teachers wouldn't come to school regularly and teach us... they were a bit negligent. But there was this Hindi language master. He was good. If we didn't recite "Putali Bai bolo bolo" poem properly, he would make us bend over and hit us hard on our backs. So out of that fear, I learnt good Hindi. I remember him for that. I am a Hindi language teacher today (laughs).

By the time she reached Class VII Vinoda not only became more aware of her education but also the economic hardships at home. Around Class 5, she, with her sister and mother, joined a home industry making papadams to earn a livelihood. Later they bought a calf when her sister earned a government scholarship from school, groomed it

and later started their dairy business. People recognised their efforts and appreciated the mother and her daughters for their hard work.

In those times, preparing papadams at home was a big home industry activity. Somebody in the neighbourhood had that business. In the afternoon. We enquired, joined there, us sisters and mother. First day we earned one rupee twenty five paise. We were so happy because it was our own earnings for the first time in our life.

My sister got this government stipend of Rs.50 when she was in Class 7. From that money we bought a calf. We groomed that calf into a cow and started our milk business, in a very small way. We benefited a lot from this activity. My sister was not involved in this. She was growing up... big girl...

People appreciated us. They appreciated mother for having daughters like us, even though she didn't have male children. ... even without sons, she got a name through her daughters. People in the vathara used to say about me "look at the girl, she is studying in the school, helping her mother in the fields, and she is managing the cattle also." Mother would get into tears when people talked about sons, she not having sons, only daughters, but she was always proud of us.

So I continued to progress like this. I reached Class VIII. I was aware of the hardships at home, the financial difficulties, our life style. My father was not taking good care of the family, he used to waste a lot of money and resources, I knew that and felt bad about that. And we were growing up, reaching high school, school fees, books, costs were involved. So I was a bit over-conscious of our life, hardships.

I was keenly aware of all these things in our life. After finishing my SSLC, I became determined to do something more in my life and alter my life style, get education, get a job, become somebody noticeable... so after my SSLC, I got into pre-university course in a government college in Gulbarga itself. I completed my two-years pre-university course. Then from one of the units that run the various grades of passing Hindi language qualifying exams, this is in a place called Sangam in Bidar district, next to Gulbarga district... I got into one of these units and passed my degree.

Actually my sister got married quite early. So we had a bit of debt from her marriage. This is before my degree days. When I was still in school.

She completed her SSLC. Before marriage. After her marriage she completed her teachers' training certificate course, teachers' training qualifying exam. She got married early, at the age of 17 years. When my sister went away after her marriage, she was 17, we faced hardship. There was the marriage debt... I was in Class VIII at that time. I was smart, I was good with everyone, good sales skills. I worked hard to clear that debt. I learnt these values about money at an early age,

didn't waste money... tried to save as much as possible to clear debts, for the future.

She got values like working hard and saving for future, belief in one's own effort, to be non-materialistic and honest from a very early age. She is continuing with these values in her life today, she says, which actually helped her to develop her own philosophy about life.

I would distribute milk and curd also, by walking...then would go to school... worked on Sundays also in the field. I was happy as we worked hard, saved money, had a good life. There was contentment, satisfaction... I was proud, happy. People used to appreciate us, me especially and would hold me as a role model. Because I worked, earned, studied and was responsible. I liked standing up for my family. I learnt a lot of values then. They are with me now, protecting...

Even now I can lead a luxurious life from the salary that I am getting from my job, but what is the point? Only for myself? That is selfish... after all why do we need luxuries? I don't believe in spending money unnecessarily. That habit that I got into early in my life is continuing even now. I don't have desires like I want gold jewellery, I want that or this... if somebody is in a difficulty, I donate money to them. That is more satisfying. I have given money to my relatives; some of them have not returned small amounts and I have not cared. Big amounts like 20 or 30 thousand rupees, I ask them to return. See, with the money that I am getting I can employ two servants and put my feet up on the sofa and relax... leading a comfortable life... but I don't believe in that kind of life, only if I strain my body can I enjoy the benefits of my earnings... I have to work hard both physically and mentally, that is what I prefer. So I have not bought even a sofa set. believe in leading a simple life, doing my work myself.

(Hardships that Vinoda experienced early in life shaped her values about money, becoming self-reliant and awareness that she needed to be strong and helpful.

Importance of education was also realised early in life which provided a goal in her life. Is this importance linked to economic side of life or is it linked with a **person's self growth**? Learning to respond to life's hardships filled her with inner strength and an ability to solve problems. **Positioning herself** in this context also is the construction of her self, her identity and her beliefs.)

I am confident with my position...

As she grew up Vinoda thought seriously about higher education and later about getting a nice job. She did not have any strict plans of a particular career, she says. She thinks

the feeling that as a girl she should achieve more in terms of higher education and a job was strong. Girls in her caste and community didn't normally get educated.

I actually didn't have any strict plans of becoming a teacher or any other career. I wanted to study further, higher education. As I grew up, had some life experience, I thought besides getting higher education, I should also get a steady job, have some career like a teacher, or a police woman or something that women in my community wouldn't normally go for. That was in my mind. I wanted a job, to work. I didn't share this dream with anyone.

After my Pre-university course, I thought of joining a college for a bachelor's degree in education. My sister said I should join a college near her place. By that time I had a degree in Hindi language... you know you can finish this language degree quite fast as you can take the qualifying exams privately one by one every six months, so by the time I finished my pre-university course, I also had this Hindi language degree.

Then I moved out of Gulbarga. I went to Kolar, where my sister's family lived. I joined the college in Shidlaghatta. I had this big desire of higher education and achievement motivation that I as a girl should get higher education and come up in life. See in our community and caste girls don't get higher education and build up their own life. They hardly go for a job. I am the first one, probably.

So, in Shidlaghatta, I stayed with three other students, we rented a house, shared the expenses. By that time we didn't have any proper income. Our dairy business was closed. Debts were still there. I wasn't doing such work anymore. Our financial conditions were poor. My brother-in-law paid all my B.Ed. studies expenses. It all came up to some Rs.10,000. Things were not that expensive, cost of living was not high at that time.

I finished my B.Ed. in 1989-90. After that when I was about to go back to Gulbarga somebody said there was a post in a school nearby there. A private school. In Mulbagal *taluk* in Kolar district. They used to pay me Rs.200 as salary per month. I worked for four years. I was happy about my earning capacity. It was a different experience this time. Like no doubt I had earned good money through our dairy unit; but this was different, I worked in an organised sector, for somebody else, earned a regular salary... so different experience. In between I used to do the clerical work also; it was a private school, newly opened. So we were expected to do more work.

In the fourth year of my work there, my brother-in-law came to know about the vacancy in this high school where I am now. In Bangalore. He enquired, got the application forms, he filled them up and sent them to the Selection Committee. I got the interview call. I did well in the interview, was selected for this job. It comes under the government reserved quota. I don't know what were the criteria

for selection there, but they selected me for that job which was permanent, government salaried job. It was huge luck.

Initially I used to be a bit scared. Big school, lots of students and staff. City students. Slowly I gathered confidence. I thought it was teaching work that I liked most. I loved Hindi language, was well educated in that area and had the command over the language as an academic subject also. So I gathered my confidence to work in that big school. As a student also I was bright, never had problems with exams. B.Ed. was a bit tough but I sailed through easily. I didn't struggle that much like others. I got a II class in B.Ed course.

Sometimes when I looked at the students in the high school sections, they appeared to be grown up men. They used to tease me as I was a new teacher, and said I would leave the job within a couple of months. But I stuck to my guns strongly and faced them. Slowly I started different approaches to teach them the language. They were like rowdies in the beginning. Gradually, they liked my teaching, they adapted to my ways.

Education has given her more courage and confidence, she says. She can live confidently.

Being an educated female... I can face any kind of life situation and live life confidently. I have that confidence. Yes, all that and any kind of situation I can face. If it is through life experience, maturation, in a gradual process of maturing as an adult...I don't think one can face all kinds of life situations efficiently without education. So I would say education has given me this capacity. I face all sorts of situations, I am ready to take on everything, whatever situation comes up, I am ready to deal with that, I don't show my back to life.

Now I have complete control over my life. I help only if I want to help. I take all the decisions now. But sometimes when elders keep saying something, I listen to them, I just melt to their words, their influence is stronger there at such times.

(Vinoda's emphasis is on the fact that girls from her caste and community rarely get higher education. Expectations for women are low. She is the first in her family to be highly educated and having a teacher's career. She is also emphasising how she managed the financial hardships, overcame the social barriers and achieved both higher education and a high job profile. These are highlighting her preference in **positioning** herself as an achiever, her place in the society as an achiever and her **self-identity**. She is positioning herself in **an authoritative place**.

However, the texts also show more than confidence in herself, her experiences highlight the social expectations and how she achieved social and economic progress. Her reflection on having complete **control** over her life shows a **tension** between **self** and **obligation**.)

Vinoda thinks as an educated woman she can guide people better. People recognise her status with respect.

When I think of myself, first thing that comes to my mind is that I am educated. As an educated woman I have the ability to guide a few people. I can help them find their 'correct' path. I can participate in their development. I can do all this confidently.

See my education and this job, as a result of my education, that teaching job has given me status in the society. People give me respect, they say hey, look teacher has come, sit her in the chair. But the same people will show a mat to an uneducated ordinary woman, don't give her the due respect that I get. They talk to me with respect because I am a teacher. So I got this respect, recognition in the society. That is right, just an ordinary educated woman will not get that recognition because this professional position is different.

Position, my role... the fact that I am educated gets some attention because of my behaviour, my smooth polished language, my easy approach... Because even though a woman is educated she is not making use of her education to get a job, be in a profession... that brings a lot of changes to a woman's behaviour and approach.

Education and also a steady respectable job. Not all jobs get that respect. So the important thing here is earning, being financially independent, position... So that is my experience. An illiterate person still knows what life is, but for the finer elements of life, we need education. To me, I have come to know more about life through my readings of literature.

(Her belief that she can bring people on correct path raises a question – what is '**correct**'? Does she mean socially expected and **accepted path**? The attributes that she lists of an educated woman indicate her experience of following the **socially approved** behavioural patterns and manners. Is she respected because she is following the stereotype or is she being respected for being educated? Or just for being a school teacher? The distinction between an illiterate person and herself as an educated person is interesting. By **being educated she knows** more about the finer elements of life.)

Her education helped her to grow as a person internally, with knowledge and life experience. It made her more participative.

Education has given me knowledge, awareness, exposure. Understanding people better, like people, how they are, what is their mentality, why do they behave like this or that, how should we interact or respond to them, about this society...

From education... I have got this encouraging opportunity to participate in everything. In all matters. If being an educated women I remained at home, nobody would call me to participate in an event. So this sort of opportunity, I have got. Education gives us women a chance to participate in life events more. We have to make use of the opportunities. My education has provided me scope to gain much from life.

Because of my education... I am aware of our rights, women actually now have 50% reservation in all government schemes, law etc. Earlier it was only 20% and then 30%. Now we have this new approach to women's life that women are also equal to men. Earlier on women didn't participate well in politics. Now women are in the workforce, in education, in politics, all the fields. They are excelling in many fields like arts, music... there are good examples. Now we have women ministers at the national and state governments. See, all this knowledge, awareness about women's condition, history... all this came from my education.

Personally speaking, I don't know what is the direct influence of politics on my life. Some general application is there like while participating in the elections... only because I am educated well, I can analyse the political election scene and decide whom to vote for, who is good etc. And about governments also. Definitely my awareness comes due to my education and also, additionally I read and absorb a lot from the experienced wise people, so called visionaries, poets, by listening to people...

(Confidence, being happy, being in control, position, status, recognition, respect, satisfaction, better abilities, knowledge, awareness, personal development... these look more as her experiences as an educated woman. Are her experiences really this positive, nice and fulfilling? The texts are revealing many other experiences too. She is confident about her place in society, specifically the social contexts of life. She is well-read and is aware of history, women's rights and women's place in society. The personal and the social needs more probing.)

See, whatever is the destiny that will happen, so I keep myself light-hearted.

Vinoda talks about her marriage at length. The events, their effects on her life and on her personality. They have had a significant influence upon her life's philosophy.

Vinoda had to be married to her own brother-in-law owing to her sister's decision. Both her sister and brother-in-law felt that as Vinoda had a good paid job she may be exploited by her husband if she was married to a man from a different family. So they decided that Vinoda must marry her brother-in-law, remain within the family and look after her parents in the absence of a son. It appeared as an easy solution to future problems. Her sister organised and formalised the marriage.

Vinoda did not like her marriage and tried to oppose it; but was forced to accept it; she became depressed after the marriage. To overcome her depression and to be herself again, Vinoda enrolled into an M.A. in Hindi language studying through correspondence. But again her sister thought she would get out of her depression only if a baby was born. So against her wishes, Vinoda got pregnant just when she was studying for her M.A. program. She was unhappy.

In 1997, there were some serious efforts to look for marriage alliance for me. There is this caste system, then right level of education for an educated girl, economic stability. When I was in II pre-university course we got two alliances; two grooms with diploma qualifications. I was even displayed as a bride, more or less my marriage was fixed with one of those. I was only 17 at that time, didn't know much about marriage etc. My sister intervened and insisted with my parents that I continued my higher education and got a degree; that parents didn't have a son, so at least this daughter would support them later on... and the boy's side people insisted that marriage be conducted immediately. We didn't have enough money to organise the wedding. So, we asked for some more time, but they decided to cancel the wedding and got another bride. So, my luck was like that in marriage matter. See, whatever is the destiny that will happen.

But it somehow happened that I had to get married to my own brother in law. In 1998-99. I was depressed. I didn't want this kind of marriage; this marriage was against my wishes, so those two years I felt very low, depressed, trying to maintain some balance in my life with this unwanted marriage. My sister herself wanted me to remain within the family, so she organized and formalized the marriage. Yes, I did oppose. I opposed, said didn't want this marriage. But it was not strong. Because my parents and sister insisted that I got married to him. So I obliged. I had to. Yes, it hurt me a lot when people said she married her own sister's husband...

When my sister said I was raised with them, spent few years with them, then got a job, you know they both helped me and my parents a lot many times. When she said I would be like a son to the family, to look after my parents, without going outside the family... and that they were not sure of what type of groom I would get if they searched outside the family, he may be greedy for my salary... instead of that if I remained within the family with security from both sister and brother-in-law it would be helpful for the whole family... see, when you look at that situation at that time, a whole lot of problems appeared. That is if I were married to some other man, outside the family. So they thought easy solution was that I marry my brother-in-law.

I was very jovial with my brother-in-law earlier on... like a younger sister to him, teasing him a lot all the time. I lived with them on and off. I was easy with him like a sister. But then when marriage happened I had to change my ways. I had to change the relationship, it was hurting... worrying and totally new. I had to force myself. I also thought of my sister's words that there was a possibility that I might marry somebody who may be after my money, then give me a child and later abandon me... you know, society would brand me as "husband left her"... I thought about her words. And then my brother-in-law also said look most men these days are not good in character, they are alcoholics. Most are money-minded, you have to be cautious here about your life. His words of caution. I was confused. Even then I had the dream and a desire for a nice man, a romantic dream of my life partner... but it didn't happen. So that's a bit sad in my life. But after that I adjusted myself to the new situation. My philosophy is that accept what is there in front of you and live by that. If you keep worrying about something that is gone, what is the use, you are wasting your time and energy. You know, the saying is why worry about spilt milk? So I left that behind, and adapted to the new relationship. New life. But I was unhappy. I was depressed for some time.

Again, later, as I was much depressed, they both thought I should have a baby to get over with my depression...

At that time, actually, I wanted to study further, get a postgraduate qualification. So I was doing M.A. in Hindi language. I was an external student, studying through correspondence. When I was doing the contact classes in the first year M.A., I discovered that I was pregnant. I had to balance my pregnancy with the master's course work and then writing the exams. I completed it successfully. I slowly recovered from my unhappy mood...

Vinoda recognises that studying further and doing an M.A. gave her some happiness. It kept her interest up in life. She has now accepted her life circumstances philosophically; has changed her attitude, has adapted to her husband and family life. She has learnt to be light-hearted.

Now I feel I am happy... because see, I don't have any hassles from the husband's side... no pressures whatsoever. My husband is coming at this time, I have to cook his dinner, look after him... no, nothing of that sort. I am free in that respect. I am totally independent as a queen. He comes on the average once in a week. He comes and goes... I don't miss a husband... (laughs) there are these two children, my sister's children with me, and my child, my mother here, and my teaching profession... so my life is good, in fact. I enjoy this freedom.

V- Don't you feel and desire that you wanted your husband to be with you, sharing your life's moments, you and your child with him...

Ummm, (laughs shortly)... what to say, yes, I do have... but... I am not demanding, don't expect him to fulfill any of my desires... I never even bothered my parents about my desires or dreams. So why now?

Vinoda tries to move on in life rather than brooding over 'something that can not be repaired'. She thinks she is more free than other married women as her husband does not live with her; he doesn't demand much from her; she doesn't have to follow a dutiful wife's role. She is happy that she is in control of her life fully, is economically independent, does everything for herself, and there is no man's intervention or dictating terms with her.

I tend to think and look at the world differently. Let me look at the people who are below me, having less and lesser chances than me; don't look at the people who are above me and get jealous... what's the use? Let me interact with people who think of me as "she is better than us". Say for example, this woman's husband is in the military and doesn't see her for a year, another woman's husband has divorced her... their suffering, their misery about their husbands... that is more painful. So instead of that misery in life, I feel satisfied about waiting for my husband for a week. This is easy, isn't it? I have adapted to this waiting. And I take everything easy in life. Whatever matter it is or a problem I treat it lightly. When I look at the hardships that I have undergone in the past, in my life, everything seems easy to me now and whatever is there in store for me in future too, I will look at it lightly. So nothing is a big problem. May be for 10 or 15 minutes, I may whinge and fret about it, after that it becomes diluted. I don't usually complain or express my negative feelings and emotions outwardly.

I take the decisions here for my own well being. See if I brood over that, life becomes only about brooding over the problem. People will say oh, look at her, that is her constant mood, everyday misery, she cannot address that problem in any better way...so my belief is that we have to change. See, how this world is made? It laughs at you when you are laughing. When you are crying nobody listens to you. That is the reality. So solve your problems by your abilities. I keep myself light-hearted, with a nice joking light mood, humour, I keep laughing.

Definitely due to my education and also additionally because I read and absorb a lot from the experienced wise people, so called visionaries, poets...

And my tendency is that I like to learn from all sources, everything. I want to keep moving forward in life. Let me read this, discuss, interact with people, know more about it, and apply to my life... that is the tendency. A person who learns this way from life is the most happy person. Education gives us money and a job, it doesn't give us life lessons and learning from life. Doesn't give us contentment. That is important. I am talking about my life. See education gives us a job and money may be like Rs.10,000 per month; but not satisfaction in life. Even now, I am leading a simple life, I don't use too much oil in food, don't spend too much extravagantly... I can use 10 kilos of oil... but my health suffers... so I distribute, I share...

(I remember that **I was silent** for a long time while I listened to her. My scribbling in the long note book said I also remembered to ask her questions in between to focus more on some story lines. Probing deeper into her inner experiences. For my own understanding. For my research. For my analysis. Now, as I read the story on getting married to her own brother-in-law in the transcript, I become silent again. What made her... why did she...? I feel uncomfortable. I am a woman too, my dear readers. I can feel tears welling up in my eyes. Am I allowed to feel these emotions while doing a phenomenological research? Feel the woman in me or just remain as a researcher? Slowly I gather my balance.

Yes, she said she was **confident**, was **in control** of her life as an educated woman. Her positioning was one of **authority, confidence and power**. She was an achiever, a rare occurrence in her caste and community. After her marriage and with her child's birth things changed. Life experience and education. Is there a link there impacting on an educated woman's experiences? What happened to her **confidence, control, authority** and position in the matter of her forced marriage? What happens to an educated woman's **authority, power and identity** when social expectations act against personal desire? Is this interplay between **threat and desire, causing a constant dilemma**, ever present in an educated woman's life? For Vinoda, the **conflict** is strongly evident between the **personal and social**.)

An educated woman means a good manager of her two worlds.

Later, I asked Vinoda to describe herself as an educated woman. From the transcript I noted that Vinoda talked collectively – we women, us women. She was one of them.

Vinoda underlines that education gives women many opportunities related to knowledge and worldview, employment, qualities like being courageous, reflective thinking, skills related to life and people. This is connected to her living and life skills. It can actually teach women how to live. She thinks every woman must apply her educational outcome to better her life.

Vinoda also highlights educated women's pro-active role in their children's upbringing. If a woman is educated the whole family is educated, she says. It gives her better qualities to apply to family situations. She thinks even though a woman is educated, in Indian society, she is first of all a family woman.

Education gives a woman a lot of opportunities to know what is happening around her. The knowledge, awareness, lots of scope to know about life situations, about leading life itself... experiences to know what happened previously... what is happening now.

And mainly education paves the way for women to live. How to live, money. And courage to live, knowing things related to life, giving awareness to her how to lead a life. That awareness, that reflection and thinking. Then education polishes the skills of talking to people, interaction, how to interact and what to say, to analyse people... uneducated people talk roughly, they are rough in behaviour. Educated women become more awakened.

Personally, when we talk about her family life, education gives her skills to pass on to her children. And she makes sure that her children get education. She can teach them. She wants to give more, probably. The saying is that if one woman is educated, the whole family is educated. If one man is educated, it is only him that is educated. Yes, it teaches her adjustment, more cooperation. Adjusting better with the members of her family, like in laws, husband... More adaptation to the family. What I say is that adaptation and adjustment are very important.

The usual type of an educated woman in India is that even though she is educated and working, she is also a family woman. Whatever problems she gets in the family she manages well. She manages both her work and home well. She is duty-bound. Mostly educated women don't go only for a job. She is followed even there by her family and related ties. She works in both worlds. She is a good manager of her two worlds. She solves everything and also works. That is the educated woman.

An educated woman is an able woman. Vulnerable means even though she is educated, she may not make use of the opportunities and will worry to no end and brood over her life. But one has to continue. Education comes handy there, it gives her opportunities to continue in life, providing alternatives. There are ample chances and opportunities in life, she has to use them. So from her education she becomes enabled. Yes, she gets the awareness and ability to shape her life on her own.

(Coping well, **managing the two worlds** – workplace and family – efficiently solving the everyday problems with her improved skills, abilities and awareness... with more adaptation and adjustment, with better analytical abilities and polished manners... these seem to be the experiences of Vinoda as an educated woman. **Are they?** She is a good manager of her two worlds, using her education to provide herself with alternatives to continue in life. What alternatives did her education provide when she got married unwillingly? **Acceptance, rejection, contestation, adjustment and adaptation.** With better skills and abilities? Is this the confident educated woman or the **confident, social ideal** who has more awareness of her place in society, balancing the everyday tension between the personal and social? A woman's perception of life as a woman irrespective of her education.)

Epilogue

Vinoda's experience of being an educated woman is a mixture of enabling herself with better capabilities and strong values and submitting to her family's decision concerning her role in the family. She, with a job, control over her resources and most life matters, having a position, power, respect from the society, has confidence and courage. She says these come from education which women must apply to their life. She has drawn a lot from education in terms of awareness, worldview, skills, outlook on life, better manners, financial independence and life skills. Her qualities like patience, light-mannered mood, goodness, sharing, giving, simplicity, non-materialism also come by mixing the application of her education and learning from her unhappy marriage. Her insights are listed below in the table, with supporting quotes.

Abilities & skills	I would distribute milk and curd also, by walking...then would go to school... worked on Sundays also in the field. I was happy as we worked
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hard, saved money, had a good life. There was contentment, satisfaction... I was proud, happy. People used to appreciate us, me especially and would hold me as a role model. Because I worked, earned, studied and was responsible. Liking standing up for my family. I learnt a lot of values then. They are with me now, protecting...

Even now I can lead a luxurious life from the salary that I am getting from my job, but what is the point? Only for myself? That is selfish.

Influence of family I didn't want this kind of marriage; this marriage was against my wishes... My sister herself wanted me remain within the family, so she organized and formalized the marriage. ...Because my parents and sister insisted that I got married to him. So I obliged. see when you look at that situation at that time, a whole lot of problems appeared. So they thought easy solution was that I marry my brother in law.

Adopting ways But after that I adjusted myself to the new situation. My philosophy is that accept what is there in front of you and live by that; if you keep worrying about something that is gone, what is the use, you are wasting your time and energy.

Life's philosophy And my tendency is that I like to learn from all sources, everything. I want to keep moving forward in life. Let me read this, discuss, interact with people, know more about it, and apply to my life... A person who learns this way from life is the most happy person. Education gives us money and a job, it doesn't give us life lessons and learning from life. Doesn't give us contentment. That is important. I am talking about my life.

Confidence Being an educated female... I can face any kind of life situation and live life confidently. I have that confidence. ... I don't show my back to life.

Position, power, status, respect from society See my education and this job, as a result of my education, that teaching job has given me certain status in the society. People give me respect. They talk to me with respect because I am a teacher. So I got this respect, recognition in the society. That is right, just an ordinary educated woman will not get that recognition because this professional position is different.

Control	Now I have the complete control over my life. I help only if I want to help. I take all the decisions now.
Manners	Position, my role... the fact that I am educated gets some attention because of my behaviour, my smooth polished language, my easy approach... that brings a lot of changes to a woman's behaviour and approach.
Financial independence	Not all jobs get that respect. So important thing here is earning, being financially independent, position...
Knowledge, awareness, worldview	Education has given me knowledge, awareness, exposure. Understanding people better, like people, how they are, what is their mentality, why do they behave like this or that, how should we interact or respond to them, about this society...
Life skills-courage, finance, awareness, thinking, interactive skills	And mainly education paves the way for women to live. How to live, money. And courage to live, knowing things related to life, giving awareness to her how to lead a life. That awareness, that reflection and thinking. Then education polishes the skills of talking to people, interaction, how to interact and what to say, to analyse people... Educated women become more awakened. ...when we talk about her family life, education gives her skills to pass on to her children. And she makes sure that her children get education. Yes, it teaches her adjustment, more cooperation.
Adaptation, adjustment, good manager	The usual type of an educated woman in India is that even though she is educated and working, she is also a family woman. Whatever problems she gets in the family she manages well. She manages both her work and home well. She is duty-bound. Mostly educated women don't go only for a job. She is followed even there by her family and related ties. She works in both worlds. She solves everything and also works. That is educated woman.

Mani

I don't know what exactly I learnt or got from education.

Mani

I met Mani in 1996 When I was working for a donor agency which provided financial support to grassroots organisations. The organisation that she had founded was in the formative years. Over the next few years we met occasionally during organisational meetings and also whenever I visited their organisation. When I went over to Bangalore in 2003, I renewed the contact details of my NGO colleagues – there were many changes in the phone numbers, emails and postal addresses. When I rang Mani, to ask if I could visit their fieldwork, she asked me what was I studying in Australia. I ended up not only telling her about my study but also inviting her to be a participant. Mani said she had never thought about this topic. She wondered if she would be helpful at all in my study as a participant. Nevertheless she agreed to the interviews. I went over to them in a dual role – as a guest speaker during their women’s meeting on March 8 and to conduct my interview with Mani and two of her staff. I spoke to Mani in her office on March 9 and again on April 10.

My home environment lacked motivation for education.

Mani said she would give me a sketch of her life as a story and try to answer my questions in between, in the context of her specific stories. She told me if I needed a good understanding of her experiences as an educated woman, it would be better that she just talked about her life from her childhood days. She felt so because she had not focused so much on herself as an educated woman. Maybe she would discover and perceive herself as an educated woman as we talked, she said. I agreed to this idea.

Mani comes from a large agrarian family. Her father followed his religion very rigidly, she says. She thinks he had a tyrannical control over his family when they were growing up, and he never encouraged his children’s education. Her eldest brother discontinued his education due to mother’s pressure even though he yearned for higher education. Her middle brother did not complete his higher studies. Her immediate elder brother put in his own efforts, went his own way to achieve his dreams of higher education and has a Ph.D. He influenced her decision to take up higher education.

Mani recalls that her home environment lacked any support or motivation for education with a sick mother and an overly-religious father. There was no stimulation, guidance from anybody, exposure to the outer world. Their world was closed, within their caste and community. She thinks she lacked awareness of the outside world.

If we want to talk about my education, experiences that are related, then we have to start from my schooling, early days. Going back... I have done this M.A. degree from Mysore University. But I had no idea that I would be reaching that stage where I could do an M.A., attend the university etc. See my background was like that. My father was not that much educated. There was no educational atmosphere at home.

My father was a farmer. He never paid any attention to education, his children's education including getting his sons educated. we just went to school. I am one of the 9 children who survived out of 13. Among them were 6 girls. I am the only one to reach up to M.A. level of education. Only my immediate elder sister reached the Pre-University level. First brother did his Pre-University. Second brother said he would do Chartered Accountancy course but didn't complete it. I am talking about those years. So nobody really focused much on higher education. The whole environment at home was like that, lacking any awareness about higher education. There was no newspaper, no radio for sometime, no motivation. There was no inclination even to expose ourselves to the outside world, eagerness to learn from the world... no, it wasn't just there. And see, we belonged to a something like a tribal community, culture, agrarian...so education was sidelined. We lived only among our community circle, friends and relatives, that was our limited world. I didn't have much awareness about anything else, much exposure towards anything more than that.

Then what happened was this brother... my immediate elder brother took up higher education. See my immediate elder brother, now he is the only one in the family to have reached M.A., and Ph.D., to have reached some good level in life through his education, only through his efforts... to this brother also, my father would scold him without stopping, too much actually. He, much later, encouraged me a lot and also helped in many ways for my studies.

She only thought that she would be married off when her turn came, have children and her life would end like that. Watching another girl from their community do her teacher's training diploma she got occasional thoughts of doing a similar course and become a teacher. But she feels even her college education did not result in any motivation for higher education or kindled an interest in her towards knowledge or awareness. Her reading of novels and magazines exposed her a bit to the outside world.

Actually my eldest brother always repented for not continuing his education after his pre-university course. My mother depended a lot on my eldest brother, her first son. With her second son also, she didn't encourage him to go for higher education and stationed him at home... So the only awareness that I had was alright, they would find a groom for me, as all my elder sisters were married already and get me married off. Marriage, some nice man, good family, children and continue like that – this was the awareness and thinking that I had. I never even thought of any higher education for myself. When I look back now, probably I think, sometimes a vague thought did occur to my mind then, that I could become a teacher if I continued my studies. See this thought appeared because of this girl Savithri from our village who did her teachers' training certificate course and became a teacher. So looking at her, I thought if I too studied like her I could become a teacher. It was only a thought, no plan or no ambition. And no efforts were made in that direction either. In high school, I cultivated an interest for reading... magazines which were rarely brought to the library, books, novels were there and I loved to read them. But you see my father never liked education and his children getting educated. He just didn't have that orientation towards education. So whenever any one of us sat down with books to read or write, he would scold us without stopping. He would get very angry, very irritated. He would be so negative saying what is it that we wanted to achieve from education. Regardless of boy or girl.

He never tolerated us studying, even for our degree exams, he wouldn't give us time to prepare... he would say 'throw those books away, come and do some work here, there's so much to do'. My eldest brother was always grumpy and complaining that he was not allowed to study further, his future was ruined...see he had the greatest desire to study and have a career. But parents stopped him and put him at home to manage the farm. My middle brother did not involve himself much. My third elder brother was sent to a hostel to study as that hostel was free for our community students. My father accepted this arrangement only because it was free. He went on, much later, to do a Ph.D.

At home, elder sisters were married, eldest brother was cranky all the time, two other brothers were not at home; actually this immediate elder brother had some influence upon me as he was genuinely interested in education, in learning, knowledge-gaining etc. But even then, there were his own hardships all the time... father didn't send any money to him, he said he didn't even have Rs.50 for his personal expenses, he couldn't come home often because father didn't give him money. Hostel was free but other expenses were there... so he was dejected. Actually we were never poor. Father had good money. Ours was a financially well-balanced family with good resources. He had reservations of his own, he wanted to control our life in all possible ways. When we wanted footwear he would not buy them, no books, no good clothes... he was funny. I don't know why he wanted to control us like that. We never understood him. So, overall, it wasn't a family where children were told education was important!

(Influences from rigid home environment, father's temperament, frustration of all siblings... but **schooling also was there**. Have these factors impacted upon her experiences as an educated woman later in her life? Her schooling experiences were not particularly motivating and guiding.)

For her it was just attending school, and passing exams without much effort. There was no connection between what she learnt in school and what happened at home. She feels education had no relevance in her world then. Mani says her schooling was very mechanical. Learning was never a problem to her even though there was no stimulation either from her lessons or from the teachers. It all was a routine exercise, she feels. Nobody was keen on education even when she was studying for her bachelor's degree. Sometimes, with changes like the medium of instruction or language, she had to struggle a little to learn. Otherwise her education was only passing exams. Mani says she does not know what exactly she got from her education.

So education to me was just passing the exams. There was nothing coming from my education, I didn't even feel the relevance of anything that I learnt in school.

At school too, they were always conscious of covering the syllabus and finishing the term... nobody showed any extra interest in anybody's education. So I didn't find any motivation in education in any big way. Even when I went to college, the famous college, I didn't find it unique or something great. I had the same friends from school, same community people around me... 10 am to 4 pm routine there also. Wait for the bus until 5 pm, walk for about 1.5 km to catch this bus... in the morning also catch a bus to town and another bus to the college... all our attention was on these things... not on what we were actually learning... there was no stimulation, no guidance, we didn't read the newspapers, or listen to the radio... there was no guiding people around us... and home atmosphere was like this. So how could I focus on education?

Ah, what happened in high school about this language was, we had this uncle who was a Sanskrit pandit. So our family children and others in the community were influenced by him and took up Sanskrit language as the first language when we reached high school. You know he was the Sanskrit teacher in high school (laughs). And the general understanding was that Sanskrit language studies got us good marks compared to Kannada language. And it was a remote village, the school was an aided school. Everybody was from this community, among the school staff and the management, from our community. Once they entered the school in some capacity, they wouldn't leave. They had this school job, their lands in and around the same village, their family settled there. So it was invariably a closed-life. No outlet. No brilliant teachers, no brilliant ideas, no

brilliant learning atmosphere. They came to school, taught us the routine lessons, we learnt them automatically without thinking... it continued.

When I came to my degree stage, I started retaliating against my father. Education was limited to going to the college and attending the exams. There were problems in education also. After my pre-university course I took up degree education in English medium of instruction. And Sanskrit was still the first language. Sanskrit teacher, my uncle, never taught us Sanskrit as a lovable language, it was made tough, non-applicable to our life, dead... and our mother tongue was this particular dialect, language...and third language was Hindi, that Hindi master too was never serious about Hindi as the third language... so what happened then was again pass the exams routinely... so I didn't gain any knowledge in any of these languages. The novels and the literature that I read in Kannada were the only proper sources of knowledge that I gained in high school. But even then I got I class in the exams. Good percentage, without any effort.

Even during my degree days I thought like my sisters I would also get married. After my bachelor's degree, I came to Bangalore, to visit my sister. There I said I didn't want to go back home again. I wanted to take up a job. I said even if I got Rs.200 or 250, that was okay, help me in getting a teacher's job in any school here, in Bangalore. I said I would not go back to my father again, could not bear him anymore...so we went to a Convent school asking for this job. My sister also had a baby at that time, she said okay, it would help her also if I was around. There in the Convent, everything was English-language oriented. I was a bit shocked. I had never suffered from an inferiority complex before, you know about my abilities. I was always bold, frank. But here, in this Convent in Bangalore city, it was totally intimidating for me. My writing was alright in English as the degree education was in that medium. But I never spoke the language. So I couldn't teach these children at all, or it was very difficult. Other teachers were also just average, not very knowledgeable, some had a bachelor's degree like me, but they spoke the language. I felt very lost among them, when they spoke English, had jokes... I suffered from an inferiority complex. The salary structure was also funny, one month it was Rs.200, another month it was Rs.300...everything was strange for me.

But then I had to go back to my village again. At that time, my eldest brother in the village fell sick with typhoid fever, my mother also got very sick, so I was called back as there was nobody at home to manage things. I stayed back for about 6 months... then I thought what did I have there...I thought I must do something about life, my life.

Probably that was the first and the only time that I got a serious thought about my life. I had done my degree, but didn't have a purpose in life, so what next? I thought I could do an M.A. I thought I was not required at home anymore as there was my new sister-in-law to run the family. By that time I was really away from my father, I wouldn't even speak to him, I was totally frustrated by him and his scolding... nothing mattered to him, who wants what, who is doing how... nothing about us, so I was disgusted with him. There were talks about finding a

groom for me; sisters were discussing the horoscope. I was reluctant. I didn't want to be there, seeing my father everyday... that much disgust.

I felt like studying further and getting a job and finding a new life. By that time this brother who was married also felt more responsible about the family and encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. So I planned for my M.A., brother helped me with my fees, by borrowing money from somebody. He accompanied me to the hostel, enrolled me there, saw that I was placed in the university without worries... so a new phase started. From this point onwards, father became a little bit soft towards me. Over the years he changed a little!

So I went to this big city, to the university to do the Masters, a two-year course. I didn't have clear-cut plans about what subject to study. I did sociology, economics and philosophy in my B.A., so I had to choose one among these three subjects. I didn't want to study economics. People said sociology was easy to study. I got II class in my final degree, so I could get into sociology easily. Philosophy didn't have any job opportunities later on in life. These were all the points that were considered at that time. So I took sociology in my M.A.

(Two long texts – on her father and home and on her education. Father left a long lasting impact on her with his tyrannical nature. That actually made her leave home. A **'push' away motivation** to do something else in life? A motivating factor for higher education? Whereas she says even higher education did not motivate her in any way. Mechanical learning experience. Subjects, teachers, lecturers, learning and teaching atmosphere, resources... no, nothing impressed her or left a striking experience. What is **'proper' knowledge**? Knowledge that is defined and disseminated by society's structures and systems? Personal wisdom?

Clear indication that schooling, subjects, teachers did not have any impact on her. They seemed to move her forward, at least, in terms of gaining educational qualification. She could occasionally think of higher education as a change in her life. On the other hand her relationship with her father, the roles of the domestic sphere and society's general negligence on education leaving Mani without gaining a purpose or some meaning in life even after her bachelor's degree are noteworthy. The state and civil society encouraged the continuation of roles and responsibilities not so much education. The adage that education brings all progress is nullified in its effect in Mani's story. Ironically even her **bachelor's degree** education **did not get her a job**. Even in a teacher's job in Bangalore she was confronted by her lack of English language

proficiency, not her subject knowledge or her wisdom. Until now, in her experiences, education has not been useful.)

She thinks she was too 'unexposed' even when she went to the university for her master's degree. She had the best lecturers and the best stimulating, intellectual atmosphere around her. But she did not gain much from anything except for observing everything with curiosity. She does not think she benefited much from her academic studies at the university.

In my M.A. also I remained quite naïve. Actually there was a lot happening in and around the university as it was known for its intellectual atmosphere. There was a lot of discussions, conferences, seminars, events, activities. So many of them were happening. But I was not that much aware of anything around me. I had my own same girls' groups around me, girls like me coming from rural background, not so modern. We stuck to each other within this our own small group. We were not anything recognizable. We were not studious, we were not big intellectuals, we didn't participate in the events of the university, we didn't know much about anything. So it was like that, mediocre life. Unfortunately I didn't even get friends who could be much more than me, become a guide...

See, even then I didn't gain much academically. There were lecturers, excellent library, intellectual atmosphere everything was there. But I didn't get good guidance and motivation from these factors. Academic learning scope was not that much, for me. Some lecturers who had studied in Oxford University were exemplary. But I wasn't that much impressed or influenced. I don't know why. Even in our sociology class there used to be some 80 or 90 students in the lecture hall; nobody attended to individual students. Even in college, I was studious, sat in the first bench in front of the lecturer, asked sharp questions and probed the lecture notes. But I found that what I was learning in those subjects didn't really apply to life, everyday life. So, I restricted myself to only passing the exams. I didn't think beyond that as an intellectual.

(Her experiences in the above texts once again highlight education becoming uninspirational, leaving her without a direction in life. Neither for a job nor for knowledge and wisdom. Did **her rural background** adversely affect her opportunities to access the university level academic life? Is that a tension? But she did not gain much even from the very knowledgeable lecturers and the subjects they taught. Are these her assumptions? **Assumptions about** people of rural background not being smart, urban background and their abilities and girls...)

My growing awareness was actually nourished by a person, not education.

She underlines that her future husband, who was a classmate at that time brought the awareness in her life that something else existed beyond and after education, something more about knowledge, worldview and more awareness about issues in society.

Sometimes education fails to inspire people like me. But people may become sources of inspiration and motivation. My growing awareness was actually nourished by a person, not my education. I met Shankar at the end of 1986. He was in Social Work masters, our departments were next to each other. I was not much aware of boys also. If somebody looked handsome I would just look at him. I never fancied any boy or a man, didn't have love affairs, was quite innocent. During my bachelor's degree days also, even when I came across boys in the college, I didn't treat most of them as equal to me.

Because of the caste difference. I would know if they were from different castes by their behaviour, their language pronunciation. So I would keep away from them. I didn't treat them equal with me. I wouldn't tolerate them as they were not Brahmans. I thought they were not good people, so I had to avoid them. So I didn't have many opportunities to mingle with boys. I didn't look at boys from any different eyes. I just ignored them. But there were no family restrictions not to mingle with boys. We were quite close to boys in the family circles, relatives. I just didn't treat boys in my college as important. May be I followed the caste system as we interacted mostly with our caste boys who were almost like your own blood relatives. I couldn't look at them differently. So I never even felt curious about other boys. Once there was a proposal for marriage when I was in college. There was this friend of my elder brother but I always thought of him as a dumb head. To another proposal I said he didn't have a degree whereas I had a bachelor's degree, so he is lower to me. Like this, I didn't approve of mediocre boys. Probably I was thinking and dreaming of a good looking, decent man, with higher education, much above me...

But this Shankar's case was different. I thought he was good-looking. I admired him for his looks, for his intellectual talk, manners his brains and his radical ideas. This was at the end of my first year M.A.. I thought he was very sharp, very intelligent, was very literary, participated in high intellectual events, very articulate, he was very good looking. I didn't think much about him as not being a Brahman. From my family background anybody who was not a Brahman was branded as a Shudra, the 'other', lower caste person. Only Brahmans were considered as standard by all of us. I didn't have much awareness about different types of castes. I never even tried to know or felt interested. At the outset I thought anybody that suited me was okay, regardless of the caste. I didn't care much about the caste as long as this somebody suited me and my thoughts of a man. But I still didn't approve of boys or men speaking differently from Brahmans. But Shankar was different. Even though he was from a different caste, he was above me in everything. So I really didn't mind his caste because his

highly polished language, manners... his total personality was quite appealing to me.

I spent the first year of the master's course with curious eyes, wide open, eager to observe the world around me, but still naïve inside me. Those seminars, events, their talks and debates were all interesting to me. But I didn't learn much (laughs)...After I got introduced to Shankar I simply followed him everywhere, in everything. Probably it was me who opened up first about liking him. I said to him that I liked him very much, liked his talking style, his words, his behaviour... He was very active in all sorts of things in the university. There were many forums, platforms, associations... opposing the caste system, introducing radical ideas, socialism, breaking the socio-cultural myths... he was active in all these. Probably I was introduced to this different world by Shankar, or through him. Slowly I started grasping things. I started learning things, about life and about the world around me. I was quite impressed with him too, always thought about his superior interests, intellectual personality, his ability to present papers so effortlessly in seminars, people liking him and trusting him so much... everything about him impressed me immensely. Then I felt there were so many things that I had to learn and absorb, develop myself, grow as a person.

So in education, I was never a dull student, or had difficulties in learning or understanding what was taught or never suffered from any inferior feelings that the subjects were too tough for me. But I don't know what exactly I learnt or got from my education. Only after I came into contact with Shankar did I realise that there is so much beyond and after education. Besides formal education there was so much to learn from. That we could use the library in so many different ways for our knowledge, there are so many opportunities to expand our limited understanding of this world, there are so many ways of participating in life...

Until then I had this understanding of education as passing all my exams without a fail, and after my MA, I will have to become a lecturer like others... this was the only limited view that I had of my formal education. It never even occurred to me that education could or would have given me something. And in addition to that view, I thought I was a bit different from my sisters that I got up to post graduation level in education, so I would be better than them, I would get a lecturer husband, life will be nice etc. That was my spread of thoughts at that time (laughs loudly).

The reason why I am telling these things is that I am not a dumb person, I am not a person who can be branded as dull or daft, she won't understand this kind of person. I didn't come from a low caste, or because of that I suffered a lot of inferiority complex, so I never evolved myself as a person, I was subordinated... no, it was not like that. The only drawback in my education was that I never got a sound, strong guidance to progress in life in this particular direction... no, I didn't get that at any point of my formal education life, that's a pity. It was a closed circle of the same friends, same relatives, same teachers who thought of teaching only as their duty. Nobody inspired me as a teacher, nobody tried to promote the students, or instill that confidence, become a model to their students... I can't

think of even a single teacher who was a guiding force like that to the students. It was like that in my formal education life.

After Shankar's contact, I realised the interest in education and thought of studying more and further. But I never did that (laughs loudly). Got married, job, child... lots happened. Probably after I met him, I was immersed in the love world (laughs again), just continued my studies as usual without any major changes. Only when he gave me some books, I would read them. Otherwise there was hardly any time. Morning I would get up and think of Shankar, then attend the classes, and in the evening again we both would sit down in the campus and talk, talk and talk. When he was discussing so many matters with me, mainly it was him discussing them I would listen to him, only then I got some of this social education, world education, opened my mind to other things... I don't know what exactly I learnt or got from education...

But all this actually helped me open up my limited world to the various issues that he was raising, broadening my thinking, drawing my attention to so many facts of life, remove the short-sightedness that I was having about English language, caste system, my naïve nature. I started opening up myself to the world of reality around me only because of these talks (laughs) and there was Shankar. I used to think oh, is this world full of all these matters, issues, thinking. See, this Shankar was from a sort of Communist background, so issues were aplenty for him all around, and he would go about posing as a great intellectual (laughs); but I didn't have any kind of orientation or exposure, let alone thoughts inside my own mind about such things... but he would love me so much that I loved every moment of being loved by him, I just couldn't imagine leaving him even for a moment, that was reality for me. But then these arguments, issues and talks would come in; and again some disagreement between us and me looking at things wide-eyed and open mouth, he would ridicule me but he was protective also; and again in the morning our classes would begin, we would rush to our departments...then I would think he was upset with me, I would spend all my daytime thinking about that and the classes... it continued like this, that one whole year.

So my world was like that. And education, its value, my understanding of education not coming through only books and passing exams, these were unfolding slowly. Shankar would introduce me to the wealth of the university library, how students can also be actively involved in many issues of the society. These were still unfolding to me. But I was still very new to everything. Now looking back I tend to think did we, people like me, walk around all our life until then blindfolded? Why is that we didn't see anything around us, how come we were not stimulated by anything around us... teachers, lecturers didn't motivate us... so, in reality formal education was not present or experienced by me at all.

(Discovering the world within and beyond formal educational frames. One person's guidance can impact so much in life, she is saying. Does that mean there **is no impact** at all from formal education, even higher education? She says it was not present at all. Not

experienced at all. Is this only an individual experience or a collective experience, of many more people? Does everyone have a guiding source beyond their educational influences... to **experience education**? Is this the success of a person's charisma over the failure of an unimpressive education system? 'People like me walk around all our life until then blindfolded.'

Her texts highlight a particular **dilemma** about her personal stands – on following the caste system, on having some reservations about men in her world, her consciousness of her bachelor's degree status when a marriage proposal came and her sharp observation on lack of relevance of education in life. She did not mind Shankar's lower caste, even though he too was doing a similar formal degree she regarded him as an intellectual; her reservations about men subsided when she thought of Shankar.

Or did she experience her world, until she met Shankar, that was devoid of motivation in terms of people and events? **One person** and his personality changed her personality, her world and her future. **Not education**. How do I connect the personal and social in Mani's story? Did Mani's extremely rigid, uninspiring social world lead towards accepting another extreme – a man and his absolute personal influence upon her as a person? Her texts also highlight her choice of the people she related to which illuminates her sense of **identity**. Also her ability to take decisions much contrary to the expectations of her family and society.)

Shankar has influenced me more than my education...

Mani thinks that her postgraduate days filled her with different experience in terms of living in a hostel in a different city, falling in love with her classmate and later deciding upon him as her life partner. These gave her some confidence, it was in a way a liberating experience for her, she thinks.

Shankar changed her world in many ways including opening her mind towards the world. He supported her, provided good guidance and direction in her life. She complemented him with her in-born skills of managing their domestic lives well. Later when she started a field-based career Shankar provided much guidance. More than what

she learnt through her formal subjects it was his support and guidance that influenced her personality and career, she says.

...the major advancement because of my MA was that I could choose my life partner myself. Living in a hostel, outside the family itself was an experience. That gave me some sort of different confidence. At any cost I was not prepared to go back to the same environment at home. So I was in a way liberated from that atmosphere only because of my MA and I knew I could find a job, any kind of job from my MA degree.

But I didn't get an opportunity to test myself, my skills in an outside totally new and strange environment, facing the world alone, myself like that. That experience I actually missed. Because see, immediately after my MA degree, I joined Shankar and we were together afterwards. Even before it was he who exposed me to a world of awareness, intellectual discussions, human relations, about our society, people, issues... he would go on talking... I would just listen to him. He knew so much. See he was already in that social movement, a big leader...

He was also my support all the time. But he always discussed everything with me, he never left me out of anything. And I was not dumb; I had natural skills in handling everyday life, finances etc, so I participated quite naturally. I was not an intellectual like him, but I was average skilful woman, capable of handling our domestic lives well. He lacked skills there, in that domestic area. So we matched our skills, pooled our strengths together. We were complementary to each other. And because of that I never got this feeling of being submissive or under him etc. Because I grew up in a large community, I was quite good in talking and interacting with people, managing things associated with daily life...

When I required to work in the villages, in the actual field, I didn't need these subjects or my degrees. I needed experience, good experience to work in the field. Especially the project people, women etc. At such times it was again Shankar who taught me the tricks of interacting with people in the field, the topics that I should discuss with them, how to approach them as a professional yet reaching them as a person etc. So it wasn't that difficult.

(Shankar's influence. Her own personality. Both becoming complementary. Growing as an educated woman. What patterns emerge here? Learning to become a professional from Shankar's guidance. Having and recognising her own abilities and strengths in her career such as interpersonal skills, efficiency to manage a project and self-confidence reflected in doing so.

Using **her abilities** as an educated woman... what are the experiences? Evolving as an educated woman? There is Shankar's shadow and influence in everything that she does,

is doing, including guiding her project. So back to her abilities and strengths. There is a **tension and conflict in** reflections. Growing abilities and running the project efficiently...from the influence of her education or the experience of being educated or from the guidance that Shankar provided at each and every step in the following years? Maybe just when she was exposing herself to a new academic, learning, intellectual and totally different environment during her M.A. study Shankar came into her life. May be it was the combined effect of Shankar, new environment that had just begun to fill her with opportunities of choice, the very fact that she lived away from family and realised she could choose her own way in future life and her higher degree qualification also. This crucial period in her life, the events, the people and the environment itself, might have helped her realise the person inside her. This **self-realisation** grew over the years through her chosen career at the grassroots and her different life style due to Shankar's influence.)

I am very much different from others.

Mani said she had never thought a topic such as the experiences of being an educated woman. After some thinking she says she can say being an educated woman is being confident. It also includes recognition from the society, gaining strength that she is educated and the very feeling that she is educated is different. She knows that she is different to other women of her family who have not had higher education. Her qualities, thinking, values are different. There is Shankar's influence to some extent, she notes. Education has given her a base for analysis, insights, reflections.

Mani recognises that she is a woman first in her everyday life. Her identity of being an educated woman comes later as everyday life envelops women in reality as they function as women. But education has provided her a channel to develop and build upon her capacities.

As soon as we say an educated woman, we... (pause) could we define her as a well-cultured woman... I am just wondering how to put it...educated woman and the experience of being an educated woman... I am thinking. I had never thought about this topic before. What can I say about my experience of being...

Perhaps our education gives us such courage, confidence to say that I am educated and I can do something about my life. See I am noted everywhere as a woman with a MA degree, or I myself say that look, I have a MA in sociology... see, this qualification also matters a lot.

I didn't get that confidence then. Because even after my BA I was considered unfit for jobs because of my poor performance in that Convent school in Bangalore (laughs)... so I thought I was not fit for a job, a profession, I didn't have the confidence. But I was aware that I needed a job to earn my living, to be independent etc. So I went for a couple government job interviews also at that time after my BA. But I didn't get; because BA was just an ordinary degree that didn't have any job value. But doing an MA was still a speciality as not many in my native place did an MA. So I was privileged. That feeling came afterwards.

When I finished my BA it didn't give me such strength; only after my MA that qualification itself gave me strength and some power. At least for my mind, for some people, in the society, within the family circles, among my siblings, or social functions... there is some recognition by people that I have done an MA, I am an educated woman. So there is that recognition and I feel it very much in my life. After my M.A. I also got the confidence of getting a job, could survive on my own. And this feeling that I am very much different from others too.

For example, see this qualification is there; that degree and the qualification comes to use everywhere, because people recognise you by that in outside world; wherever you go, you can use that degree. And since my area is rural sociology it is quite relevant. And then I said I feel so different from my sisters in my thinking and living. There is never a feeling of being submissive in my life now. In whatever matter it is, the influence of my higher education is there. It shows automatically too, in my everyday life in some situation because I have something to say always. And when it turns out to be correct, I am proud of my reaction or response. I don't come across a situation where I grope in the darkness, no, there is always some answer to everything... see, this position is reached due to many facilitating factors, one among them, quite strongly is the influence of education, higher education. When I came here first employed to run a women's project, I ran the project quite efficiently. It didn't happen successfully in Bangalore when we started our work there initially... but here I proved my efficiency. It gave me satisfaction. I received a lot of appreciation. It gave me so much confidence that I could manage any such work easily. There may be an influence of my MA too there and then this work exposure also. This came as I have an MA degree...

People would invite me to participate in public meetings, organised talks, as a guest to speak from a platform, literacy campaign, guest lecturing, participate in the activities of other NGOs, different forums... so I started thinking this is because of my MA too besides my work. See these people would put my qualification next to my name in the invitation cards. Probably with just a BA degree, this wouldn't be possible. They recognised my MA qualifications too.

See, this education, it is like a base, I think. Keeping that base with you, if you say, you think, you view or analyse your life, there is an influence there, you get more insights there. It is like a facilitating key. So, I would say education has helped me much, I cannot deny that at all.

For example, see, I don't think like other ordinary women. When I say ordinary women I don't mean to lower them nor I would claim myself to be an intellectual person with a high profile. But I know and I can say that I am different to some extent compared to most other women. Say, for example, in matters related to raising our daughter; giving prominence to her thoughts, treating her as a person... and about this caste. Even though I was born into a Brahman family, I am not practicing Brahmanism. We have girls, our staff from different castes. They spend days and nights here, with us. See, their thoughts are different, habits and behaviour are different. It starts from their cleanliness and sense of hygiene. Everything is so different with them. But I adjusted to them, sometimes I taught them to be clean. I accommodated them easily in our house. Shankar being the only male in the house, how could we live like that... but I think my education helped me there, set me thinking broadly, more openly and with more maturity.

I don't think all educated women would be able to do this. When we start thinking about other educated women being like this, I don't get a good answer there. Whether they have done MA degrees, or Ph.D.s. I have seen many women with higher education. They are, most of them, not like this... mostly immersed in their house matters, materials, purchasing this or that, bank balance, having a high life style, class feeling, closed family life, not open towards people lower to them or accommodating. When I see them now, I know I am not like them. I just didn't opt to be like them.

I tend to participate only in such places where I am recognised as a person, my voice is recognised; otherwise I remain passive; I don't claim anything. I cannot categorically say that as a woman, as an educated woman only because of that I have got this, I have obtained this in life... I cannot claim to have obtained anything big only because I am an educated woman.

Now, many times, most times, our ways are binding; we are socially bound. So when we speak of individual freedom, we cannot get to do everything freely in our society (laughs). We cannot be free in that sense of doing whatever we want to do. And then as times passes, we tend to lose motivation or enthusiasm and ask ourselves do we need to behave like that? See, at certain age, that enthusiasm and spirit is there; but as we grow older, with maturity, we tend to become adjusted to that frame, and prefer to live within that frame. For example, at one stage of my life I used to say why should I cook, I will make my husband cook, I will make him do all house chores...some age influence was there. Young blood. But gradually, life looks different. We start to accept everything within the frame, and orient ourselves to living within that. We even tend to think that this is right and easy, I cannot do everything alone, it is better to live within that boundary. So nothing is recognizable as totally individual freedom there. We get tied down by numerous things in life. See, I want to sit and read for hours. But I cannot leave

that work, this and everything needs to be done within a time frame. I have to attend to that. Sometimes, I have felt it. I wanted to read, I never got such a free time to sit and read as I liked.

Sometimes I do feel for missing out on my interest of reading. I am educated, alright, but have I been able to read plenty of literature and other stuff, to expand my knowledge base, to inform myself better? I am educated, yes, but I am not a distinguished person in anything. I don't have that specialised, expert knowledgeable personality. I do feel sorry for this. I want to have that. But if I go about that desire now, all the other work will suffer. So I have to give up my interest of reading, gaining knowledge. Sometimes I start making a resolve within me, saying 'yes, I am going to make some time for myself, for my reading, I will sideline all other work.' But it is just not possible to implement that in action amidst all this work at home and with the organisation. Then I think is it right to ignore these works, plans, actions and be immersed in my own selfish desire of reading.

I don't see a great different between an educated woman and a woman. See, life is being us everyday. We want to live everything. See, if you go with a single mind of being an educated woman, who is such an educated woman who is not a woman first? You are a woman, you are living, you want to live this life as it unfolds before you everyday. You cannot go around living as an educated woman only. If that happens then, this everyday life will be damaged. You certainly want to live this life also. Because we want to live this kind normal life also. That is reality. Everything is inclusive here. So, one is forced to sacrifice something. So, in my case it is now giving up my interest of reading. I even thought sometimes, of doing a Ph.D. which has not been possible until now. I have to give up that idea, living this everyday life. See, probably that forcefulness, resolve without compromising is not there in my personality, I think. So, may be I find excuses and let that desire of mine pass away. Sometimes I do think that if I make up my mind very firmly, it may become a reality. But I also think that I can compensate without that desire. So people cannot go about living too individualistically like practicing total freedom, equity...we have to adjust and compromise with life. For example, in my case, I tend not to order others about work. Like you know, hey you, you do this or do that. Even if I myself am very tired, I would do the work myself but I can't order others to do for me. Sometimes in the evenings when I returned from the field with my young child I used to think oh, if only somebody was home to look after me! But I wouldn't say that out loud. I believe life in everyday terms is like that, we are people first, then comes the status, our awareness that we are educated.

But we cannot ignore the role of education here at all because through education as a channel, this development can be achieved; or that is our conviction. That education should become a channel to further our capacities to develop ourselves; more people will be involved; there will be a generational development and change through these educated young women... so education becomes quite relevant there.

(Feeling different as an educated woman. Feeling more as a woman than an educated woman. **Boundaries, compromises.** Everyday life. Giving up personal space for other commitments. **Everyday life realities** of a woman. Educated woman is secondary to a woman. **Personal versus social.** Lots of insights and themes here that add up.

To begin with Mani talks about her education providing her with choices to do something about her life. She could bring in a change if she desired to. But only a bachelor's degree was not enough for a job. Education up to a B.A. did not automatically result in getting a job. She gained confidence and a feeling of power after her Master's degree, along with a feeling of being different to others. Different as she was more educated, different as she had grown as a person in different directions from Shankar's influence, different as she was aware of many choices available to her. Over the years, she has recognised society's attention towards her as an education woman and her career. It is a satisfying feeling. She is **confident** in herself. She knows how to use her education which is a base for a person to grow.

However, there are a few **dilemmas and tensions** too. She also talks about her ways that are **binding**. She even generalises that 'we are socially bound.' Society controls an individual's life and freedom. Realisation that we cannot do everything that we want to do comes gradually with acceptance.

Being able to do what she wants to do personally has not been possible to achieve. Her personal desire of relaxing, reading, doing a Ph.D. degree, obtaining specialised expert knowledge, expert personality...Is this because she is extremely committed to her grassroots work, or she keeps herself within the **social frames** or her **personal choice** of living within the frames, sacrificing personal priorities? She says there isn't a great difference between educated woman and an ordinary woman. She is a woman first, then an educated woman.)

Epilogue

Mani's description of herself as an educated woman and her experiences give a picture of discouraging home environment, uninspiring formal education, education lacking

experience. Her open-mindedness and curiosity to observe the world around her were more present during her student days than participation. She credits her life partner Shankar for guidance and support for her growth as a person. Her profile of an educated woman's experience has features like courage, confidence, strength, power, recognition and respect from society, having insights and different values, inclusive life style.

These summarized features are listed below with supporting quotes. These will be described further in the next chapter with a discussion.

Father's power and control	But he had reservations of his own, he wanted to control our life in all possible ways... I don't know why he wanted to control us like that... what we actually wanted he would never get those things for us. We never understood him. I am talking about those years. So nobody really focused much on higher education.
Brother's example	My immediate elder brother took up higher education. See my immediate elder brother, now he is the only one in the family to have reached M.A., and Ph.D., only through his efforts... He, much later, encouraged me a lot and also helped in many ways for my studies.
Home environment	So nobody really focused much on higher education. The whole environment at home was like that, lacking any awareness about higher education. There was no newspaper, no radio for sometime, no motivation. There was no inclination even to expose ourselves to the outside world, eagerness to learn from the world...
Uninspiring education	...we studied in the school, yes, and that was it. Return home, and there was absolutely no connection between what we learnt in the school and to our life at home. School lessons only in school, to pass the exams, that was our education. No discussion, no parental involvement...nobody showed any extra interest in anybody's education.
Education lacked experience	So, those schooling and college years... education to me was just passing the exams. There was nothing coming from my education, I didn't even

feel the presence of anything that I learnt in school.

Shankar's influence	Only after I came into contact with Shankar did I realise that there is so much beyond and after education or apart from formal education. That we could use the library in so many different ways for our knowledge, there are so many opportunities to expand our limited understanding of this world, there are so many ways of participating in life... I got some of this social education, world education, opened my mind to other things...
Guidance, support Complementary roles	He was also my support all the time. I had natural skills in handling everyday life, finances etc, so I participated quite naturally with my instincts. I was not an intellectual like him, but I was average skilful woman, capable of handling our domestic lives well. He lacked skills there, in that domestic area. So we matched our skills, pooled our strengths together. We were complementary to each other.
Courage	Perhaps our education gives us such courage, confidence to say that I am educated and I can do something about my life. See I am noted everywhere as a woman with a MA degree, or I myself say that look, I have a MA in sociology... see, this qualification also matters a lot. When
Confidence	I finished my BA it didn't give me such strength; only after my MA that qualification itself gave me strength and some power. At least for my
Power	mind, for some people, in the society, within the family circles, among my siblings, or social functions... there is some recognition by people that I have done an MA, I am an educated woman. So there is that recognition and I feel it very much in my life.
Social recognition	But now I can say I am different. Only by comparing to other women in our family. This, I think, is due to my education. What else but the influence of my education, that is the contribution of my education, isn't it? I believe so. After my MA, actually I became more cultured, more
Influence from education	simplistic in my life style.
Insight	You certainly want to live this life also. So we cannot very strongly, vehemently say we want to live as educated women; because we want to live this kind normal life also; that is reality. Everything is inclusive here.

Kavitha

I was not confident even after a degree. I lacked experience.

Kavitha

Kavitha is working as a community organiser in Mani's organisation. She exhibited a high level of zeal and dedication towards the work that she was doing. Before I went to meet Mani I had the idea of approaching her staff for my research interviews. I knew her staff consisted of only women. I rang Mani a few days before I visited her and asked if I could invite any of her staff members as my research participants if they were university-educated and had completed their Bachelor's degree. Mani agreed and informed her staff about my intention. We found out that only three of them had a bachelor's degree awarded. Among them was Kavitha, who expressed interest and willingness to participate in both the interviews. Interviews were held on March 9 and April 10 in their office.

I was not confident even after a bachelor's degree... I lacked experience.

Kavitha remembers that as a girl and later as a college-going young woman she was timid. Completing a bachelor's degree didn't help much in overcoming her shyness. She thinks social environment affects a girl in developing assertion. It is discouraging, without much scope to develop confidence and an individual identity. Society expects 'a girl to be a girl.' She has had experiences where she felt too pressured, anxious from the social expectations surrounding her.

Kavitha had an aim of getting a bachelor's degree qualification, get a job and be financial independent. Her parents gave her that opportunity. She is engaged, getting married soon.

Most commonly in our country it is hard to see confidence in a girl and a woman. Nobody instils that confidence and courage in her. From her very young age her parents treat her differently to that of boys. She is surrounded by society which interferes with everything – there is a girl here, she is of this age, why is she dressed like this, she should be dressed in a sari according to that age, don't send her to school, she is a burden anyway, oh, you got a girl again, okay keep one lakh rupees ready for her marriage, now that she is born you are in debt already – this attitude surrounds her from birth. Her parents also don't have confidence about her. Even before she realises, she has already experienced this feeling oh, God, why did I become a girl... I am a girl, so this is my place. That experience is

deeply rooted. I have experienced it many many times in my life, feeling why am I born as a girl.

In our Kannada language lessons at school we had *Veeravanithe Obavva's* story. How she exhibits her courage and sense of time in putting down the British troops during Tipu Sultan's time. And the popular story of our famous lady police officer Kiran Bedi, a contemporary role model. I often thought that these women achieved so much in their own ways, they were exemplary. I wanted to follow their example.

I used to like History very much. I didn't like studying English language. Maths was okay. But English was the toughest. I would never get more than 30% pass marks in that subject. My brain would go blank during the English language exam. I used to get very scared of failing in that subject. I got good average marks in other subjects. I liked Maths. My father tutored us in Maths, he is very good in Maths.

My father was always very encouraging towards our education. He said he would be ashamed if none of his children studied Maths as he was an expert in that subject. And he was very strict about our studies and our learning. If we didn't learn properly he would be very harsh saying if you don't pass an SSLC, you would eventually get only a drunkard man for a husband. That made us study hard!

My aim was to get my bachelor's degree, and a job and stand on my own two legs. That was the only thought. But to face all this, it was tough with this sort of people's attitude about my conduct. Why college education for her, why not marriage, she talks with boys...you know, we are constantly nagged by these neighbours, relatives and society in general. It just demotivates you. Many times I was not able to do anything...I would sit at home and cry. So, this society doesn't let girls develop inner strength, like courage and self-confidence.

My parents helped in keeping up my aim of getting a bachelor's degree. They trusted me. And I always told them not to get me married off early. Let me study and become self-reliant. I told them even though I was born as a woman, I would become useful to the society as a man, so let me develop myself like that. Even now I tell them that... my marriage is fixed now. I didn't want to marry. Especially after joining this organisation, I never wanted to marry. There is so much to achieve in life. But there have been so many conflicts at home about my marriage. I am the first girl, having two younger sisters. Shankar Sir, from this organisation, counselled me saying this society looks at unmarried women from a different viewpoint. It treats them differently. So just get married and then continue what you want to do. Don't hurt your parents, you have two younger sisters too, so don't go against your parents. Then I agreed for the marriage. Next month it is taking place. I am still feeling that way, don't want marriage. Sometimes I also think of my abilities – let me marry, he doesn't have to take care of me. I am an educated person. I can earn my own living. I can take care of myself. So at least I need not be a dependent.

Before joining this organisation, I was only a college educated girl. I didn't have courage or confidence about myself, my identity... nothing. If somebody said something negative about me, I would lose every inch of my self... very frightened, like keeping myself back, not brave. Yes, I was like that even after completing my bachelor's degree. Even if somebody said a silly thing about me, I would worry a lot about that. I mean it is like that here, the whole social environment. We girls are always scared... even when I was studying... see, it just comes to us from our surroundings. Nobody tries to support her to develop confidence.

So, an Indian woman, not just me, whoever it is, educated or not, she needs that motivating environment where she is given hope, confidence, her own identity, courage... then undoubtedly she will become a good confident woman in this society. But nobody gives her that scope, nobody even lets her develop as a person, they don't. Because she is a girl, they actually try their best to remove all the natural feelings of confidence and identity. They curb them. They want a girl to be a girl.

To tell you the truth I wasn't like this even when I was finishing my final degree. I was only, what they say, a book-worm, hesitating to speak, timid behaviour, not confident. I could not tolerate even the slightest criticism about me or teasing. The first response would be crying, weeping, worrying about what others thought of me... It happened when I used to get low marks in the college exams too.

The only confidence that I had during my degree days was that at least I was getting a degree and I would be able to get a job if I wanted. Then I could rely on myself. But I was very sensitive about everything. Only after I joined this organisation, through my travelling in the villages as part of my community organiser's role, I got this self-confidence and courage.

When I was studying in college for a bachelor's degree in Commerce, I was aware that I had opportunities that many of my peers didn't have. A lot of my friends didn't even begin the college degree. I used to think at least my life would be definitely different from theirs because I could be economically independent. They are not educated. I am educated. That kind of confidence was there in me. And I studied my subjects with good focus. Later I wanted to do a master's degree, M.B.A. I couldn't as it needed high marks, good results in the entrance exam and then a lot of money to pay for donation, for fees etc. What I want to say here is even at that stage I was not an outspoken girl, I was still holding myself back in everything. I was scared to identify myself as myself in front of even 10 people. I would hesitate to reveal who and what I was. May be I lacked an understanding about my identity. I just would keep back... Here, in this grassroots organisation work, you know I am working as a community organiser here, I have gained a lot. Both identity and recognition of my abilities.

From a hesitant person she has transformed into a confident and courageous person. Kavitha credits her organisation and her role as a field worker for the changes in her

personality. During her college education she was developing some confidence which disappeared when she was at home after her studies. She says she felt worthless then. This particular job gave her an identity, new energy. Her education gave her theoretical perspectives but she lacked life experience until she got into her present job, she notes.

It took some time to become this confident woman from a hesitant girl. I would sulk when people would talk something about me. After my degree I started speaking out, like voicing my thoughts, questioning when people said negative things about my life. When I started seeing the world around me with my new position, you know I was a degree holder by then, there was some kind of growth inside me as a person.

And from this job I have grown tremendously as a person. I voice my thoughts fearlessly now. If there is a necessity, I don't hesitate to speak on behalf of women and girls in public. I raise questions, ask why things are like this in our society. I speak at public functions too, representing the organisation. It has given me strength. All this happened gradually... may be different level exposure to life also counts here. Sometimes when I look back I wonder if this Kavitha is the same as that old Kavitha. There is such a big change in my personality and attitude.

I was developing some level of self-confidence and courage when I was doing my bachelor's degree. I used to tell myself how proud I was, doing a bachelor's degree and I would be a degree holder soon, that achievement feeling was growing inside me. After finishing my degree I was at home for two months. In those two months I lost all that confidence and courage that I was getting during my college education. I don't know why. May be I was sitting at home doing nothing.

When I was at home doing nothing I got this feeling that I was of no use, I was a waste-body. I was neither studying, nor was in a job. I was a burden to parents. What was I doing in my life? I felt guilty even about having food without contributing to the family's finances. I don't know why, what happened to me at that time, all I felt was I was useless. I thought oh, why on earth has my college life ended... I had no goal in life... sudden feeling of loss... terrible experience.

Then only after getting a job, this job, I got my self-confidence back. I felt as if I was charged with a new battery. So for a woman when she is given education, especially like bachelor's degree level education she changes a lot, she starts to become a person. She starts to grow in some ways. Then she needs to apply that to her life in many ways... like a job, interaction with people, handling new situations... See, after my degree staying at home doing nothing I felt I was restricted as a person. My mobility was restricted. I didn't have the courage to go to Bangalore city even though it was so close by. I didn't know how to find a job for myself. I depended on my father for everything. Until I completed my degree education I used to go to the college and then home life. There was a focus. I

didn't have use my own abilities as that was a routine. But after that, without a focus, I felt helpless. To do anything different I needed to rely on my father or somebody. But now I am different. I have the courage to do things independently now.

No, education alone didn't give me such courage. I was scared even after my degree education. I liked to be mobile and be independent. But not inviting some trouble, like going out alone in the night times. I follow that even now for my own safety. And my inferiority complex that if I asked somebody about how to go to the city, how to do things that I didn't know, like applying for a job... They might say oh, look at her, a village simpleton... they might misguide me and my safety would be at risk... so I was hesitant. See, I was just a bookish person with a degree. I lacked that life experience. I didn't have any life experience. I didn't face situations alone to learn from life.

My formal education taught me some theoretical stuff. I could do things only when I had somebody beside me guiding me or supervising me all the time. I didn't have the practical experience. But I always wanted to be a capable, independent woman... I used to look at women who were in jobs and wonder how did they get their jobs, on their own, or with some help. I used to admire them for their independent abilities. Could I also become like them. But I didn't have the courage to put these thoughts into practice. I was dependent upon my father for everything. Educated but not having life experience.

(Reflections on the social environment that surrounds a girl, her education, subjects, learning, father's influence. Then on her **choices available** in life. Even though Kavitha was determined about financial independence and no marriage, she has to get married. She could choose her employment but not take a decision about marriage. Education gives a **theoretical knowledge**, not so much in terms of **confidence, courage** and **identity**, she says. A woman **learns much from life experience**.

Her experiences about society, its influence upon girls and stereotyping illuminate the girls' and women's place in society. Her words underline her **confrontations, conflicts** in everyday life. She disliked society's control over her life, wanted a life of her own from her education. The **tension** that is evident in her experiences is between the individual and the state. State and civil society's control over her opportunities, her ambitions and her marriage seems to be more than her own ability to express confidence, courage and developing an identity. Fortunately, her father encouraged her to complete college education. However, he often reminded his girls that if they didn't

do well in exams they would get only a drunkard husband. Is this **experience affirming** the popular social belief that an educated girl gets a better job and a better husband?

Kavitha's college degree education did not empower her to speak out, express herself confidently or even overcome her timidness. She lacked practical experience and exposure to life's multiple situations and challenges. Education for independence, but still being unable to speak out in everyday life? Or to take decisions? She felt useless, 'a waste body'. Does her 'terrible experience' illuminate the currently perceived value of education, i.e., it is for a job and social status? Education is not, then regarded to empower a person critically to analyse their world!

A **turning point** with her job was when she put her education, her thoughts and ideas to practice. Life experience actually gave her what she desperately needed and dreamed of.)

Now I get the picture that I am not a shy, timid girl anymore.

Kavitha says she has the confidence of surviving independently anywhere as she is educated. She can be financially secure. She is also capable of making decisions. She thinks her present job helped her to strengthen those abilities. An ordinary administrative level job doesn't empower a woman in such a way, she feels. Now she is able to express herself confidently with reflections and her own viewpoints. Her grassroots work provided space to develop these abilities.

She says she is in control of her life, her earnings. She thinks better about her future now and imagines her future plans. As an educated woman she has improved her manners, interpersonal skills, has developed qualities like patience. She says educated people are expected to develop such qualities which she has achieved. She can counsel others, guide them.

The basic reason to go up to bachelor's degree level is to get a good job... it gives so much confidence. The confidence that I have now is that I have got this degree and experience in life. That I am capable of getting a job and earning for my life. I can survive anywhere. Tomorrow when I am married whether I get a good life or

not, I at least have this confidence that I am not a burden to anybody, not to my husband or to his family. I can be economically independent. I can contribute to the family's finances. That courage is with me. I am proud about it.

This job is the biggest influence on my life. Now I am capable of making my own decisions, to know what is right and wrong. If I had a clerk's job I would have to just say yes to my parents' decisions about my life. I wouldn't have the capacity to have clarity about my own viewpoints. My viewpoint wouldn't be valuable. My parents would have dominated over me.

Now it's different. I am more aware now, have my own knowledge base and better worldview too. I have my own imagination for a life partner and my future life too. I am sure this couldn't have been developed through a clerk level job. I would have been just an ordinary woman, with just a bachelor's degree in hand, without much thinking space. I wouldn't have got this courage and confidence to speak my mind and express my views.

I have always admired women holding jobs. Working, professional women. Even when I was in college I would interact with my lady lecturers a lot to discuss various things. I liked it so much. I used to think how well they speak, they are so knowledgeable, why am I not like them. Sometimes I reflect upon this job. Does it really suit me or should I choose another career based on only my commerce background. I have found that it is more satisfying here. This NGO work has changed my life so much. I have a clear identity now as a woman.

Now as an educated woman, I don't have any particular woman leader as a role model. But I admire Shankar Sir and Mani Madam so much that they are an ideal couple to follow. Like my role models. I share everything with them, my personal life matters, family matters, everything, I don't hide anything from them. This marriage matter also, I discussed with them a lot before I accepted the decision. They counsel me a lot, give good suggestions, give me courage, teach me things, they provide guidance about what to do or not to do. They are a big influence on my personality..

When I think of myself as an educated woman I get the picture that I am not a shy, timid girl anymore. A picture that people won't talk lightly of me now because I am an educated woman. I have that sophisticated way. As an educated woman I have the ability to convince people, talk to them about their behaviour, guide them better.

See because I am educated I am expected to have better patience. That is one of the qualities of an educated person. So with patience I can get people to analyse their behaviour. My patience itself will show that I am an educated woman, not like village rough people letting their tongues go off loosely. I am not of that low level. My behaviour has improved. I have good manners, talking and behaving in the public responsibly. People recognise that and give respect saying ah, she is an educated woman, you can see that from her polished behaviour. I have developed that image now. I am the first girl in our family, both parental sides - first girl to complete a bachelor's degree. So my family elders treat me well, with respect.

I get a lot of appreciation from people as they link my education with my behavioural manners. I improved a lot as I studied further and further. I made some changes in my behaviour consciously because I thought as an educated girl I should not exhibit immature behaviour. You know talking loosely, childish behaviour... we should use good, sophisticated language, sober manners. Our behaviour itself will tell others we are educated.

I feel proud as an educated woman. Taking my own decisions, being firm about my decisions... like even now if I make up my mind I can stop my marriage. I have options in life. I can live without marriage also. I have an imagination about my future, what might come up in my future life and how should I take decisions... My thinking is there, purely my own and my own decisions are there. They are not influenced by my parents. That firmness is there. I have a clear idea about my expenses. I have control over my money.

I have the capacity to face an unjust situation and oppose that bravely. I can support other women who are in distress, motivate them, counsel them about life... yes, my education also has some influence here. I have my own abilities. I will not be dependent on others, not even parents. My parents have faith in me that I am capable of living my life successfully. Because of my education I got this job, from this job I got to do this kind of meaningful work. From my work I have got this identity. And this identity has given me satisfaction that I am an educated woman. All these are nurturing my personal development. So both are linked here – my education with my job, and my job with my identity.

Psychologically I have gained so much from my education. An SSLC pass girl wouldn't get so much confidence and awareness, she is almost equal to a girl who is restricted at home without education. I was also like that after my SSLC. Only after coming to degree level, did I improve myself. So much as a person, developing confidence and courage in my daily life, not giving importance to unnecessary gossip about me, overcoming my timid nature and shyness. This came to me because I know very well that I am now a degree holder, educated woman and I don't have to be a timid shy woman anymore. I have the capacity to live better, manage my life better. My general awareness has increased. My understanding of the world has improved. My perception about others, women and girls especially, has improved and I sometimes feel that I can help them to be better as people.

(**Confidence, decision-making**, being proud, being in control, financial independence, an imagination for her future life, better manners, sophistication... coming partially from her education and partially from her job. Did Kavitha find her **identity** as educated women only through her job or did she develop an identity through her education, her job and life experience? Her texts reveal **contradictory** experiences.

The **turning point** here is not Kavitha's higher education. It is her job with a grassroots organisation. An organisation that is working for women's empowerment. For women who are in distressed conditions. Counselling and working towards a change in their distressed conditions is the goal of the organisation.

The **contradiction** evident in Kavitha's texts points out the tension between the state and the individual. The individual did not experience confidence even after completing a higher degree. The state imposed the beliefs that education is beneficial. Later the individual gained an identity and better world-view through the empowering nature of her work and reinforced the state's ideal on education. This reinforcement continues in the later texts.)

It is important for girls to feel they are educated...

Kavitha tries to give me a picture of girls' education in rural areas. This also depicts the attitude of the society in general. Firstly, she notes, mother's outlook of her daughter's education is about socialization. Then the young girl comes under the effect of fulfilling the social and familial expectations as a daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, mother, which continues through generations. Kavitha believes that women bear everything and suffer silently. She says she wants women to be strong and articulate about their experiences.

Reflecting upon her own education, she thinks subjects that she studied in college didn't help her much in developing her worldview. She thinks the curriculum vision is not in favour of girls. She lists a number of things to be included in the curriculum of girls' education that gives them stronger identity and personality. She feels the society is patriarchal, women are not allowed to achieve much in their lives. The current social trend is to give girls basic education so that she gets a better groom in marriage.

I think it is important for girls to feel they are educated. First of all girls' education is necessary. What is happening with girls' education is this. If I am not developed as a person, as my parents wouldn't let me, I won't let my daughter to develop. This goes on like a chain effect. If mother is educated she might think let my daughter get some education and have a better future.

But among the uneducated women it is a different mentality... am I educated, no, didn't I manage the family well, didn't I get children and look after them well, didn't I fulfill my role as a good woman in the society... so why should my daughter be different... she will learn and live the way I lived... so no education for the daughter. And then the young girl comes into in-law's family. The mother-in-law there would be the same, expected to control the young girl more. She repeats a discriminative behaviour, picking up faults with the girl, blaming her parents for not socialising her better to suit the husband's family's needs. There is a proverb – whatever education a girl gets, she cannot escape from the drudgery of cooking in an earthen pot. That is the socialisation process from her childhood. Whether you are educated or not, you are going to your in-laws, your duty is to serve your in-laws, your husband, that is your life, that is your identity. It is already decided.

In our society a woman is always subordinated. It may be parents, relatives, husband, in-laws or larger society doing it. Ill-treatment and humiliation everywhere. The usual tendency and expectation is that she keeps up her silence and bears everything. But she should not be like that. Whatever is the source of her humiliation she should have the capacity to solve it by her patience and good counselling. May be win over her husband or in-laws through her patience.

Women should not be head-strong. Overdoing, over-behaving, non-womanly qualities like, having her own ways, arguing... no, she should not be like that. She should exhibit those tender qualities of a woman like love, patience, sharing, giving, tenderness and affection. She should not be over-showing, over-dressing, showing off her body, too modern, too loud... too stylish... She should be strong as a person, showing her inner strength more than words and bragging. Action should reveal her inner strength, not words. That serious behaviour should be practised. Firmness, steady mentality, protecting the family as a nurturer...they are ideal woman qualities.

In schools and colleges the curriculum must contain all that, developing those strong womanly qualities. That prepares girls better for future life. For example if a girl is SSLC level, she should have the knowledge of health education, her body, personal hygiene, awareness of her future life as a woman, personal capacities of managing a family, her individuality, being bold. And legal education, her status, position in the society, existing laws, legal structure, her rights, how to make use of the legal system... so many things could be included in the curriculum. Now what is happening is it is just going to the school, and college, carrying books. They don't have any understanding of what they are learning. Learning should become useful to her future life. That kind of practical education along with the formal curriculum should be given to girls.

Take me for example. I took commerce, I am a bachelor's degree holder. I know the subjects superficially. Like most other people. There was no difference between me and not-so-much-educated village girl. I mean there was no exposure to all the things that I said before that one should get. Like reading beyond your syllabus, your subjects and observing. Did we do this during our college

education? No. Going to college and studying the subjects to pass the exams, that's all we did. Books from the library, other sources, discussions with the teachers, face to face interactions with learned people about their experiences, listening to other women's stories... there are so many ways that we as girls could learn to develop ourselves. No educational institution has this model even today. Along with the curriculum she gets this additional knowledge and awareness that is important for a girl in our society. But what is happening now is all her time is being given to the books and studies and exams. There is no practical exposure, awareness...

... this society doesn't allow girls to develop as people. Men fear that their position will be lowered. So from the beginning it has been like this, this patriarchal society. From ancient times. Women never got to the top position, they were not valued in this society. It is the same even now. So many times I have thought that how would it be if all the boys became girls and girls became boys... then all the girls would be on the top, having a commanding position, it would be so nice (laughs). I thought if men washed the dishes in the kitchen in our country oh, god, what a big relief to women! See that is like a big liberating experience.

Another thing is this wrong attitude about girls' education. If the girl is educated a little, a better groom is sought for her. Nowadays if the groom is having some petty job, he is demanding an educated girl, at least with an SSLC. If she is not educated at all, a farmer from a village is guaranteed in marriage. Parents also are not devoted to her education to empower her. They just want to say that their daughter is an SSLC-pass, only for namesake to increase her chances in the marriage market. Whether she has truly learnt something or not to better her life... nobody is bothered. They just send the girl to the school to say that she has an SSLC qualification. But in reality so many of them can't even read or write properly. But parents' attitude continues to be the same. People just don't realise how a girl feels when she is using her education.

The respect and recognition that an uneducated woman gets and what an educated woman gets are totally different. Even though both are earning their livelihoods, the way society treats them is different. For example just the way these uneducated working women are addressed in public life. It is so low level respect, loose terms, very loose language, ill-treatment, physical and sexual abuse... very derogatory behaviour by men. Such women are just dismissed. So, irrespective of her ability to earn a living, an uneducated woman is treated very lowly in the society.

On the other hand an educated woman is treated differently. The confidence level between these two women also varies. Whereas the uneducated working woman has low level of self-esteem and confidence, the other one has a good level of the same. The latter has the ability to tackle the issues differently for her good. Happy families are rare among the uneducated lot. I see this difference so often in my field work, meetings, training workshops... It is slightly better among the educated group of women. She has a better ability to balance things. She has options. She

has a status in the society. More mental capacity, more awareness, more information and more exposure towards the betterment of her life.

(A **deeply reflective text** with many messages of personal experience and assumed collective experience. Education is argued in favour of, for all girls. She recommends certain changes and additions in curriculum to develop confidence in girls with practical problem solving abilities. She invokes the **society's good woman** image being carried on among the uneducated women who tend to continue the circle of **socialisation**, of domestication and stereotyping.

It is not just a woman's education that gives her the experience of respect and recognition from the society. It is through practising the good woman's behaviour carefully which only an educated woman can do. What happens if Kavitha doesn't experience **respect and equality in her husband's family**? How does she imagine the **problem situations** and the ways of handling them? What **choices** has she thought of and what level of **action**?)

I have to get married due to this society's pressure too...

Thinking about her own marriage she says she had to force herself to agree to the arranged marriage, mainly due to parental and social pressure. She wanted to remain single as she has seen a lot of women being unhappy after their marriage. But she thinks it would be difficult for her to live as a single unmarried woman in her society. People around her have pointed this out. She hopes that her future husband would be a good man; if not, she will counsel him and put him to a good path. She also thinks in difficult circumstances she has her education to make use of; so she can live independently.

Talking about future life and children, she says she wants to bring her children up without any discrimination, give them good education and values. If she gets a daughter she will give her girl confidence and courage.

Mine is an arranged marriage. I am getting married next month! I am willing in one way and unwilling in another way. I didn't want a marriage in the first place. I wanted to continue in this job for some more time, help marginalised women. I have listened to so many miserable stories in married life. Of beaten up wives,

roughed up, drunkard husbands... separated wives, suffering with health problems, children suffering within abused marriages. I used to sympathise with abused wives and offer some solace. I was terrified at such times and also frustrated, disillusioned about men, marriage... why can't I be a single woman? Can't I live without marriage? But you see, it is so difficult here in this society for a single woman to live without a marriage. Society will not let her live peacefully. She is always threatened in some way. So it is not correct, to go against my parents' idea, my marriage. I have to get married due to this society's social pressure too. If I didn't have the social pressure I wouldn't have agreed to the marriage proposal. I wanted to remain single. Even though a woman is educated she has to bend to social pressures like this.

Even among girls of my age who went to school with me, they have many different experiences with their marriages. Many of them, my age girls, are widowed, are separated from husbands, some are murdered by their in-laws, some have committed suicide... when I learn more about their condition, I feel terrible. I am terrified also. When we were in school we used to weave our dreams and plans that we would become this or that, achieve something with our education... but now... some of them are dead. But then there are some, who are educated with college degrees, having jobs... but their marital condition is not a happy one. Not good.

Yes, most of them are like that, not wanting to live any more. They have lost interest in life. They look so aged and withdrawn. Recently I met this friend ... she was a friend since our first year pre-university course. She didn't complete her degree, was at home after she discontinued her education. I completed my bachelor's degree. It seems there were some arguments about her marriage between her parents. She committed suicide. Two of my friends actually took their lives like that. Another friend of mine wanted to become a nun, she didn't want any family ties. Then there was a rumour about her that she had a love affair with a guy. I don't know what actually happened there, but it all ended in her death. I know many of my friends who are suffering in their husband's families because of dowry reason and many other reasons. They are spending their whole life just in tears. There is no hope for them at all. We all wanted to study, have degrees, jobs and our own life. I especially said I didn't want to get married after seeing so much misery around me. But most of my friends didn't even express that. But there are friends like this girl who did her B.Ed. degree and became a teacher. Rare case. Compared to thier situation, I think I am much better... at least I have developed some self-confidence. I am confident about my future life.

If the man whom I am going to marry next month is good then I am lucky. If he is bad, then I have the awareness about life, I have to use that. I will have to set him in the right path, counsel him for a good life. I got this wisdom from Shankar Sir. After discussing things with him and Mani Madam, I agreed to the marriage. Sir said I won't be able to live alone in this society as an unmarried woman. Then there are my younger sisters too, their future... Sir said people will look at you differently, they don't treat you with respect. They treat you with some respect if you are married, so just say yes to the marriage proposal. I said yes.

I have to take a break soon after marriage. My fiancée is living in a different place. It is not close by. I don't know about my job situation yet whether I will continue or not. Or, if he is willing to come over here to live. I am told he is running a small business. I met him during the New Year festival time in February and March. His parents are in a neighbouring village here which is their native place. As the place that he is living now is far away from here we have to see who lives where, if I have to leave my job. I really don't want to leave this job or this organisation. I have wept many times out of that anxiety, getting chest pain. I kept telling I didn't want to leave this job. I love it. I love the organisation, everybody here. But Shankar Sir counselled me a lot about my future. Then I had a good discussion with my would-be husband. So I may have to take a break after marriage.

Sometimes I imagine very harsh and terrible things in my future married life. Sometimes it appears good to me. Oh, those stories about women being bashed up by husbands, myself being locked up in the house or being treated cruelly. But I have a very adjusting, understanding nature and lots of patience. So nobody has treated me harshly until now. If he is also good natured and adjusting, I will not have any problems. We will lead our lives happily. But if he is like other men treating me badly and cruelly, then it is expected what I would be doing. I have my own capacity to live without him. I can lead my life anywhere successfully with a job, standing on my own legs, earning a living without dependency. I have that courage. I am ready for any consequences. If I get a good married life, it will be very nice. I will be happy. My parents-in-law are quite aged. There is already a daughter-in-law in their family. It seems she has had no trouble in their family. So I can't say I will have any. But I don't know much about my fiancée. So I can't imagine this or that specifically. But I am sort of prepared. If I imagine all good things about my married life and then later land in trouble then it will be doubly difficult for me to face the life and adjust to hardships. So preparation is better.

If my future husband is exploitative and harsh with me, I will try hard to change him by discussing, by counselling him. Explaining things to him patiently that I too am an equal to him, not less in anything. To the maximum extent possible. If he doesn't change even after few years after my patience and endurance, as I said before, I would go my way. I will live my life independently. But I prefer the counseling and mutual discussing way more than leaving him totally.

I believe in the patient approach. I will do my best to convince him, advise him. Not immediately by clashing with him, or arguing. Slowly with patience I will counsel him. If he says I must not work, I will say if that is your wish, let it be like that. But then remind him that we need this much earning for the family maintenance so you earn that. And I will try to turn him slowly to my side by giving new awareness like, if we both work, our family will benefit. If there is a misunderstanding and it continues further and further on then... I don't think so I will follow his path. But when the time comes we both will sit down and talk about it. I am hoping that he would agree with me.

I want to bring up my children without any discrimination. Whether we have a girl or a boy, I will have only two children. Give them good education, make them independent with good values. I will make them good human beings. I will give them good courage, not raise them as timid human beings. Especially if it is a girl, I will give her a lot of courage and confidence. Let her grow up like boys. With equality. I mean without the feeling that she is after all a girl...bring her up with good confidence and outgoing nature. Well, after that I haven't thought much about far future. Because he, my fiancée is also educated to my level there should not be a problem. He has also worked in an NGO so he should know about rights, empowerment, equality and so on.

(Stories on marriage surrounding her everyday. Her own imagination about marriage. Terrible personal feelings while reflecting upon terrible experiences that her friends have undergone in their married life. Hopes about her own marital life. Plans for future. Dreams about children. **Confidence** in her counselling skills as an educated woman. **Firmness** in her decision to have **choices open** in case of a troubled situation in married life.

Is this the experience of an educated woman using her abilities as an educated woman, to solve problems, to face challenges in future life, to demonstrate her worldview? Kavitha's texts highlight multiple threads of her **confusions, dilemmas, torn between** her personal stand against marriage and the stronger social expectations.

Many of her texts reveal the strong external influences upon her attitude and beliefs. She believes in counselling her husband, which is part of her work while empowering marginalised women at the grassroots. She believes that **her path is good and proper**. What is the standard for this 'proper', 'appropriate' and 'correct' path? Is this assumed belief, assumed behaviour, not reflecting the influences of her own education, an educated woman becoming a good family woman, practising the womanly qualities? Again education linked to economic security. The **popular social belief** system is reinforced.)

Epilogue

Kavitha's experiences of being an educated woman are resonated in her confidence, being proud, having an identity, abilities, skills, financial independence, polished

manners and interaction. Her worldview, awareness, thinking, reflecting and responses towards her lived world have improved over the years, both during and after her completion of a bachelor's degree. Her job as a community organiser with a grassroots organisation has impacted a lot upon her as an educated woman.

These summarized features of her experiences are listed below with supporting quotes.

Her job	And from this job also I have grown tremendously as a person... it has given me strength. This job is the biggest influence. This wouldn't come from a clerk level job. I would have been just an ordinary woman, with just a bachelor's degree in hand, without thinking much. I wouldn't have got this courage and confidence to speak my mind and my views. Sometimes I reflect upon this job. I have found that it is more satisfactory here.
Identity	Because of my education I got this job, from this job I got to do this kind of work, from my work I have got this identity. And this identity has given me satisfaction that I am an educated woman. So both are linked here – my education with my job and my identity.
Financial independence	Tomorrow when I am married whether I get a good life or not, I at least have this feeling that I am not a burden to anybody, not to the husband or to his family, I can be economically independent. That courage is with me.
Patience	As an educated woman I have the ability to convince people, talk them through their mis-behaviour... see because I am educated I am expected to have that patience. That is a quality of an educated person. Slowly with patience I can get people to see the reality of their behaviour. My patience itself will demonstrate that I am an educated woman, not like village rough people letting their tongues go off... I am not of that low level.
Better manners	My behaviour has improved, manners, talking and behaving in the public... people recognise that and give respect saying oh, it is good, she is an educated woman, you can see that from her polished behaviour...

	<p>this image is there now. I am the first girl in our family, both sides among the girls, first girl to complete a bachelor's degree. So my elders treat me well.</p>
Altered behavioural patterns, sophistication	<p>I get a lot of appreciation from people as they link my education with my qualities. I improved a lot as I studied further and further. I made some changes in my behaviour consciously because I thought as an educated girl I should not exhibit such behaviour. You know talking loosely, immature behaviour... we should use good standard language, our behaviour itself will tell others we are educated...</p>
Interactive skills	
Her future life	<p>...so I have an imagination about my future, what may come up in my future life and how should I take stands... my thinking is there, purely my own and my own decisions are there, not influenced by my parents. That firmness is there. I know my expenses, I have control over my money, my future... yes, these are influenced by my education. I have my own abilities, will not be dependent on others, not even parents. I can live independently, my own life.</p>
Dilemmas about marriage	<p>I am getting married next month! I am willing in one way and unwilling in another way. I didn't want a marriage in the first place. I wanted to continue in this job for some more time and help other women in the villages. I used to listen to so many miserable stories. I have to get married due to this society's social pressure too. ...Even though a woman is educated she has to bend to the social pressure like this.</p>

Rani

A woman's failure in life comes only if she is not married ...

Rani

I met Rani in 1987. At the university when I was doing my first postgraduate degree, when we stayed in the same women's hostel for two years. She studied physics while I did psychology. We drifted into our own worlds after our studies. Several years later we came into contact through a common friend. We both were lecturers at that time. We met a few times over the next few years until I left for Australia in 2001. I contacted her in March 2003 when I was in Bangalore for my research interviews. I told her what I was trying to 'research'. Rani said it was interesting and also agreed to become a participant of my study. She asked me to find a place for our interviews. She did not want to talk in her home with her family members present there. Later we met twice for the interviews, once at a friend's house and another time at my sister's place. When I met her for the first interview I became quite attentive towards her confident manner. She came by on her new scooter. I was meeting her after several years. She looked every inch a successful professional woman. And she said she was exactly that.

I am confident and proud.

I explain the ethics forms, formalities and the design of my study. Then I ask her my question: What is your experience of being an educated woman? Rani has been looking at me curiously. She changes her posture when she is about to reply. She says she has got a position of power, recognition in the society, has financial security, self-confidence. She continues as if she is listing the experiences. I listen. She is very proud that she is an educated woman. Education is the best part of her life, she says. She is happy and very confident. She prefers to be in control on her life matters. She is financially independent. She says she can survive anywhere.

I am confident as an educated woman. The best part in my life has been my education. If I have an identity today it is through my education. I have gained a lot of self-confidence. People recognise me as an educated woman. That is my identity. Financially I am secure. I can earn. Not dependent on anyone. This feeling comes because of my education. If I wasn't educated I'd be sitting at home doing nothing, depending on others... even for my primary needs I'd be dependent on others... so because of my education I am now protected. I am very

proud that I am an educated woman. I can do so much. I have that potential and power. This is from my education.

So many times I even forget that I am a woman... I am so confident. You know, even in places where there are only men I don't get the feeling that I should not be going there, I should not talk like this or like that, I have restrictions, it is their world or I should not express my opinion or experiences, behave in a particular way you know that overly projective style of feminine manners ... I don't feel all these. It is because of my confidence... through my education.

I have recognition in my profession. If not I'd have ended up in the kitchen, cooking all the time, remaining passive in life. But now I know there is a world out there, how it is, what's happening in this world, so many things about life... my education is giving me all this awareness.

In matters of life, I handle them well. We can do everything whatever we want to... we have the courage, confidence... this courage comes from education. If you don't have education, you don't go out, you sit indoors all the time, don't interact with people... so many things...

But my education... it has given me so much... I have got so much out of it... So I think I am not missing anything in my life... because of my education, I mix with people, interact, learn, grow...

So this is one aspect. Another is financial security.... wherever I go I can survive.... only because of education... there is a Sanskrit *shloka* in some Vedic hymn.... I have forgotten the exact words.... but it says your education will protect you in every way. I have experienced this.

When I go through these memories they give me so much happiness... see all this because of my education... If I didn't have this education, if I sat at home without getting education, I would have missed all this, I wouldn't even know that these things could happen to me...

... education has a link to my personal development too... If I was not educated and was at home, I would have been forced to accept my subordinate status...like all other women I would have accepted the situation thinking I have to be like this... socially, financially I am controlled... I don't get my own recognition... so a fear develops. But our education gives us that confidence... if a situation arises, I can live alone... yes, I can live alone independently... I have the courage, confidence and I am financially secure...

(Rani is saying she feels **confident, proud, happy** as an educated woman. Her **identity** is being an educated woman. She says she is in **control** of her life, feeling **powerful**. Her **confidence level** is superior. She has a powerful position in her profession. Thereby she has gets the **recognition**. She is **financially independent**. She knows she can

survive anywhere. She has the **courage**. This is in the very beginning of the transcript. Sounds so strong.)

Being an educated woman she has advanced in her thinking, worldview. She has obtained a good name as a professional. Rani says education helped her to develop her worldview, in the realization of her potential.

...now you see, if we are educated we come to know the world... about different things about the world, about different people, different things in life, we go out, we interact with a variety of people, we grow as a person...

If not, we'd sit at home, within four walls, cooking... at the most we read a magazine, that too what we read we don't apply to our life.

To view the world around me, to think about life...my education is helping... now, everybody has this intellect.... to expose this intellect properly one needs education. Like for example, I have education.... so because of that I am using my intelligence in a good way... I am teaching as a lecturer.... I teach and give my students good things... that way I am using my intelligence in a good way.... I am doing the maximum that I am capable of... I have been working for the past 12, 13 years... in different places... wherever I have worked I have gained a good name... from my students, colleagues... these I gained from my education...

(Better **worldview, interpersonal skills, intellectual expression, abilities** are the other experiences that Rani lists.)

Rani's schooling experience doesn't strike her as unique or very inspiring. Her general outlook is that 'you learn something from whatever you read'. Now she recalls her Supplementary Reader and her history texts. Studying and exploring the world brings experience about the knowledge one is taught to gain in formal education, she says.

I believe in this even now...whatever you read you learn something from that. I liked my subjects...usual ones like Kannada, Social Studies, Science and Maths. But there was this Supplementary Reader which had folk tales, our epics and lots of stories... these actually influenced me a lot, got me thinking in so many ways...what do you do in the curriculum... you just read some science, do some maths, read about someone else's histories... you don't learn anything for yourself, your life... its mechanical... there is very little influence on you as a person... only co-curriculum activities and studies influenced me a lot...built my values... even the teachers narrated these stories effectively making us feel the themes...everything related to life situations... so I learnt to give, to retain the goodness... go in a righteous path...

I didn't retain the curriculum... teachers didn't influence me so much nor curriculum studies... now I recall the history lessons that I read in school when I visit places... some uses are there for geography too...

And Civics... yes, there was the Constitution, rights, duties.... I tried and now also try to follow our civic duties in daily life...try to be a good citizen. As a woman I don't feel different after studying civics, it is the same for everybody... rights, equality. Yes...it is possible to achieve... there are some exceptions in personal lives. People that too women are achieving so much. In the past they didn't let women into the different career fields... now they are doing it... they are giving the opportunities... so we can use these opportunities...we need opportunities... and women's interests to achieve also...

In my high school days, I didn't have a very progressive atmosphere... even those girls who said they would achieve this and that... they never achieved anything like they said... they are all housewives now.... I have at least achieved something professionally... I am satisfied that I am using what I studied for the good of my life... at least that feeling is a happy feeling.

(Curriculum didn't impact on her much. Folklore, stories, epics gave her **insights** into life. values. And then an observation on women who became housewives after their higher education. She is **making good use of her education**. Unlike them. There is equality for everybody. Women don't make use of it. Why does she feel these, about women making use of/not making use of their education? Where is it coming from?)

I ask her why does she think so? Some women remain passive, as she said. Some can express their abilities better, such as professionals. Can she talk more on this? Rani thinks that girls are brought up in that typical protective, socialised way which actually makes them weak as individuals – so it is the social system also that moulds a girl, stereotypes her. Her parents were not like that, they didn't try to make their girls conform. Though, when they were teenagers, her mother wanted to train them as girls.

I was always in a co-education atmosphere. We sat separately... we didn't feel any different at that age... but some girls used to behave timid and weak and used to follow boys for their help... probably because of their home atmosphere... social pressures... their intention probably would be... like the Indian mentality... bring up the girl carefully, protecting her and then when she is about 20 get her married... that's the agenda of her and her life.... This attitude could have caused this behaviour of these girls in my class...

I used to sense the differences in other families... moulding a girl in the stereotyped way... we didn't get that treatment... in my college days I have seen

so many of my friends, they used to cook meals at home and then come to college to attend classes...their mothers didn't cook... because daughters were to be trained well...

My mother didn't push me like that... after sometimes, after my college she tried to put me in that mould...but again she didn't force me...they both were progressive. They never forced us to do the girlish things at home like cooking. I didn't become a stereotype. Education was common to all, to go to school and college; we all got the same opportunities.

During my school or college days I never felt I was a girl and I had to be different from boys... may be the home environment facilitated this... my own friends and classmates were behaving in a stereotyped, girlish way... but I never did. I used to think why am I so different from them? I think naturally I was like that, didn't sense the sexist difference. Felt more like an individual. People were like that with me. They wouldn't warn me that I was a girl so was not expected to do that or this. You know...

In our school days I was the topper; so teachers always said I would achieve great things going to the college, to the university etc. They used to say other girls would do their SSLC and get married but not me... I was encouraged a lot. Among my classmates some boys have become doctors, lawyers.... Girls are mostly married and housewives. Among all girl classmates, perhaps I am the only one who is still single. With a master's degree, a profession but not married (smiles).

(Rani observes that social, parental attitudes normally mould girls' behaviour. She didn't undergo that experience. She was encouraged by her parents and her school teachers. She also notes she is still single while all her girl friends are married. How does she view this? Is this linked, in any way, to her high **confidence level** and her observations on married women remaining passive?)

She compares herself to other educated women who prefer to be housewives, that is, not using their higher education to become professionals. She thinks they are passive, waste their time by choosing to remain within the private domain of life. She is proud that she is a professional, is making good use of her education.

In our Indian society there is this thing called hey, women should not come outside, out of the house, they should stay indoors. They have this restriction. I see this even in my profession, not only with men, but also among women, them practising it. Some educated women don't behave like educated people. They behave like these housewives.

They lack this confidence. They just studied, got degrees, but they don't have confidence. No confidence in themselves. They don't think like – we should be doing this, take decisions, this is right or correct, we are like... what do they generally say... we are no less than men... those women don't have this feeling. Among so many of them that I have seen... But I think I don't feel their way. We are equally confident. We can achieve anything. But the only thing is that this Indian society is a little restrictive. So because of this restriction I feel that we are not being able reach to their level.

They generally say... look men can go anywhere, can do anything that they want, can be like whatever they want... but personally I don't agree to this. We too have this potential. But what is happening is our family attachment, you know us the women and our feelings... we grow up in our family... we are attached to our family members since our childhood, if we cross them it may hurt them. These feelings pull us back. I think this is what has affected me in a way in my life. So I have not been able to achieve all that I had planned for my life. It could also be my family background. My family is not a highly educated family... so... some differences exist.

(What is she implying here? What is this experience associated with? Marriage or being the eldest of the four children? A **tension** is showing up here. **Withholding herself** for her family? An experience of finding herself different to the rest of her family.)

It's also important that women behave as educated women if they are educated... you see, many don't behave like they are educated even though they have education... they have to reveal, show to the outside world that they are educated... behave like educated women... but many behave like illiterates... I think they must not be called educated people at all... they just remain passive...

Remain passive means they don't move forward in life. Don't apply their education to life... not doing that... passive... they get their degrees only to keep up their status... that's it... just for social status... I am also a degree holder... just for social life, they just pretend... or like if I get a degree I will get a good husband... like that... only for their social life... just to get a name in their social world ... but in the real sense if you are educated you should apply your education to life situations...only then are you educated. That is how I feel as an educated woman myself.

Educated in the real sense means... umm... most importantly confidence... That I put first of all... it gives you confidence... it develops confidence... one should get that first... then we should be able to do independently everything that we can do or achieve to get. One should try to do this. As I said before, depending upon situations, excepting few backgrounds like family background probably, if there is encouragement there, then we can do anything, it is not wrong. We must try and do everything. Another best part is we are no less than men, to say in that sense.

Another thing is if we have confidence we don't experience anything bad in the outside world. At least, as a woman I have not personally experienced anything like this until now. They say if you are a girl you should not go out in the night... oh, she is out even after 9 pm in the night... I didn't experience anything like that even as a very young girl...even in my teenage years I didn't experience anything bad outside. I think it is said so because we ourselves create these things... like you know... we are women, we are weak, vulnerable... if you create and project that, then it becomes a personal thing... but I have not experienced anything bad like that... what some women do is project themselves as women... oh, we are women and we are weak... like that... before anything else they present themselves as women, not their abilities or skills... what happens then is sometimes men misuse it... you see... these women exhibit too much femininity, tenderness, shyness to present themselves as women. I don't feel this is right...men misinterpret these, exploit women.... Well, education may not figure here in this example... but as I think, well, at least educated women can exhibit courage, confidence... not pretend that they are weak.

I will give you an example. One of my own female colleagues was saying the other day. Whatever it is, we women can not earn like the men do... I felt bad. Why do these women think like this? Today female software engineers earn more than men sometimes... being educated these ladies talk like this. I don't think there is a gap between men's and women's earnings. In my world, the earnings are the same. So many times I get better opportunities. I earn more than them. I am proud. So I think these women who talk like this want to be like that. They have decided that we women are below men's level in all respects and we should remain so. They have accepted it. It is not necessary why they have to accept or even think like that!

(Rani clearly is saying that her **confidence** is mainly related to her **identity** as a professional. As an educated woman she has made good use of her education to become a successful professional. This, she points, in comparison to other women who don't use their higher education. They remain passive, staying home as housewives. She doesn't feel weak or vulnerable, she notes. She feels no less capable than men. She holds back sometimes as she thinks she has to care for her family's feelings.)

I can't go against my family just because I am highly educated

I decide to go back to Rani's comments about her family. My questions: Can you explain more about this feeling of not hurting your family? What are your feelings related to your family members? Rani feels that her highly educated position put her in a slightly awkward position in her personal life – she is suffering a bit from that. She has no mental match within her family, but she has learnt to compromise. She thinks her

being a highly educated woman could have negatively impacted upon her marriage prospects. She feels if women are more educated and better, their own family members do not treat her well; they discriminate. Because she has applied her education to her life, she is more sensitive and aware. But such women are not much liked.

In my personal life, I have suffered slightly ... May be because I am a highly educated woman (laughs). But there is a reason behind this. Like even the family background matters a lot here... I wouldn't have suffered had I come from a well-to-do family or well-educated family or a high- class family. My thinking is not matching with my family. I mean intellectually and having a better worldview. So, it has affected me personally, though only a little, not to a big extent.

Because I am with my family I have to be like them. So when I am like this, because of this, I tend to think perhaps I wouldn't have been in this kind of situation if I had done just a degree or an SSLC. Like for example, all those women who have settled down in life without doing a degree or a postgraduate degree. You know they are settled. I am not, not yet. But this feeling is rare, only at times when I feel very sad or depressed. But it is only in my personal part – only in that aspect I feel a little bit bad. In all other ways the best part of my life is my education. But...just because I am highly educated I can't go against my family.

When I went to college, they didn't let me stay in the hostel... they put us in my aunt's house and finished 5 years college, B.Sc. For M.Sc., I stayed in the hostel. They could have done this for my B.Sc. itself... but they didn't because we were girls... I had to do some of the house chores, collect water, mix with relatives, and also do my college studies... it was hard in a way... but you see, this didn't happen in my brothers' case... they were put in a hostel... they felt we girls should be under somebody's supervision, protection. Social pressures. Some narrow-mindedness. We were mature enough then to take care of ourselves, to protect ourselves. But they thought we were weak as we were girls. See the social attitudes. We couldn't speak because we didn't have the courage at that time.

Well, looking back now...probably financial reason could also have affected their decision... lower middle class family... financial constraints. It is different now. Now we are an upper middle class family.

...When they thought that we were coming of age to get married then they started discriminating. We couldn't protest or oppose because we were living with them in a family. It is like this everywhere even now, is it not? Mine is not an exception, so I have accepted... but I feel very sad. We are so well recognised in our professional life, in the outside world. But here at home we are discriminated against. It depresses me... why is there this discrimination? I try to think deeply.

See, how discrimination takes place within the family situation. You know... if the women in the family are better and more educated than the males, in my case

my brothers, they behave differently... like... they don't accept you. They don't acknowledge your superiority. Even brothers who are born with you... they feel they should be above their sisters. If their sisters are more educated than them, they get jealous. Probably, in my experience, only a father accepts his daughters in this kind of situation. Not even a mother. Even a mother gets jealous. She thinks ah, she is also like me a woman, but she has achieved something more in life than I have done, ... so mother tends to get jealous about the daughter's achievement. See, women against women. Only sometimes! This is in my case. But my father who is 100 % proud, oh, look my daughter is so well educated. Only my father felt that way. He might have said things which hurt me, only when he got very depressed as he has not been able to get me married off. But it is rare. When he analyses me, he thinks he was wrong then, feels proud about me. Only he has a good understanding of me.

Her power and control over her life irritate her brothers. They express it in many ways. She thinks if she was not as educated and was not earning as much, and also remained single, she would have had a miserable life. She says at least now, due to her education and being a professional, she has a good life.

My brothers' behaviour... yes, they behave very impolitely... rude behaviour. They don't pay attention to things that I say, don't value my words or experiences, neglect it completely... ignore me. But they can understand me, you see. There is nothing wrong in that... but... they prefer to ignore me. It hurts.

... last year I bought a scooter, very proud about it. My brother started criticizing... I said it is my wish, my money, so I am buying the vehicle. He said people will talk, they will gossip, she is not married even at this age, she bought a vehicle. Why does she need a vehicle? I said who says that? Who cares? It is my money, so I am buying, it is my satisfaction and for my happiness, so I am buying. What's marriage got to do with this? Did I say I won't marry and then buy this vehicle out of that money? No, I have said I will marry. I haven't found the right person. I am not getting married to this vehicle, okay? Marriage has no connection with this vehicle buying thing. I have money for my marriage also... my own savings... and I have money for this vehicle also... I have divided my money... marriage is also needed and this vehicle is also needed... for my own enjoyment. What, because I am not married yet, does that mean, I have to give up all other enjoyments and happiness? No, I don't agree. See, their mentality!

(Yes, a **tension** is showing up in her relationship with her family members. Their attitude towards her sounds **slightly negative** which arises from her not being married yet. She said she was strong, powerful, confident. Here she is caring for family feelings, in turn **getting hurt**. At times she gets sad and thinks of married women, having settled down in life. Why didn't she become one like them? Then the home environment.

Mother and brothers discriminate. Father doesn't. **Tension, struggle. Contradictions** in emotions, feelings, perceptions.)

I ask her what does she think of her future life partner and marriage. Rani says she doesn't want to be in a secondary status after she gets married. She wants to remain equal with her partner, basing their relationship on mutual love rather than power positions. She wishes for an understanding partner.

Most of the times, you know, I have felt that they all, men around me, ultimately acknowledge my achievement in my profession and admire me. But they feel women are secondary... So how do we approach this, I think? That is relationship in marriage. I don't agree if husband says I am a man and you are a woman, so there is primary and secondary status. I don't agree to this... when there is good love between the two and then there are roles, ok, you do things for him out of love and it's mutual. If there is that love then there is no question of losing or winning. I expect a partner who is loving... our relationship should be based on love. I want such a partner. If he doesn't value my individuality and me as a person first of all, I will not value him as a person... no... because I have my own individuality, my own thinking... my own capacity... he has to respect all that I have... otherwise...no way. For example, if I were married. I am not yet married. If I am put in such a situation with limitations because I am his wife, I don't think so I will accept that situation. If at all I get somebody like that, I may have to face difficulties... I don't know.

After my B.Sc. I joined for M.Sc. Physics course. I used to dream a lot about my life even when I was in college and later days also. About my beautiful life, loving companion. When I attained puberty I had so many things happening inside my brain. I had so much energy... ah we can do so many things in life, achieve so much in life... can climb Mt.Everest. I had these can do thoughts. Even during my master's degree days. If I had got a proper, understanding life companion at that time, I might have achieved these, who knows? I don't know... I never got anybody. Not even a proper girl friend so to say (laughs loudly). There wasn't much of a concept like boyfriends during those days. Even now it is not there everywhere. In my days girls used to just flirt with boys for fun sake. I may have had chances to find somebody in the PG campus during my master's degree, but I didn't pay any attention to it. I lost my chances there, I think.

I am always supportive of love marriages. Love and marry that guy... is really good. I am for it. These ideas were definitely there. I had these ideas and thoughts even I was a young adult. I wanted to love somebody. And wanted him to love me so intensely, so tenderly. I am a very romantic person, I guess (smiles), even then I used to dream and think about a loving man in my life. But fate is...

A woman's failure in life comes only if she is not married.

Rani thinks that reasons like her care for her family, her preference about a life partner from her own caste, an upper caste prevented her from finding her own partner outside her caste. She narrates her experiences related to her marriage aspect. Recollecting some past events, Rani says during her initial days of career, her colleague fell in love with her but he belonged to a lower caste than hers. So she did not agree for a marriage fearing adjustment problems. She also cared for her family.

But that phase of my personal life... my marriage.... only that aspect in my life... but I can't say even there education has anything to do with it.... as I said before there are plenty of reasons for that...

Ah, I want to tell you another thing... some women even before they get married start dreaming and planning about marriage, husband, home, their children etc... but I don't feel for children... but definitely I want a marriage... I want a loving romantic partner, I want to share my life with him... beautiful. When I was working in this particular college, this person was my colleague... physics faculty... he belonged to a lower caste.... my caste is Brahman caste, very upper... his was a very lower caste... this was the reason... I was close to him in the sense we used to talk to each other very much... there was no other kind of intimacy... if the caste was the same I would have married him... Yes, even now I have these caste feelings.

I cared for my family feelings and feared that they would not allow me. The reason for me having these feelings is... you know sometimes we see these people in their homes, in their personal backgrounds. Like friends or classmates. It is very difficult to adjust. It is really very difficult to adjust to their ways... because we have grown up in a particular way in this way. Their ways are different. Starting from the food aspect, every difference matters... ok... leave the food factor... other very personal matters... no I can't.. I feel very uneasy when I think about it. It is difficult for me myself. Yes, it is me who can't do that, I couldn't like it personally, it is my decision, my personal choice. And there is this. I am the eldest girl in the family. This is also very important. If I went in a separate way the whole family will be affected. I didn't want to shock my father in such a big way. He has a lot of trust in me. She is educated and well behaved, good girl. So I could not go differently. So I never thought or considered my decision. That decision. But if I had got somebody from my own caste, then I am for a love marriage... always supportive of a love marriage.

Much later her parents arranged her marriage with a suitable man whom she too liked; they were officially engaged; later she found that he had cheated upon her lying about his chronic disease. She cancelled the marriage. There too she proved that she was in control of her life, did not want to be trapped just because she was a woman. However, she says her family members subtly dislike her decisions.

... once my marriage was fixed...it got cancelled. They tried to cheat us in a way. They thought that this is a middle class family, they would give their daughter away if the boy's family was financially well off. He had a doctorate. We saw the degree and thought it was a cultured family. But day by day as I talked to him, I found out that all was not well and we were trapped in a way; he had a disease. So it was cancelled. Even then it was my own decision. I said no marriage....not this man. Perhaps if it was any other girl, she would have said look, my engagement is over, marriage is announced to everybody, things are finalised... it's okay, I will compromise and I will get married to that guy. She would have gone ahead with that marriage. But not me. Because we are talking about educated women, I am telling this... I decided to cancel the wedding. If he had a disease, why should I live with him? Why do you marry.... to be happy... this man didn't have any interest in life at all; he even knew his dying date... so why should I suffer? Why should I get married to this guy? Would he marry me if I had a chronic disease? Just because the marriage is settled? No, I don't want it...so many girls have faced this situation and let me be one in that history. I was firm, I said no. Because I was confident of myself. I was not one of those illiterates who would submit to the pressure, bend her neck and get married in a slavish manner. I am not that type.

But then my brothers... As long as I am not settled, they are not happy or interested in life. At such times I feel sorry that I am educated. Why did I get so much education? If I had got some basic education and was a home-based girl this situation wouldn't have come up... I feel sorry. But this is the only moment that I think like this... only this moment that I curse my education, my degrees... but not at other times... as I said before I have always felt that my education is the best part of my life.

I feel and experience education in my life unlike so many other women who get a degree and forget about it later...I am applying my education in my life. It is always there with me. That is why I don't want to compromise with these pressures, that's it.

That social discrimination. I face it, confidently. I don't show my hurt, my feelings. I behave confidently. I am frank. Yes, I am not married yet. Because of this I am a question mark... this makes me think deeply... what's wrong with my situation, I am not married, yes... so what? Why are these people bothered? They can gossip about me or degrade me if I am going in a wrong path...I agree. But they have to respect these single women more because they are earning, they are financially independent, totally responsible for their lives, not dependent on others... actually society should treat these women much better. The ones who are never married at all; better with more respect and goodness. I respect them... they are great because they are not experiencing some beautiful things that most other people in this world are experiencing. Like their own loving family.

They comment. This society. For example, I bought an ornament recently. I showed it to my cousin who visited us at that time. He is of my age, married with two children. He said straight away 'When will you wear these things?' It means

only if you are married you can wear gold jewellery, now you are not married, so you don't have anybody to see and admire you, so you can't wear them, you can't go out wearing them, what's the use. Overall feeling is it's all a waste when I am not married. The social assumption and expectation is that... that women don't go... should not go out and enjoy if they are not married. Another important thing that I want to tell here is if we people make some good properties, if we earn well they say why are they getting the property or earning money... for whose sake are they doing this? They don't have a family, children. What for? They comment like this.

...yes, I go out. I attend all the close relatives' functions. Sometimes I don't go. Not because they are getting married being younger than me or anything like that. I tend to think oh, they may hurt me. And those questions that they ask... everybody is married, why aren't you getting married? Noticeably a woman's failure in life comes only if she is not married, I think. That's the only thing that hurts me.

(Being unmarried can become a woman's failure. What a poignant expression. She looks totally engrossed in her narrative. I watched her intently, sometimes nodding my head. Later when I listen to this narrative on tape and read the transcript I become attentive to the **tensions** once again. She said **she can do anything** that she wants to do. But she is choosing not to hurt her family members. She prefers not to go beyond the caste conventions. She struggles between the marriage vision and her educated identity. **Conflict**. A feeling of being **torn between** roles and desires.)

I welcome certain changes, not all.

I ask her about introducing changes in her life. If she would go overseas and have a different life, with changes like finding her own partner? Rani hesitates. She says she doesn't want to change. Her roots are in her culture, in her world, in her values based on Indian philosophy. She says she has only changed her dressing habit to a little extent.

... going abroad and having that life... I think it is possible only if I live there and remain there. Ummm, no I can't say 100% that I will do that. Because this mentality remains the same. You see, my mentality goes with me there also. See, basically I am an Indian woman. Even if I go abroad, my roots are here. So probably they may become stronger if I lived abroad, I may value them more, who knows, there are such chances too. When I see their free society... I think about this a lot of times. I don't know whether people of my age think about this philosophically like me, but I do think about it. Ultimately what do you get from such indulgences? Changing your life, free life style? It is all temporary

enjoyment. Temporary happiness. For that temporary enjoyment why do I want to lose my values? My ethics? See I have my confidence because now I am value-based. My strength comes from that. If I change I may not have this confidence. I can't talk confidently. Basically, that life may be value-related, ethics-related, but...personally I feel I don't like it. Yes, I want a good partner. I do wish for this good partner very much. But in that way, the free way... another thing, perhaps I have crossed that age also. I think so.

There is an extent in this society... how to put it... or may be it is my choice. I wear churidars too which is out of my choice, but I don't wear trousers... you see the difference? Not much change there. I feel it is good for my life. But if I wear such dresses, at home these people say ah, she is so forward; very modern. See, they are not ready to accept us like that. They expect us to remain at their mental level, their expectation level, social influences. So it is like that, I don't wear trousers. Even wearing churidars happened in the recent years. My sister started this. So I don't want to have too much change in my life.

(She is not sure that giving up her life style and having major changes in her life style would give her happiness. She believes that her strength is coming from remaining within her own cultural context, according to social expectations. Earlier she said she is not a stereotype. Then she associates **losing her values and ethics with losing her place**. Does this mean rooted to one's culture? Is there a **contradiction** here? It also appears to be **her choice**. Am I interpreting this with effective bracketing?)

Being educated means being confident and empowered.

Rani says education gives women opportunities to be independent. But not all of them make the best use of it and liberate themselves. Women have as much capacity as males but social norms and family bonds restrict women. If they don't keep them up, family peace is ruined. So they compromise. Keeping all these in her view, a woman must still apply her higher education to be independent, she thinks.

Educated to me means... umm... most importantly confidence. That I put first of all. It gives you confidence. It develops confidence... one should get that first. Then we should be able to do independently everything that we can do or achieve to get. One should try to do this. As I said before, depending upon situations, excepting few backgrounds like family background probably, if there is encouragement there, then we can do anything, it is not wrong. We must try and do anything. Another best part is we are no less than men, to say in that sense.

As I said before when I speak of an educated woman, I mean a woman who speaks out for herself, what she feels and thinks as a person, without any hesitation that she is a woman with that confidence. And when and if she can manage things on her own, she should do so without the backing away feeling that she is a woman and has to remain back. With her own awareness that she is capable of managing life without depending on others. Here I mean depending on males.

So what I have seen and have experienced to some extent is that men do not tolerate women getting higher education than them. What happens is this age-old tendency... male dominated attitude, what they say male ego. They think that it is a blow to them if women are more educated.

Just an example of how an educated woman can be strong. A colleague of mine married a divorced woman. Second marriage for her and first one for him. But she left him after some time. We don't know the exact reason. She said he tortured her. He said he wouldn't have married her in the first place if he was such a person. See, generally saying these things are happening these days. We can not say who is at fault she or him. See such women are also there who may not think like ah, I got married for the second time. So I will compromise and live with adjustments this time. No, she was different, strong, her decision was made by her. She took the decision and left him; may be she is economically independent, brave and decisive...

Now education has some influences there, I can say. A woman is independent in getting out of the house, doing all her work by herself, mobility, personal movement, courage, communicating her ideas, taking decisions. It is because of education. Yes, it is education 100%. And also she can manage things without the help or support of a male now. This is because of her education. But some have drawn their own boundaries like say I am a woman, so I have to be like this, I should not cross this border. These people have restricted themselves even though they are educated. So they have not used their education to apply for their life. This is what I think. Here I want to give you an example. My colleague in the college, she is a doctorate degree holder. She is an English lecturer. I want to repeat her words – college introduced a new rule that one staff member has to be present between 4 and 6 pm in the college library in the evenings to monitor the students there. At this time this lady said “From 4 to 6 pm in the evening in the college! It is not possible for a lady. A lady cannot stay alone at that kind of a time. It is too late and unsafe for a lady.” I felt very annoyed and sad also. You see, our college, our library and it is not late in the night, our own students and staff, a lady lecturer says she cannot stay because she is a female. What is the use of her education in giving her courage then? She didn't use it. I lost my belief in her education. See, how this false notion of womanhood and related qualities are embedded in her mind even though she is highly educated. I felt this was very wrong. I didn't agree with her words.

... education has given a lot to us women. A lot, if you use it. Like this freedom, this capacity that she can manage everything that a male is expected to do, not just

economic independence; her own capacity, that ability... you see that is also needed.

When I think about such tendencies among women, I feel sad. Because even when she is educated she wants to follow the rule like some things are to be done by a male or a female... I don't agree. But then, sometimes if we don't keep up with the norm, that creates some misunderstandings in the family. At such times, I feel, they obey or prefer to follow the norm to maintain the family peace. Then I think that is right. Respecting your family and their feelings. But if their male partners are understanding and supportive, then there is no need to limit their boundaries for women. It is wrong to do so. It is not needed. Let them also do, the males. If family members are not with you, then it is a different thing. Family members means everybody can and should participate. So it is, in most cases, these women who draw the lines around them, it is a kind of restriction. They restrict themselves. Some traditions we need to keep. It has been there within the family, if it is not harmful for anybody, only for the good, then there is nothing wrong in following such traditions, I feel. That is, by following, we should get some positive influence.

(An educated woman must prove that she is educated by her actions and thoughts rather than projecting herself as a woman, a weaker sex. Attitude of **equality, empowerment** and assertiveness comes from education if one realises the educational goal suitably. But Rani is also saying that caring for their family and their feelings is also important. Women need to maintain **family peace**. Is it only women who maintain the family peace? Rani did not emphasise a man's role in keeping family's peace. Does this mean a woman is a traditional **ideal**?)

Epilogue

Rani describes her experience of being an educated woman as being a confident, successful professional. All through the years of her life she has felt different. She criticises women being only housewives, those with higher education, not making use of it. She reflects upon the major events and actions of her adult life through which she continued to grow as a stronger person, only because she is educated. Her decisions and stands are related to her views about tradition, culture and her choices of what she would like to change.

Rani's texts underline that the confidence, power, control, being proud, financial independence, family and cultural bonds, personal choices, and adjustment are the major points of her experience. This is presented below with supporting quotes.

Confidence, Identity I am confident as an educated woman. The best part in my life has been my education. If I have an identity today it is through my education.

Being proud I am very proud that I am an educated woman.

Power, Control I can do so much, I have that potential and power. I have control over my life, my decisions, money...

Financial security Financially I am secure. I can earn. Not dependent on anyone. This feeling comes because of my education. Wherever I go I can survive...

Courage If a situation arises, I can live alone... independently... I have the courage...

Awareness If you don't have education, you don't go out, you sit indoors all the time, don't interact with people... so many things... but now you see, Expanded worldview if we are educated we come to know the world... about different things about the world, about different people, different things in life, we go out, we interact with a variety of people, we grow as a person...

Continuing boundaries We grow up in our family... we are attached to our family members... if we cross them it may hurt them... These feelings pull us back. So, I have not been able to achieve all that I had planned for my life.

Like, even the family background matters a lot here... I wouldn't have suffered had I come from a well-educated family... My thinking is not maTeachers' Training Certificate courseing with my family...

...it is like this everywhere even now, is it not? Mine is not an exception, so I have accepted... but I feel sad. We are so well

Family: acceptance & awareness	recognised in our professional life, in the outside world, but here at home we are discriminated...I try to think deeply.
Choices on:	Ah, I want to tell another thing... some women even before they get married start dreaming and planning about marriage, husband, home,
Life partner	their children etc... but I don't feel for children... but definitely I want a marriage... I want a loving romantic partner, I want to share my life with him... beautiful.
Following Culture	Yes, even now I have these caste conventions. And there is this.... I am the eldest girl in the family... this is also very important... if I went in a separate way the whole family will be affected... I didn't want to shock my father in such a big way... he has a lot of trust in me... so I could not go differently...
Marriage	... once my marriage was fixed...it got cancelled. They tried to cheat us in a way... he had a disease... I was firm, I said no. Because I was confident of myself. I was not one of those illiterates who would submit to the pressure, bend her neck and get married in a slavish manner.... I am not that type...
Stand on personal changes	This, my mentality goes with me there also. See, basically I am an Indian woman. Even if I go abroad, my roots are here... so probably they may become stronger if I live abroad, I may value them more, who knows... See I have my confidence because now I am value-based. If I change I may not have this confidence. I can't talk confidently.
Education gives a lot to women...	... education has given a lot to us women. A lot, if you use it. Like this freedom, this capacity that she can manage everything that a male is expected to do, not just economic independence; her own capacity, that ability... you see that is also needed.

Shubha

Education is my base to progress my thoughts and thinking.

Shubha

Shubha was my senior in college where we studied for a Bachelor of Arts degree. She was in sports and theatre, so she was well known in the college. I used to spot her occasionally as her sports schedule was always busy. We met again while I was studying for my master's degree in psychology in the adjacent city. She had been selected to do a long apprenticeship in theatre in the same city. We re-started our friendship from there onwards. I used to watch the plays staged by her theatre repertory regularly, reviving my interest in arts. We drifted off when I moved back to Bangalore after a few years. I saw her briefly once when she was getting married and later with her baby daughter. When I went over to Bangalore for my research interviews in 2003, I accidentally learnt that she had moved back to Bangalore with her family. I contacted her. She was excited. We chatted about our lives. She was busy in theatre. Her daughter was growing up. Upon contacting her I told her about my whereabouts, my Ph.D. study and invited her to become a participant. She agreed, invited me to stay with her for a couple of days. Our interviews took place on March 20 and May 11.

That discipline, that commitment came from my schooling days. It shaped my values also.

Shubha narrates the influences on her present personality. These influences came from her school teachers, role models at school. Values and discipline that she learnt in those early educational years have had a positive impact upon her as an adult. She has re-connected now with the folklore, stories of those days and narrates their metaphorical meanings to her daughter.

Shubha says she was a bright student in primary school. Due to the selection of English language as the medium of instruction in a different high school she suffered a set back in her studies, diverted her focus towards sports. Those were the beginning years of nurturing her interest in theatre too. She learnt a lot from exposure to the political and social movements, theatre happenings in her early years and as a teenager.

I really enjoyed my schooling... that is my primary school. I had these two lady teachers... I have to tell you about the first teacher, Mrs.A. She was a senior person back then itself. She was there until I finished Class 7 and retired afterwards it seems. She did not have children. She used to talk about that quite openly. Using the Sarvagna padagalu, those visionary philosophical messages about life. She used to give a lot of messages, using folklore... describing the life of a woman who doesn't have children... many such messages about life... visionary messages. I don't know why she used them so often. I can't even say if she was suffering.

Now in my adult life, in whatever I do, in most situations, those visionary messages come to me. Those words come to me automatically even though I am not thinking of her at all. It is deep inside, engraved probably. That style of narration, her facial expressions, I remember all that. She as a teacher is an important influence in my life.

Our principal was ditto like Sir Visveswarayya, the famous architect. See in those days for us children, Sir Vishveshwarayya was a great personality and leader and we were to follow his example. And our principal was exactly like him. Same discipline and devotion to work. We would feel like worshipping them, adore them with respect. Such loyalty. Their influence upon students was profound. I guess it was generally like that in those days. I would respect him so much, with such single mindedness. Many personalities influenced us at school. Besides our preparation for tests, exams we also excelled in literary and cultural competitions, vying with others, right up to Class 7. That discipline, that commitment came from my schooling days. It shaped my values also.

What subjects influenced me most? Not the main subjects like science and maths, I suppose. But Kannada language lessons were great. More than being lessons, they were moral stories with values. With lots of sub-stories they touched upon the intricacies of life, our everyday experiences. They were close to us our life, to us as humans.

Now I tell the same moral stories to my daughter with my own interpretations:. They may not be academic at all. These were close to my heart, not my head. I can identify them as values. Lots of stories told in our school days were connected to our life.

After my daughter's birth I am going back to those school learning days – repeating the learning, showing her the sky, stars, moon, sun, explaining things about the universe, general science, general knowledge like learning about plant life... all these were done in my schooling. So I am relearning everything again, or re-living what I learnt at school. Otherwise I can't say schooling subjects have left a deep impact upon me.

In high school I chose the English medium of instruction. I suffered a lot in the first year, in Class 8. Now I think I should have discussed it with somebody. But then I didn't know much. I was restricted in my participation, self-expression. Only because it was the English language atmosphere, everything was learnt and

communicated in that language. My first language was Kannada in which I could express myself so well. There was this inferiority complex that developed that we, who came from Kannada language as the medium of instruction all through our primary school education, couldn't do better in those competitions or studies. We felt we didn't have the English speaking ability. I lagged behind in everything at school. So my interest in studies took a backward step. Fortunately, sports activities were very good in that school. So my attention, focus, interest, everything turned towards sports. From literary activities to sports. To overcome that inferiority complex, not being able to digest my failure to do well with the English speaking children of other classes... I embraced this new avenue – sports. I did well. People recognised me there as a good sports student. I needed that psychological boost, recognition. So I was recognised as a sports girl.

But altogether I lost the sense of being an intelligent girl in exams, scoring high marks; excelling in academic studies. To me, passing those annual exams became just enough. Study only for that purpose. So, I became an average student. I finished my Class X there as an average student (laughs).

I finished my Class X in 1977-78. That was the Emergency period. So behind our school and the adjacent college there was this huge college ground. It was popularly known as National College grounds. In that huge football ground all these high level political meetings and big speeches were held. I used to go and listen to them. I was exposed to such things quite early. In the beginning it was just curiosity of seeing big politicians and intellectuals in person there. The whole atmosphere around me was intellectually motivating. So much vibration was there. These political speeches were against the then prime minister and against the Emergency that she had declared. Well-known Kannada litterateurs used to speak from that platform. It was just a stone's throw from our house. Somebody from home would go and I would join them.

I can't say very specifically say if I have been greatly influenced from those days. But that atmosphere has had a strong influence on my personality. That excitement of so many things happening around me was enchanting. Tremendous personality development happened during those days. Particular stands and views about political and social movements, people's influences on me... That experience, people moving towards the stage, the colours, the flags, political hand outs, sign boards, slogans, the vibrating crowds, heated discussions, cultural activities, our excited participation and observation... they all have a good say on me a person.

Then I joined this particular pre-university college. I didn't get a high, fabulous percentage in Class X. I got a first class but not very high marks. Just average. I didn't get to join the prestigious college. I had a variety of interests in high school, not just studying. Model making, stamp collection, cultural activities, sports ... I was very interested in creative activities. I was bored of school lessons and studies. I found a strategy. Just pass the exams. That was enough. I became active in all other things, creative activities. I continued this interest in the pre-university

college also. I don't have much to talk about that phase of my life. I did not do much in that college. I spent most of my time in the Student Federation activities.

What happened at that time was this: my elder sister who had finished her bachelor's degree by then was active in a particular theatre group. I became involved in that too and was very active there. I worked a lot there, volunteering, learning about acting, watching the play rehearsals.

My sister used to bring out a magazine of related to that theatre activities and theatre in general. I was also sharing a lot of petty work with her there. I was with their team as a youngster. In 1980 the team did a huge jatha about social issues, problems, beliefs and superstitions, gender. I participated in that jatha very actively. A noted theatre personality did a poster, heralding a greeting card campaign by hand painting... invited the public to paint expressing their ideas and make their own greeting cards. In the background of promoting awareness on social issues. This kind of painting expression was open to all, anybody could paint, make their cards. That was so interesting, unique to me. I was wonderstruck. It was a different world altogether.

My sister's team staged Macbeth play. I attended the rehearsals when they were rehearsing the scenes. That experience probably changed the whole course of my life. A huge change was happening inside me. Now I realise that. How much it impacted upon me, my life, my ideology, my philosophy on life... Then onwards I felt that inspiration, vibration within myself.

I wanted to act in plays. I wanted to get into theatre. That huge stage, that electric presence of the actors, their acting, the plays – classics, folklorish – the very medium attracted me hugely. I wanted it more and more and more. And that greeting card campaign, that was perceived as a movement. I was swept away in that movement. Every moment of it filled me from inside. I was transformed.

The issues related to dalits, caste, class, superstitions, gender discrimination, psychological issues, social and political oppression.... They tried to raise public consciousness. Awareness building. These plays developed me immensely, with awareness, with insights, with changes.

I started looking around me, at the society, home, people with fresh eyes, with a new lens. Did gender discrimination happen at home, was my father like that, what is this class issue... but my father was never like that. He never discriminated us because we were girls. At one stage it came out only in words. We were shocked, we said 'so you also can think in those lines'... that was all, and that was enough. Never repeated again. There were no open instances of gender discrimination in our family. But now we tell our father that he had such feelings deep within him. But there were no open feelings and expressions. So it couldn't be felt openly or challenged that way.

(Interesting recognition between what the curriculum subjects can mean to each person, how differently and how a person can make their own meaning from what is being

learnt and taught. Shubha provides her own insights into the popular stories that she narrates to her daughter now. Shubha also recognises the **multiple-layered effects** of learning at different stages of life.

And then the theatre world. Most of these experiences shaped her world-view, intellectual and critical thinking and developed her personal stands.

Multiple influences on her that came from the world around her. Many **turning points** from those experiences have tension-filled experiences. **Tensions** are related to the pressure good performance, an inferiority complex related to English medium of instruction and developing her strategy of ‘just passing exams.’ Is her experience **challenging an education** for new thinking, enhancing abilities and liberating the learner? Was her strategy of ‘passing exams’ a **survival game**? Or playing the cards? Does society encourage this strategy? Or does it encourage **learning from life** which Shubha gradually adopted?)

Shubha says within her family although nobody pointed at girls in a discriminating way, her sisters experienced gender discrimination which she affirms now as an adult.

I want to share an instance. When my brother used to write his annual university degree exams, he would spend all night studying hard for his exams. The whole household would immerse itself in that study atmosphere. I don’t know why we behaved like that when he studied hard at exam time. We participated with him, for his preparation, as a family, united. He was the first child among the four. My mother would make a sweet dish everyday when he went to write those exams. Being the youngest I was pretty curious about the sweet I was going to eat soon. I would ask her what sweet she was going to make that day as my brother wrote yet another exam. She used to make varieties of sweets in the traditional way. I don’t know whether he asked for them or not. If I analyse all that now it may be from my intellectual analysis now as an adult, with awareness. But during those days, we never felt any difference and any sort of discrimination. But I had noticed something by then – that my mother did not make any sweets when my elder sister went to write her final exams.

Now probably I want to analyse that situation this way – sister was the second child in the family; the novelty of the situation of the first child going for an exam was diluted. We did not feel that level of excitement. Or may be my mother discriminated because he was the only male child and the first one. But we have never discussed this at any time and we did not experience it that way. There was no room for such a discussion. But my elder sister says she has experienced the

discrimination. I am pampered a little as I am the last one. Being the youngest I have been benefited in many ways. So I didn't even sense any discrimination happening at home. My sisters have experienced it, it seems. And they have fought against it, repaired the situation. As a result of that when my turn came as a big girl, there was an improvement in how I was treated. So I didn't experience it as my sisters did and opposed it. I am thankful to them. This is my current analysis!

I was actually on a favourable side, always. They both did their college education wearing only long skirts. Those traditional dressing habits were strictly maintained. In my case, I was the first one in the family to wear a different dress, a pair of trousers and a shirt. They couldn't. So when the first sister speaks bitterly sometimes, rude with my parents now, I keep quiet. Because, I did not experience the discrimination I can't blame them. But I do support my sister. This comes from my intellectual awareness now. She says our father did trouble her, caused her problems when she wanted to work, choose a career and so on. But I don't know of these from my own experience. Because my brother is 10 years older than me, he actually would pet me and looked after me, more lovingly than my father. So I didn't feel any difference about being a girl. Nobody said you are a girl, so you should be like this, like that... I have experienced that freedom at home. When I was growing up, probably I attributed those womanly, tender qualities to myself, by observing others and my sisters. I don't blame anybody for such behavioural changes. I went easy with life. There was no compulsion of any sort. Like for example nobody said you are a girl, don't laugh loudly, it is very ungirl-like. You are a girl, sit like this... Because we girls did not laugh loudly at all. We always displayed very much girl-like behaviour. So there was no room for male dominance in our family. I actually started laughing loudly when I started living on my own, after coming to the theatre repertory.

I have thought about that deeply sometimes. Now I think yes, how come we did not laugh loudly or speak loudly in our family? Why weren't we like that? But we were just not like that. I don't know why. Now actually because of my changed expressions of behaviour, my family members are exposed to such things, you know laughing loudly etc; but nobody says anything nasty about me.

(Again, an **insightful** analysis on gender discrimination. Shubha's experience at this point is related to a girl's position in her family, how that position is perceived by others. And there are influences from siblings. Shubha states she never experienced gender discrimination at home, yet supports her sister now who seems to have experienced it. Her text poses two challenges to gender theories – firstly, gender discrimination and oppression cannot be generalised as everybody's experience. Secondly, it is individual-specific. Only from her current intellectual, analytical position Shubha tends to support her sister, not from her own experience background.)

Then Shubha experienced academic failure and the bitter feeling of rejection. Shubha says she learnt a lesson in her life about the importance of academic studies, family's support and decided to move on alone in her life.

My family members always said education first. Even my eldest sister cautioned me often that I should study hard, focus more on education, not on my various interests. But I was swept away by the theatre movement when I was supposed to be studying hard for my second year pre-university exams. That was the qualifying year to get to a bachelor's degree course. As a result of my activities...I failed that year (laughs loudly). My family members were furious. Everybody pointed a negative finger at me. Negative. Not abusive. Some words said followed by a long silence. Unbearable silence. I tried to find out what marks I actually got. Went to the Board of Studies, something was not correct in my answer papers...I found that out through the re-counting process. It was just beyond my understanding.

I felt alone in my struggles. I thought I didn't have any support from the family. I decided to move on, alone in my struggles. As I failed the qualifying exam, I had to remain at home for a year. You see, I didn't have the eligibility to enter a bachelor's degree course. Later on I passed the exam. But that one whole year I suffered so much all alone. I could not share my feelings with the family as they would only blame me for the failure. I tasted the bitterness of academic failure for the first time in my life. I felt miserable. It was not just a failure in an exam. It was a big blow to my ego also. I was very quiet during that whole year. Insulted, ridiculed. The following year I joined the first degree college, chose my own subjects. Instead of continuing with science subjects, I took arts subjects.

My sister says she faced an objection when she chose to do the arts subjects. My brother said when I couldn't pass the science subjects how would I be able to study the new subjects and get a B.A. completed. But I just continued. I took it up as a challenge. I had the great insult experience with me. I was greatly hurt by my brother's comments and behaviour. But I found out that I did enjoy the subjects. From there onwards, my journey was a lonely journey. I took decisions about my studies, my life, my job....

Joining this first grade degree college for my B.A. was a totally different experience. A different world, different friends, different growth...see those growth and development stages... primary school, then a different high school, then that pre-university college, all new experiences. I used to feel very sad that my life was over in that pre-university college. I was stagnated. But then afterwards, another jump to this first grade degree college, it changed me so much. It was a very positive experience. Sports friends, literary friends, theatre activities- many of them were not even my classmates, not even my subject mates; but I got friends for life from that college. Some of the lecturers are still my friends.

(**Influences and learning** from various sources – teachers, subjects, non-academic sources. Then the exciting political and social environment. Movements. Stimulation, motivation. Alongside changes in academic life introduction to sports, theatre.

Many **turning points** in Shubah's life are intertwined with her academic performance and choosing her interests outside the curriculum. Are these turning points also tensions and conflicting experiences? **Tension** between the individual's interests, social expectations and the state systems. **Conflicting experiences** related to subjects, exams and expectations around performance. Formal education is valued first and most, above personal interests. Expectations are specified that performing well in formal education is preferred over 'other' interests. Do these systemic expectations create a **dilemma** for a young learner? Is education about exams or is it the personal development?)

It was a new world of experiences. Lots of questions and answers were interwoven.

Shubha summarises her feelings after completing her bachelor's degree in Arts, where she was at a crossroad, neither studying further nor being in a job. She decided that she needed a job and that would make it easier to marry her long-time friend. She thinks economic independence was important at that point of time in life as people such as her family would have less control and power over her personal life. Her brother had certain plans for her which she did not pursue. She tried to get out of his control too.

After my B.A. degree... I didn't know what to do after that. I wasn't studying, I wasn't in a job – what was my occupation in life... I didn't know. I could have done a master's course in the university, an M.A. in Kannada literature. But two more years' commitment, going to the campus daily, not being able to earn some money, again depending on the family for my fees. I didn't want that situation of dependency again. I wanted an independent life of my own, my own career...

My father didn't actually interfere with my life. It was my brother who was controlling my life. He didn't like my B.A. degree course, my love for theatre; he had certain plans for me. He liked me very much and thought I would achieve great things in life, following his guidance. He wanted me to study science. Later higher education. But I went in a different path. He might have been disappointed by my choices. So more than my father's control, it was the brother here!

Now I tend to think that my father psychologically depended on him as he was the eldest, and the only son. My father didn't express his support for what I was

doing; he neither stopped me nor supported. He just remained neutral throughout. It is now to me quite interesting to reflect on.

My brother was the eldest in the family so he had a voice of power. He used to tell my parents that only because they left me free to do what I liked to, I was not following his guidance. I would sneak out to the theatre for the play, I would go to literacy events, meetings, sports competitions...He believed if they had had control over me, I wouldn't go in my own ways like that.

I often think my father could have said that he had confidence in me and he was aware of what I was up to; but he didn't... he didn't take the responsibility for me. He always used to say ask your brother, for everything. I would get irritated by his attitude of non-involvement. Gradually that feeling started building up within me. Meanwhile my elder sister got married. That marriage also was not a happy occasion within the family. The pressure from that situation also was telling upon me. For a few years.

She married somebody from the theatre field where they both were active. It was a simple marriage, each other's choice, not arranged by the families. And another thing was it was not a conventional marriage. She had to fight her way against the family elders. By that time my family members had noticed that there were some similarities between me and her, in our personalities. She married and left the parental house. What they couldn't do with her, they tried to do with me, put pressure on me. Obviously they didn't like what she did. They didn't forbid me completely from doing what I was doing. Sneaking out to participate in my theatre activities was like a hide and seek game...mainly between me and my brother who opposed it strongly.

Perhaps there is a lot of ideological differences between the two of us; then and even now. Now of course, we have learnt to handle our relationship very diplomatically. We don't hurt each other. We are grown up adults. Our life is ours. But then it was different. He could exert control over us as he was the first child.

Around the time of my elder sister's marriage he said something like 'if Shubha went in the same path as you did, I would hold you responsible for that'; meaning I might follow her example of going against the family's wishes. He challenged her saying if she would take my responsibility. She said she wouldn't. She said I was responsible for my behaviour, decisions and my actions. She said she wouldn't get involved in my life matters. This was also around the time that I was at home, having failed in the qualifying pre-university course exam. I was shocked by what she said. I felt I was alone. Nobody was with me. These family members were not interested in what I wanted. They were not with me or my life. I had to continue in my own path. That realisation was actually eye-opening at that time; it helped me shape my actions and my goals; continuing in life as I planned to.

I was shocked at my sister's words, I loved and role-modelled around her. I was disillusioned. I realised that I had to struggle in that family. Afterwards, as my

academic life improved, as we all matured in our life after many years, things have been perceived differently. Once when I jokingly reminded my family members that I had failed in my pre-university course exam, they exclaimed how could I fail, that they didn't remember it at all. So, that episode was forgotten completely by them. But I have not forgotten those times or those experiences.

(**Control** over her life, **resistance** and **confrontations**. Learning from those experiences with an experience of **feeling torn apart**. Tension filled years around her choices available in life, pursuing those choices against losing the trust of her family and their support. Although she did not personally experience gender discrimination in her family, her experiences reveal another person's, her brother, control over her decisions and actions. Shubha's everyday resistance arises from this point of **control and power**. The representation of the **social system** against the **individual**.)

Shubha says she had this internal urge that she wanted a career that was satisfying to her intellectual personality. After a challenging selection process she got selected as an apprentice at a state-level theatre repertory. Her long-time dream was realised.

Shubha narrates two difficult moments at this moment of her life – that of going against the wishes of her father and brother to have a career in theatre; and losing her lover to another girl. She believes her sports background gave her strength to pull herself through difficult moments. She also traces her growth and development with new educational environment and a newer perspective of life while she trained in the repertory.

Meanwhile I had plans to get married to this friend. We were close to each other from my early days in the theatre group. It was supposed to be an inter-caste marriage. I had the clear idea that only if I was economically independent, having a decent job and an income, could I get married to that guy and face the family's opposition. He was about to return to Bangalore after completing his degree in theatre from another city. I was a forward caste person and he belonged to a low caste. Nobody knew about this plan at home, about the two of us and our mutual love. I mean how could they know? He was somewhere else, I was in the college and then he was here and there, involved in his theatre career... so we were not together for people to come to know about us. All this was around 1986, 1987.

I was trying for jobs. I got a teaching job in a well-known private school, teaching Kannada language to school kids. They asked me to teach nursery classes too. From 8.00 to 12.30 I would teach Kindergarten kids and then the usual primary

school children. I used to get very tired by these long hours of teaching. But I started enjoying the KG classes. I gave up the higher classes and taught only KG classes. I worked there for one and a half years. I enjoyed it thoroughly. We were 12 teachers, we followed the joyful learning methodology. We had a very good qualitative time with children there. There were a lot of activities.

But I still had the longing desire to do something more worthwhile than this, something that opened up the person inside me fully, with brains, talents and personality. Although I had a teacher's job at that time I was a bit disappointed that my higher studies ended with just a B.A. degree. So I decided to do an external M.A. in Kannada literature. I applied for the course as an external student. It was 1988. I liked it. I wrote the first year exams, got good results. During the same time I had applied to this newly launched theatre repertory, to be an apprentice there. At that time the state government was planning this repertory in the adjacent city. ometime during my first year M.A., I attended the first interview that was meant to shortlist the applicants.

I was still working as a teacher; when I was about to start the second year of my M.A. course, I got the second interview call from the repertory. It was in a different city. I had to go out of station. I had to seek my father's permission to go out of station where the interview was held. I asked the parents for permission. They said no as usual. Brother also said no. I insisted. He said 'do whatever you want, I don't want to be involved'... No one ever said anything positively about my plans, activities. No one was ever happy in their reaction to what I did. There was no consensus amongst them about what I was doing. So they wouldn't say yes or no, didn't get involved, were not sure...

I passed the second interview also. Then the third interview – three days test. Again approaching the parents, then the brother... their negligent attitude, I wept out of sadness. See, I couldn't go without informing them, but that humiliation...I still went for the interview. By the time I returned I knew that I wanted to do this. I wanted to continue in this theatre field. It was meaningful. It became a challenge. People knew that I was attending this interview. It was like a major exam, I didn't want to fail in this one. I wanted to be there as an insider. Then I got through.

I had to tell them at home. I had to resign the job. I had to give a formal commitment to the government as a trainee. I had to shift to the other city where the repertory was being established. Father didn't say anything, I just asked him whether I had to get the permission from the brother, he said yes, do whatever he says. I told my brother, he just nodded his head sideways as if I had brought another unpleasant news to him. Nobody said anything, neither positively nor negatively. I couldn't wait anymore, I gave the consent to the government. I resigned the job.

(Again **resistance** and **contestation**, leading to tension, **torn apart** experience. Living the **domestic ideal** as expected by the society or choosing one's own life? **Torn**

between the system and the individual goals and plans. How do women continue with their preferred choices and desired actions? Shubha's experiences reveal that it is not an easy path. A woman's choices are controlled by the state. Ideologies of formal education, expectations of achievement, good performance in exams and proving an individual's worth from those achievements are the preferred ways of life over individual interests and choices.

Although Shubha said she didn't face any discrimination, it is her father or brother, who are taking decisions about their family women's life. Her perception of gender discrimination is not overtly described or identified from her own experience. The family males' control and power over her life choices is an example of discrimination. Why didn't Shubha talk about the absence of women's power in her family? Her elder sister had to confront the males at her marriage time. What is the participation level of her mother and middle sister in the family decisions? What are her internal experiences with her self concerning other women, the state, tradition, acceptance, perceptions of socially normalised frames of life and male authority over females'? How does she relate to men in her profession, her lover? What is her position in the society as a woman?)

Back to my plans again. The plan to marry my long-time friend somehow didn't work in my favour. Something unexpected happened then. So I didn't get him. He had to marry another girl. By that time I had resigned from my teacher's job. I had given the consent to join the repertory. I had to shift to that city for my theatre career. He also lived in the same city and so did that girl... It was like a love triangle. It was a difficult moment. I was at the crossroads, confused, without any support. I suffered a lot in those days. But even after all that I retained him as a good friend.

V- Why couldn't you marry him?

Umm, he had to marry that girl. They both had some kind of a brief affair it seems. She got pregnant. So they had to get married. He had to marry her. He said that he was in that situation, he didn't have a choice. When he told me what had happened, before he married her, I thought of the unborn child first of all.

V- Didn't you ask him and remind him about your mutual love and plans of a marriage, family...

Yes, I did. I asked how could it happen when he was committed to our relationship. Men have thousands of reasons to justify their behaviour. He said he

didn't have an affair with her. That it was an emotional moment between them, he was sort of consoling her about her distressed situation as a good friend. And it happened in that emotional moment... he was caught off guard, he was trapped... he said all this. See if it was an open affair between them, I would have fought that. I would have got him around, back to me... But an unborn child was involved there. It would be a life long problem for all three of us adults, and distress for the child. I thought of that first. A lot of people in fact asked me later, how could I and why did I let go of him? Why didn't I fight back to get him? That was the reason. Thinking of that unborn baby and its future. It was a blank feeling. I didn't have any alternative but to let go of him for the sake of her child. It would have been wrong for me to clinch him away from the child. The stark reality of her presence, her child was there in front of me, how could I live with him in future? And I feared for his reputation too that his name would be spoilt. By then he was a well-known person in the theatre, had a good name. So I gave up myself. I surrendered to the situation. I accepted my defeat there.

V- What do you mean by his name and reputation?

He was quite famous and well known in the theatre. Everybody knew him. His name would be spoilt even if we were married. Do you think she would have kept quiet? She would have dragged him to the streets and taught him a lesson, not caring least for his feelings. And all three of us would be a laughing stock in the streets. People would have pointed a finger at us. I fear that most – then also and even now, always. I fear that a lot. I don't want my life to be a public property, dragged into the streets. I don't want the public to know about my personal life. Not my personal matters.

V- What do mean by this street and public?

See our marriage plan was not known to my family. And it was an intercaste relationship. We belonged to different castes. That was a major problem. I would have to convince so many people about it and face a stiff opposition from my family. I didn't have my elder sister's support either. When she got the hint of our plan to get married, she opposed it. So in the face of all these, why let this personal matter become an issue and known to all?

Instead of becoming a laughing stock in the society, death is better. See, it was a value, we talk about values all the time, don't we. Here is an example how it was realised. She was a woman and was pregnant without a marriage. Society does not look at what type of a woman she is, it observes her state of being pregnant and stands by her, accusing the two of us. That was our strange situation. Society would definitely push him towards her and marriage. So I didn't want all that to happen. I gave in and told him to carry on with his wish.

...yes, that year was very difficult. I had the most wonderful career training opportunity in my life. All those seven years that I struggled to be in the active, professional theatre, that dream was coming true at last, I was an insider as an artiste. My dream of full time devotion to theatre and immersing in it was within my reach now. I could realise that dream now. But the person who said he would

be with me all my life in such a venture, my dreams, my journey was not there with me anymore.

So that depression, that emptiness was there for sometime. But as time passed, I overcame that very soon. I involved myself deeply in theatre, training and learning... doing things that were close to my heart. The hurt was there with me all the time, but there were other important things than that as time passed. The repertory was most engaging. It revealed so many different layers of experiences, perspectives on life...it revealed so many faces of life that were not known to me. It was overwhelming. Theatre is a strong experience. Normally we tend to think routinely in our lives, about us, people around us, same worlds...the routine characters of our life... But in theatre I got so many other contacts, networks... and besides being my self, there was another character that I could become and be.

Psychologically I could transform into another person. I could adopt another persona. That became a life culture. I started to learn how and what would it be if this character moved into this life situation here... shifts in life, in characters, in feelings... I learnt a lot. It was not limited to only theatre career. I extended it to life situations too; it was not just me always. What if I moved into this situation, what would be the reactions of people, different phases of that experience...different layers of human experiences... it was a whole new world of experiences. Lots of questions and answers were intertwined. All this provided another, different meaning to my life as an educated person. It was a huge personal development period.

Much later, after a few years...when my colleague proposed to me... see, I was so confident by then. For me... by that time, I had crossed so many such intricacies of relationships and life situations. Those I had seen and heard around me, involved myself in, experiencing the minute aspects of life... so many of such episodes of life were happening. Strengthening me as a person. When my colleague proposed to me I never even thought of the caste difference between us. Not even a thought or a worry that I would face opposition from my parents, that I might have to convince them. I was so independent by then that I didn't have to ask anybody for anything. But my would-be husband was tense about our marriage as such an inter-caste marriage had not taken place in his family circles. He thought it would be a shock for them (laughs). But they took it easily when we told them. They all participated well in our marriage. His whole family. From my side my father and brother remained neutral as usual. I didn't wait for their consent or involvement. I just proceeded. My both sisters and their husbands supported me completely, participated fully in the marriage proceedings, organised things from my side. Everything went really well. ...

I am not a traditional wife. I mean I don't follow that traditional wife role...from morning to night these are the things that a wife does, so I do the same, follow the stereotype image... no I am not like that. Whatever I can do, I do; I don't follow any routine at home, like cooking and cleaning. Our time is entirely ours. He doesn't expect any such role model behaviour either.

(A rich text on life, on people, understanding the world, **worldview**, **self-reflection**, gaining insights with **turning points**...Shubha's stands on maintaining the privacy of her personal life, on human values and on men are highlighted in this text. Also the social **systems** that prevail upon an **individual's choices**, in her case, planning to marry a man who is not from her own caste and choosing a career that was not valued by her family.

While deciding about her choice of joining the state theatre repertory to fulfil her lifelong dream she faced opposition from her brother and non-involvement from her father which were both discouraging. Again submitting to a male's power – with Shubha having to seek their permission to go out of station – is highlighted. Interestingly, she **does not analyse** this as male supremacy or dominance. She focuses on the experience of being unsupported and lonely in her endeavours.

The texts related to her failed attempt to marry her lover raise an important question: how important are higher education and financial security for a woman to **take decisions** in the **personal sphere**? Is it mainly an educated woman's financial independence that influences her decisions, her position and action?

Another significant experience is Shubha's acceptance of what society prefers and respects in regards to letting go of her lover to marry another woman who is expecting his child. Is this **acceptance** of the prevailing cultural and social norms? Although she says 'men have thousands of reasons...' her choice, in this matter, is to remain with social systems. Her internal fear is of being exposed to the public indicates maintaining the socially accepted position of a respectable middle-class woman. Instead of fear, she has a non-guilt life. Is this experience another example of '**good woman**'? Or is this an educated woman's way of **expanding personal choices**?

This expanded choice space is used well later when she accepts and marries her colleague, again an intercaste relationship. In making that decision she values her life experience, her improved financial condition and her position of living independently outside her parental family's control. She need not ask anybody for anything, which is a good example of **independence for a middle-class woman**.)

Education is my base to progress my thoughts and thinking.

Shubha reflects upon her position of being an educated woman in many ways. Firstly, she says education removes arrogance and exposes one to understand people in a better way. This also relates to understanding life's realities and responding to them in an empowered manner, resolving conflicting situations. Secondly, she says education has given her confidence. This is related to her ability to do what she wants to do, economic independence, choices in life, analysing life situations. Though education doesn't get a person everything in one's life, it provides opportunities for growth and development from which a person learns to apply her abilities differently.

Now I will tell you how I am using my education. Well, I will put it in a very simple equation. Education removes or lessens our arrogance. When people say they are educated they are up there... it is not right. What I feel is if you are educated come down and look at the wonderful things here on the ground. That is what I say. Up there means looking down at the world from the top, you know what I mean? Rather than doing that, looking at people, relating to people, in ways that you can associate with them and the world from the bottom is more correct...a bit of human psychology (laughs).

That way my education has exposed me to people and their psychologies, understanding them, their life and world... practising this understanding everyday. One can say that without studying formally one can understand human psychology, there may a lot of such people. We do have many examples. I respect them a lot. They are great. Like the poets and the visionaries. But everybody is not like that. Some need education, an education with some focus and a goal. You will know about people, how they are using their learning, how they are living in what different ways, applying the educational aspects to life... when you observe these life matters... then you will think of applying your education in a lot of suitable ways. There is a difference.

Then... uh, confidence. My education has given me confidence. Understanding is given to me through my education. I will tell you how.

Confidence in matters like... I can do anything if I have the wish to do... with a wish, confidence to move on in my life if you want to move on. And then, understanding. This is related to what I told you a minute ago. Understanding people and the world around you, this is one side. Another side is, understanding the reality of life. Education betters such an understanding.

Some people say that a person's life experience gets them that understanding of the reality. I agree but I also want to add that education also gives, enhances such an understanding of the reality. At least in my case it is so. Because I have been educated, I could get into different areas of life, think and analyse about life.

Without education only the stem of experience would be there. Now with my education I not only have the stem of experience but also have the branches to it that have grown and spread widely. This is possible because of education. See there is this bag of experience. A lot of good things happen from that. You can enhance that and take it forward with your education. You can move and you can hand over experiences to others also.

You are asking me how do I describe myself as an educated woman? Educated woman's image... getting formal education and using it to the well being of her life successfully is an educated woman. Any kind of education should aim at this. Not functional or money oriented. Career, jobs, income... It is not just these from education. Education should apply to life and bring that totality in life's progress for anybody.

That has happened in my life. That is my experience, so I can say this strongly. For others it may not be true. In my case it has become true. Because in my life I have been struggling with my failures and successes – I am continuing in my life. So I reflect and realise. I know that is right, this is wrong. So if somebody asks I know what to tell them, show them the path as per my experience. But all paths are not full of roses. One has to struggle in life to continue in the right path. It may be full of hurdles. One has to continue knowing that fully well. That is the reality. This is the experience in my life after all these years.

Education is my base to progress my thoughts and thinking. It helps me to analyse the choice factor also. Applying that to life is important. I have got this from education. But then we can't just get everything only from education. Society is slightly different!

I will explain this. We can't get everything from being educated. Even after being educated many a times in many places we still have to fight for many things. See, even the minimum 33% reservation for women in the parliament is still not guaranteed. Even though Vajpai and Sonia Gandhi have agreed to it, political people at the lower rung are not agreeing. When the situation is like this in our country, the struggle for equity and fuller participation continues with women whether women are educated or not. It has to continue and it is ongoing forever.

In my personal experience I am not fully experiencing that equity and participation because in my career it is like... for a year I have been in this industry in Bangalore. In this career I have not been able to move up like a man does. Within my industry... in the film and TV industry. This work doesn't have a time schedule, they work around the clock.

For women to work in this industry around the clock, at any time of the day, there is no adequate and appropriate security in our country. So I tend to be bound within myself with my own frames and rules. Some women go past them, beyond any limitations and boundaries. But I can't go beyond like that, beyond my certain boundaries. So when I am like this, bound, I tend to feel that oh, because of these boundaries I have not been able to achieve much progress... I feel sad. Generally.

Even an illiterate woman becoming slightly educated gains so much confidence...

Shubha says learning happens in many varieties of situations. She believes that her formal educational qualifications have a good link with her profession. She links education and its potential to get a decent job with self-confidence, courage and the ability to do what one wants to do in life. Economic independence through a decent job provides a direction to a person's life, she says. Education must give confidence to a person as it exposes her to different life situations. She underlines that education gives a person economic independence, shapes one's life, gives knowledge and opens up many avenues. What education gives a woman is the ability to have choices such as a decent, respectable job, and many avenues. She recognises that she got the courage to think of marrying a man outside her own caste from the ground that she was educated and would become economically independent so that others will have less control over her life.

In my degree college I got varieties of thinking atmosphere, set up, lecturers, friends, different intellectual stimuli... they all contributed to my life. See education is not just text books and learning from them. If it is just that I would have not had the ability to think differently. I would accept my parents' ways of arranged marriage, and going by the popular trend of a job, a husband and a routine life. But my college education, my sports background, my theatre experience gave me different perspectives on life. Not just the learning material, the syllabus. But my subjects psychology and literature also helped me a lot. When people say where is the link between your formal education qualifications and your profession, I say there is definitely a link.

One thing is that education enables us to understand and also give confidence. Financial independence is the most important thing that comes from education. Even an illiterate woman becoming slightly educated gains so much confidence because she can in some way earn a living. That confidence comes from being educated. Once you are dependent on others, a feeling of inferiority complex that you are dependent, you are under control is constantly there.

There is definitely a connection between education and a job. Education gets you a dignified job, whatever job it is, a kind of dignified, may be a nursery teacher's job... so for a decent job you need education. So education must not be neglected. This realisation came to me during my bachelor's degree days. When I was in that pre-university college, I used to bunk the classes, do a lot of other activities; my brother would say that degree was important to get a job, I wouldn't listen. But later that understanding came to me at the degree college doing a BA.. I didn't have any problems with money; but later I understood that we cannot neglect our formal education, it is very important. It is very essential. Varieties of reasons – financial independence, leading your life the way you want, shaping your life's

course, or knowledge building... learning new things, information... see it is an opening. You get an exposure to so many things, through education. If you don't go in that direction, that exposure will not be there. You will miss out on that.

I think that is how I got the courage to go against my caste and thought of marrying my long-time friend, that person who married another woman... Ummm...see, financial independence is the most important thing here. If I was financially independent, nobody would harass me. I would tell them about my marriage, get married and leave. It was my earnings, my family and my future. So I was strong about a job and my own earnings. Whatever people said about my marriage or my family, it wouldn't matter much if I lived apart from them.

Education, for any person, must give confidence. My plus point was that I was trained in sports. In sports defeat, the failure is common. It is difficult to accept, I know. Not everybody can accept it easily. But my sports background taught me that failure also is a part of life and the game continues even after that. It helped me a lot. And there is the influence of education also.

What else education has given me ... it has given me confidence. Compared to those women who are not educated, I can give this list. So firstly it has given confidence. Given me exposure.

Yes, I agree that a lot of women who have not received any education living in the villages and bush, remote places, are also living well, with confidence. I don't deny that. When we look at the statistics, a lot of such women are caught up in a variety of problems, issues and are suffering. Compared to this, women who have got education have come out of such problematic situations successfully, there are numerous examples of this. Or I can say their education is showing them ways of getting out of their suffering situation.

But I can't say that education helps me in all matters of my life. Upto some stage there is education, after that it is life experience. I can't say until my last breath my education helped me in everything. The atmosphere that my education provided me to view life from many different angles, the exposure that that atmosphere gave me, and the experience that these two, the atmosphere and the exposure gave me – in these aspects my education has helped me. It is not entirely education always that has given me everything. If I say that it will be bogus. It was education up to some stage of life. Now it is my life experience more than education. It is how I am using my education to my life situations. Experience around me in my world, people around me, how they are living, my associations with these things and so on.

I didn't get this atmosphere and exposure that easily. I had to fight a lot and come out of the conventional world. That fighting spirit, that motivation must be there, but not all women have this kind of spirit. See so many girls with such high percentages in academic achievements, with high level of thinking also, don't have that spirit. They don't fight as they try to keep up the honour of somebody's family, somebody's name, some ego of some family, a person, they don't come out of that conventional frame.. I feel unfortunate for them.

In such circumstances I think education didn't give them anything. May be it gave them intelligence, to reflect and suffer with conflicts. At least they may pass the action to their next generation. Their education didn't give them personally the capacity to face their life and take some action. Many women experience this. And for many others it is not needed. They say they don't want such an understanding or they don't need it.

They enter the field I mean their life just to follow what is already existing. After many many years they repent and think ah, if only I had done something for myself... having my own space... Some do reconstruct their life frames. I have seen this happening. When their children are a bit older say 17, 18 years of age, these women feel the emptiness. Then they try to reconstruct. At such times I think positively about them. Yes, they don't have the routine equation in their life. See this equation of a bachelor's degree, then a master's, some career... they didn't get that equation in their life. They were trying to live for others. Now they go back and reconstruct. Some understanding comes then. It is alright. Here we have to think that as they had some level of education they were able to come back and reconstruct life again with some moving forward exercise. Otherwise they would end up making papads or masala powder. They come upon choices only because they are educated.

And then there are other women who have not even completed their university bachelor's degree but now they are living well, with good interesting concepts in life; they may not be in good jobs, professionally speaking. But they are pursuing something and earning their own money. So education is not always about having high profile jobs and career. To me it is different. Education should teach us more about ourselves.

To me fighting, struggling within one's own self, within ourselves is quite important, for that education helps us. Fighting within myself is discovering our selves. Sometimes we collapse with that conflict. Then we continue... again a new bag of experiences... education helps us to continue.

(**Confidence, abilities, financial independence, values, insight** on how to move on in life, open avenues to pursue, **analysing** life's realiteis, developing a better understanding on life and insight on going in a right path – Shubha is saying these are her experiences as an educated woman. Rich insights. Then comes a **tension**, a **compromise** – she has **boundaries**, frames that she **prefers** to follow. She is a woman. Because society is like this. Are an educated woman's experiences a combination of utilising the benefits of education alongside continuing the society's expectations around culture and systems?

The text on the usefulness of education is stressed with a value attached on how to apply to life situations. The **tensions** show here again. As an educated woman Shubha can do anything only if she wishes to. The **conscious awareness** of what is her wish and pursuing that wish is highlighted here. There is also a personal development in terms of knowing and making meaning from her struggles, failures and success. Interestingly, from being educated she knows what is the correct path and could guide people towards that path.

What is the **correct path** in life, for everybody? Would her path appear correct to another woman? Is Shubha's understanding of life's reality correct? There are several life's **turning points** here. Resisting her brother's control over her decision to join the repertory and marrying against the wish of her father and brother become turning points of success that are meant to make her powerful and in control of her life. Submitting to the social expectation of sacrificing her lover to another woman because of the unborn baby becomes the experience of her life's **frames and boundaries** that she wants to follow. Turning points of her life are an interplay of struggles of understanding her self, her choice factor related to what she prefers as her position in the public, her control over life also regulated by what she wishes to follow in keeping up social and cultural expectations.

Her confusion and dilemma are also evident in those experiences. What to follow, what exactly does the frame 'full control' mean, what is the frame/s of her own, what boundary to follow in what matters and so on. These become visible in her contradictory texts related to education:

- (1) Giving confidence to women and her later contradicting statement that for some women education does not give anything;
- (2) Education gives you a dignified job and later text that education is not always about high profiles;

(3) Education increased her choices to take decisions which are clashing with her experience of submitting to the society's control, her creation of frames and boundaries in her profession which men dominate;

(4) Contribution of education until some stage in life and valuing life experience;

(5) Illiterate women getting confidence upon becoming slightly educated clashing with her statement that a lot of educated women enter the life field trying to continue the conventional frames of life;

(6) Choices and action of illiterate and educated women – limited for illiterate women.

Is this how education brings progress in an educated woman's life?

Shubha's own choices and actions reflect many **dilemmas**, especially in the matters of profession, affirming cultural and social ways of life, accepting and continuing with the boundaries. These are her **choices** without a conscious effort to change through a concerted action. Her experiences illuminate her **growing self-understanding** and awareness of her limitations and expanded **choice space** as an educated woman. Her growing awareness of the tensions and struggles within her self are an indication that, as she said, she is **torn apart** and between the educated, **confident ideal** and the educated, **social ideal**.)

Epilogue

The following are the summarized themes coming from the texts.

Primary education: Influences Now in my adult life, whatever I do, in most situations, those visionary messages come to me. It is deep inside, engraved probably. She as a teacher is an important influence in my life. That discipline, that commitment came from my schooling days. That shaped my values also.

Such things can't be explained academically. They may not be

	academic. ... they were close to my heart, not my head. I can identify them as values.
Exposure to intellectual events:	...in that huge field all these political meetings and big speeches were held. I used to go and listen to them. I was exposed to such things. The whole atmosphere around me was intellectual. So much vibration there.
College education	Later joining the other first grade college for my B.A., different world, different friends, different growth...see those growth and development stages.
Personal growth	I started to learn how and what would be if this character moved into this life situation here, shifts in life, in characters, feelings... I learnt a lot. All this provided another, different meaning to my life as an educated person.
Gaining from education:	Understanding people and the world around you, this is one side. Another side is, understanding the reality of life. Education betters such an understanding.
Life's perspective	Because I have been educated, I could get into different branches of life and think and analyse about life. Without education only the stem of experience would be there; now with my education I not only have the stem of experience but also have the branches to it. See there is this bag of experience.
Confidence & courage	Confidence in matters like... I can do anything if I have the wish to do... with a wish, confidence to move on in my life if you want to move on. But then economical independence is the most important thing that comes through education. Even an illiterate woman becoming slightly educated gains so much confidence because she can in some way earn a living, that confidence comes from being educated.
Financial independence	Education gets you a dignified job, whatever job it is, kind of dignified, may be a nursery teacher's job... so for a decent job

you need education, that gets you the job.

Choices & moving forward

Education is my base to progress my thoughts and thinking. It helps me to analyse the choice also. Applying to life is important. I have got this from education.

Education should apply to life and bring that totality in life's progress for anybody. That has happened in my life. That is my experience...I am continuing in my life. So I reflect and realise.

Education, reflection and action in a woman's life

May be it gave them intelligence, to reflect and suffer with conflicts. At least they may pass the action to their next generation. Their education didn't give them the capacity to face the life and take some action. Many women experience this. And for many others it is not needed also. ...Then they try to reconstruct...with some moving forward exercise.

Nirmala

**Education is linked to my job, job to a good husband,
then good life.**

Nirmala

I have known Nirmala for more than three decades. As an adult I was impressed with her desire to learn better. Her parents got her married off after her bachelor's degree. She used to tell me she could not take up higher degree studies as she was expected to fulfill her family responsibilities as a married woman and later as a mother of two children. She always supported my interest in higher education. Nirmala agreed to be a participant in this study, becoming the first participant to be interviewed, just after I went to Bangalore for my interviews. I stayed with Nirmala at her home for a few days in March and April 2003. Our first interview took place on March 6. The second one did not take place until May 13th, as her kids had school break and summer holidays. She was also occupied with family matters.

How do you describe education?

Nirmala starts to describe her experiences of being an educated woman by asking questions around my research topic. She reflects on formal education, based on her experiences of schooling and later college degree study. While commenting on her schooling, she says it was a routine that teachers completed the syllabus, students were expected to study a few basic subjects and languages to pass the exams. Syllabus did not make any sense to her. She thinks parents, teachers and society did not think of orienting children to either schooling or meaning of education. She feels learning English language, which was not much used in their everyday life, was a challenge and she developed a complex for not mastering that language. Terming all these as her beginning experiences she raises the question as to how to define an educated woman.

In my view, I still have confusion about who is an educated woman and what is education? Because, how do you describe education? I was considered intelligent, got good marks and there was no doubt that I would get a first class in Class X also. That was a state-level public exam. But to me, what education I was undergoing up to Class X was just for marks, learning something that was not meaningful. There was a tension of failing in the exams, additional pressure from society, from parents; so all I knew was I had to study to pass the exams, to continue my college studies, that's it. Never felt like I was educated! So do you call me an educated woman? From what ground?

My questions are so many... is education language learning? Or education is for gaining knowledge? In what? Just a few subjects to pass the exams? How is it related to what you experience while education is given to you? No connection there. How do you analyse this? Who made it compulsory to study certain subjects? If it is compulsory, some education system has been designed by somebody and whether we like it or not, we are all forced to undergo that? What is the relevance then? I have a big grievance about this matter. This is my experience to begin with.

Teachers never gave us any orientation or proper introduction to our learning at school. They didn't explain why we were learning, how would it be useful in our future life... nothing. They only came to class, taught the syllabus as expected of them, that's all. Or perhaps they did do that but we were too young to comprehend what they told us, so both mistakes may be there. Anyhow, I started getting an idea about education from my Class V. We used to follow the teachers blindly, aim for 60 per cent marks which was a first class; get the marks, that's all, we didn't have the awareness, didn't get the relevance of what we were studying... Surely, no teacher gave us this meaningful background to about we were learning. Apart from this, there was no stimulating atmosphere which gave me an understanding of what and why I should learn this and this...

In my Class V I got more awareness. Like I am in a school, I am being given education, subjects... From L KG to Class IV I did not have such awareness. My parents enrolled me at school, so I went. I mean, this is way back some 30 years ago, my early education. Nobody, I think, had any clear awareness about education. Parents used to dump their children at school; we had to go and learn something there, that was it What is education, why should I learn, how is it going to help me in my life, in my future... education didn't provide any ideas nor did I develop them on my own at that age.

Then all of a sudden, in Class V they introduced English as a compulsory subject, as a language to learn. Then this dilemma started in my mind. Why should we learn this new language? What is its relevance? Are we going to use it everyday in our life? Questions in my mind. From the beginning I was not comfortable with English language.

Like this feeling that I cannot do well in learning this language, I won't learn it successfully, why should I learn a strange language, so I do not want to, I cannot... even though I had the capacity to learn that language, I developed these ideas in my mind. I didn't accept it. I grew up like this. When I came to Class X, I started becoming more aware of how this language was used in our life. By the time I started realising English language was important in our lives, it is being used widely, it would be helpful if I learnt it, my school education was over.

I studied two languages, English and Kannada from Class V, mathematics, science and social studies and then Hindi as a third language. All my primary and secondary education was in Kannada language medium. See, we were not using English language anywhere around us except at school. So I faced a big problem

there. Later I was told that English would be the medium of instruction at college. I asked myself can't we continue our education in our own language? My dislike for English language continued. I also had this inferiority complex about this language from the beginning days; that is there even today. See, these are all my experiences!

Another example, in my high school, my teacher never did any justice to history, civics, geography subjects. Never actually taught us properly. Just killed their time in the class. I was having questions again, why do they waste their time in the classroom without teaching us anything? Why don't they explain to us what is there in history? Once I was asked a question about Sindhu Valley civilization; I just knew blindly that our Indian civilization started from Harappa-Mohenjodaro civilization, but I didn't know anything more than this, like our history started there, our ancientness as a society... no, I never had that knowledge. Even though it was there in school syllabus they didn't care to give us that knowledge. I was just a normal girl, not brilliant. I didn't have the craving for knowledge at that time. I didn't have the awareness to learn on my own, follow my quest, gain my own knowledge. But I did have numerous questions in my mind! So, at that time I blindly answered the question about Harappa-Mohenjodaro civilization. I got claps for that. But my internal mind became very alert. I just blindly answered the question. I didn't have any in-depth knowledge, further knowledge about that, even though I wanted to know. So I felt helpless, hurt in my feelings. I asked myself did I deserve this applause, didn't I lack the true knowledge? I was pained. I was hurt deeply. From my own lack of moving higher to gain more knowledge and from the lack of proper guidance from my teachers.

By the time I came to high school I realised that English language was preferred widely in our country. When I got to Class VIII, high school, because we were in the Kannada medium class, we got only dull teachers, we didn't improve much. They didn't take much interest, we were not treated well. We were discriminated against children who were learning with English as the medium of instruction. Children were also not brilliant in this Kannada medium class. I was getting good marks and a first class in every Class because I just followed blindly what the text books provided. Blindly wrote the exams and got good marks. But never went deeply into the subjects, like the relevance of science in our life. So I didn't get any education I should say. My schooling didn't help me in getting the true learning experience. It left a deep scar in my mind. Even now that feeling is there. An injustice is done to my life, that anger, that outrage... from parents' side, from teachers' side...

The reason for that is our society. That blind attachment to some syllabus and English language. The British gave us that system and we have to follow that if you want to be called educated. If you learnt in the local language as a medium of instruction that was useless, so preference and attachment towards English. My parents told me to study in Kannada medium so did I. I didn't have the awareness that studying in English medium would help a lot in my future. Solving a mathematical problem was not my own intelligence, it was just following blindly what they trained us to follow. I felt that way.

V- Here when you say intelligence, what do you mean?

Intelligence here means having the practical application ability. They should have explained to us how it would help us in our practical daily life. Like you use this in this way, if you go to a shop it would be used... so that practical knowledge and application was lacking there. It was a mechanical rote learning without practical application. I was not satisfied with their method of teaching. I thought that was not education. That was forced rote learning. They said you have to pass the exams, you have to complete Class X. Then you have to do your degree. They didn't give us the meaning of education. I never felt I got real education in my life.

Later I analysed this situation in my Class X – Why is it like this? What is wrong here? Let me go back and study what I learnt in my previous classes, subjects. I did that. And I realised that there was actually no meaning at all in following the text books, the subjects. I came to know the subjects very well. No problem there. But I still didn't get the practical use of that study material, how it would help us in our life.

Once a good teacher came to our class and explained about English language and its use. I thought it was so simple, learning English was so easy, why didn't I learn that language... I could have done well... see, in just one single period that teacher broke that myth of English language learning. Then I was in Class X. It appeared easy and within my reach. See Kannada alphabets, grammar everything is difficult compared to English... So all those years of having these questions – why had I developed an inferiority complex about my inability to do well in that language, why nobody gave me that confidence about learning this language...

I started growing mentally. I started looking for learning from more sources. I started learning grammar. I started on my own, with my own efforts. When I went to college, I took English medium to do the course. After this stage English was never an obstacle. I grew confident... So it happened like this. I didn't struggle anymore.

The reason why I am sharing this is being a mother, I explain to my children why they are learning this, how it helps them to understand our world, how it helps them in their future, I explain the meaning, I give them the background of what and why... I don't want my children to experience what I experienced as a child in my learning. I want them to have meaning in their learning.

(Lack of guidance, forced learning, **irrelevance of subjects** and lost faith in teachers and teaching methods early in life. **Expectations to perform** well in formal education, meaningless curriculum, negative effect of English language in schooling. These seem to be **directing** Nirmala's experiences as an educated woman now. With her children's learning and with her own growth of self, **she is re-learning**. The early experiences also highlight the **tension** between the individual and society. She was forced to **conform** to

the patterns of her formal education, which made her question what and how she was learning. Dissatisfaction and awareness of what was lacking in her education. Learning English language at school resulted in developing an inferiority complex and loss of **identity**. She felt out of place. She remembers the experience of being discriminated against. This experience has influenced her personality even as an adult. Again **tension** related to identity and **position in life** as an educated woman.

Nirmala was disillusioned by the education system; she has overcome that with a critical awareness. She has not rejected the system; remaining within the system, she is trying to provide a different and meaningful experience for her children in their formal education. She is using her education in this way.)

Education is linked to my job and job to a good husband, then good life.

Nirmala says her education was linked to getting a job, getting a good husband and then having a good life, which was the tendency of the middle-class society. She emphasises that that was the purpose behind a girl's education. It was regarded as a safety net in her future life. The family of a prospective groom who had a government job would look for a girl with a university degree and a job as it was meant to bring a lot of benefits for the couple's future.

I came from lower middle class, so job was important, this education, the qualifications helped me in getting a good job. And these two would get me a good husband. The attitude that was promoted by my parents was that. Our times were like that. They did so too. I believed yes, get a good job, it will get me a good husband. I proceeded with the same equation. Financially we were not that comfortable when we were young, lots of ups and downs were involved in our family. I believed it was my hard work and my job that would provide me with a better life... I continued to have this perception. Mother said study this secretarial diploma course, it will get you a good-salaried job; you will get a good husband because of that nice job. I blindly followed her suggestion, completed the diploma course and later got a nice job. I didn't have the faintest idea what that course would be like when I started it or the practical use of it in my life. But such was the life equation.

... my education was linked to my job and my job to a good husband, then a good life. See, in the lower middle class families, where I came from, the tendency was to look for a middle class person for marriage. Parents had this complex that we didn't deserve a high class, or highly educated bridegroom because of our own

socio-economic background. They believed that our level was only that much... that sort of inferiority complex, wrong mindset. That came from the community, from the society... so very brainwashed. That was it, our life, limited. Blind following. Ok, this groom had a government job so he would be perfect for our girl... government job gave him all the qualities, all eligibilities to demand things. Parental calculation was even if he died early you would get pension from his government job, you would have a secure future... that was all that was there in my family elders' minds.

And basically the bridegroom's family looked for a girl with a university degree. See, three quarters of people won't have any knowledge drawn only from their degrees. There may be some exceptions. That is a different story. I don't say everybody is like that or like me. Some may be knowing everything about their education. But the general tendency was like what I said, they don't draw any knowledge from a mere bachelor's degree. The purpose of education was to get a qualification which had good value in the society in terms of a job and a better husband in case of a girl. Even now most people just study to get this basic degree qualification for a job and a better life. Mostly materialistic life. My diploma and the bachelor's degree in commerce that I did later got me this job. Only on the basis of those certificates... they didn't want to know what talents I had, my other skills. I always knew I could express myself better in a different, creative job. For us middle class people, a decent job and financial security was important you see. So I worked in this job for 15 years, restricting myself...

In my times they expected a decent educated family, earning bride, capable of contributing for the progress of the groom. If she had the earning capacity the couple could get a house, buy a vehicle, live a better life etc. One salary went for the daily expenses, another went for these extra comforts and property-making. So with this intention they used to look for only educated working girls. See, she was a free servant at home, and she earned some money from her job. And I was very beautiful-looking, there was no scope for anybody to say no to me. This way my degree helped me... to get the job, and then to get this husband. Generally it is a wrong practice. The wrong impression is that people think that this person being a degree holder will know a lot of things. It is not like that. Once again I am not generalising it. In my case. They said I had the basic education, a degree, a diploma, she will bring up her children well, she will help the husband. So my basic education certificate, diploma certificate, degree certificate and a good job helped. And then I was born in a joint family, had good training in how to be a proper wife and daughter-in-law, you know to build a family later... I would easily fit into other families like ours. My parents were teachers, so my in-laws family thought she would be clever as a wife and daughter-in-law, would suit their family well. With this calculation my marriage was fixed. It was an arranged marriage. If I didn't have this certificate and this job, this groom would never have married me. So the intention was mainly that.

(Education for a job, a better husband, a good life. Those were the social expectations, she says, which her family reinforced. Following the stereotype. A bold statement that

only her educational qualifications got her, her husband! Acceptance with a **critical awareness** of the situation... Nirmala's experience as an educated woman! **Turning points, insights and tensions** too. Recognition that a girl's education was an insurance for her future. Not for **developing the girl** herself, her identity or her personality. Her parents, being teachers themselves, followed the system. Living up to the social expectations came first against liberating purpose of education. Nirmala is experiencing **tension** and **conflict** in everyday life with this critical awareness. Fragmented **identity** and **sense of self**, and knowing that she has better potential. **Acceptance of the social** is causing **tension** within the individual. How does she define herself as an educated woman?)

Me, an educated person? ... just for namesake. I am becoming educated now.

Nirmala declines to be called an educated woman. She says her education was only gaining technical educational qualifications. She does not recognise those qualifications as education. Some of the subjects that she studied in college became useful in her administrative job later. Otherwise the subjects and her college education don't have relevance in her everyday life. Her bachelor's degree in Commerce is helping in her life with only 50 per cent effect. She says in her view an educated person would have an in-depth knowledge of various subjects related to life and wisdom. They would have a sound world-view which would shine in their thoughts and action. Even though she has formal educational qualifications, her mind refuses to accept that as education.

Me an educated woman? ... just for namesake. As I said before, I am a bachelor's degree holder. You may point out my formal educational qualifications. You may ask me how is my diploma or my B.Com degree is helping me in my life... it is helping me only some 50 per cent, that's all. They are just technical qualifications. In my diploma I did English typing and shorthand. These two technical subjects helped me later in my job but not any other subject that I studied at school or college. I just learnt to read and write better, that's all (laughs). Literacy is important. I definitely support that. But I haven't felt any big effect of education in my life, you know, feeling educated within myself...

Actually, within myself I am highly dissatisfied about being recognised as an educated woman. I have doubts about my own self as an educated woman from my own standards. When you call me an educated woman, it is questionable to

me. I feel like asking you in what way? I don't feel so. Its because I don't have good knowledge base in any subject area. I just learnt, observed, got to know things superficially. I lack that in-depth knowledge, that mastery over a subject with complete knowledge. I am lacking that fulfilling, satisfactory feeling about being an educated person having better wisdom. You people call me an educated woman once again based on my degree, on my certificates, college education, job capacity etc. But inside me if I question myself am I an educated woman, the answer is a clear no. I have a craving to learn, learn better and in-depth. That didn't happen in my education. To some extent, being literate, sometimes in everyday life I may feel that I am an educated woman but then my mind rejects that and says no. Mere literacy is not education. That is my experience.

(When I read this section of her transcript, I sit back for a few minutes. Nirmala is **challenging** the normalised belief about formal education, the normal equation: educational qualifications=educated person? She negates this in her experience. She says it is not her experience. An **invaluable insight**. What is my educationscape on my research canvas? She is saying she learnt the subjects; fulfilled the expectations. Got formal university degree. Got a job and then a good husband. But never experienced that she was educated. Living up to somebody else's expectations and living the **social ideal** is not being educated experience. However, she recognises the importance of literacy – reading and writing. She is experiencing the value of being literate which sometimes seems to give her an experience of being educated. But she equates being educated with having a better world-view, wisdom, complete knowledge in some subject area and application. This viewpoint is interesting. What is **complete knowledge**? A thorough understanding of a particular formal subject? Better world-view than whom? What is the comparison between?)

Nirmala says she is giving herself an opportunity now to learn, to apply, to expand her knowledge-base and her experiences of education. This is happening along side her children's schooling and with herself being able to participate fully in their learning.

Actually now I am putting that craving for learning into practise. My urge to find out, to know, to apply my learning to life situations. From different sources. Now I am getting a feeling that I am becoming educated. After I quit my job in year 2000, I started reading from various sources, learn and know about things... I am growing as a person. Before that... I will give you an example. See, when I thought of shopping I knew only one place, I didn't know many shopping places and the variety in choosing things. Now I open the newspaper, look for the choices and select. I have time and the interest. And wherever I go I now tend to

observe people and world around me... keenly follow the happenings... people's behaviour around me, find out how they know this, what is the source, what is their viewpoint and experience, the knowledge associated with that experience... If it is an event I probe into it. How did this happen, what was the cause, what effect it is having on people... Then how people gain knowledge, how they access information, how do they use it... I learn keenly from these observations. So I am developing as a person. In terms of what is knowledge, what is education, its use in life – this awareness is beginning, to expand now. I couldn't indulge myself like this before.

All these years I was occupied with work, marriage, husband, children, bringing them up, and life's necessities... you know from our normal middle-class standard here... we needed a plot, then build a house, have some financial security for future life, materials for everyday life... these routine things. So I never had a chance to experience education in life. Now with that craving for experience growing stronger, I am focusing on that.

See now I am quite matured also in terms age and experience. I can reflect on life better. And through my children I am now becoming better educated. Whether it is English language or something to know deeply from the textbooks, I follow it meticulously. I also read extra books and magazines for additional information and awareness. I tell myself there is so much that I have to learn, to know... had I done this much earlier in my life I would have become a notable person. But I didn't.

But I knew I had the zeal, intelligence, capacity to become one. And also the confidence. That I could accomplish something more, better... but the world around me was... the society, it was different. Then parents. So it never happened. Now I have reached middle age. Now I am seeing this happening through my children. However silly the topic is we try to know all about it. I never let my children read or follow the textbook or anything for that matter, blindly. How it is useful in our life, what is the application, and how we have to approach the whole thing... its relevance, use, first of all I get the complete information from various sources and then explain to them with patience. Open up the subject fully for their discussion and understanding. And also provide them with opportunities to experience a few things that are related to their education, to some possible extent. So far as I know, my children haven't shown any disliking towards their education. They are not forced just to learn, they are enjoying their educational experience.

I can't deny the fact that I am more experienced in life now. I am already having some educational background, literacy, have an adult mature mind. Even then education or to be called an educated woman... I think the qualification required to be called so is this urge to grow as a person. It is the thirst to discover everything from things around you, that knowing of the world. All that growing is education. Only that is the experience. It is not formal education. How do you get this education? It is by learning, gaining knowledge, experiencing it, applying it, developing your self fully as a wise person... At least that is my belief and

experience. I have come to understand the whole thing like this. I don't know whether it is right or wrong. Growing my self as a person is my education.

Yes. It is my experience. That is education in my experience. How a person comes to be a successful human being, how one becomes an enabled person, what is required for that, what do you need to learn, know... that is important, that experience. Not those marks that you get in the annual exams. That person who grows like that is an educated person.

Education and over the years it is my experience that has helped me more. It is my life experience. It is not formal education. Here I call my life experience as my real education over the years. Life education, how you understand the world, how you handle your life... that will give you more information, confidence, everything. I call that education. Not schooling or formal education.

Yes, every moment that I am living now I am being educated. Reading, gaining knowledge, learning, observing everything around me, finding more about things in my world, knowing more about the world out there... see I believe this is true education; not that bookish knowledge or learning without any understanding. I strongly disagree with that. I don't believe in that at all.

(What did Nirmala **gain** from her own **education**? **Literacy**. An awareness that formal education did not give her a fulfilling experience of having a sound knowledge. What is knowledge in Nirmala's understanding? Is it an in-depth understanding about a phenomenon that concerns our everyday life? Her experience around the failed intentions of education has opened up different channels of **self-growth**. Opportunities for relearning, becoming educated while educating her children. Growing as a person with a critical awareness. Ironically, she did not find a **space** for such a self-growth until she participated in her children's schooling. Additionally, she values life experience too. Why did she not try to create a space or opportunities for personal growth and development? Earlier on, she rejected the notion of living the social expectations that education reiterated. But she continued to fulfill such social expectations in the roles of being a wife, a mother and a working woman managing **the two worlds**. She carried on her roles with a critical consciousness, without trying alternatives or looking for changes. She lived through the gradual process of maturation, life experience and bitter consciousness of not being able to take action for her own self-growth. The constant presence of **tensions and conflicts**. Do women like Nirmala undergo these gradual stages of life and start to relearn while their children are learning? Do they re-learn the experience of being educated through their children's learning experiences? Although

Nirmala is clear about the failed purposes of education in her life, although she is reiterating the socialising role of education, she never thought about a change or choice. Is she continuing the **social ideal**? What exactly did she gain from her education that is influencing her now as an educated woman?)

Experience-wise I think I am better educated now.

Being an educated woman, Nirmala says, she is getting respect from her husband's family. They value her decisions and give her respect as she is a bachelor's degree holder. She has a confident position in the family. They give more value to her words as she is educated.

Her formal education gave her literacy. Her life experience is more valuable. She says she is skilful in managing everything well from her common sense and applying her intelligence and practical knowledge. This is not from her education. She thinks she is better educated now from her life experience. However, she affirms that being educated gave her better awareness of her position in life in her roles. She is critically more aware of how she is living the everyday life in those roles and what she needs to do to carry on those roles successfully. The main thread that weaves her awareness with her successful role-management is her family's well-being.

Nirmala puts her husband and children first in her life, lives around them and their well-being. She reflects about her life and about herself at the end of the day. She notes that she has to wear a mask to manage her roles in everyday life. She says that is the reality in her life. She underlines the role of culture which supports male domination. It is just not her being subordinated to the male's authority. Most educated women who talk about women's liberty in the public sphere are also living with such masks in their private sphere, she says. The subordinated self is only 50 per cent of herself which she makes visible to the world; the other half of herself is not even felt in everyday life. She thinks that is the experience of most educated women in her world.

She thinks she is now proud being an educated woman. This experience did not come from her formal education, but from applying her skills, learning, her life experience

and the self-motivation to grow as a person. It is her own journey of self-discovery through a gradual process. This, she calls, is her experience of being an educated woman.

My experience as an educated woman... it has given me that position in the family, that confident position. My husband's family members come to me and ask for my viewpoint, ask for my decision, they consider them important. And also the best. My suggestion is valued. They give more value and importance because they think I am a degree holder. If I were not a degree holder, they would have looked down upon me. Not important, less respect... you see the difference?

Yes, definitely they would treat like that. For example if I was just an SSLC pass woman... They would have expressed it very well that she is after all only a SSLC pass, not even a pre-university course pass, why do we have to go to her and ask her for her opinion, who cares for her suggestions... don't we know that she is incapable of making decisions...? It is sad that less educated women are treated like that.

In my life education has become useful only to get a degree, some qualification certificates, to get a job, false appreciation and recognition from people (laughs)... only for this image! Double degree holder, having a diploma and a degree. But what I value are my inherent qualities. Those are my values also.

Being a person with good values has helped me in my life. Kindness, not hurting people, justice..., I speak out my mind taking strength from those values. I explain my stands and my beliefs. I talk confidently. But this is happening only now in the family. After 15 years of marriage. I too am learning to speak for myself, it is happening slowly after all these years. Life experience counts more here.

I feel that I have been skilful, managing everything well from my common sense, using my own intelligence to some extent, practical knowledge and my application ability. My formal education gave me the skills to read and write. As I said before, some awareness of science, social studies, some knowledge of the subjects. But mainly it is experience that has improved my life, not education. Experience wise I think I am better educated now. From life experience. From adjustments, compromises, thinking of the family welfare. We don't require a degree education for this. It is a woman's nature, her values.

For example, if I want jewellery... I know our financial situation better than my husband. How much we can afford, how much we can spend on what... So I decide not to buy jewellery. Even though he says he can buy me jewellery I say no. I analyse our financial situation from the family's well-being point. I don't want to get a loan or overstretch our monthly budget just to buy this gold ornament. So even if I do desire for that, I hold my desire back. I can live without gold jewellery. I know I have the desire but I will buy when we can afford that

really. There are other expenses related to my children's needs. So I go like this. I never go by the desire just like that.

And at the same time in every day living, I have demonstrated that my decisions are for everybody's welfare. That everybody should feel comfortable and happy, nobody should get hurt, keep up the family balance...I strive hard to achieve that balance. I get the best results. When I know this, I tend to stick to my decisions for everybody's sake. For everybody's well-being.

(Her experiences also include gaining respect, recognition from her husband's family members. From her being educated position she has gained and maintained a confident position among his family members who value her decisions only because she is a degree holder. She recognises that it is the society's preferred way. But she has **bitter feelings** about this. The person inside her, her natural skills and abilities, common sense are not recognised and valued. The clash is between her **self-perception** and how **society perceives** her. Valuing literacy or learning from life is a **constant dilemma** for her. Her **conflict** is also related to being a 'good wife' and a 'good family woman.' The 'good woman's' value of sacrificing her personal desires for family's well-being is stressed.)

I haven't been able to do what I have wanted to do in my life. Most of the times I go according to the family's priorities... if I am working for 15 hours in the day, I think of my children and husband first and go according to their needs. I keep hardly an hour or so for myself, for my own things. That is life's reality. I judge the situation, then I decide about my priorities. I don't think so educated woman comes there first, it is just a woman. Well, a family woman in this case. Even as a family woman, I don't do 100 per cent of what I feel like doing. I have to adjust with others. As an educated woman...(laughs). My time and space is not there totally for myself, you see.

Another example. I wanted to do a master's degree in Commerce. I tried many times. I was always busy. I was allocated specific duties and responsibilities in the office. I was running the administrative side alone. I would get just half an hour to have my lunch in between many sorts of work demands. Then as soon as I returned home my children were there to take care of. Their needs like feeding them, tutoring them, cooking, attending to other housechores...

By that time my husband returns from work and then again more work. I would be exhausted by then; both mentally and physically exhausted. Mentally in the office, physically with children and work at home... then planning for the next day, so where's the time for myself?

But every moment my inner mind would be pricking me from inside, that dissatisfaction, that lacking... not being able to do what I wanted... I wanted to read, learn from different sources, gain knowledge, improve my worldview. Whatever little time I got, if at all I got in the office, I would rush to the library, borrow books, would bring them home to read. But I never got time to read them in between all these demands. So I would return them to the library without reading (laughs). Even now I want to read. I have collected a lot of books. I have slowly started reading them now at least. I am not in a paid job anymore, you see. Even then it is hard to find your own space as everyday life's demands are so many.

Being myself? Definitely not. It is just not possible to be yourself all the time. Family becomes the priority. The same thing, you have to wear a mask all the time for the family sake. Whether you like it or not, you have to smile and carry one, pretend with your husband and sometimes with children also, even parents for that matter...you know due to the pressure that they have to be satisfied first, kept happy...

You have to act, play up to their expectations. So, that mask stays on all the time. As soon as I go to bed I reflect on my life... I pretended this much, to keep them happy. I acted like this, played the game this much... is this right? I ask myself.

But I don't have a choice here. I have no other life than this one, so I have to continue. Whether you go outside, in public life or it is with your own husband, you have to be wearing that pretending mask. 90 per cent women in this society wear such masks. Yes, I am right. According to me, 99 per cent women are like this in their everyday life. Whether educated or not, having a career or not it is true. This is my experience. I am telling you this after sharing this experience with some 40 working women like me. It is very true.

Most of them, 99 per cent educated women, live wearing such masks. Just when they come to the realisation that they are not true to themselves, they slip into sleep. Then get up once again in the morning, put on that balancing mask again and continue with life... that is life for women here. Yes, every woman has to wear that mask, otherwise she cannot live in India. Don't forget, in the same way, the other person, like husbands, also wears masks to satisfy you, to care for your needs, to keep you happy. When I know this, I prefer to wear the mask whether I like or not to make him happy. That mutual balancing act is ever present between husband and wife. But normally a wife tends to balance more as her goal is the entire family's well-being.

Other areas of life? What to say? See, my area is only my family. More than that I cannot speak. At least not this time as I am a housewife. I am aware of what is there in the Indian Constitution to some extent. Politics, rules, law...But practically it is entirely a different story here. It is only male domination that wins. Male's authority is valued more than a woman's. They say women's programme, women's welfare, equal rights, celebrate women's day etc... yeah, all

these are there. It is equally true that the women are getting the same snubbing everywhere, whether in the public or the private life. It is the same.

If at all a woman says she wants to do something, achieve something, then immediately men will snub her. Including my husband. Whatever is the issue. He doesn't want me to overtake him. So it is going on, that male domination, it is continuing in our country. Whatever lectures even the so called liberated woman gives outside when, when she comes home as a wife and a mother, that confident woman is the slave to her husband, cannot be independent. Only in a very very rare case it may be different... but 95 per cent women's cases are like this, that submission is there in everyday life without any change.

Women's position is different in public life in our society. There is no respect for rights or responsibilities or recognition of individuality. Especially for women. The system itself is like that. If a woman goes and asks about something in public life she is discriminated as she is a woman. A woman cannot achieve much without position or power. Nobody even recognises you if you are a woman. You are never considered as a person of your own right and position. Not even as a citizen. It is only for the sake of a passport...they ask, are you a citizen of India, we write yes or no. We have to force our minds to remember that word citizen. That awareness is not there even among educated women.

This culture is like that and also the male domination. Even educated women who talk for hours and hours about women's freedom and rights are finally submissive, follow the same culture. Most of them don't try to break the cultural impositions upon women. Yes, even though they are highly educated. Uneducated women to some extent are not aware of freedom and liberty and women's rights etc. So they are suffering. But educated women also suffer in spite of knowing and being more aware...

All this is my experience. And also of many other women like me. I have seen the experience of many educated women. Probably this is the experience of most educated women in India too. You can ask others from other regions too. I am pretty sure that it is the same experience throughout. There may be a variation of some 5 per cent. Otherwise 95 per cent times, it is similar in most educated, yes, graduate, bachelor's degree holding women in our country. I say this confidently.

Our education is only 50 per cent useful. Yes, you get some financial independence to spend your own money that you earn from your salaried job. You get some respect from family members because you are earning and contributing you the family's progress. You are slightly better than an illiterate woman as you are literate to deal with things in public life. For a job, a better husband of good family background, then to settle down nicely in life with children, house, luxuries like expensive furniture, home appliances, package holidays... routine things (laughs).

The other 50 per cent of her education is just not used at all. I feel that is the experience of an educated woman. But she can become alive using the other 50

per cent! But it is hard. I feel sad about this. But then there is no other kind of life. This is our everyday reality.

I can proudly say that I am an educated woman. But again it is not through my formal education so much. Only after my degree, yes, after my college degree I can tell you for sure, that I started opening my eyes to the world. That is, as a career woman, then my experience in applying my skills to different situations, new awareness that I am getting now after quitting my job...also when I started relearning academic knowledge with my children's learning, my own urge to continue to grow as a person... now I can say I am an educated woman. Applying what I am learning to practical life situations. May be I am better placed as a formally educated woman to get all these awareness... education is one, applying it to our life is another.

Life education, life experience, how you understand the world, how you handle your life... that will give you more information, confidence, everything. That I call education. Not schooling or formal education.

I manage my public life well. I face all situations efficiently. Like I said if I didn't have this life experience I may not have faced them with confidence. Now, I have reached a stage in my life; that maturity is there. The knowing that this is what it is all about is there with me now. It comes gradually.

That knowing didn't come from the fact that I was a bachelor's degree holder. I have developed it from all the experiences I have had in my life. Now I am very confident. Even if I am asked to interview American President Bush, yes, I am ready. And I handle situations successfully. I have that top level confidence.

(Many interesting experiences related to **private** and the **public spheres** of life. Nirmala even talks about finding **space for herself**. And also of **change and choice**. While negating the positive influence of formal education on her personhood and **self**, she affirms the benefit of being formally educated. That is in **growing her self**.

Nirmala puts the **family woman first**, educated woman next which she says is the expected rule in her society. All women irrespective of their educational levels have to live **wearing masks**, with **adjustment** and **compromise**, with **acceptance** of male authority. Personally she gives priority to her family's well-being in place of her own wants and desires. Including giving up opportunities of self-growth through higher education. She has accepted her roles and her position in the society. Middle-class status, normal expectations that are approved by society, efficient role-management which family and society appreciate.

Nirmala talks about having no choices for herself, to bring a change in her life pattern, to do something for her self-growth. 'It is hard to find your own space', is her experience as an educated woman who is constantly managing a **balancing act** in everyday life. The **acceptance and resistance** phenomenon is ever present with submission. She has **no space for a choice**, no life other than the one she is living, cannot change as the system is continuing strongly. The **conflict** arises in this acceptance and submission. Submitting to the restricted position, **fulfilling** the expectations and giving her self no choice for change are also the experiences. She can only find her space to grow through her children's learning and their opportunities for growth.

Acceptance also is leading to the experience of affirming society's **control and power** against the individual's **power and choice** for action. She allows life experience to take over the influence of education which empowered her with literacy, with financial independence, with better position in her husband's family and most importantly, with better, critical awareness of her everyday life. However, '**finding space**' becomes the ground for not changing her place.)

Epilogue

Nirmala thinks she cannot be recognised as an educated woman if considering only her formal education. Her experiences are related to experiencing and re-living education now, along side her children's learning and her own continuation of learning from various sources. Her understanding of herself as an educated woman is related to such a continuation, awareness about education and it's role in a person's life, making curriculum relevant in life, participating in her children's development, education linked to job, husband and a good materialistic life, life experience, respect, self awareness and developing worldview.

Her insights are summarised here as initial themes.

I was considered intelligent, got good marks and there was no doubt that I would get a first class in Class X also. But to me, what education I was

Irrelevance of education	<p>undergoing, learning something that was not meaningful. There was a tension of failing, from the society, from parents; so all I knew was I had to study to pass the exams, to continue, that's it. So do you call me an educated woman?</p> <p>I explain to my children why they are learning this, how it helps them to understand our world, how it helps them in their future, I explain the meaning, I give them the background of what and why...</p>
Education linked to better job	<p>My diploma and commerce degree got me this job. Only on the basis of those certificates... they didn't want to know what talents I had, my other skills... I always knew I could express myself better in a different, creative job... for us, middle class people a decent job and financial security was important you see. So I worked in this job for 15 years, restricting myself...</p>
Better husband	<p>Ok, this groom had a government job so he would be perfect for our girl... government job gave him all the qualities, a good life; even if he died you would get pension from his job, you would be secure...</p>
Better life	<p>If she had the earning capacity the couple could get a house, buy a vehicle, live a better life etc. One salary went for the daily expenses, another went for these extra comforts and property-making. So with this intention they used to look for only educated working girls.</p>
Importance of educational qualifications	<p>...you may ask me how is my diploma or my B.Com degree is helping me in my life... it is helping me only some 50%, that's all; they are just technical qualifications. I just learnt to read and write that's all. Literacy is important. But... Not having any impact for myself, you know, feeling educated within myself...</p>
Use of education in life	<p>Now actually I am putting that craving for learning, that urge to find out, to know, to practice. Now actually I am becoming educated. After I quit my job in 2000, I have started reading from various sources, learn and know things... I am growing.</p>
Becoming educated with	<p>Yes, every moment that I am living I am being educated. Reading,</p>

awareness	gaining knowledge, learning, observing everything around me, knowing the world... see I believe this is true education; not that bookish knowledge or learning without any understanding. I don't believe in that.
Being educated	It has given me that position in the family, that confident position. My husband's family members come to me and ask for my opinion, ask for
Respect	my decision as it is considered important, and the best. My suggestion is considered important and valued. They give more value and importance because they think I am a degree holder.
Self-awareness	It is just not possible to be yourself. The same thing, you have to wear a mask all the time for the family sake. All the time that mask stays. So as
Adjustment	soon as I go to bed I reflect on my life... I pretended this much, to keep their happiness I acted like this, played this much... is this right? But I
Choice with acceptance	don't have a choice here, I have no other life than this one, so I have to continue.
Awareness, worldview	... that is as a career woman, then my experience in applying my skills, new awareness after quitting my job, and when I started learning with my children's learning, my own urge to continue to grow as a person... now I can tell that I am an educated woman. Applying what I am learning to practical life situations. May be I am better placed as a formally educated woman to get all these awareness...

Deepa

I feel happy ... wherever I go, I can manage things confidently.

Deepa

Nirmala introduced me to Deepa who had become a friend of hers in recent times. Nirmala said Deepa had a good interest in discussing everything, expressing herself and discussing social issues. She wanted to meet me when I went over to Bangalore to find out about my research. When I met her in March, after talking to me about my research Deepa said she could become a participant in my research. Her enthusiasm was impressive. She did not want us to talk in her residence as she felt her father-in-law was interruptive. Our two interviews took place at Nirmala's home on March 7 and April 13.

I feel happy ... wherever I go, I can manage things confidently.

Deepa said she feels happy that she is an educated woman. She wanted to do a diploma course, become a teacher but her wish couldn't be achieved. Her parents valued a university-level, bachelor's degree so that her marriage prospects would be improved. A bridegroom's family would prefer a girl with at least a bachelor's degree.

Deepa said she is proud as an educated woman. She applies her education to manage her family's affairs, to participate actively in her son's education, matching with her husband's expectations... She feels only because she is educated up to a bachelor's degree level has she learned to manage her family with more efficiency. She feels she is now confident about her abilities to manage all situations of life. She was even able to travel abroad with her young son to join her husband when he was working overseas.

Being an educated woman... um...well, I feel happy that I am an educated woman. Because... like everybody says... you know, education is first... A university degree was valuable. My father wanted all his children to have at least a university degree, which is regarded as a minimum qualification in our middle class. I wanted to do Teachers' Training Course, become a teacher. But they didn't consider these things much. I have a bachelor's degree in Commerce. Parents were looking at things overall, present and the future. My father felt if we didn't have a degree then it would become difficult to find a bridegroom. People said even for a bridegroom's family to consider a girl for marriage, she had to have a degree. See, these intentions are always there behind a girl's education. So I completed a bachelor's degree.

But then, I have been very fortunate in my marriage. I have got such a good family from my husband's side. My husband has given so much freedom at home. I mean he says you do what you want to do and what you think is right... But you must attend to the family needs first. look after parents, his parents are living with us, well enough, do your duties as expected. Then I can do whatever I wish to.

I am confident being educated. If I want to go anywhere, I have got that confidence. I can manage. Even at home they give me respect. My husband is teaching me so many things... In all matters. See, my mother-in-law and father-in-law both have retired, they have free time now. They are at home with me all the time. They don't say do this, don't do this. They say you are educated. We worked so hard, we are tired in our lives; we can't manage the family. Your husband earns enough for the family and gives you enough to spend for the family. So everything is in your hands now. Treat us like children in this family and look after us... don't think of a job, be at home managing the family. So all kinds of responsibilities have fallen on my shoulders. Sometimes I feel burdened with all this. But then there is also happiness in this.

Look, higher education gave me this better position, changed my status. My husband's family is such a good family. I developed my abilities to stand up to my husband. If I had not got this degree education or had got less education such as a pre-university course or SSLC, then I would not have had this ability to take on all the responsibilities that my husband is giving me. Only because of my education I have that ability, and the confidence to manage everything. Yes, 100 per cent.

From that ability I could travel alone, I could manage things related to the overseas visit taking my young son with me. My husband actually said if he didn't leave me alone to handle the travel independently I would never learn. So I had to do it all by myself. Education is helping me so much here.

And then... Personally, as I said before only because I am a degree holder I got into this family. Educated family, educated husband. It is just not me, even in his friend's circle, everybody is so highly educated. Both husband and wife, having top work profile. So they look for a degree holder girl. Here it is not just a marriage thing; this educational qualification of the girl is also equally important. There will be a good mental match between husband and wife. Marriage becomes easier because of the girls' degree. This is the normal pattern in our society.

Being an educated woman...I feel proud. Managing household matters efficiently like balancing the finance. If there is less money available this month how to balance that; the ups and downs of the month; keeping a check on the finances; how to maintain next month's expenditure etc. What happens here is... see people like me...I got married at the age of say 21, 22, it is quite early in our family circle. For a year we, I and my husband, didn't take any family responsibilities as we were young and his mother was training me in family management matters.

After that we were given all the family responsibilities. We learnt quickly. It only needs some time.

Being educated we can pick up things quick, that is the difference. Less educated or illiterate woman may take a long time to pick up. That is what I feel. It might not be like that. When you go outside, meet with friends or somebody, talk and interact, the behaviour of an educated woman is totally different to that of a less educated woman. I have improved so much over the last few years like that. I have courage and confidence after observing others and learning from others. But in those beginning days I didn't have any at all. Only now, because of observing others and learning.

If you ask me what is my experience now I can say I am fully a confident woman. I have gained a lot of confidence; I am brave to say things frankly, openly, share my feelings. Speak with anybody without fear; I know how to behave in a circle of people. I couldn't do many of these things before.

Being educated I have that satisfaction. In addition, there is confidence that wherever I go I can manage things confidently. Then communication abilities, even if I didn't know something, I could ask somebody and try to know and use the information. These are all possible because of being educated only, I feel. Mainly that confidence. I have education, I can work if there is a need, I can earn my living and lead my life independently. I can support my family.

And by being educated my thinking capacity has changed. I think education is very important for this kind of development. It certainly develops your thinking capacity. Then understanding capacity... My expression abilities like expressing my thoughts about something, about different matters have improved. Suppose I know only a little about such matters, I am interested in knowing more or learning more about them.

(Deepa's higher education was planned around getting a good bridegroom for her. A minimum of a bachelor's degree was the eligibility required in the marriage market. Luckily Deepa got a good husband. Her father **conformed** to the social expectations, so did her husband's family and Deepa **conceded**. Deepa is **happy and content** that she conformed and that she has been accepted **without conflicting** ideas. However, her wish of doing a teacher's diploma course and becoming a teacher was not fulfilled. In spite of this, she is comfortable to go by the family's expectations.

She is **proud as an educated woman** with a bachelor's degree that gave her the husband she admires. She acknowledges that he is a good guide to her in teaching about roles and responsibilities, the management of which is her immediate world. Within this, she recognises her efficiency, her abilities and her confidence. So the

positive link is between her being a degree holder, getting a good husband and improving her abilities that is giving her the experience of being a proud, happy and confident educated woman.

Does education give her the abilities and confidence in managing domestic matters, balancing the family and travelling overseas alone with her young son? The inner layers of her experiences reveal that first of all her **father assigned her a role** to play in her education and marriage. **Is this continued** by her husband so that she now accepts his word with positive feelings? Deepa is **affirming** the expectations of the state and civil society. The **space** for the individual is **restricted**. Her role is limited to listening to her in-laws, matching with her husband's abilities which seem **ideal** in her world. Most of her expectations are in tune with society. Is there a **tension** in her experiences? If there is one, how does she recognise that tension?)

It is not like those subjects didn't give me any kind of knowledge or they gave me complete knowledge.

Deepa talks about school and college subjects. She says she has little memory for them but recognises that they became effective in her everyday life to certain extent. She places importance on life experience.

To tell you the truth, as I told you before, without my choice I studied for a B.Com degree. My father had an aim for his children that all three of us would get a university degree. You see, he struggled a lot while getting his sister married off. They searched for a bridegroom for her at least for about 4 years. The other side families all demanded that they wanted a bachelor degree holder girl, it didn't matter whether the girl was employed or not. My aunt had studied only up to Class X, SSLC pass. After that she had technical qualifications like certificates in short hand, typewriting. But the families didn't think much of these certificates. She couldn't be married off. So my father naturally felt that his children must have at least a university first degree. As a result, some of my own desires remained with me. From my childhood I was interested in literary activities as well. In my high school I used to write poems and articles for the school magazine. In college also. Then there was this district newspaper. I wrote for that also. It helped me a lot to recognise my writing talents and my desire for writing.

My college education didn't help me much directly. Or may be, it did help. I can't say... I don't remember them with all the details. See, things are different in my experience. The kind of people, friends, atmosphere here in Bangalore is so

different to what I was used to in Kolar. Although, Bangalore was only two hours from where I lived then. This was during the early 1990s. The atmosphere that I grew up with was different to Bangalore environment. Our world was small. We were all from the same place, lecturers were from the same place, we knew them personally.

Our behaviour was always to obey the elders. They also treated us young girls like children. If students were a bit older, then the way they interacted with teachers was different. But we hesitated. But here in Bangalore city, things are not the same. See, we went to college, studied, and went home, that was life; we did nothing else. How things are changing now!! Bangalore life is so different. And the changing times! Even a kid in Class VI or VII knows so much. People are different in manneris, that sophistication and their attitude... I am not saying these things are wrong. But there is a lot of difference in the attitude, towards others too. I learnt so much about interrelations, about people, their diversities only after coming to Bangalore. More than my own education, I learnt a lot looking at others here, learning from somebody, learning from the world around me, all that happened only here.

At school I studied the usual subjects. Languages, science, maths, social studies, drawing. music. I used to participate in the co-curricular activities well. I have very less memory about the subjects. Physics, chemistry, biology... something like that. I remember studying history about kings, dynasties, civics. Constitution, rights, politics, members in the Houses ... After Class X I didn't continue any of these subjects.

Even in Class IX and X, I never felt the seriousness of the subjects; only studied to pass the exams. I was more engaged in co-curricular activities, play, outdoor games with friends. About other subjects at school...I have very limited memory about socials and science. I was always poor in maths. So whatever I studied at that time liltle is left.

What I studied in school and college is helping me in some ways, in some matters. Some situations immediately remind me that I too studied them in school. For example, this bank balance, credit card management... even though I studied commerce in college I didn't have the practical knowledge; now as soon as I look at them I understand the application value. Now it goes into my head easily. Like commerce, balance sheet, petty accounts... Actually now, I get to understand more things from the newspapers and magazines that I read. Not that bad. It is not like those subjects didn't give me any kind of knowledge or they gave me complete knowledge. They become meaningful and relevant only when you apply them in life, like later on in life.

I think we learn better as we go on in life. It is purely life experience, at least in my case, not my formal education. Even though I had my degree education I used to feel scared, didn't have that courage. I hesitated about speaking to new people. I was not sure of how to mingle, socialise with people. There was not much diversity in my small world. I would go, attend meetings, events, but not speak.

Not immediately after my degree education or not even after my marriage. It happened slowly. While travelling in a bus also, I never used to ask for a ladies seat even when I was pregnant. I would travel standing for more than an hour. I am thin; I was thinner than this when I was pregnant, nobody could tell I was pregnant. In spite of my dizziness and aching legs I would not speak out boldly and ask for a ladies seat; I would not speak to men. Some elderly men would understand and give me a seat but not young men, no. I would feel at such times, why should I exhibit my weakness that I am a woman, and make that as an excuse to ask for a seat in a bus? My tendency is such, let me suffer myself, but not let others, that was the mentality.

But I learnt a lot while I was getting my passport done to go overseas and then while staying in Singapore. They give so much respect to ladies, they follow rules. Whoever that is, a big top man with a mobile, a laptop anything... they respect. There is no discrimination. But here whether you are educated or not, whoever you are, nothing happens if you are a woman. Here we need education as well as experience and also our own wisdom. Simple matters like queuing up at the electricity office, cinema theatre men just take over women and children. We women keep quiet, why get an unnecessary headache and get into trouble? But I have improved so much. I have some courage and confidence now.

This didn't come from my education, even though I was a degree holder, no, definitely not. Not from my education. I had to observe and learn gradually. So it came to me through gradual experience, exposure. From such times when I wouldn't get anything done if I didn't speak out, others would take the chance away... only then... from that pressure I started articulating my thoughts, I spoke...

(The contribution and application of formal education is discussed with life's practical situations. Deepa feels she **learnt a lot** from **everyday life situations** and sometimes by applying what she studied in her Commerce degree. In school she was doing well in co-curricular activities which she couldn't pursue in college studies. She can't point out the influence of subjects that she studied. Mere completion of her degree did not fill her with **courage or confidence**. In her experience she learnt gradually from observing others, talking and discussing, sharing her thoughts with people around her.

Deepa's experiences include **conformity** with the social systems. As children and then later as students she and others were taught to be **obedient and conforming** which **restricted her expression** and sharing with her family elders and teachers. Even as an adult woman she has continued **to withhold herself** from expressing her self although she is improving gradually as she is experiencing new situations such as travelling

overseas. There is a **dilemma** here. Interestingly, exposure to another society and its culture during her short stay in Singapore **exposed** her more to women's rights, participative citizenship and **individual respect**. Comparing that exposure with her position in her own society, Deepa points that even **educated women** don't get **respect in her society**. Women need education, experience and their own wisdom too to command respect in her society. However, her stand is 'why get an unnecessary headache' in place of **self-assertion** and **self-confidence**. Is this a **conflicting** experience? Being an educated woman, she does not **choose change or action**. Or does she feel that change and action are not necessary in her comfortable world?)

I am trying to give my son good values...

Deepa says she is applying her education in many ways in her domestic world. Her participation, besides other family roles and responsibilities, is with her son's learning. He is learning a tough syllabus, so she is using her education to help tutor him at home. She recalls her father educating them at home after school hours with discipline and values while her mother looked after the house chores. She values her father's role in their upbringing highly. She says her father is a role model to her. Her husband respects her as a person. She appreciates the same discipline and values in her husband too. She wants her son to follow these two men's examples. From her personal experience, she thinks, men are better in taking decisions which are more correct than what women tend to take. She feels she is an educated woman while guiding her son.

I have to apply my education to my family situation as I am not a working woman. To interact with guests, to tutor my son ... at least in that matter it is useful that I am educated. He is going to this Central school with CBSE syllabus. It is a tough syllabus. Very high standards of performance, expectations... many parents can't cope with that syllabus, they can't tutor or guide their children. So children suffer so much in school work or in project work. If you look at Class I syllabus it is so hard. Even we didn't have that standard in our Class X. In a way we are learning so much with our children's learning. I try to tutor him at home after school hours, coping with that high standard syllabu. This is possible only because I am at least a bachelor's degree holder. I am getting better with my sons learning. I want to learn more to tutor him better.

I want to give him good values. My education is helping me again in guiding my son with values education. When we were children my father did everything more

than my mother. He set a good example with his values. So father is a role model for me. His mentality was if he had money, he would use it wisely for the family's well-being. If something was left after that he would help somebody in need. Necessity was the ruling thing then. Go according to the needs and what was really necessary. He would give Rs.10 each to us every month as pocket money; but then he used to get the correct accounts from us, details about how we spent it. We were good children, we didn't demand anything. He got us things that we really needed. Everything was nice that way. So now, I tend to think that I should bring up my child in that way, with the same discipline. But it is not possible in the present day situation (laughs)... there are so many influences from others... but I am trying to give him values like respecting girls, strict handling of money and so on.

Talking about respecting women...see in India male dominance is the rule. May be because I grew up that way I might think so, I don't know. However much the woman is educated... what we women see at home and experience even now is the same. My father was a teacher, mother also was a teacher. So job-wise there was no difference. Mother used to do everything at home and then go to work, father didn't do much at home. But even before mother said anything like buying things for home, like for example even a bunch of coriander or chillies, he would get them before she asked. He cared for the family so much. I used to observe the neighbouring families also. There, the wife... the women weren't treated well. But there were variations. In some families women were respected equally even if she was not employed. Some others didn't give equal respect even if the woman was working. But my father was different. In our family there was so much freedom, we were treated very well with affection and care. He participated well in our upbringing. As soon as children came home from school he used to tutor us, guide us... very disciplined. Mother used to earn and give her salary to father, she would keep some Rs.10 or 20 to herself. He took care of her needs. Everybody got the same fair treatment, he got us all what was necessary. He is a role model.

My father-in-law is different. He quit his job long time ago. My mother-in-law faced so much difficulties, she suffered so much. She shares these things with me. He didn't take up any family responsibilities. He is a very good man, no doubt about it. Doesn't hurt anybody. But even now he commands things at home with that male's authority... like if he wants something we have to do that for him, food that he wants to eat... He doesn't compromise. Things are easier to manage even with such demands as my mother-in-law shares the work at home. When I am put in such demanding situation in her absence I tend to feel that men must be more responsible towards the family. Even though she has done so much, he doesn't give her the due respect. He insults her in front of everybody. Even for silly things... he makes her cry, makes her feel sad about her life. He is not kind to her. I don't know if it is my luck that my husband is so nice to me. He is so kind, caring and gentle. May be he has seen the effects of his father's negligence too much.

My husband is totally different to my father-in-law. He is very different to a lot of men around here. I am physically very thin, very small in body type. I tease him saying don't you feel funny about me being so small, what do you say when your friends tease you about it... but he has never said anything negative about me until today. So it is not like what I thought about men before my marriage. My husband's support is very much there in all matters. He respects me so much. He respects and treats women well, doesn't say negative things about them.

It is very common in our society that men say such things about women. It is not good. But I personally think that in some matters the decisions that men take are correct. Women cannot take them. Matters like family finance, future plans, property making. Like my father or my husband. What they decided was so correct for the families. That is why I totally approve of men's decisions in some matters.

I know there is a lot of difference between men's thinking and women's thinking. I do wish men's attitude and negative mentality towards women should change completely, they should learn to respect women, value them, treat them equally... this should be there from the beginning of a boy's upbringing. If this happens all other changes will happen (pause).

I keep telling my son, you should respect your mother, respect other girls and women, you should value their feelings. But even at this young age boys behave differently. That girl and boy difference thing happens very early in life here. They know that and they follow it automatically. I think it comes in their blood! After much tutoring and counselling my son may hopefully react a bit more positively towards girls but the whole environment at home is different, society is different; men are dominating. He knows this. I don't know what he is going to pick up when he grows up, whether from my father-in-law's dominance and my husband's understanding nature. We don't demand that he should become an engineer or a doctor but first of all he should be a better human being with values, be good natured. That's my wish. I try to read to find out more about bringing up children in a value-based way... can't put pressure on them... so we are learning more now, a new way of education for us... reliving that education that we got and relearning. For our children's sake we have to learn once again... see I am becoming educated again (laughs).

(Influences from her father, father-in-law and her husband. Taking guidelines from their attitude, behaviour, values to raise her son. While she adores her father and her husband who seem her role models she doesn't approve of her father-in-law's irresponsibility towards family. She is trying to give values to her son, to become a good human being on the lines of the two men being the model.

Deepa has **interesting experiences** related to men in her immediate lived world. She approves of those men who are caring and responsible towards their families. 'Family

first' men. She supports decisions taken by such family-oriented men and thinks they are more correct than women's decisions. But her husband transferred all his domestic responsibilities to her as he spent most of his time at work. He assigned her specific roles and responsibilities. He **trained her to fulfil his expectations**. She recognises that **he is a role model**. Interestingly she doesn't speak much about her mother's role, responsibilities and contribution to the family. Although her mother did everything at home and also worked as a school teacher, Deepa tends to ignore her efforts. She recognises her mother-in-law's suffering and sacrifice and values them. Is Deepa affirming the '**good woman**' image that **her society prefers**? A woman who is sacrificing her well-being and self-growth for her family's well-being? Is her mother-in-law better than her own mother in living the 'good woman' image?

There are visible **dilemmas** in Deepa's texts related to male dominance, acceptance of male authority if they are caring towards family, and criticism towards males who are not responsible. She **accepts** the state and systems, conforms with domestic roles and expectations. Yet, she wants her son to be **respectful towards** females. Is this respect towards women who are domestic and conforming? Is her experience one of being the weaker, second sex but a preferred one?)

Being educated depends on what level of education, how they apply...

While talking about the experiences of other educated women, Deepa discusses her grandmother's example, points out what she learnt from her example. Deepa feels sad that educated people of her times now don't look at the internal qualities of a person but they judge a person by superficial codes related to dressing habits, manners. She wonders in what sense one is educated, while comparing women like her grandmother with today's educated women. She says there are noticeable differences in how educated women express themselves. Later she observes certain differences in the lives of illiterate women and educated women.

...the understanding of education depends on how one receives it. Some women have not got any formal education at all, but we feel that we have so much to learn from them.

Ummm...for example... see, like my grandmother. My grandmother is now 82 years old, my father's mother. She might have studied up to, say Class 3 or 4. She joins us in our general chats and expresses her views on everything so wisely. She is so good even with such negligible education. Even now she reads. She works at home... you know she is living my parents. I mean my mother used to work full time until recently. And there is an unmarried aunt who is not well now. So my grandmother takes care of all my aunt's needs, and participates in domestic responsibilities without any frustration. Responsibilities are too many in our families. Our marriages, our children's births at parental house, so many family events, life is very busy.

She never thinks of a separate life for herself, it's the family life that's it. She has been busy ever since my grandfather's death when my father was just 16. She has managed everything bravely all alone without any major male support. She doesn't go out of the house at all. A male earns livelihood for the entire family and she manages the family. She has never had a life for herself, hasn't got anything for her own self all her life. When I look at her I am amazed - she is so selfless, doing everything for everyone. When I have say some 20 people in the house at a time, I can't manage. I get stressed. I tend to think that I have too many other things to manage. But my grandmother never says she is tired, she manages everybody, looks after the sick ones in the family... does everything like caring for pregnant women, new mothers resting in the family, young babies, visiting relatives...

I have gained valuable insights from watching her. Like learning to be very empathetic and sharing... feeling for others. This empathetic attitude doesn't come from education alone, it should be there in one's mind from their heart. From mere education one doesn't get everything. May be there is some improvement in understanding life but that again depends what level of education and what one does with that as in applying their education. But one learns to be responsive only through experience and values like having an open mind.

A lot of educated people have many pretensions. They don't want to involve themselves and offer helping hands in everyday life. But to me...I was brought up in a supporting environment. I volunteer to share the work wherever I go, participate with others, be pro-active. But it bothers me when I look at people who are not helpful, sharing and supportive. I think about human values then. Does this come from my education or from experience or insights gained from elders? I can't say. When I go to these so called educated and sophisticated people, they look at my clothes, check out my talking style, how polished or sophisticated I am, my manners, the way I speak English language, whether I am stylish or not... that is their evaluation of a person. Just the superficial, pretended personality. That makes me think what is our education giving us, really? What is education making us learn in our life, like human values, being open-minded? In what sense we are all educated? But then it again depends on what level of education one receives, how they apply... some highly educated women don't behave like that. But some behave cheaply even with a high education.

When I look at average educated women, as you said first degree holders, there is definitely confidence there. From their education, definitely. Earlier in my grandmother's example, it is different. That was a dependency, there was an uncle, a brother supporting her and then her son, that is my father, and now she is supported by my brother, so she has that male dependency feature all her life.

But in my mother's case it is again a bit different. She had education, she did her teacher's training diploma course, got a teacher's job, even now she gets a pension from her job. Her position is different. In case if a male member says something hurting or somebody tries to exploit her, she has that financial freedom, to live independently. She need not be financially dependent on any male member of the family. At least people like her are capable of solving their own problems. Her commitments are little. All that she has to do is do some part of her duty to the family and then she is free for herself as a person. She can tend to her desires, what she wants, or attend to something else. There is that independence in all respects.

What I am saying here is economically women like my mother are firm, through education they get this position. From that they get confidence of facing anything in life. My education also gives me that feeling. I have education, I can work, I can earn my living and lead my life independently. See in today's world nobody is there for anybody, everybody is for his or herself.

If everything is okay with this person as per what society thinks is right, then we value them. Otherwise nobody gives a damn... Life is like that now. That human relation is operating only at a superficial level. In earlier times, if men said nasty things about women, women would keep quiet. Now it is different. Now women say you give respect to me, then I respect you.

Women gain this confidence from education, from observing each other. But if you don't interact with others, if you lock yourself inside the house, you cannot learn things. So it is up to educated women and how they apply their education. There is a big difference between the ways of thinking of an educated woman and an illiterate woman. Illiterate women cannot understand things as quickly as educated women do. Understanding things, participation, managing, outlook on life, even basic interacting abilities. Education makes women better in all the above matters.

(Deep **insights** gained from others' examples, from life experience and also from education. Qualities, **human values** don't require formal education. She compares her grandmother's life with that of her mother's in terms of their independence, roles, responsibilities and commitment. Grandmother was dependent on male support but managed the private sphere efficiently. Her mother is not financially dependent which gives her a different position. Her commitments are only a few. Being educated, employed and having **control** over her financial situation improves her problem-solving

skills. She is free in terms of her own time and opportunities of doing what she wants to. She cannot be exploited on the grounds of dependency. Is she appreciating her mother's **'better' position** compared to her grandmother's? Is she indicating that a woman's **financial independence** is **important** and desirable? However, her father did everything for the family, as Deepa observed. Mother even gave all her salary to her husband. In what ways was her mother independent? In this regard, how does her father become a role-model in Deepa's world? **Tensions?**

Comparing this with her position brings out the **conflicting** experiences in Deepa's life as an educated woman. She has never been employed. Her husband assigned her domestic roles and responsibilities which she is carrying out happily and efficiently. She neither has a financial independence nor has 'freedom' in terms of her own time and money. Her husband told her she can do what she wants to do only after fulfilling her given responsibilities. Proving her abilities, gaining appreciation from her husband and in-laws and **living the social ideal** seem to be most fulfilling experiences in Deepa's life. However, recognising her mother's financial independence and freedom is also an experience of **contradiction**.)

Talking only about myself is very special, having this kind of special space...

Deepa said she felt very happy that she spoke only about herself as an educated woman. She had never talked about herself before with such particular focus. So it is a special feeling for her, she said. She thought the whole experience was like discovering her self, who she was. This was the first time she ever thought about herself differently as an educated woman. Nobody had asked her about her experiences. She did not know that she had so much to share. Summing up her experiences she said she has the confidence as an educated woman, it developed strongly over the years with life experiences.

I am happy to be to recognise myself as an educated woman. I am happy because I did my bachelor's degree, from that base I got a good husband and a good life. They value my education within my husband's family circle, saying she is a graduate. That also makes me happy. And I have confidence to go wherever, like I said going to a foreign country on my own as a woman. Even if my husband goes away, working overseas for 6 or 8 months, I have the capacity to run the family in

his absence. I am proud of my education. I have that satisfaction. Satisfaction that I am an educated woman.

I felt very happy to talk about this topic. We generally talk about women, education and so on. But we don't focus upon a topic like this. Asking specifically about myself. So it helped me a lot, actually, in many ways. Going back to my life situations, talking about school, recollecting past memories and then importantly talking about myself as an educated woman. This is a new experience. Yes, talking about myself was a kind of... how do I say... a kind of discovering myself process? You know, that special feeling that I too can talk about these things... having my own space for myself... thinking, feeling, reflecting back and forth, being with myself. When did I ever talk like this in my life... may be never, never ever. Even sitting down to talk about myself as a woman, as an educated woman... it is a very special feeling. I must thank you for all this. It was a rare occasion. I am very happy. I don't know how to express it.

I didn't know that I had all these experiences inside me. Only when you speak to somebody in this context they emerge out. Am I right? I didn't know that I had so much to talk about myself. Some inner most experiences of a woman, as a woman.

Your particular question what do I think of myself as an educated woman is of so much interest to me. You know why? Because although I am an educated woman, earlier I didn't have a focus on that feeling, it was blank, what do you say about yourself... never asked or never answered something like that in my life about myself. Probably this is the first time somebody asked and I thought about myself with a total focus for a few hours at least.

Probably when I was talking to you, I gained more confidence of being an educated woman. Or did I discover myself by becoming an educated woman? Anyway, I got more and more confident as I was speaking to you... see people usually don't ask questions like this, like you asked... we discuss our menus, kitchen work, family, children, school, in-laws, our sarees... But nobody had asked about me calling me an educated woman! That is very special, reflecting about myself, talking only about myself, having this kind of special space. I feel so good, positive about the whole experience now. We must talk more often with this kind of focus!

(Happy, proud, satisfied, confident of being an educated woman. Firstly, she associated these experiences with her private sphere roles and responsibilities. Then she talked from her heart as an educated woman. The process of thinking and reflecting on her experiences was a special experience. A special space was felt. Is this a **turning point** in her life? Or is it **another tension**? Is there a struggle here – about understanding a woman's space? Beyond the domestic space do women have space to

discuss their abilities, potential, their education and its application and so on? Isn't it important... to talk about their experiences?

On the other hand, women's experiences reveal the **tension** and their **contradictory** worlds. Deepa is confident and happy as she is able to carry on her roles efficiently. Life experience has more influence than her education. **Education** empowering an individual to solve problems, to enhance abilities, **to critically reflect** upon life events for a change is not recognised as her experience. The **ideal of an educated woman** is the **ideal of the state and the civil society** carrying on with the expectations. Is this affirmed in her experiences? Or moving beyond these two lenses, where and how do her experiences stand? What if she had not adjusted and fulfilled the domestic roles? How would she face everyday tensions? What changes would she desire if her independent decisions were not appreciated in the family?)

Epilogue

Deepa is happy, proud, satisfied and confident being educated. Her experiences include those feelings and also improved abilities, awareness, better position, status, interactive skills, better thinking and understanding. Trying to give values to her son, guiding him, introducing him to proper role models are some other experiences. She compares the lives of her grandmother and her mother to her own self being an educated woman. She recognises financial independence and better opportunities that her mother had as an educated and working woman but Deepa herself has obtained insights from her grandmother's managerial and efficiency skills, and human values. Her happy feeling of being an educated woman includes getting a special space for herself, which opened up an avenue of discovering herself again.

These insights of her experiences are listed below as initial thematic areas.

Freedom, happiness,	I have been very fortunate because I have got such a good family from my
roles,	husband's side. At home, my husband has given so much freedom. I mean he
responsibilities	says you do what you want to do and what you think is right... But you must
	attend to the family first. look after the parents well enough, do your duties

position and status	properly. He is teaching me so many things... See now, higher education gave me this better position, changed my status.
confidence, satisfaction, abilities, financial independence	<p>Only because of my education I have got this confidence, 100 %. Only because of that I could travel alone, I could manage things related to my abroad visit....</p> <p>That satisfaction. In addition, there is that confidence, wherever I go, I can manage things confidently. Mainly that confidence. I have education, I can work if there is a need, I can earn my living and lead my life independently. Being an educated woman, I feel proud. Managing household matters like balancing the finance. Now I have improved, I have some courage and confidence after observing others and learning from others.</p>
better thinking and understanding	And thinking capacity has changed because of my education. I think education is very important for this kind of thinking, it actually develops your thinking capacity. That understanding capacity...
Giving values, guidance to son	But then with our children's learning we are also learning so much. I try to tutor him at home... This is possible because I am at least a degree holder; I am learning with my son; and I want to learn more to tutor him at home. I want to give him good values. So my education is helping me in guiding my son.
Recognising grandmother's qualities	But my grandmother, even at this age, she never says she is tired, she manages everybody, ...everything. I have gained some insights. Like learning to be very empathetic and sharing... feeling for others. This empathetic attitude doesn't come from education alone, it should be there in one's mind from their heart. From mere education one doesn't get everything... one learns that only through experience, values about life.
Feeling special	I didn't know that I had so much to talk about myself. Though I am an educated woman, earlier I didn't have a focus on that feeling, it was blank, what do you say about yourself, never asked or never answered something like that in my life about myself. Anyway I got more and more confident as I was speaking to you... that is very special, about myself, talking only about myself, having this kind of special space. I feel so good, positive about this now. We must talk more often with this kind of focus!

Vinathe

Education has provided certain directions in my life.

Prologue

I have been writing, rewriting and rewriting, the experiences of my research participants. Putting my skills of a story teller, a journalist, a writer, an academic... I have been writing. As a woman. As a researcher. This started in August 2003. It started after I finished my interviews with the nine women in May 2003 in Bangalore. Initially I wrote their words while listening to their experiences recorded on tape. Then I just listened, a few times, without writing. Later I started translating and writing their experiences. Experience stories began to appear slowly at the beginning of 2004.

But I still had not written my experiences. Stories of my experience of being an educated woman. I knew one day, before the end of 2004 my experiences needed to appear on paper. But... where to begin... how...?

From the narratives of my master's thesis? Or make a fresh beginning? Ah, how can I even say a fresh beginning? The stories of my experience were already there in the experiences of my nine women participants. They were there all around me. While women were talking, doing everyday routines, while they were discussing something with me, and when I was reflecting on my own life... experiences were scattered all around me in all directions. But still the same question followed me. Where is my experience text? How do I write about my own experiences?

Let me go back. Trace my journey backwards. As a researcher of this study. As a writer of this thesis. As a woman thinking about women's experiences. What did I say about listening to my participants? Ah, there it is...phenomenology. Listening and interpreting experiences in considerable depth. In depth. As much as possible. Be a good listener. Open your mind. Let them talk. Open their minds, their lives, their experiences. Ah, that's what I have to do. Remember, I am just a woman, like them. I need to open my mind, my life, my experience.

What is my experience?

Experiences come as narratives, stories, dialogues, comparative, I and us, mine and theirs and ours... they are life's everyday texts. Representing the past, present and future of life. Of an educated woman. That is how I began. This is what I wrote and rewrote.

I have had a different parental approach in my upbringing...

My parents were both teachers. My mother could not continue her higher education as she took up a teacher's job after her teacher's training. Later, after her marriage, she was focused on bringing us up besides being a school teacher for 35 years. My father was always interested in formal education, so he continued his studies even after he got his grandchildren! As a teacher, in the beginning of his career, he set a good example with his leadership qualities, contributing towards better student retention, improving schools with community participation, and inspiring students with his belief in getting educated. He inspired me most as an educational leader as I watched him in my childhood in his various roles of a teacher, a headmaster and a principal. He commanded good respect for his innovative actions. I often pictured myself as a leader like him.

Both my parents told us a lot of stories in their own time, on different occasions. Mother did that more as a duty of a dutiful mother, to give good examples to her children. Her stories were always about morals, sacrifice, giving, sharing, tender qualities, religion, stories from Indian epics. They made me weep secretly inside my bed cover as she narrated them during bed-time. But the stories that my father narrated were actually from his life. When he was young he worked with his family in the agricultural fields, besides attending school. These stories were filled with his adventures, sometimes his older brother also was with him in his adventures, of experiences with wild animals from the forest, experiences related to their agricultural lands which he periodically kept a waTeachers' Training Certificate course on at nights. My hair would stand up straight, as we listened, eyes attentive, mind totally captivated, every word taken in... even now I can recite all those stories. I don't know what they did to my siblings. But they made me crave for adventure, do something, be free in the wilderness, live in a forest... this has had a say on my personality as an adult.

My mother wanted us to have at least a basic bachelor's degree and later, preferably government jobs. In my sisters' cases a bachelor's degree and a job would get them better husbands. So they did their Commerce degrees, got a job, and were later married off. My father did not like the idea of his daughters getting higher education. He believed that would make them dominating women. He always believed in male domination, which was a strong factor in his background. My mother insisted upon our education, and thereby economic independence. She supervised our education despite my father's stiff opposition. However, he encouraged his only son in everything, they both invested a lot of their interests in his upbringing. They preferred an expensive and prestigious engineering degree

for their son and later sent him to the ‘land of opportunities’ for a higher degree and good life.

Compared to my siblings I have had a different approach both in my upbringing and education. Good for me! My parents did not plan much for me, luckily, as I was their third daughter. This was a blessing in disguise for me. I became fully literate in Kannada language at the age of 7 and I immersed myself in reading a variety of books, journals, magazines, almost everything in my little world. Probably because of the oppressive atmosphere that surrounded me day and night, I tried to escape into different worlds through my readings. Through these readings I transcended myself into the worlds across the oceans, mountains, experiencing diverse things. I was called a book-worm by all my relatives and branded as a non-socialite when I was growing up. Later they called me an intellectual as I went on earning several academic qualifications. I had a different personality. What I was reading also was having a good impact upon developing me as a person with positive values. Mainly they came from folklore, stories, autobiographies, epics, visionary poems. Besides the influences from my parents, it was these different literary sources that influenced my thoughts and development.

Reading vast literature perhaps shaped and directed my education and later my work related to human development through education. As my parents did not think much about my future in terms of a job and a marriage, I had the opportunity for higher education after my bachelor’s degree. I could at least argue to go to university to study psychology for a master’s degree.

Among the subjects that I studied in school, I particularly liked languages, social studies, and biology. I always believed in the values and morals that my lessons explained and followed them. School texts and lessons satisfied only a small portion of my quest for more knowledge, understanding and learning. I often imagined myself as a king, a warrior queen, a patriot or a poet described in the books. I loved to read about ancient cultures and civilizations, adventures, expeditions, discoveries. Roman history, Greek epics, Arabian stories, Hindu mythology of millions of stories, Egyptian explorations, geographies and peoples of the globe – They enthralled me as a child. And I narrated those stories to other children in summer school holidays. They called me a gifted story-teller. This is in my primary school days. I loved the experience of gaining knowledge about different matters of life and the world. I put a lot of questions to my parents. Even now I ask questions- within myself- about the world around me. This keeps expanding my worldview. There have been periodic influences from people that have provided newer perspectives for my life.

My primary school was a mixture of experiences, explorations and growth. I focused less on lessons in my primary, read a lot outside the syllabus. In the higher primary, getting high grades and always a first rank was easy. And I continued my readings. I was recognised as an intelligent girl, an intellectual. Then later high school was different. I chose English language as the medium of instruction. Studying all the subjects, except for two languages, in English

language. I found it difficult in the first two years; my liking for the school subjects diminished. I didn't get high grades. I was a bit ashamed, a bit sad, and disappointed. I was Teachers' Training Certificate coursee other girls from English medium schools doing well in high school; they were the stars. Everybody liked them. They spoke English with teachers. I didn't. I was becoming a big girl. Many things bothered me... my body, my new spectacles, big boys in high school, smart girls, boring subjects especially physics and maths which didn't appear to be easy...I lost interest in them. I read more from the languages, social sciences, biology and looked around for more books in the school library. I retreated into my world of readings. Librarian recognised me as a dedicated reader.

I was a shy introverted girl in those days; spoke less, appeared less confident, worried a lot about the world. But I had dreams of a higher education, a high profile career, of becoming a leader figure in my career. Then my Class X annual exams became the immediate focus. Everybody said that was the most important year in school life as it was also the qualifying exam to enter pre-university. I had to get good marks to get an admission in prestigious colleges. I studied hard, focused hard on the subjects, tackled this English language – I was Teachers' Training Certificate coursee from Kannada to English language books, magazines and everything else. I read Nancy Drew in the beginning, advanced to higher levels of adventure books. By the end of Class X year I was reading James Hadley Chase and novels in English. I discovered a whole new range of books, different countries, cultures – all through the eyes of English writers.

All through this particular year, I was undergoing a tremendous personality change. I studied hard and got good marks in the qualifying Class X exams. Passing Physics and maths was a nightmare which haunted me for the next 7 years. I also knew that I didn't like my high school days. I felt imprisoned all the time. From a confident primary school girl who was a top scorer I had become an average scorer, a shy and an introverted girl. I just wanted to escape from school to college life where I had freedom from compulsory attendance, glare of teachers, regular performance in tests and exams, notes writing, sitting still through classes utterly bored and not being allowed to read what I wanted to read.

I could do all these in college, first pre-university then bachelor's degree. I had to travel everyday in a bus to the city where I studied in this college. I maintained the minimum required attendance. I wandered around the city, earmarked the most interesting libraries, sat there and read more. I studied even less for the annual exams. I liked psychology and some parts of my English literature subjects in college. I continued to be an introvert. I didn't agree with a lot of things others routinely did. Yet, I could easily do everything that I was trained in, in our traditional, brahminical life. But I felt different. From my college days I got some close friends for life- my fellow students and also lecturers. But I can't really point to any one single teacher or lecturer as the most influential... I learnt many things from many of them. Such as discipline, rules affection and gentleness, democratic attitude in a class from a few school teachers; wide-spread thinking, reading, issues, reading a classic from my college lecturers.

That I thought I was different had its reflections in my life through all those growing up years. I wanted to run away from home, didn't have the confidence as I thought I would be very unsafe out there alone. But that feeling was getting stronger and stronger. I wanted to be free, independent, living by myself, not depending on parents, I wanted a job, needed to earn my own money... I felt trapped. I wanted action in my life with adventure, traveling, my own life... I think I resisted control over me. Parental, social, economic... I thought getting a job was the only answer to that. I told my father as soon as I got a decent job, I would leave the family. To escape from their control. Job, my own money, economic independence, nobody's control over me... then I could buy more books, do more of my photography, travel safely, do many things. I wrote an eligibility test for getting a government job and got selected while I was in the final year of my B.A. degree. I took up the job, while I was still studying. I didn't like this job, the set-up of a government working place. I disliked it very much. Meanwhile I completed my B.A. degree, got into my master's course. I resigned this job within a few months of taking it up. Everybody said what an idiot I was, to resign a government job; it didn't bother me. I knew I could survive anywhere, on my own, earning a basic living. I had a bachelor's degree by then. It would save me. I had waited long enough to get this bachelor's degree. I too believed that a degree was essential to get a decent job and further quality in life.

Later, I went to a different city for my psychology master's degree, lived in the university hostel and explored the bigger areas of evolutionary psychology. Then several things related to those studies happened; such as studying wild monkeys for my dissertation, continuing that for a Ph.D. later, quitting it, then getting into a journalist's job, later an academic teaching career, quitting one by one, getting into human development field... each of these phases opened up a gamut of experiences, different worlds, people, opportunities... I think I was lucky that my parents didn't force me to follow a routine equation of life-a degree, a job, a husband and a family.

It is like a snakes and ladders game.

Now, as a mature adult, I realise that quite often I was carried away into a colourful world that did not really exist around me. I think I was not good in practical thinking and application. I only read a lot of books, but didn't know how to live like most others- smart and successful. I wasn't smart that way. I was naïve. I was a girl. I couldn't be out there doing adventure and traveling. What I read in books, what I imagined, what I carried in my head were much removed from the realities of this world.

This naivety often landed me in difficulties. It's like a snake and ladder game that we play. I play that even now... with my nieces and nephews. On a lot of occasions people wanted me to be like them. I couldn't be. Including an oppressive relationship with a man who along with his family members forced me to learn to be a stereotype. I felt vulnerable. But I got myself out of that situation quickly. Later I was expected to be a subordinate in a few job situations. In every

such situation I took courage that I was educated and it would take me forward providing alternatives in life. I was confident of living independently as I was educated. I was confident that I wouldn't be exploited so much even if I lived alone. So I never stopped myself and refused to be in an oppressive situation for long. I strongly believed that my education would lead me out of distressed moments. If I had been an illiterate woman, even with a personality of courage and tendency to move forward in life, I don't think I would have provided myself with so many opportunities in life to move on. Being educated has taken me forward in life. It has provided certain directions in my life. I just can't imagine myself as an illiterate woman. That would feel so oppressive.

This tendency of recognizing and feeling myself as an educated woman, opening up new avenues/opportunities for my self-growth and development has remained the same over the years. I have worked in various fields – as a journalist, a lecturer of Psychology, a development project coordinator in a donor agency, a teacher-trainer with the grassroots organisations, teaching Education subjects and in the research area. To me these opportunities were occasions to share my thoughts and my worldview with learners. For this to be happening as an ongoing journey, I think my position of being an educated woman is quite motivating. This is especially so considering my personal background from a traditional society and upbringing.

My parents were/are very orthodox Brahmans, traditional in their outlook, keeping up their religion, culture and caste high in their actions. I looked upon these factors of tradition, culture, caste, religion and orthodoxy in life with curiosity; wanting to know how they originated, evolved as practices and beliefs. My mother trained us all well in keeping up the rigid Brahminical ways with minute details, all the rituals, practices and customs. I can say even now I am good in these things. However, the matter of how they are directing human life is of more interest to me than practising them rigidly. I like to understand the philosophy behind a religion, how a human mind could harvest the thought of a religion, how the customs and practices evolved; how people cultivated cultures and continued them through epochs and eras; how changes occurred to the tradition of a particular age – these appear intriguing and challenging to me. I like to use my educational skills to explore and study, understand these and other matters that affect human life. Though sometimes I feel I am still living in an imaginary world rather than learning to live practically in my real world, with smartness and success.

In my adult life I have followed the philosophies of life more vigorously. So it became easy for me to choose different life styles. But my basic values and principles, following ethics, social justice and morality remained the same – find goodness in all, be fair and rightly justifiable in my actions. May be, this is from my childhood influences, from people and from other sources in school. But then, I know a person who is skilled all kinds of petty jobs, is so efficient in his work...and he is illiterate. I have known him from my childhood days. His values are great. I also know many women from my mother's generation who are not educated, but have values, principles and skills. They practice social justice in

everyday life without even uttering that word. But now I can see the difference. They are carrying out their dutiful roles as traditional family women, they have never talked about themselves with anyone. That man couldn't earn a better living as his skills got him petty jobs only, not a recognised, well-paying, dignified job. People treated him lightly, not so much respectfully. If only he was formally educated...

Several people in my world, including my family, have shown little tolerance for my actions of freedom, justice, ethical stands and equality. Whenever I questioned the male dominance in my society, men have disliked me. Whenever I tried to participate in life events as a person, not on the merit/demerit of being a woman, people have looked at me with suspicion. Whenever I have questioned about people following hierarchies with power and control I have been shunned. But I have moved forward in my life with alternatives. Is this the contribution of my education? Is this confidence coming from my internal qualities? I don't know. I rather prefer to recognise that confidence of being an educated woman.

Alternatives, changes...I keep my container open. I like the little rain drops falling in.

Whenever my father, when we were all children, said my mother was not university-educated, my mother would reply that she has had four higher degrees, i.e., her children. Even now, as I am continuing with my own life with changes and unconventional life style, I want to understand her more – How did she understand her life, of being a popular teacher and a highly value-based woman? Why did she choose to identify herself as a traditional woman following the Hindu stree *dharma* of being a dutiful wife and mother? Was that her ultimate value, to keep up the tradition? But then she always demonstrated a very high level of humanistic values such as sharing, supporting, loving, caring and comforting others. She was a gentle person yet was quite strong about her stands. She was educated, used her education in many ways in her life, yet was orthodox and traditional in a lot of ways. She set a good example for following human values to her children and her students. She reflected a lot on her actions and life. But she did not allow herself choices in her life for alternatives and changes. She restricted herself in her traditional role. She always said her life was her husband and children. She appeared to be more a culturally duty-bound woman than an educationally liberated woman. To me she said I should follow her training, the Hindu stree *dharma*. Sometimes I disliked those words. For I knew she was suffering. My own life has been influenced greatly by her values. Values like sincerity, truthfulness, affection, sharing, helping, and qualities like patience, perseverance came from her example. But I did not want to follow her training in living as a pious, Hindu Brahman woman. I wanted to move on in life as it opened itself to me. To be with its flow.

That is the context, perhaps, I feel like having if I want to understand myself as an educated woman. Being able to take my own decisions, being with the flow of my life right from choosing my own formal education to choosing my own life partner, most of the times trusting my education will provide alternatives in life. It

has also given me the wonderful skills of reading and writing, understanding the different ways of my everyday life, my world; participate efficiently in knowledge-building and sharing activities; experiencing life in all its moments and diversities. There are other benefits like economic independence and better material conditions of life. My confidence in life also comes from the fact that I can find a better job, earn a better living as I have good educational qualifications.

I am a wife and a mother of a little boy. I say this so often in my everyday life now. But I cannot honestly say I am proud as an educated woman. I don't often claim that status in the society. That I am highly educated. Though all my relatives in Bangalore keep saying that to their children. In my experience a lot of illiterate women in Indian society are equally capable as literate women and some highly educated women tend to be utterly lacking any agency. I have known many women who are different-some are totally dominating in every way, some negotiate their lives differently, some others remain submissive throughout with their full awareness. I don't know how will I express myself as my life moves on. Will I find my identity in being a mother? Or being a wife? Will I talk about my own self-growth or will I talk about my child's growth? Will I put my family first or will I continue to think of my own agency and action? Will I start using certain masks as my marriage and motherhood mature? Can I even think of a mask on my face? Many questions that do not have answers yet...

My own experience is a combination of formal education, observing and learning from people and the world, trials and errors of life and maturity with life experience. But literacy opened up an immense array of newer opportunities and experiences for me to develop a worldview. The first decade of my adult life had all the influences from my education and formal knowledge in my life situations, not so much from the realities around me. I think I was more a theoretical person, not quite relating to the real world around me and it's different bases of approaches and attitudes. The present, second decade of my adult life is an application of my formal knowledge, what I learn from others, their experiences and learning from my own experiences. I think being educated experience gets better and better over the years merging with another important ingredient, life experience. I believed being educated, when I had those initial academic qualifications I thought they would equip me with problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, understanding people, leading my life successfully in most aspects. I don't think my education got me those as an immediate result. maybe I lacked common sense and life skills as a person. I improved in these matters as I gained more life experience.

My question, which I have been asking within myself, what does education mean to a person, remains a quest even after all these years. I can only see its impact in my life – some changes, an improved economic condition, improved skills, better thinking and application to life, problem solving, better understanding. I see around me that it definitely enables a person with better abilities. But how a person uses her education to better her life is not totally dependent upon her education alone. I feel education and using common sense with abilities will make an educated woman's life richer in many ways.

I remember Khayyam's words:

Neither you nor I know the mysteries of eternity,

Neither you nor I read this enigma;

You and I only talk this side of the veil;

When the veil falls, neither you nor I will be here.

Omar Khayyam (Khayyam, 1979, Quatrain No.7)

I, the researcher, have not analysed Vinathe's experiences. For, I am Vinathe, the researcher and the writer of this thesis. This study and the thesis is my lived experience. I began the thesis with my questions and reflections around the experiences of educated women, voicing my interest and concern about learning directly from them about their lived experiences of being educated women. My journey throughout this thesis is intertwined with those questions, interests, concerns and the need of studying women's lived experiences, including my own. They represent me the woman, me the educated woman and me the researcher. My experiences narrated above act like flashing lights, connecting to the chapters of this thesis. Throughout those connections illuminate my tensions, dilemmas, the turning points of my life and the contradictions that I am picking up as an educated woman and the researcher. Therefore, the analysis of my experiences is presented throughout the thesis, in all the chapters.

5.2 Conclusion

How am I to interpret the mystery of these experiences? Must I? Nobody knows the depth of human mind. From this side of the veil I will try my best to know what is there on the other side. For, I can do only that much. I know in a philosophical sense there has been no beginning made nor will there be an end to our experiences. Our conversations. Our stories. Insider. Outsider. It is as infinite as this life, this eternity, this mystery. I am just carrying on with what was present before and what may not remain the same in future.

In this chapter I recorded the ten women's experiences, presenting and reflecting on them. Noticing some unique experiences, I commented on the intricacies woven together but hidden within the experiences. Doing so means the details and the intricacies need to be described in much more depth so that we begin to feel them, alerting ourselves to the realities that lie hidden in our experiences. Experiences told at the time of the researcher's questioning. Experiences that are viewed from a particular lens. Life is always on a move, a constant journey. So are women's experiences that are lived everyday. What has been told until now in this chapter might have undergone some changes as time moved on, with fresh currents in the ten women's life's river.

Like most rivers of this Earth, life is meandering. For the moment, as 'Neither you nor I know the mysteries of eternity, neither you nor I read this enigma' (Khayyam), the experiences of ten women, which I co-constructed, will stay with us. I will look at them again, in the next chapter, with further reflection, analysis and reconstruction.

For many women, life is a meandering river. Life changes courses with twists and turns, which only when revisited much later in life provide a newer understanding. During such revisits they come to be recognised as turning points. These turning points signal a particular event, an important decision, and a milestone in terms of time (such as getting married, giving birth to a child). These turning points become significantly visible during the narration of the texts of being educated leading to a two-directional effect. One is that they provide for the participant an experience to re-view themselves in the

present, drawing from the past and reconstructing their sense of self. Interpreting their experience texts will highlight what is hidden in the layers of experience. The second directional effect of recognising the turning points from women's texts lies in its usefulness for the researcher for her multi-levels of interpretation. On the other hand, turning points of a life text illuminate tensions, uncertainties and dilemmas. These become more visible, vivid and evoke certain feelings.

These women's stories are unique on their own, as they are, as individual stories. They reveal some common threads – of their agency, constructions of their identity and meaning that can be made in a particular time and place. These stories are not static; rather they will continue as each woman constructs, perceives and makes sense of her experience from within her lived world in many unique ways.

I highlighted some of the tensions, dilemmas and conflicts in the texts, in this chapter. In the next chapter I will discuss the recurring themes that being an educated woman is being the confident ideal and living the social ideal. I will discuss these two themes through their experiences and show that they lead to another layer, a much deeper one, of experience. In Chapter 7 I will reflect more on this deeper layer, discussing the lived experience and presenting the phenomenological theme of this study.

Chapter 6

Being an educated woman: Torn between ‘confident ideal’ and ‘social/traditional ideal’

Women need a dialectical phenomenology that moves back and forth between the world as it appears to us and the world we refuse to see. We need a mediating method that stretches between lived phenomena and an ideology of family life to help us diminish the distance between the private and public poles of our experience. For the world we feel, the world we remember, is also the world we make up. The place that is familiar can be the place where we are most lost.

(Grumet, 1988, p.65)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter illuminated the ten women’s descriptions of ‘being an educated woman.’ They were texts that were narrated both temporally and episodically. Reflecting on the immediately visible commonalities and differences I highlighted those experiences that were becoming initial themes. Some of the experiences included having better skills, improved abilities and better financial independence, an expanded world-view and improved interpersonal relationships. By being an educated woman, each participant is experiencing better status and respect in society. They are also experiencing more power and control and self-expression with more authority.

The participants’ immediate response to the question ‘what is your experience...’ was ‘I feel confident.’ Their later description of confidence, its increased levels as they completed their formal education, secured jobs and carried on roles with wifehood, motherhood and/or as a professional, was connected to that immediate response of feeling confident. This educated, confident woman was perceived as the ideal in their society. Later, their experience showed their preference for living the social/traditional model or a ‘social ideal.’ Both confident ideal and social ideal were placed on a continuum in the life of being an educated woman. In this chapter I will firstly present texts that illustrate this preference. Then I present texts that indicate something else –

something beyond the ‘confident ideal.’ The chapter analyses the tensions and contradictions of the two themes – that of the confident ideal, and that of the ‘social ideal’. From these thematic descriptions I move on to an interpretation and the question of amalgamating the experiences, a ‘torn between’ experience. I reveal the multi-layered experience of being an educated woman through these three thematic layers.

6.2 Describing the confident ideal

The first response of all the participants to the research question ‘what is your experience...?’ was that the overall experience of being an educated woman was being more confident in all life’s circumstances including their roles as a professional, a wife and a mother. In their descriptions of feeling confident, feeling more enabled and better skilled, all the women, except for Vinathe, draw strongly from internalised outcomes of education. This outcome is the ability to balance all life situations consistently. Such a balancing act becomes easier for an educated woman with the application of their better abilities and skills that enhance their power and control.

For example Kanaka’s words ‘if not for my education how else could I have got this balance, stamina and confidence’. Firstly, her confidence as an educated woman is expressed in everyday life situations with particular people, actions, context and her philosophy of life, also the collective outlook. Secondly, the awareness that she is educated stays with Kanaka even when she is silent in her mother-in-law’s house. That awareness gets a practical expression when she moves, with her family, into their own house. She finds a teacher’s job again and directs her family’s growth and progress – ‘After my son was born, I started working as a teacher once again and am continuing even now. So now back to my aspirations, my dreams’. Thus it is confidence that is making her capable, a good manager of her family as well as the courage that comes from the very awareness and feeling that she is educated, her education will support and protect her: ‘My education has given me this courage... indirectly it is helping me. It has instilled this confidence in me. Not directly. So I face everything’.

Rani, Deepa and Shubha talk about being confident as educated women in comparison to less educated women who might not have the same level of confidence. Rani and

Shubha comment how less educated women feel restricted in making use of their educational outcomes, without applying their learning to solve problems. Rani feels she can do anything that she wants to, and this feeling comes from her confidence of being an educated woman: ‘We can do everything whatever we want to... we have the courage, confidence... this courage comes from education. If you don’t have education, you don’t go out, you sit indoors all the time...’

She reflects upon the passive attitude of many educated women and thinks that they do not behave like educated women. Being confident in all matters of life is the characteristic of an educated woman:

But many behave like illiterates... they just remain passive... they don’t move forward in life ... their degrees are only to keep up their status... just for social status... for social life, they just pretend... or like if I get a degree I will get a good husband... just to get a name in their social world ...

For Shubha being confident is the primary experience of an educated woman. For, ‘education exposes us to everything gradually, to life matters. We start learning more and more about different life situations ... analysing within ourselves; we start cultivating the strength to analyse the matters as they are. We become more confident.’ However, quite similar to Rani, Shubha tends not to generalise the experience of confidence with all educated women. It is *her* primary experience. Education, for Shubha, helped to develop problem-solving skills and feelings of being enabled in all matters of life. This she contrasts to many other educated women who repeatedly reconstruct their choices about their life quality with a feeling of not having a space of their own in their life. Such women have not made use of their education. However, recognising choices and taking action for change comes only through education and from being confident.

Like Rani, Vinoda also links her confidence with her ability as an educated woman to face any kind of life situation. For example Vinoda says ‘being an educated woman ... I can face any kind of life situation and live life confidently. I have that confidence’. This confident feeling is also Vinoda’s experience of being enabled, being in a strong position in the society considering her community’s backwardness, as she says, where

girls are not encouraged to take up higher education and then a career. This experience also gives Vinoda her identity of being a strong individual woman celebrating her agency. She believes she has achieved this through her education.

All the ten women connected their experience of being confident women to their increased ability to balance life situations. The characteristics include moving forward in life, facing any kind of life situation, doing anything that they want to do, having courage, stamina and strength, better management skills, and analysing and solving everyday problems. The practical applications that they have experienced are related to having formal subject knowledge, enhanced abilities (in various situations of everyday life), better financial independence, besides improved status and respect. These related themes are discussed in the following sub-sections.

6.2.1 Confidence related to formal subject knowledge

Ganga, Rani, Deepa and Vinoda linked being confident to increased levels of formal subject knowledge. This came from education. Their better formal subject knowledge increased opportunities to expand their world-view. They could practise the subject knowledge in various life situations, including, imagining a better future for themselves and their family. Accessing knowledge, acquiring knowledge and its application are all significant aspects which impact on their sense of self. They believe they are growing through their subject knowledge.

... knowledge we get and we will come to know how to use that knowledge according to situations for our life's good. (Ganga)

...whatever you read you learn something from that... I am satisfied that I am using what I studied for the good of my life. (Rani)

It is not like those subjects didn't give me any kind of knowledge or they gave me full knowledge. They become effective when you apply them in life, like later on in life. (Deepa)

See, all this knowledge, awareness about women's condition, history... all this came from my education. (Vinoda)

For Ganga and Vinoda the reality of achieving their dream of a 'decent government' job came from their specific subject knowledge area. They became school teachers, teaching specific formal subjects. Vinoda not only trained as a school teacher but also as

a Hindi language teacher which gave her specific knowledge in related literature, philosophy and world-view. They both could access formal knowledge in terms of the foundational school curriculum subjects and use them in their everyday life in their own unique ways.

Ganga talks about knowledge and practice of her Science subject area, which is her passion, in everyday life; Vinoda talks about using sources from Hindi literature and making meaning from the visionary messages for wisdom in her life; this oral history knowledge is interwoven in women's everyday life. However, practising their formal, acquired knowledge areas that these women refer to in everyday reality was different to that originally assumed during their years of formal education. It is clear that they prefer to practise the traditional image of a family woman and conform to societal values over their intentions to practise assumed formal knowledge.

Rani is proud that she has specialised knowledge in her Physics subject area and also her high level of reading from other knowledge sources. Her image of an expert professional is a concrete one, of her position in the public domain of life. She appreciates her personal awareness of the worth of formal subject knowledge and is proud that she is practising it.

Nirmala challenges the ways of acquiring formal subject knowledge in formal education. However, she does not deny its worth or relevance to everyday life. She argues that formal subject knowledge in various areas needs to be acquired, appreciating/practising its meaning. The learner must also be taught/trained how to practise it in everyday life circumstances. From this background Nirmala is continuing to make a positive sense of her own formal knowledge and is trying to pass it on to her children in a practical way. In her experience gaining such knowledge and creating a scope to gain more is helpful for her identity as an informed person. This also improves her status in society and family resulting in more confidence.

6.2.2 Confidence related to abilities (being able to do)

Another experience of being confident is related to having better abilities and using them. All the ten women provided many examples to support 'being able to do' experiences. This experience, having a number of different practical applications, is associated with abilities to manage everyday life matters, family affairs, to be successful in professional life, to face any kind of life situation, to solve problems in life. All the ten women tended to compare their abilities with those of illiterate and/or less educated women. More practically, this also relates to paying the bills and managing financial matters across counters in banks and government offices, as well as understanding health situations and basic medicinal use, managing inter-state, overseas travel and so on. Being able was also linked to making decisions related to personal health, pregnancies and family planning. Being able is being an intellectual person expressing oneself better with articulation and assertion.

Ganga's text is an example that illuminates the enhanced ability of an educated woman in comparison with an illiterate woman. It is the experience of efficiency and the ability to participate/respond to everyday family matters.

Mostly in the daily chores... suppose the cooking gas stove that we use... to an uneducated woman she doesn't know from where we get gas, how to use it, it is an exhaustible resource, we have to use it carefully ... these things she won't know.

Deepa speaks of her experience of managing family matters, her overseas travel and using internet technology with enhanced abilities. Mani's experiences include the ability to become a successful professional, using her education in expressing her professional and project management skills. She thinks the experience of being able to be a professional woman is linked to her higher education, which in turn enhanced her confidence level.

When I came here first employed to run a women's project, I ran the project quite efficiently. ...It gave me satisfaction. I received a lot of appreciation. It gave me so much confidence that I could manage any such work easily. There may be an influence of my MA too there and then this work exposure also. This came as I have an MA degree...

An educated woman experiences better intellectual expression, which is a unique ability, Rani says. She notes that everybody has this intellect but educated people can express it appropriately in their profession. Rani's calling upon educated women to behave like educated women, to be active agents in their life is suggestive of decision-making abilities.

... to expose this intellect properly one needs education. If there is this intelligence then you can use it in different senses...but to use it in a proper way one needs education as a channel.

Kavitha's text on developing more polished public behaviour is an ability of an educated woman. She attributes certain qualities to an educated woman. It is also her way of making sense of her self:

As an educated woman I have the ability to convince people, talk them through their mis-behaviour, see because I am educated I should be having that patience. ...My behaviour has improved, manners, talking, behaving in the public, people recognise that oh, it is good, she is an educated woman you can see that from her polished behaviour... this image is there now.

Vinathe and Vinoda both describe the ability to survive/live and face any kind of situation in life which they recognise as a strength from being educated, although Vinoda's experience includes compromise and adjustment. Shubha's texts emphasise the strength of formal education in building women's capacities. They point out the choices educated women have. 'Choice' is an indicator, from Shubha's and Vinathe's texts, of their confidence. It characterises their experience of being educated.

6.2.3 Confidence linked to financial independence

A significant ability that is enhanced by being an educated woman is financial independence. It is actually an interplay between the sense of self-confidence and financial independence. The women equated financial independence with an increased level of their self-confidence. A typical example is of Kavitha who emphasises her confidence in her ability to find a better job, one that means she is not dependent on anybody. Although experiencing a feeling of being lost between the phases of completing her bachelor's degree and being unemployed, she is aware of her ability to find a 'decent' job:

... It is the confidence I too have as I have got this degree. That I am capable of getting a job and earning for my life. Tomorrow when I am married whether I get a good life or not, I at least have this feeling that I am not a burden ...

When I doing my degree I was getting all that, you know that self-confidence and courage... After finishing my degree I was at home for two months. In those two months I lost all that confidence and courage that I was getting through my college education. I don't know why, may be I was sitting at home doing nothing.

V- Could you explain this, what happened?

K- When I was at home doing nothing I got this feeling that I am of no use, I am a waste-body. I am not studying, not in a job... am a burden to parents, what am I doing in my life... even having food I felt guilty; I don't know why, what happened to me at that time, all I felt was I was useless. I thought oh why on earth my college life ended... I had no goal in life... sudden loss... only after getting the job, this job again I got my self-confidence back, as if I was charged with a new battery. So a woman when she is given education, especially like bachelor's degree level education she changes a lot, she becomes a person.

A better job that suits her personality also provides a direction in her life; gives her an identity; and nurtures her confidence level. Mani also felt confident that she could earn her living only after she completed her master's degree. The experience of developing confidence is very strongly linked to finding/getting a decent job. However, the higher the educational level, the better is the opportunity of finding a good job. This gives more confidence. This indicates levels of confidence. Mani is quite aware that a B.A. degree does not have much job value.

No, I didn't get that confidence then. Because even after my BA I was considered unfit for jobs because of my poor performance in that Convent school in Bangalore (laughs)... so I thought I was not fit for a job, a profession, I didn't have the confidence. But I was aware that I needed a job to earn my living, to be independent etc. So I went for a couple govt. job interviews... But I didn't get the jobs because B.A. was just an ordinary degree that didn't have any job value.

Similar to Kavitha's experience, Vinoda's confidence increases because she is in a job that suits her, one which is getting her respect and better status in the community. Without this particularly suitable job she might not have the same level of confidence. Without the same degree of respect and status in the society, she might not experience being confident and able to do anything. Ganga also experiences more confidence only because she is in a teacher's job which was her aspiration and goal. Being confident is thus linked with social status and respect in society.

6.2.4 Confidence related to status and respect

Vinoda's text brings another dimension to the claim of an educated woman experiencing better confidence. This is linked to the ability of becoming financially independent, thereby having an increased confidence level and later to the experience of being enabled. Being 'enabled' through education, for Vinoda, is linked directly to aspects of respect and recognition, enhanced status in society. These experiences are neatly captured and framed in the order of being educated, being in a decent job (particularly a teacher's job), becoming financially independent, gaining a better status with prominent recognition and respect.

... my education and this job, as a result of my education, that teaching job has given me certain status in the society. People give me respect, they say hey, look teacher has come, sit her in the chair. But the same people will show a door-mat to an uneducated ordinary woman, don't give her due respect that I get. They talk to me with respect because I am a teacher. So I got this respect, recognition in the society.

Vinoda is aware that her position of being an educated woman, being a teacher has given her an experience of power in her lived world. She emphasises that a teacher's profession is socio-culturally respected well in Indian society. To my question on the possible difference in the experience related to power and respect among educated women Vinoda said educated women don't get respect and recognition, both leading to the experience of power, if they are not professionals, not in respectable jobs. Being in a respectable job brings considerable changes in an educated woman's behaviour which is related to her experience of power and respect.

Position, my role... the fact that I am educated gets some attention because of my behaviour, my smooth polished language, my easy approach.. ... when I go to my native place, they say hey, *akka* is coming, clean up everything, let us behave properly... that is they are recognising the fact that I am educated and they cannot behave roughly. So education gets recognition. And my position also. Not all educated women get this respect, especially if they are just housewives, not being a professional, not being a working woman etc.

V- Why is it like that, the difference within the educated women?

Because even though she is educated she is not making use of her education to get a job, be in a profession... that brings a lot of changes to a woman's behaviour and approach.

Vinoda gets respect and experiences power over others in her community where most women do not reach the level of completing a bachelor's degree. That feeling is similar to Rani's which resonates in her calling upon educated women to behave as educated. Rani also reiterates what Vinoda says. A higher job profile with a higher financial power results in higher social power. If an educated woman is a housewife, society does not give her much respect.

All women, excepting Kanaka, describe their experiences of having control in their life. Control in decision-making, control within the everyday life events/actions, family matters, control over one's life aspects and over their personal earnings. In other words, they feel more agency. However their texts reveal tensions related to their perceptions.

6.2.5 Tensions related to being a Confident Ideal

The ten women's texts illuminate the concept of everyday agency. The first layer of their agency is related to each woman's increased confidence level marked by better abilities, formal subject knowledge and awareness that she has a better money-earning (financial) ability. As such Indian women's agency needs multiple layers of understanding. In Chapter 1 while discussing locations of agency in women's lived experiences I noted that women's agency has complex meanings between their private and public spheres of influence. In the modern, post-independence and postcolonial Indian society, women's agency in earning a livelihood and taking everyday decisions related to the welfare of their family assumes more importance. Women experience confidence if they are managing their family matters efficiently. I have pointed out in my discussion of relevant literature that the postcolonial characteristic of participating in the paid workforce itself boosts the confidence level of women coming from a middle-class, socio-economic background.

Vinoda's participation in economic activities very early in her life, for the well-being of her family gave her an effective personal agency. Later she recognised the power of applying her ability to do something, become somebody noticeable and express her agency through more formal, public channels. She could achieve all these by

completing higher educational qualifications, getting a government teacher's job and earning respect and status in the society.

Girls' and women's education has been a contentious topic within the local culture of India. Various researchers have argued on topics related to policy, human rights, quality education, and participation in the public sphere¹. In Chapters 2 and 3, I found that the question/s commonly asked centre around issues of providing educational opportunities and fulfilling the right to education. Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2000a; 2000b; 2003) call for female education to enhance the freedoms and capabilities of women. Sen (1999) observes that only through greater achievement in female education can a country progress. Questions arise around this progress: progress in terms of what – material and economic? Or social progress? Women's progress in what realms of life? These questions demand a deeper understanding of everyday tensions and conflicts that 'being an educated woman' experience reveals.

In this section I have described how the ten women equated their experience of being an educated woman to the ideal of being confident. Many questions arise in relation to this ideal, which is suggesting tensions and conflicts. This calls for a deeper analysis of their texts which may answer and examine their perception. In the next section I discuss the concept of the 'social/traditional ideal', in the light of the lived experience texts that seem to indicate something different to the claim of the confident ideal.

6.3 Living the social/traditional ideal

Many argue that the world of formal education is exclusive of women's experiences; that being educated does not result in choice or change (Bhasin, 1994; Longwe, 2001). Educated women are expected to remain unchanged in a rapidly changing world (Chanana, 2001). Being educated can be a contradictory experience for women: "Artificial or natural, so long as education fosters 'manly' qualities and these are taken

¹ See Chapters 1 & 2 reviewing literature from Bordia 2000, Burra 2001, Chanana 2001, Ghosh & Talbani 1996, Mazumdar 1987, Nussbaum 2003, Patel 1998, Sen 1999, Unterhalter & Dutt 2001.

to be the polar opposites of ‘womanly’ ones, educated women will constitute contradictions” (Martin, 1994, p.103).

Fulfilling familial and social expectations to carry out their different roles by drawing upon the ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1991) has been a prominent area for research in women’s studies. Many of women’s experiences are connected with their private sphere in this way. Kanaka, Ganga, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinoda described their experiences of putting their family in the forefront of their life; fulfilling their roles as being wives, mothers and/or daughters-in-law. Their experiences illuminate the notion of an educated woman becoming significantly visible and acceptable within the roles of a good wife/mother and a daughter-in-law. The experiences also point out their position of being accepted within the family from carrying out such roles which leads to a position of social respect and a place in society. This has been a prominent location to study women’s lived experiences.

Carol Pateman’s (1988) argument of a contract existing between men and women affirms the above point. Kanaka, Ganga, Deepa and Vinoda, although active agents in various situations of their private and public spheres, affirm Pateman’s concept that the male was the citizen and controller over the female. Nirmala affirms that our contemporary society is ultimately patriarchal where women’s identity is only secondary to men’s.

Ganga, Kanaka, Nirmala, and Rani and Kavitha considered an educated woman with more socialisation and acceptance of the same. This, they accept with a compromised ‘happiness’, a conscious critical awareness and an acceptance with a choice for future action.

I should have more patience. If the woman loses patience there is no peace at home. So balance is important for her. (*Ganga*)

Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very less for us... that is what I am as an educated woman! (*Kanaka*)

Our times were like that. So I believed yes, get a good job, it will get me a good husband. (*Nirmala*)

If I am put in such a situation with limitations because I am his wife, I don't think so I will accept that situation. (*Rani*)

I don't know much about my fiancée too, so I can't imagine this or that specifically. But I am sort of prepared. (*Kavitha*)

Because we girls did not laugh loudly at all. We always displayed very much girl-like behaviour. So there was no room for the male dominance in our family. (*Shubha*)

These texts speak of the image society creates for a woman, societal norms that educated women perceive deeply. It is also an image that they are aware of indicating the context of their individual space and human agency. The acceptance of what they see as traditional socialisation resonates in the experiences of Kanaka and Nirmala, but only with some irony; wanting to celebrate their agency but living their dilemma of acceptance and resistance in everyday life. Although Nirmala is questioning the tradition in her own way, Ganga is willing to accept the system as it is 'easier' for her to live everyday life. In fact she feels 'free' with her husband taking on all the responsibilities. Ganga's experience shows a preference for remaining within and continuing the tradition of a good woman for the good society as a conscious choice. In another way she has chosen it as it is beneficial to her own self.

The women's sense of self, perceiving an educated woman as a family woman first is generated from within the beliefs and expectations about a family woman's 'image' of fulfilling duties and responsibilities. The ethic of caring, included as part of the image of an educated woman, is sensed and followed from the beginning years of their life. This gives rise to inner tensions. Being told that as an educated woman she would perform better as a 'good' wife and a 'good' mother becomes a conflicting experience. This is accepted gradually with the growing sense of self living everyday life experiences.

The young woman who is receiving education for acquisition of formal subject knowledge, enhancement of her abilities, developing her worldview aspiring to be an educated woman also grows with social expectations. This is reiterated uniquely by each woman:

They wanted a girl to be a housewife. If a wife is good, if she is adjustable, peace is maintained, harmony is there. These are important. (Kanaka)

Maybe I can do more good to children, bring up my own children better. (Ganga)

I think of my children and husband first and go according to their needs; hardly an hour or so I keep for myself, for my own things. That is life's reality. (Nirmala)

...attend to the family first. look after the parents well enough, do your duties properly. He is teaching me so many things... with our children's learning we are also learning so much. (Deepa)

She manages both her work and home well. She is duty-bound ... (Vinoda)

Within the above experiences of Kanaka, Ganga, Nirmala, Deepa and Vinoda there are images of a 'social ideal.' Ganga can only think of doing good to her children as an educated woman. Her education has 'empowered' her to bring up her children as good citizens. This seems to be her 'self' as an educated woman. Acquiring formal educational qualifications to become a teacher is 'just' Ganga's self-growth.

Nirmala puts the family first, with a critical awareness that she 'must do' so in her accepted roles – this rests upon bitter feelings and frustration. This is also registering her everyday resistance. Her experiences included tensions and conflicts; they bring out the dilemma between acceptance and rejection. She followed the path of social role fulfillment with a constant feeling of internal conflict. She has continued to live with that choice of acceptance. Her acceptance comes with a high level of awareness of her resistance, but at the same time the realisation that it is her own choice.

Although Vinoda celebrates her achievement of being probably the first female in her community to be highly educated and being a career person she calls upon educated women to be better socialised. She is recommending they take on more private sphere duties and also more problem-solving skills, with a duty-bound conscience. Her position in society is firmly established with higher education and a career; however her personal position as a second-wife, wife of her own sister's husband in relation to role expectations and responsibilities in everyday life is one of constant conflict. This experience of living the traditional ideal has influenced her identity, life's philosophy and confidence level. Her experiences also emphasise the social ideal. She is a duty-bound wife in the public sphere and a constant source of guidance to her children, besides being the main carer of the family in all respects. Acceptance of her situation does not mean she is 'happy' – rather, it reveals her everyday conflict and resistance.

Shubha's experiences with her first love/relationship and intended marriage during the years of her higher education reveal another dimension of a social/traditional ideal. The man who was in love with her for many years, around whom she planned her future tells her that he has to marry another girl 'under some strange circumstances'; the other girl is expecting their baby. Shubha suffers but does not choose to fight back to get him. She says she feared for his reputation and that his name would be spoilt. She chose to follow her personal value of respecting the rights of a pregnant woman to have her unborn child's father as her husband, legitimising the child's existence. Abandoning her plans for their life together seemed a better way of solving the problem for her instead of inviting public attention – 'all three of us would be a laughing stock in the streets. I fear that most – then also and even now, I fear that a lot. I don't want my life to be a public property, dragged into the streets. Not my personal matters. Instead of becoming a laughing stock in the society, death is better. It is a value.' Once again, this was an experience of compromise and acceptance; although she lived through sadness and a conflicting experience for many years, she was personally 'at peace' that she followed the social ethics preferred in her society. In a way, it was beneficial to her own sense of self.

Shubha supports the notion of a woman being the family-builder. She provides this analogy – just like a builder a woman also builds her family brick by brick; without her the family concept does not exist – which highlights the social/traditional ideal.

Deepa has stages of using/not using her formal education in her life. Subjects that she studied in school and college are useful sometimes. However she also feels the ambiguity in retaining what she learnt during the formal education years. But she does not feel the accurate impact of her formal learning in any one area of life or a particular life situation. Her ideal world is a 'happy family' where she has found peace. She fulfilled her father's expectation, got married to a good man only because she was a bachelor's degree holder. Her husband provided her with a specific functional framework, a role, in his family – running the family and looking after his parents which he could not pursue as his work was too demanding. She 'fitted' herself well into the expected role and was thankful to her husband for training her to be both confident

and the traditional ideal. Her personal tensions are related to her informed awareness of gender relations and giving her son concepts of gender equality and good citizenship.

Rani strongly recognises herself as a confident educated woman who chooses a traditional life framework. Following the caste system, following the tradition of setting an example for her younger siblings and following the traditional model of remaining as an obedient daughter are Rani's experiences. She does this with willingness. By being a traditional model she keeps her conscience clear, but with tensions and conflicts. They affect her in her decision related to marriage, personal identity and respect at home.

The experiences of being the social/traditional ideal are therefore experiences of constant struggle, adjustment with self-questioning moments, resistance with acceptance and everyday contestations for the women. These are linked to emotions and feelings. Feelings and emotions are marked by underlying evocations, textual tones and turning points that provide specific insights to understanding a 'social ideal.' These are discussed in the following paragraphs. Discussing the expressive-mantic locations provides another layer of a deeper understanding as well as illuminates how the women used metaphors and images to flag the importance of their temporal and episodic texts.

6.3.1 Expressive-mantic locations of the social ideal

Madeleine Grumet (1988, p.65) describes women as three-legged creatures, their place sometimes is familiar, other times 'a lost world'. Her words illuminate women's journeys that stretch across their lifetimes, viewing them as a past with a present sense, in the present with past feelings, from the present meditating on a future – a synthesis of life's past, present and the future. Their worlds are both present and absent in a unique way, the worlds that they see, make up, sometimes the worlds that swallow them. Worlds of the public and private. Along her journey a woman engages herself in a constant dialogue with her experienced worlds, sometimes heard, at other times unheard.

Viewed from this perspective, Grumet (1992, p.29) observes, "education emerges as a metaphor for a person's dialogue with the world of his or her experience." Kanaka

draws on life's 'milestones', Vinathe uses the 'snake and ladder game' metaphor to express life's meandering ways with turning points; Nirmala evokes the metaphor 'masks' to represent how she deals with events and actors of her personal and public worlds. These masks that women wear, she points out, facilitate their becoming better and ethical carers of their families and good women in society. On the other hand the masks are what women like Nirmala allow the world to see. The world, the public can see her only through those masks, sometimes catching a glimpse (Grumet, 1991, p.69). The masks of an educated woman, a working woman, a mother, a tutor to her children, a good wife and a competitive professional can also be, and/or, become personal insignia of and for these women over the years of their personal dialogues (Bakhtin, 1981).

Rani, Deepa, Kavitha, Ganga and Vinoda treat their personal insignia, their label of a professional, a dutiful daughter, a good mother, and a good woman, with pride, with happiness, with confidence and as an important part of their own identity. They do not overtly use the metaphor of 'masks' in their life; they describe their roles as they see them. However there are glimpses in their texts of an identity beyond the insignia, beyond their masks. The texts reveal experiences of tensions, conflicts, dilemmas that are 'real', operating within and behind their roles. On the other hand Nirmala and Kanaka are aware that others see them through their masks and that their deeper self is alive behind those masks. Kanaka recognises those deeper levels of emotions and feelings. Nirmala not only describes them vividly with evocations but also recognises underlying tones of dilemma in perceiving her self.

During the various stages of my reading of the interview transcripts there were times that evoked my own feelings and emotions. That made me wonder, once again, how the particular text was speaking to me. I wish to provide an illustration to describe how I felt. A few years ago my little niece, then five, begged me to repeat a story which was my narrative about a boy who played with my long hair sitting behind me while we travelled together in a bus. What was interesting to me was her interest in the feelings and emotions associated with my description of that simple event that happened only for a few minutes. The little boy was pulling my hair. Each time he did so I turned to him and made soft faces at him indicating 'don't do it'; sometimes I smiled at him, some

other times I mock-frowned too. I also used gestures. My niece wanted me to repeat these particular texts of that narrative and enact the whole event repeating especially the soft faces, the smile, the indication of don't do it again through the gestures. The vividness, the aliveness as I tried hard to reconstruct the scene, held her attention as she was absolutely immersed in its evocation. The description both in words and enactment created within her the experience of the immediate present – images and sensibilities (van Manen, 1997, p.354) that left her reflecting upon the event with a sense of questioning wonder, which transported her as if she was there, merging her understanding with the centrality of that experience. I could see her asking questions within her mind, repeating my text and creating and reconstructing her texts as a response to my text. Living those few minutes in these texts, as I reflect now, might have enabled her to recognise the meanings of experience.

Now that was precisely what happened to me as the researcher of this project while reading the women's texts. Repeated readings, 'living' the process of making sense of the texts and wondering what those texts were speaking were all parts of my lived experience of understanding another educated woman's experience. Following are some texts of Kanaka that exemplify the evoked wonderings, which in turn bring us close, into presence the meaning within the women's experiences. They provide deeper insights into the social/traditional ideal.

We women construct our worlds within four walls of the house...

Nobody likes her going outside that...

But this is different in a boy's case...

Most of the times she is not her self...

Where was my word?

I kept silent; I learnt that...

...so this system continues.

Kanaka has taken the metaphor of boundaries deeply into her life as a philosophy. The text asserts 'we women all have boundaries.' It continues to comment upon the position of girls in the present time. The text argues that their position even now is not better for her going outside but is socially and culturally controlled; however a boy's case is different which suggests a practice of gender discrimination, and the gendered nature of

education, which Kanaka knows of as she is a teacher. The speaker of the text continues to evoke the raw emotions of the reader especially when it says a woman is not her self most of the time. Even if she wants to, her voice is not heard; she adjusts and compromises in everyday life, making silence a practice. Hence the system continues. I found Kanaka's metaphor both a challenge and a question. To me, it was suggestive of the profound tensions and conflicts that an educated woman was living through. In what ways does Kanaka's metaphor illuminate/relate to other educated women's metaphors? It was a huge canvas!

The questioning wonder around these texts begins with a question about what could be the circumstances and life conditions that evoke the image of 'living within the four walls of the house.' The power of the evocative meaning coming through the text on silence and voice hits us through the metaphor of four walls, boundaries, gender segregation, discrimination and thereby possible alienation of a woman's self. This alienation is relived again in the text when it says 'where was my word?' Here the self is lost within a world that is both known as well as unknown. The known world seems to be the knowledge of systems perpetuating; the unknown world is the unexpected reception of her family members' expectations around her identity.

Experiences of evocations are abundant in the lives of Rani, Vinoda, Kavitha, Shubha, Vinathe and Nirmala. They also have specific underlying tones that highlight the tensions and conflicts. Many tones, especially of Shubha's and Vinathe's experiences, highlighted their personal struggle related to their identity.

Tones reveal much deeper inner meaning about events and actions, texts of life, as they are viewed from the present. Without recognising tones we may not fully 'stay' with the intensities of women's experiences that "stir us at the core of our being" (van Manen, 1997, p.364). This is evident in Rani's observation that 'a woman's failure in life comes only if she is not married' or Shubha's reflection 'I had to fight a lot and come out of the conventional world.' Both women's reflections open up the possibility of "aspect-dawning experience" (van Manen, 1997, p.363); they provide a lens to view the experience in a new, transformative light.

Shubha's words on coming out of the conventional world signify the journey of a woman experiencing tensions and conflicts all along. Before these words Shubha has another text 'I didn't get this atmosphere and exposure that easily.' It has a connotation of associating an educated woman's celebration of her independent identity as well as confronting society. She specifies that many highly educated women do not fight their situation but prefer to stay, to keep up the honour of somebody's family, somebody's name, some ego of some family, a person... In other words, they are living the 'social ideal.'

Shubha's experience illuminates the inner meaning which is both evocative and with a tone that has aspect-dawning experience, that society does not accept her individual, independent identity that easily. Either she has to keep somebody's name or honour, or she has to fight a lot. A mediating space between two extremes does not seem to exist for an educated woman to express her self without leaning on either of the two extremes.

Rani's observation on the position of single women carries profound tones of direct social and cultural influences upon a woman's personal identity. It evokes empathy with the woman in question. It turns a reader's focus towards her life contexts that seem to disable her agency and label her as a failure in life. On a deeper level, reading the same text again and again moves the reader's experience closer towards the woman herself. A woman's failure... is public knowledge, a public construction and a public reality. At a deeper level the text provokes a question – why is it that this woman comes to accept and live with her experience as if she is a failure? Rani emphasises that she is following her family's feelings, wanting to remain within their social/traditional ideal.

This is also the question that Vinoda's experience texts pose. Vinoda accepted her marriage believing what her sister said – 'she said I would be like a son to the family, to look after my parents, without going outside the family.' This acceptance seems an easy way out of conflicts and tensions of the future; Vinoda has adopted the stand that her position is safer and more secure than perhaps inviting the condition of an abused wife.

However this acceptance is what Shubha cautions against, in her text, that a lot of highly educated women accept their obligation to keep up somebody's name, the well-being of a family or even the ego of some family member. On a different level there appears to be another profound meaning in Vinoda's text 'like a son looking after parents, not going out of the family.' She provides a deep insight – a girl after marriage goes out of her parental family; so parents invest less on her future prospects, whereas a son who looks after his parents when they are aged has a right for more parental investment. A son who remains with parents occupies a better respectful and rightful position in the family. Shubha's experience also confirms this: her brother's position in the family is accepted as the dominating and commanding authority over others.

These textual tones illuminate the lived experience of educated women living the social/traditional model of what is seen as the ideal. This social construction controls everyday life matters and conditions, overriding educational achievements and educational contribution. In other words, the lived experience is an experience of being torn-between being the confident ideal and living the social ideal. This torn-between experience locates each woman's tensions and conflicts highlighting the experience of contradiction.

6.4 Negotiating the 'confident' and 'social' ideals: A 'torn-between' experience

In this section I analyse and discuss the tensions and conflicts in more detail around the theme of being 'torn-between.' Firstly, the tensions are related to the expectations of education in each woman's life. These are social expectations, parents' desires around their girl's education, the girl's personal expectations related to the purpose of her education (this is what I wanted; I wanted to become...). Social expectations and parental desire around a girl's education were located in a site of considering a girl's education as a commodity to be negotiated for others' benefit (such as her future husband, in-laws, future married life and family). The girl's personal expectation was around perceiving her education for personal benefit in relation to her independence, individuality, uses such as in a profession and expression of agency.

Secondly, the experience reveals tensions around the women's experience of education. These are related to the 'hoped' for experience (personal desire to achieve something, to become a significant person) and the 'actual' experience of being educated (closing of options, placing boundaries around everyday life situations, feelings of confidence vs hesitation, and power/control vs acceptance and conformity).

Each of the ten women who described their experiences of being an educated woman drew from common and particular self-understanding. Rani's immediate response to my question at the beginning of our interview was that she felt confident, happy and proud as an educated woman. As our interview progressed there were times when she described her social status in terms of sadness and even apology. I have described Vinoda's and Deepa's 'being confident and proud' experience as well as their affirmation of being good women in society. These examples highlight multiple layers of their torn-between experience.

On the other hand Shubha and Vinathe came out of a 'conventional equation of life' (Shubha's words). However, they also affirmed the significance of financial independence of an educated woman, equated with confidence, as one of their experiences. Shubha's concept of living a social ideal is related to her chosen, feminine personal behavioural characteristics and following certain boundaries in her professional world. From her early life she followed her sisters' examples in internalising and adopting a socially acceptable feminine personality wherein they did not laugh loudly or did not argue or did not talk in a loud voice. She believed these were the socially expected behaviour patterns of girls in her society. As a professional theatre artist in later life she continued to maintain certain boundaries – would not enter a male's authoritative world, would not take risks related to her profession as she was a woman and would safeguard her personal honour and privacy at any cost without giving room to let the world know her private sphere. She stressed that this image is much preferred in society. For Vinathe, 'being different' was an in-built personality characteristic, which was not socially approved. She did not follow the stereotype either in maintaining certain girlish personality characteristics or in her selection of professions. She believed living the 'what I am and as I am.'

When juxtaposing the confident ideal with the social ideal, the complex experiences reveal multiple layers of conflict, dilemma and tension in everyday life. My interpretation of their experiences now follows another layer.

6.4.1 Torn between personal purpose and social expectations

A further analysis of the women's texts show how the women believed and internalised what they were told as girls about the purpose and benefits of education. There were certain goals to achieve through formal education and certain ends to meet in later adult life as an outcome of their formal education. They related how their formal educational experiences of schooling and then college/university education, were influenced by their teachers, the curriculum and the growing subjective sense of what being educated meant in terms of social expectations. Their parents followed what all others around them were doing with their children's education, they sent their daughters to school and college. Some other times the girls themselves perceived the benefit of acquiring formal educational qualifications by undergoing schooling and college education for a secure future.

A postmodern view of education as necessary for individual progress, to enhance the status of the individual, is reiterated in the beliefs that the parents, the society and the girls themselves carried. Progress was seen in social, economic, political areas of everyday life with increased general awareness and improved personal development. These emerging beliefs sit uneasily with the traditional systemic view of education for a social good and social cohesion. The interplay between the social expectations around education and what the girls perceived as the personal purpose of their education created multiple levels of tension, conflict and dilemma for the participants. Such core experiences for the participants, as educated women, both reinforce their perception of themselves as 'confident woman' (unlike an uneducated woman) and add poignantly to their role as women within the 'social ideal.'

These two ideals encompass the many aspects which educated women experience, an experience of living an everyday contradiction.

For example Kanaka, Vinoda, Nirmala, Deepa, Kavitha, Shubha and Vinathe narrate that their parent/s wanted education for their daughters. For Kanaka and Deepa their education qualified them to get a better husband. For Nirmala it was linked to a job and then a better husband. Her education was purely a commodity available for negotiation in the process of buying a better wife for a groom, to settle for a husband who had a government job. For Vinoda, Kavitha, Shubha and Vinathe it was financial independence and expressing themselves as individuals. For Shubha it was also her family's demand. Rani, however, perceives it as normal that she was educated formally. While Ganga firmly believed that only formal education, a teacher's training certificate, thereby a teacher's job could improve her material life quality, Mani experienced everyday life's frames and boundaries more relevant to her life than being educated.

For each of these women experiences of receiving education in the socially constructed and perceived context were marked by tensions and conflicts. There was a tension between the social expectation of a girl's education, and *this is what I want in my education*. Kanaka wanted to study science, dreamed of achieving something worthwhile. She experienced a conflict when her mother made her study Arts in college instead of science or music. The Bachelor of Arts degree was *meant* for girls, she was told. Kanaka, being the first girl in the family, was taught to adjust and compromise – 'From my childhood I got this feeling in which I believed strongly that whatever I wished for, I won't get it; my desires would never be fulfilled'. This belief became a practice in her later life as an adult, as an educated woman.

Kanaka felt a clash between the desire to make use of her education in terms of working as a school teacher and forced compromise in keeping up the family peace. She felt she had to live according to the expectations of her husband and mother-in-law. She believed, and carries that belief into the present, in the ideal image of a 'good' wife, 'good' mother and an efficient manager of her household. There she recognises her self as a woman; an educated woman is present only 50% of the time.

For Ganga the goal was only one – educational qualifications and then a job for a secure future. Sensing a negative attitude towards education for girls she experienced a tension

as a growing up girl. Her social and family context motivated her to study hard to achieve the two goals. Ganga made use of her education to resolve the issue. This has given her peace of mind, besides her confidence of having a government job which is a safety net for her future. For her there is definitely a good feeling. She has made a conscious choice to reach a state of contentment as an educated mother and a teacher who is bringing her children up as good citizens. She says she prefers having no desires for herself and living the 'good traditional woman' image as one who builds her family. Preferring a change is a big dilemma for Ganga who wants to keep up the tradition, the norms of the society. The tension showing up in the text is her choice which in turn signifies the contradiction of an educated woman adjusting to a socialisation process that denies agency.

Unlike Ganga, Mani's father opposed education for all his children irrespective of whether they were girl or boy. Mani had to struggle all through the years of schooling; later with her brother's encouragement and help she completed a master's degree. Her personal conflict, besides the experience with her father, was with the nature of schooling, its irrelevance and uninspiring curriculum even at college. 'At school too, they were always conscious of covering the syllabus and finishing the term... nobody showed any extra interest in anybody's education. So I didn't find any motivation in education in any big way'. She studied merely to pass the exams. Even as a university student, while she felt there were good lecturers, an excellent library, an intellectual atmosphere '... I wasn't that much impressed or influenced. I don't know why'. The texts highlight her tension in two ways: Mani wanted something different in life escaping the oppressive family atmosphere. Education at school seemed to be the only opportunity to progress in life, but her experience of that avenue was not motivating or worthwhile. In spite of this, completing higher education itself became an achievement for a girl coming from a rural background who had a pressing need to get away from her father's control, to experience life on her own. A further reading of the texts of her experience reveals that Mani neither felt confident nor had professional skills upon acquiring her higher degree. Her life partner who was already an established professional and an intellectual provided her with a network to become a professional and also taught her project management skills. Along with these external influences, the

awareness of her confidence that she is educated and could use her higher education in many ways became a reality for her later in her life.

Deepa wanted to become a teacher. Her father wanted a bachelor's degree from her education as he felt it would be easier for him to find their future husbands only if his girls had a bachelor's degree. Deepa had a mixture of experiences around her formal education such as writing for the school magazines and later college publications. Although these activities helped her to discover her talents and abilities, overall higher education apparently did not leave a lasting effect on her as a person as – 'we went to the college, studied there, went home, that was life; we did nothing else'. The text highlights a tension about finding space to express her talents outside the curriculum sphere and the uninspiring curriculum environment. The tension continues into her married life as she feels 'it is purely life experience, not my formal education. Even though I had my degree education I used to feel scared and hesitate about speaking to new people'.

Kavitha has a similar feeling about not growing much through education as a person. She was a shy and timid girl even after completing her bachelor's degree. Her father was not only strict about his children's educational performance but also expected them to understand the social expectations: 'he would be very harsh saying if you don't pass an SSLC, you would eventually get only a drunkard for a husband. That made us study hard!'

Deepa's bachelor's degree qualification was only meant to get her eligibility to be considered by a groom's family; Kavitha's education was for a job as well as to find a better husband. Both these texts critically highlight not only the attitude about girls' education (which Ganga and Mani had to confront in their educational years) but also point out what is offered to girls and women as educational experiences. Later the women's identity, level of personal happiness and confidence are valued against those achievements.

An educated woman has to be doing something that is expected of her, such as acquiring a job which was the immediate expectation of Kavitha's father. 'Do

something otherwise you are a waste body' is what Kavitha got from the systems that designed her education. An educated woman without either a job or not being married is lost, experiencing "with nothing to do ... I'm irrelevant" (Chekhov, 1984 quoted in Martin, 1994, p.108). The system does not expect her to think differently, choose alternative goals in life or use her education to develop her own life style. This is what Kavitha also internalised. She did not experience the liberating, the critical consciousness purpose of education. When she did not fulfill the social expectations for a brief period of time she was lost even as an educated woman. Only if she reinforces the stereotype does she become confident, 'charged with a new battery.' Contrary to what she says is her experience in the above text 'a woman when she is given education...she changes a lot', even with the education of a bachelor's degree an educated woman has neither an identity nor confidence.

Here again, it seems that it is not education that is the pivotal influence. It is a certain process that provides guidance and direction without which Kavitha as an educated woman would once again be lost in life. Thus the mere 'being an educated woman' does not translate automatically into becoming a confident ideal.

6.4.2 Torn between rhetoric and reality

While undergoing the above stages of expected achievements and developing personal identity the women have lived certain conflicting experiences. In Vinoda's example, she is managing her life as a second wife to her husband who is her own sister's husband. She quotes many cases of educated women who are in abusive marriages. She is surviving and living from the experience of being taught to endure personal sufferings, celebrating patience which is the most important quality of a woman. Here she is a woman first.

Notably in contemporary India most illiterate and less educated women do find employment and will participate in paid economic activities to support their children. It is not mere finding paid work that will make a woman 'stand on her own.' Socially and culturally she may still be a subordinate (Burra, 2001; Vijayalakshmi & Chandrashekar, 2002).

To an extent it may be necessary to state that an educated woman uses her education as a safety net for her future to provide her with better material conditions without depending upon a male. For a woman living in a traditional culture, reaching this level and achieving economic security could be a celebration of relief from male dependency (Stromquist, 1996). Kavitha says about her future married life '[even] if he is like all other men treating me badly and cruelly, then as it is expected, I have my own life, I can lead my life anywhere successfully with a job, standing on my own legs, earning a living without dependency'. However having a break-up in marital life and living an 'independent' single woman life has its own socio-cultural repercussions. Fearing such negative consequences many educated women tend to wear 'masks' and set their own 'boundaries.'

Kanaka, Deepa and Nirmala also talk about their education preparing them in circumstances of their spouse not providing them material life conditions. However, the experiences of Kanaka and Nirmala poignantly reveal that educated women are only 50% educated women in everyday life, that 'we women construct our worlds within four walls and we wear masks all the time'. In this respect a woman's education is certainly useful for her and for her future in terms of removing oppression by a male family member. However, despite the social myth, it need not necessarily result in the experience of gaining more confidence. After all, a girl's education is promoted in terms of making her a better commodity in the markets of jobs and marriage, pension in a situation of early and unexpected widowhood. The economic viewpoint of a woman getting work 'outside the home' resulting in 'standing on her own' does not guarantee that she escapes an abusive marriage (Kanaka's experience), or that she escapes the family's pressure of having to marry a man without her choice (Vinoda's experience); there is no guarantee that she expresses herself as a 'free human mind' (Sen, 2005; Tagore, c1961) celebrating her individual agency and dignity as in Nirmala's case. Even educated women, employed in a decent, 'nice' job might experience abuse and ill-treatment leading to suicide, as in the case of Sangeeta Sharma whose death was discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Nirmala's texts related to her formal educational experiences are strongly indicative of the tension and the conflict that had implications all through her life. She clearly says that it was not 'her education' or 'education for her own purpose' but it was 'their education.' Her mother who followed the social expectations strictly made it clear – education of a girl was for a job and to find a better future husband, a situation similar to Kanaka, Ganga, Deepa and Kavitha but differing in situations and degrees of expectations. Nirmala was critically conscious of the irrelevance of subject knowledge and processes offered through schooling and college education. As she grew up she realised the frames of her formal education around which she had to live. To get a government job that offered pension and to get a better groom to marry – 'for us middle class people they were important'. Ensuring these two meant a good quality life.

Nirmala's texts affirm the social construction of female education as a way to reproduce the stereotypical 'good woman.' Achieving good educational outcomes was not a problem but feeling their relevance to her self and in her life was a conflicting experience. She was expected to be in a job to get a better husband, to continue to earn an economic end for life's progress, along with carrying on roles and responsibilities of a good wife and a good mother.

On the other hand, Rani described her education as the best part of her life. However, being unmarried even after completing higher education and a secure job has caused moments of conflict in her personal life sphere. Her brothers despise her higher education and the high job profile she is holding. They think many marriage proposals failed because she expresses herself as a strong and a professional woman, which is a hindrance. For them a woman needs to remain traditional in the private sphere; her image as a professional is secondary. These experiences make her sad but 'only sometimes'. The private sphere's experiences in Rani's and Vinoda's life, related to power and respect, reveal a different story. They are linked to their marriage. Rani's brothers give her less respect than she expects them to; even though she is educated, she is still unmarried. This actually leads to her experience of 'I feel sorry that I am educated' which highlights the ironic situation of suffering in spite of her own achievement of empowerment. Vinoda's family did not respect her wish not to marry

her own brother-in-law, a situation wherein she felt powerless. This starkly disempowering experience actually forced her to adopt a spiritual philosophy of stoically reviewing life as it comes to her. 'Receiving' life as it comes to her once again highlights her restricted power and control in directing the events of her life.

Rani feels that her brothers and the larger society grant her the identity of an educated woman to express social and economic values, producing expected economic ends, yet expect her to wear the insignia of wife and mother. The popular social perception is – what is the use of an educated single woman's money, economic independence, property and her agency when she can not invest them for her children's future or for her family's welfare? This was the question that I faced time and again within my own family and outside when I was a single woman. This education for 'fulfilling the expectations' aspect is what Nirmala's texts also stress.

Nirmala has preferred to care for everybody's well-being in her family. She takes decisions independently but 'I have demonstrated that my decisions are for the welfare of everybody.' Nirmala, while being the decision-maker, remains the carer of her family. Her control over decisions taken in this context are accepted by others in the family. However, her experiences include not having power to make decisions in her marriage matters. Her husband opposed her undertaking higher studies, or changing her job or even expressing herself better in intellectual situations. The lack of having decision-taking space and control over the quality of her own life led to deep suffering. The tension of living this experience everyday/everynight brings the remarkable reflection – 'we wear masks all the time'.

6.4.3 Torn between conformity and resistance

Vinoda and Rani repeatedly talk about their experience of having better control over their lives as educated women. Elsewhere the texts of Vinoda and Rani reveal the contradictory nature of understanding power and control by an educated woman. Vinoda who was a teacher by the time she got married, was forced into a marriage against her wish. Her experience illuminates the dominance of the system, the failure of her resistance in spite of contesting the culture. When Rani says she prefers to follow

the caste system, did not want to marry her colleague who belonged to a lower caste, there is a note of acceptance of the cultural dominance there, even though the caste system is now against the law and against the national goals of education achieving equality. Her sense of power and control is lowered because she does not want to hurt her family members by any independent decision she might take to find a life partner on her own. Although Vinoda and Rani both stress they can do anything they want to, they also want to follow and keep up the tradition. Their experience is not one of power and control but of acceptance and conformity with the 'social ideal' including family. Their education has not empowered them enough to question the control of society, oppose the power of the system over their life and change their life conditions in the direction that they want to. The human agency of becoming purposive and independent actors in life does not seem to be effective in the experiences of many of the ten participants.

Indian women's agency is therefore redefined to include agency as part of, not separate from their roles and responsibilities which they acknowledge gives them an experience of satisfaction. Kanaka and Shubha both recognise women as family builders. They are exercising agency as architects and builders of their family. However, the question is to what extent does an educated woman experience and execute her agency, being a purposive actor who is in a dialectic relationship with social structures that are embedded in social relations?

In contrast, Vinoda's narrative evokes strong responses from readers of her texts as her story reveals how her personal agency, evidenced at first by resistance, acceptance and compromise, was shattered by an experience of withdrawal from contestation. The texts suggest Vinoda's growth, conflict with confrontations at some points in life then the journey of non-contestation with a particular chosen life quality.

So I was a bit over-conscious of our life, hardships.

There was contentment, satisfaction... I was proud, happy.

I became determined to do something more in my life and alter my life style, get education, get a job, become somebody noticeable...

Yes, I did oppose. I opposed, said I didn't want this marriage.

You know, the saying is why worry about spilt milk?

I am not demanding, don't expect him to fulfill any of my desires...

Her agency suffered while fulfilling her family's wishes and acceptance of her marriage. Compromise and living the traditional stereotype won over her agency of pursuing the objectives of her reason. Her words 'why worry about spilt milk' mirror the acceptance factor that a woman is taught from childhood, which she internalises as she grows up. This is the assertion of life experience over the purpose of formal education. Her acceptance of not expecting anything from her husband is actually withdrawal from being an agent. Agency hides behind her assumed life philosophy which actually is encouraged and respected by her culture. 'A woman's quality is to sacrifice; that is her femininity' is what the culture and the folklore tales project. A highly efficient and able girl who managed the harsh realities of her early life celebrating her agency is lost as an adult woman in later life. As an educated and enabled woman Vinoda does not question the injustice meted out to her in her marriage.

The everyday images of men and women in India and in many countries around the world are the social images that are constructed with references to culture and tradition. Within these images exist the identities of men and women in relation to confidence, position, power and control. The long standing tradition of social learning engulfs Indian women's lives irrespective of their educational levels (Ghosh, 1986b; Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987; Narayan, 1997; Singh, 2002a; Sudarshan, 2000; Talbani, 2001). Thus educated mothers may practise female infanticide, continue the tradition of son preference and become voiceless against the wishes of family members. Kanaka's voicelessness in her mother-in-laws's house, Vinoda's compromise in her marriage, Rani's stand on not hurting her family, Kavitha's belief of practising patience in her future marriage, Ganga's acceptance of her husband's efficiency over her assumed domestic image, Mani's preference to go by the normalised frames of life and Nirmala's masks with conscious awareness are examples of women colluding in oppressive situations (Cranney, 2001) rather than critically questioning it with deliberative agency (Sen, 2005).

Much contrary to Lister's definition of human agency (Lister, 1997, pp.36-37), the above experiences illustrate women 'becoming agents of society's agencies' (Fraser & Naples, 2004). In the context of education empowering people, women must not only be

educated, independent agents but also critically examine choices and preferences without apprehensions that might not follow the traditional or the 'social ideal.' Celebrating personal human agency takes a person beyond the boundaries, the masks behind the social ideal. To interpret the world and change it is profoundly important (Fraser & Naples, 2004).

6.4.4 Torn between insider/outsider experience: Choosing to be different

What is prominently noticeable from the women's experiences, excepting Vinathe and Shubha, is their choice of remaining within the frames of acceptance and resistance, contestation and compromise. This choice is related to contradictory experiences which I have coined as the 'torn-between' experience. All the women have lived through this torn-between experience in all phases of their life. Although Vinathe's experiences indicate this in detail, her experiences stand out as different from the other participants in how she used education to develop her own way of living and changing – living as learning.

Her insider-outsider perspective takes the experience of Indian women beyond the geographic context of India to the global experiences of other women who have sojourned or migrated to other countries. Many Indian women have returned to India, and it would be interesting to explore their agency, in another research project.

The difference between Vinathe's and the experiences of Kanaka, Ganga, Rani, Vinoda, Nirmala, Deepa, Kavitha is their individual understanding of the element of choice in life. Vinathe practises living as learning, using her education to live in ways that she feels most suitable to her thinking and transformative action. The other women are living their belief of using education for life and learning gradually the practice of those beliefs and the resulting experiences within their social environment. This is the conflictual dimension of their experience as educated women.

In the world of formal educational goals, achievements and professional identities some educated women feel victorious on the surface. Underneath the surface-level victory

they may be asking themselves ‘why did I get so much education’; or in other words ‘what is the purpose of being an educated woman in this traditional society?’

Yet they choose to follow the stereotype of the social ideal. What they believe to be self-empowerment from their education does not invalidate their personal choice of obliging the social, the political and the public. Their personal self here enters into a conflict that is public and political on the surface level. On a deeper level the conflict is their own personal contradiction. Rani’s personal alienation as an educated, unmarried woman is telling as an effect of the public expectation that is acknowledged and assumed upon her self. Under the surface of this alienation is the experience of allowing the imposition of the public to instruct the personal.

Two women’s experiences read differently from the other participants, who did not try to fulfil the family/social expectations but who chose a different life’s journey: Shubha and Vinathe. Their experience reveals their efforts to resolve tensions of being an educated woman (social vs personal expectations). It shows what the resolution meant for them.

However, tension and conflict mark their experiences during their educational years and later their lonely journeys as professional women. Shubha’s experiences with choosing the subjects of her interest and later having a career as a theatre artist clashed with the interests of her family members, especially her elder brother who was in the position of being the only son and also the eldest child and therefore imposed restrictions on her choices related to studies and her passion for theatre. Opposing them meant she was alone in her journey, facing society and its attitude towards her choices with firmness and courage. This is revealed in her decision of choosing her life partner. Vinathe’s texts related to her educational experiences also indicate conflicting moments – choosing her subjects, opposing her father’s stand on education for girls and later choosing her own life’s journey without her family’s support in terms of trying different professions and choosing her life partner.

Shubha did not have much support from the men in her family with regards to realising her dream of becoming a theatre artist. However, she formed a supportive and mutually

nurturing relationship with a male colleague in her theatre apprenticeship who later became her husband. But, before this she had to compromise and give up her first relationship, without much contestation. With her marriage to her colleague who protected her interests, she related differently to her parental family – maintaining a diplomatic relationship.

Without having any support from a family male, Vinathe had to leave her family after her bachelor's degree, the traditional life style and struggle to make use of her education and find an alternative life quality. In the course of those changes she underwent a series of personal conflicts and experiences of being torn apart. The struggles and conflicts lived through were like a game of snakes and ladders (Vinathe's expression), a struggle that strengthened the two women's agency in choosing alternatives. This is much in contrast to the experience of Vinoda who accepted submission, thereby, restricting her reflective space to initiate action in the direction that she really wanted. This experience reveals the contradiction in understanding her self. The contradiction is of living the dilemma, not choosing action and not creating a space for change from the power of being educated. Vinathe, on the other hand, is continuing to live with her own tensions related to her quality of life.

6.4.5 Torn between learning and unlearning

Nirmala (and Kanaka) lived her adult's imagination in her education as her parents planned her educational path. She is critically aware of this as a negative experience, which she is carrying with her in the present. The texts suggest that her growth is happening through **unlearning** the influences of formal education and learning from the world, from life. Her text celebrates her agency in being critically aware of these processes from within which she forms, reforms and reshapes her self. However the sub-text throws a much deeper understanding of her own non-growth – she did what she was told to do while she is aware she conformed, she is continuing to live not only with that awareness, but also recognition she is wearing a mask. Even with her critical awareness of the myths of formal education she chooses to live the traditional good woman image, negotiating her space available within everyday life. She does not go beyond that awareness for action/change.

Kanaka has internalised the experience, lives within the boundaries that are socially constructed. Ganga credits her career and Deepa credits her husband, for enhancing their sense of being educated women. They continue to develop through those two influences. Rani's text strongly puts forth the message that she believes she has reached a finer life quality and does not want to change. Ganga, Rani, Kavitha and Vinoda to some extent in their texts believe that one can get education only if one goes to school. They are "indoctrinated into the educational ideology of their culture" (Martin, 1994, p.19) as the receivers of traditional liberal education. However, these women are living the contradiction in their own individual ways.

Kavitha believes she can make adjustments whether or not she has an abusive marriage once she gets married, else leave her husband as she can 'stand on her own legs.' That is how she expresses her belief of the power of being an educated woman.

Vinoda allows her self to be overtaken by the society's power over her body and mind. Her notion of being a good citizen, a good family woman bringing up her child/children as good citizens frame her understanding of her agency within the educational ideology of her culture, her society and her state. On the other hand she epitomises the notion of society reproducing non-questioning, non-critical, more accepting citizens who continue a stereotypical social ideal.

6.5 Imagining the future ideal: A site of contradiction

Can women like Kanaka and Nirmala decide to live outside the boundaries, without masks? Can Ganga and Deepa step outside the stereotypes? What will happen if Kavitha's stand on equality in her marital life does not get due recognition? Will Mani's choice of being an 'ordinary' woman first continue with satisfaction? Will she continue to postpone her plans of doing a Ph.D. and having her own time to read more and grow as a person and deny to herself her regrets, conflicts and dilemmas?

While re-living their experiences of being an educated woman the ten women reflected on many different matters. Life is a river that embraces many streams and continues to run. As life is a work-in-progress, the growth of self within its continuities and

discontinuities continues with all life's tensions, conflicts and contradictions. The continuity element of life includes looking to the future from the present 'contradiction' location. Ganga wants to continue as a good, educated woman/mother, imagining her self-growth in doing a B.Ed. degree and teaching secondary maths and science. Kanaka is allowing more relaxed opportunities in her children's life, having little changes in her own life. She considers change happening through having peaceful moments with the satisfaction that she has done her duty as a good family woman for the well-being of her husband and children. She has a resigned feeling about her life in general. She says her daughters will have a better future than hers with better opportunities of choice. Even then she observes that society will not change for some time, which could mean that the contradictions of educated women might continue.

Nirmala is determined that she will allow her children space to experience the meaning of what they are learning formally. She is also determined that she will create opportunities for her own self-growth. However she believes that 99 per cent women live wearing masks. 'Just when they come to the realisation that they are not true to themselves, they slip into sleep. Then get up once again in the morning, put on that balancing mask again and continue your life... that is life for women here.' This illuminates the **continuity of contradiction** – reshaping her sense of self, re-experiencing her learning and giving better opportunities for her children to be what they are – these experiences are suspended in a conflicting space where the impact of education and the reality of everyday life spiral in a double helix. She also hopes that one day all this may change (Kanaka, Deepa and Shubha also emphasise this). Until that day society will continue to be as it is today and being an educated woman will continue with its conflicts and contradictions.

Shubha underlines that women will have to experience conflict and pass it on to their next generation, being aware of the possibility of change. However, change will not happen overnight. She feels through many future generations, girls will begin to take action for change. As of now educated women will continue to live without much action although they are thinking of change. However, Mani senses her self-growth differently. Mani is aware that women live within boundaries. Her way of defining an educated

woman's location in life, 'ordinary, normal' raises many questions about educated women's space. A woman first, her location in everyday, normal life within the webs of interlocution (Benhabib, 1999) is recognised and embraced comfortably. Practising the image of educated woman as a purposive, autonomous agent in everyday life can be damaging as she wants to live a 'normal life.' The the all-consuming question is what is a normal life of an Indian woman?

Chanana's (2001, p.20) observation on society's preference for following tradition in respect of its treatment of women partially provides a clue. Normal life itself is a web of several webs, social, political, cultural, traditional and economic. They are the constructed worlds of human beings, men and women. Mani's preference for remaining as an ordinary woman limiting choice and change in life leads to a contradiction in everyday life. Her choice is to lead a normal life, carrying on as an 'ordinary' woman.

The women, except for Vinathe, seem to have chosen to live in their world of contradictions. Does being an educated woman in traditional society involve risks for personal well-being? Do such risks threaten these women? What do women need in everyday life to confront this risk and insecurity, which actually could lead towards a change in the society?

6.6 Conclusion

Longwe (2001) is quite observant of an educated woman's contradiction of living in postcolonial society with an attitude of education bringing progress which results in conflicts. She is torn between the supposed educated ideal and the social ideal.

The ten women's experiences of being an educated woman constitute tensions and conflicts linked to confidence, power, status, control and position. While re-living their experiences they drew on metaphors of boundaries, masks, and turning points related to their formal education, jobs, career, family and everyday life experience. Commonalities and differences of their experiences were each unique revealing multi-layers of tensions, conflicts, dilemmas and contradictions. They experienced being the confident ideal yet living the social ideal.

Martin's observations that "to be an educated female human being is to be and not to be a woman – a contradiction if there ever were one" (1994, p.102) and that an "educated women will constitute contradictions" (1994, p.103) encourage a researcher to analyse such experiences from a different dimension. While interpreting the ten women's experiences I have been prompted to situate my question 'what is the experience of being an educated woman' in a different location. I have used 'space' as an analytical construct to further discuss 'being an educated woman.' 'What is my space as being an educated woman' is the question that echoes in this space, the third space that moves further from the private and public spheres. The notion of finding her space addresses the deep complexities embedded in her experiences. This is the phenomenological theme presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Being an educated woman and ‘Actionable Space’

They say in our culture that women have to be respected. Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth, Saraswati for knowledge, Durga for courage... so worship them. Comparing, they say woman is the light of her family. All that is just bookish talk. See, the same woman has to be a slave in the family, to her husband. Only if she wears a mask it is peaceful at home, otherwise not. Simple example, about women's freedom: if she wants to go a shop and enquire about something with the shop keeper, her husband doesn't let her go; or he wants to go; he wants to show her that he is superior, that male domination. However much he is educated, he tries to snub her. If she tries to overtake him by being independent, she will be punished somehow. The whole day is spoilt, peace of mind is gone. He just doesn't want her to argue with him. However much the woman is educated, she cannot or doesn't enjoy any freedom, respect... Our women are using their education only in their career situation that's all. Otherwise, in personal life, they are slaves, voiceless. She can only talk to her self.

-Nirmala. May 12, 2003

7.1 Introduction

The main concern of this thesis has been to describe and interpret the experience of 'being an educated woman' in contemporary Indian society. In the process, I have discussed many strands related to gender inequalities, debate on gender relations, girls' and women's education scenario in India, contemporary philosophy and sociology of education, and the importance of studying women's lived experiences.

Within that context I provided two examples describing the present status and position of girls and women in contemporary Indian society, where women are constantly told of the value of education from socio-economic perspectives. In Chapter 3 I showed a gap in the theoretical models of human capabilities and human freedoms effectively enhancing women's quality of life. I strengthened my point by discussing two women's suicides. While reviewing literature I pointed out that most studies evaluate girls' and women's educational status quantitatively; where they have been interviewed, researchers have again tended to quantify their educational awareness/experiences.

However, some researchers have stressed the need for probing deeper into women's lived experience of education. While discussing research studies from other countries I commented how their arguments and approaches were relevant to this thesis. While I have drawn from them, I have not restricted myself to any particular sociological or feminist or political systemic theoretical framework.

Thus I located this research with a phenomenological framework. Through the application of an interpretive framework I explored and interpreted ten women's lived experience of 'being an educated woman.' I showed how the perception of being a confident ideal experience is in contradiction to the actual, lived experience. This includes constant negotiation of living a social ideal resulting in conflict and contradiction. I further noted that the conflicting experience of being an educated woman is that of being pulled in two directions, which results in what I have termed as a 'torn-between' experience.

In this chapter I intend to outline the phenomenological theme by employing a further conceptual construct. While concluding the previous chapter I said the recurring question in the ten women's experience was 'what is my space as being an educated woman.' I explore this further, leading to a new construct that I have called 'Actionable Space'. Using this new theoretical idea I further interpret conflicts and dilemmas, the lived experience of being an educated woman.

7.2 Locating the experience: Background

In the literature review presented in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, I discussed how conceptualisations of women and education, women's education, education to girls and women, and women, education and empowerment topics are discussed as issues in the light of the long history of women's education, gender inequalities, sexual differences and/or human development perspectives. Such studies focus mainly on sociological aspects, political theories, cultural factors, feminist arguments and educational theories. The arguments mainly rest on issues related to social injustice, otherness, equality and participation. Research on women's lived experience of being educated is hardly visible in academic research institutions in India. Where research has such a focus it usually

lacks an insider perspective, whereas this research will provide both an insider and outsider perspective on ‘being an educated woman’ experience.

I argued for the necessity of this research to focus on the underlying need to change the socio-cultural construction of the exploration of lived experience of being an educated woman in Indian society. The phenomenological research question ‘what is your experience of being an educated woman’ leads us to a new and different understanding. The aim was to find out the experience directly from the research participants for an exploration and phenomenological interpretation.

Most observations and arguments address girls’ and women’s education from outside, underlining the contradictions involved between their educational opportunities and their eventual participation level. The issues of equity and participation in education, in such observations, are addressed with an aim of introducing reforms to be implemented. However, in Chapters 2 and 3 I have maintained that the very complex issue of women’s education goes beyond the concepts of equity and participation. The argument¹ related to providing and enhancing basic education for girls and women is in place now, at least theoretically. However, the necessity of an education that is inclusive of, and teaching girls and women to develop a firm, positive attitude towards personal choices and agency for a change still needs focus and deliberation.

I have maintained throughout this thesis that listening to the experiences of educated women on their experience of being educated becomes increasingly important. This is a step beyond even the functional framework of human capabilities that Martha Nussbaum developed (Nussbaum, 1999; 2000b) or Amartya Sen’s five human freedoms (Sen, 1999). In Chapter 3 I argued that Sen’s (1999) particular insistence on improving girls’ and women’s education lacks an understanding of the actual experience of being an educated woman in Indian society. I believe these are frameworks offering

¹ Sen (1999, 2005) has been campaigning for this and influencing the governances within India and across the world. However, the question of basic education to girls and only through educated women can the country progress goes beyond, questioning the development of personal agency within and among women.

ideological solutions to the various issues of girls' and women's education that appear at a functional, utilitarian level. They are concerned with the opportunities of providing education to girls and women which, in specified conditions and background, is valuable. However, this research emphasises the need to look beyond, to understand what happens after girls and women are formally educated.

Hence the research question 'what is the experience of being an educated woman' is set in an Indian societal context, but has its global spread to critically place experiences of educated women, on being educated. This calls for an open mind, a phenomenological framework to interpret them. This is what I have done until now.

Continuing my interpretation of the experience of being an educated woman, I now turn to the phenomenological conceptual features which van Manen (1990) has suggested for an interpretation of human experience. He asserts that four such features, Lived Other, Lived Time, Lived Body and Lived Space, are necessary for an effective interpretation. In the light of the research that has been analysed in the previous two chapters, the following section considers whether van Manen's conceptual features can be applied to describe the experience of being an educated woman.

7.3 Phenomenological interpretation: van Manen's concepts

Lived Time

Elizabeth Grosz (2000, pp.1017-1018), in a context of commenting on the histories of a feminist future, notes the following about time:

Time is marked not only by calendars and clocks, by uniform measurement and abstract calculation (of the kind represented by millennial celebrations!) but also by movements, through an incalculable force of passage that resists counting and numeration. The past, present, and future are composed not only of dates but also, in a more complex and incalculable way, of events. How we understand the relations between past and present has direct implications for whatever conceptions of the future, the new, creation, and production we may develop.

Time represents the past, present and the future of human life, as we human beings understand it (Husserl, 1964). So is Lived Time, with reference to the continuous flow

of our everyday lived world. In this phenomenological language Lived Time provides a descriptive ground for women's being educated experiences. However, it is restrictive to provide a ground for both describing and interpreting such lived experience as the Time aspect joins events and actions, the length and breadth, not the depth dimension. Though it has a continuous flow in the philosophical sense, in actual terms it is divisive and has boundaries. In this study the participants re-live their past of being educated and recall the events and their experiences related. These experiences of the past are linked to their living and will be woven with their future also. Though in this sense, Time seems a considerable descriptive ground, it is but one dimension of a fuller and richer interpretive ground to actually go back to the things themselves, i.e., to look at what lies beneath the surface experiences of being an educated woman. It denotes a link into the future which, from a phenomenological descriptive standpoint, will be inaccurate and incalculable (Grosz, 2000). Though Time may unfold and lead to the emergence of the new and its elaboration (Grosz, 2000), 'being an educated woman' experience, the central subject of this thesis, may not entail experiences located in the imaginary future.

Lived Body

The subjectivities of our lives and us are pronounced through our body and our bodily expression. Thus we are physically here, bodily, in this world. We experience our world through our bodies (Butler, 2006; Grosz, 2005). This has a ground of its own for the description of women's experiences, quite often used in postmodernism. It also effectively locates women's experiences of being educated women in terms of addressing issues of private and public spheres, power and control based on male and female relations (Pateman, 1988). This is often the subject of many studies exploring women and education, and women's education areas. However, the aim of this study is to expand the scope and depth of such studies by exploring and interpreting the innermost feelings and experiences that are generally unheard and unspoken. If this study locates its in-depth phenomenological thematic interpretation within the structure of Lived Body, once again it will not do sufficient justice to the depth of the participants' lived experience of being an educated woman.

Lived Other

In the works that refer to and inquire in depth the philosophy of phenomenology, such as Merleau-Ponty (cited in Butler, 2006), the Other has a connotation with alterity within self-hood and with nature (Butler, 2006; de Beauvoir, 1988; Johnson & Smith, 1990; Zimmerman, 1992). This connotation of keeping the Other outside us makes it external and separates a part of us, internal to us, that is out and beyond. If one has to draw upon the 'natural' notion to locate and discuss women's experiences of being educated, one will have to separate women from their experiences, human from the nature, without an interconnectedness.

According to van Manen (1990), the Lived Other is human centric, the connotation of which connects us with our Other. However, the very nature of the Other demands that a division is created in our study of human experiences. The description by the participants of their experiences of 'being an educated woman', in Chapter 5, together with my layer of interpretation, brought out the Otherness aspect, which is a profound argument in feminist research studies, debating the asymmetrical sexual relations (de Beauvoir, 1988; Martin, 1985; Pateman, 1988; 1989; Puwar, 2002; Stromquist, 2000; 2005). In this thesis the central focus is on 'being an educated woman'; embracing the notion of the Other negates the inclusion of both the experience and the person experiencing an experience as within and with each other. Hence, the Lived Other does not provide a sufficient ground to describe the experiences of the ten women participants. It falls short of the depth and breadth required to interpret their being, their living the model. The interpretation extracts 'choice' in the participant's life of being, and provides a partial understanding of the whole lived experience.

Lived Space

The fourth feature of van Manen's phenomenological description (van Manen, 1997) emphasises Lived Space as felt space, internal and external, which includes and transcends the physical and actual, which is not fully encapsulated in verbal words of human language. Women's lived world encompasses their physical location such as their home, their backyard, their vehicle, their office etc. Their space, internally, may go

beyond this, extending to untold, hidden, suppressed locations in their innermost space. This felt space brings different layers of experience depending on feelings associated with them. Living the ideal experience on a continuum from 'confident' to 'social' seems to represent two different dimensions relating to internal and external space; they are intertwined with each other in the whole lived experience. Thus Space, within and outside, escapes boundaries and frames of experiences, allowing an interpretation of experiences to enter a depth that would otherwise remain unexplored and unattended.

Lived Space as a phenomenological descriptive concept provides me with a construct to elaborate on the participants' experiences and to reach a new understanding. That new understanding allows me to theorise about the relationships between Space and agency. Space is the most powerful experience in women's everyday lived world, having both actual and metaphorical existence (Foster, 1996; 1998). This actual and metaphorical space provides opportunities to express agency in everyday lived experience.

For women, in the context of this thesis, even after receiving education in a seemingly equitable environment, the experience of being an educated woman may entail different experiences in their internal and external space. The participants of this study felt confident as educated women but their lived experience revealed that the ability to act with confidence is restricted within both internal and external space. They said as educated women they could do what they wanted to do but their experiences showed that they were constantly compromising and adjusting. The space of living as a traditional educated woman in Indian society entails choice, but with a profound contradiction.

This space includes constant negotiations that educated women initiate in their private and public domains, with an interplay of confidence, contradictions, conflicts and dilemmas. They are, as 'being' educated women, confident of taking action, having such an awareness about action. They know of an action for a change towards their well-being. They desire a change. However, they may choose not to initiate an action towards change in their accepted traditional life. The contradiction of not taking an action to initiate a change for their well-being widens and deepens conflicts and

dilemmas. Thus the vast space that exists in their life becomes an interplay of the contradiction between awareness of action and choice of not acting. They are able to take action, they think, know and view change and action, but they choose to be stable, rooted. Thus this space becomes what I have termed Actionable Space.

7.4 Phenomenology of Lived Space as ‘Actionable Space’

There is a light seed grain inside.

You fill it with yourself, or it dies.

– Jelaluddin Rumi, 13th century Sufi philosopher

7.4.1 Actionable Space: Interpretive meaning and definition

‘Actionable’ is made up of and is inclusive of two separate words ‘action’ and ‘able’. I have joined them together to formulate a term, calling it ‘Actionable’. I interpret the term ‘Actionable’ in several ways to provide complementary meanings. Firstly, the prefix ‘Action’ comes from the word act, which means to produce an effect, to be doing something. ‘Action’ itself means acting towards something, a deed. The second-half of the prefix ‘able’ means having intelligence, power, capacity and competency to do the deed.

The term ‘Actionable’ draws on the meaning of ability to act towards an effect, also a change in an existing condition. Integrating the two separate words action and able and the various meanings associated with them together the term puts forth a meaning of a person’s ability to do. The term ‘Actionable Space’ is in some ways akin to the psychological construct of efficacy (able to do) and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that people have the “capabilities to organise and execute the courses of certain required ... to produce given [academic] attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p.3). However, in this context, the women have already demonstrated self-efficacy in their academic achievement levels, yet are in conflict and tension with regard to the available spaces within and external to themselves where they can act.

Drawing upon this integrated meaning, the term ‘Actionable Space’ provides a ground for the description of a space in which educated women are in a condition, a position, where they have the ability to do something. They are capable of producing a desirable effect to alter their condition. They have power to act towards a change in their private and public domains of life. It is a space available to women for their concerted action to renegotiate the boundaries of their lived world.

7.4.2 Actionable Space as the construct

Most importantly ‘Actionable Space’ is a ground that brings to the fore conflicts, dilemmas and the contradictions experienced by educated women in their everyday life of private and public domains. Their ‘being an educated woman’ experience is the key with which they can effect a powerful renegotiation for a change as they desire. Thus, it is a conceptual space that has its value in an ideal [counterfactual] condition as well as an actual concrete space relating to an everyday expression of educated women’s agency.

Actionable Space reflects the contradictory nature of the ideal of an educated woman, as explicated by Jane Roland Martin (1991). It also reflects its value in the everyday agency of educated women, and resonates with Longwe’s (2001) delineation of women’s learning and unlearning experiences. In this thesis I have shown how the ten educated women illuminated their constant negotiation of their lived world, their ‘torn-between’ experience. Each participant’s lived experience of need, desire and dilemma, mirroring the deeply felt but unshared contradiction and conflict leads to a search for that personal and political Space that can locate them clearly. The external experiences are located in the public systems of political, economic, social, cultural, religious environments. At the same time, they are negotiating the power relations and control by means of their inner strength, the space situated in the internal locations of their awareness of their self and identity.

Thus, the ‘ideal’ of being an educated woman who constantly learns to feel confident and who constantly unlearns to be independent can be located in the space between action and inaction, a space wherein educated women, being capable of taking action,

can take action but will/may decide not to. They may choose not to initiate action to bring in a change that could result in unhappiness and discomfort for the family.

This choice, their decision to be traditional Indian women and become an educated woman 'suited the situation' may originate from two sources of experiences related to their position in everyday life: they find comfort in carrying on and agreeing within themselves to the well-recognised, role-performing image of a woman; secondly, they may carry on with their traditional role performance by living the contradiction in everyday life. They may be wanting a change but not acting towards it in the imagined/real uncomfortable and uneasy feeling of facing a negative consequence. Both situations, which reflect the participants' experiences, illuminate conflict and dilemma. They accept their position; they recognise externally the socio-cultural structure in which their traditional self is located. Internally they continue to grapple with conflict, dilemma and contradiction. This lived experience occurs everyday/everynight in the light of their knowing that they are capable of resisting the role towards a change. Thus, the Space, characterised by the ability to take action, already exists and is available to them, but remains unutilised or partially utilised for her own well-being. Their choice of not utilising or under-utilising the 'Actionable Space' originates from their position and personal stands associated with their different relationship with the traditional 'social ideal' and their 'being educated' confident ideal.

7.4.3 The directional flow of Actionable Space

From the lived experience of participants, it becomes evident that past and the present socio-cultural order has a particular impact on people. Women, while undergoing formal education as girls, then enter an arena that is unfamiliar to the young woman who feels the importance of and the desire for being educated. As she starts to discover the contradictions and conflicts, she experiences being pulled in two directions, and comes to experience 'I am an Indian woman first, then an educated woman'. She is living a dual identity. She finds that female education apparently is not for her sake but for others, for family. Tradition dictates that a woman's place is within her family environment; her role is that of a family-builder and nurturer. Education 'brings

progress', but where does an educated woman find that Actionable Space to make herself come to terms with her dual experience?

In her book *Interrogating women's education: Bounded visions, expanding horizons*, Karuna Chanana (2001) brings out a range of studies done over two decades on girls' and women's education in India. In a study related to girls' higher education, she observes that girls coming from an urban background express their interest and concern to be educated for the sake of their own knowledge and agency. However, the college girls interviewed for these research studies pointed out that their elders and society's view towards their education was from the traditional standpoint of finding a better groom, making the girls more valuable for marriage in terms of status and family prestige. On similar lines are the experiences of the ten women; they desired an active public life, not wanting to be restricted as 'housewives'. Even when they became housewives, they remained active, managing all matters related to their family. They indicated better success and independence in their life compared to uneducated women.

Women's desire to be educated and of becoming educated, in my understanding, arises from within themselves, from within their inner space. Their experiences of education are alive in this internal space. This desire does not fall only as a description of motivation for external reward or as a philosophical interpretation of a human desire. Though material condition theory provides a context for women to be viewed as objects on the basis of sexual differences and patriarchal relations, it does not completely provide an interpretation of women choosing and supporting their 'family building' role or their choice of following their tradition as women.

The participants of this study said they went to school as every other child in their world did, and later found their own interest at school and in studies. None of the participants said they experienced discrimination at school, on the basis of their sex; but they did experience that within their own home environment. As they progressed in their formal education and as they experienced the engaging learning environment, they desired for a change, for a growth, for a development within themselves, separating themselves from parental or societal expectations as they became educated woman. This desire creates a

rich space to interpret ‘who we are.’ This awareness, self-knowledge, produces a desire to move to what some of the participants described as their ‘better worldview’. From this perspective, the phenomenological interpretation of desire leads to a clearer understanding of how the women create Actionable Space.

All the ten participants of this study said after their formal education and while applying their education to various life circumstances they tended to realise the outcome of their education better. Reliving the stages of their education, they recalled that they desired ‘to know’. To know the world is experiencing the world, interpreting the world, relating to the world. Education is indeed an act of knowing. They desired learning. They valued their education on its own merit as an experience, not from the threat posed by socio-cultural stereotypes or images about their education, that girls lack the capacity or motivation of a male learner. These beliefs date back to the Vedic ages in Indian Hindu religion. Gargi who attains supreme knowledge, much to the discomfort of her male contenders, is challenged and tested by a male. When she wins over this learned man, he ridicules her and curses her and proclaims that knowledge is not a domain of women; if she continued with her desire for knowledge, she would be severely punished by the learned men in the society.

The personal world of a girl being educated views education as a site of desire (Foster, 1998) as it entails a different experience, which is still unknown to the girl. As they desire learning and knowledge, thereby power, young women are reminded of their place. They are reminded of the purpose for their education, the purpose existing for others, not for the women. This reminder, coming from the family and the society, shifts the women to a position of dilemma. While undergoing education this site may offer either a positive or a negative experience which results in her viewing her education as a site of desire and threat (Foster, 1998).

This is further intensified with their unlearning and relearning experiences. Their immediate family either parental or marital, and the society did not permit them to cross the boundaries of a stereotype. So they unlearned to practise their identity as educated women. Then, with age and maturity, all of them started to feel the importance of

utilising their education either for their children or to expand their world-view. So they are re-learning as educated women. However, this re-learning gains importance only after their primary roles in the private sphere.

As adults and having to deal with their everyday worlds differently, in their real lived worlds, educated women learn to apply their education in different ways, with a specific awareness of their position and self. They begin to become educated women for themselves and as always in most Indian women's cases, for others too. This is indicative of two directional flows of being educated women: one is that they grow more confident of themselves in their expression of agency in everyday life circumstances; another is that they emerge as more stable women in their relationships with other people. This stage, representing these two directional flows, may be termed as the most crucial stage of an educated woman's dilemma.

7.4.4 Enabling possibilities of Actionable Space

Some participants showed there was comfort in choosing a traditional image against an uncomfortable life decision with personally threatening consequences. Every thought of doing what they want to do involves the apprehension of familial, social, cultural, religious and to some extent economic sanctions, prohibitions and consequences that could be disruptive of a safe and secure position. The traditional cultural and social 'ideal' seems to prohibit independent thoughts and actions in a girl's and a woman's life. As adults, educated women continue to live this internalised apprehension and fear of a negative consequence, which they think will destabilise them. If destabilised from/within their everyday socio-cultural situation, they may not find a direction of their own to lead an independent life, they may expose themselves to unwanted negative repercussions. This apprehension prohibits action, resulting in an enormous inhibition that is expressed in various ways.

Actionable Space illuminates a spectrum of experiences involving fear and hope; prohibition and inhibition; desire and negation, and acceptance and resistance. The Space reflects dilemma, contradiction; potentially it celebrates the

capable/intelligent/competent identity of educated women as confident independent women.

Actionable Space resonates the dilemmatic feeling of an educated woman as it provides a space for her self to be. It also supplies locations for her fuller agency. This is her own space, without a feeling of inhibition, exclusion or otherness. This is the space available to her to find her voice to register the subaltern's speech (Spivak, 1996). This process of viewing a space of action, feeling enabled to take action and finally initiating action is the most emancipating and empowering experience for an educated woman entering into, though unfamiliar, inner moments of her own self, emerging confident from her dilemmatic position.

7.5 Theme of Actionable Space

Actionable Space exists in educated women's lives as a space with their awareness to analyse their position and take action for a change. Whereas Actionable Space is a theoretical construct in this thesis, it is also a practical, analytic construct in educated women's lives. Actionable Space is the phenomenological theme of this research. This theme has emerged from the multi-layered interpretation of the ten women's experiences, and is reinforced by metaphorical, symbolic structures, which are internal. The theme 'this is our place' is located within Actionable Space, as an interpretive theme in which women reflect and understand their self.

This is our place

An educated woman experiences two major aspects of her education – feeling the need of and for her education, and desiring to live being educated. This entails a profound contradiction in her actual lived experience.

The need to be educated, in an Indian girl's life, arises from two sources: one is external, in particular parental decisions influenced by socio-economic factors, and another is from within herself as she is surrounded by the 'educational' environment of the state. It is also from the girl herself who is responding to her lived world (actual,

personal, social). However in living this need to be educated she experiences the first level of contradiction and conflict. The actual world demands her to respond to the systems, including the educational arena in a specified way.

The ‘place’, the educational arena that she enters is a performatory ground (Butler, 2006). There is a girl who is told that she needs education for a job, a better husband and a secure future. As she learns she becomes more aware, more skilled with an expanded world view. As the phenomenon of formal education unfolds, she becomes an adult woman. She has to follow a set of prescribed rules and frames of society. These prescriptions don’t value her world view and her self-growth. She encounters a clash between the needs of the public and the needs of the private, both of which position her within a particular social space, ‘this is your place’, defining her boundaries.

‘You need education to fit well into your place’ is what the girl experiences as a young woman in her family and later in her in-law’s. The place, a specific and a defined position, is proscribed to her by religion, culture and tradition. This space defines and dictates her everyday lived experience and meaning making processes. The girl, later a woman, learns ‘her place’ and accommodates herself within its boundaries. These boundaries that specify a woman’s role, defining her place, everyday activities more or less framing the meaning of her life is internalised well. This is expressed by becoming a good daughter, a good wife and a mother. Being an educated woman becomes secondary.

Nirmala’s words, quoted in the beginning of this chapter, carry a note of sarcasm. This sarcasm points at two different yet complementary levels of women’s place: the rules of society imposed on women and rules that they resist and accept. Acceptance is more comfortable, more easy, less complicated, less threatening in their everyday life. This ‘our place’ gets them more respect and more acceptance in society including their own families and brings no threat to their safety and secure position. This time and again leads to an experience of tensions and conflicts. They are seen and appreciated by society as ‘real’ women who care about their duties and responsibilities as traditional women, celebrating womanhood. This ‘real’ woman does not represent a ‘happy’ image

or experience. Both, resolving personal tensions and conflicts and/or not resolving them, are constant sites of dilemma and struggle. They declare that they are traditional Indian women first, then educated women. Women's qualities of love, care, nurturing are also projected in terms of eternal patience, sacrifice and femininity. The 'housekeepers of the emotions' (Benhabib, 1987) are proud that 'men cannot do' the family building which is the most important realm of a female. These very women, keeping up the internalised value of a woman's place, may feel overwhelmed and uneasy if men contribute willingly (Sharma, 2001). These realities inhibit the confidence and independence of being an educated woman. Their 'Actionable Space' reflects these prohibitions, inhibitions while still remaining open for action.

The two-way struggle of experiencing one's identity as an educated woman becomes an intermingling of woman as an agent and woman as a subaltern. An attempt to address the subaltern needs to take into account the dangers of valorising "the concrete experience of the oppressed" (Spivak, 1988). Gayatri Spivak (1996, p.293) states:

... It's more than just strategic exclusion; ... When one begins to look at the way in which woman's position is manipulated, even within that space, there is nothing mysterious about it, as there would be about an ever-receding horizon which is always beyond our reach, and so on. It seems to me that finding subaltern is not so hard, but actually entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways: learning to learn without this quick-fix frenzy of doing good with an implicit assumption of cultural supremacy which is legitimized by unexamined romanticization, that's the hard part (p.293).

In reality terms 'Actionable Space' promotes a critical space. Educated women's desire of feeling confident and independent but not living the same in everyday life needs to be viewed as a reality of their lived experience. In this regard the notion of 'Actionable Space' creates hope and the beginnings of a new direction in the experience of being an educated woman.

7.6 Conclusion

The participants of this study, during various stages of their interviews, pointed out that growing confident in their relationships and also in operational terms are partly from their being educated and partly from life experience. The educated woman is placed in a

more firmly cemented relational environment, irrespective of her educated status. The confidence, feeling of independence, power, status, worldview, and intellectual abilities do not actually correlate with the confidence gained from life experience and maturity. Contrary to their being educated women and experiencing becoming educated, these women reinforce the same values of traditional values and give them to their children, along with the values of formal education such as knowledge, expanded worldview, better understanding of self and intellectual growth.

The dilemma of becoming an educated woman as with life maturity is reflected clearly in what the participants say about themselves – I am an Indian traditional woman first, only then an educated woman. This statement is reflective of the dilemma in a much stronger sense – they wish for better values to reach their children through formal education, while they themselves retain the traditional image even as educated women. This dilemma perpetuates a deep division between the intended and much hoped for educational experience, and the everyday traditional environment where being educated is experienced as a massive contradiction, which will continue through the experience of their children too.

I do not wish to cause a ripple here against educated women living the social/traditional ‘ideal’ in everyday life. I do not downplay or dismiss Indian culture nor am I presenting a negative picture of the culture. I respect the heterogeneity of world cultures and draw from the diversities of human experiences in relation to their respective cultures. However, I wish to emphasise that the dilemma of being and becoming an educated woman, arising from the participants’ experiences, is set in an environment of opposites. The socio-cultural structures stay with the educated women when they state they are Indian traditional women first, thereby creating the same environment for their children. Their daughters’ lived experience, one that is similar to their mother’s will also support and continue the social/traditional ideal. This is not to negatively imply that women themselves are responsible for their life conditions in all respects. The women’s dilemma of viewing their being educated self as secondary points sharply to their choice of not creating an actionable environment, initiating action for change in their position

and experience. This will result in the continued socio-cultural hegemony, which they choose, over the intended purpose of education – education for ‘real’ empowerment.

As I said in Chapters 1 and 2 the language I have chosen to interpret the experience texts is to highlight women’s insights and women’s voices. I believe the lens of ‘change and action’ illuminates ‘being an educated’ woman’s lived experiences more brightly.

This is the language that is currently absent in girls’ and women’s life in Indian society. My lived experience has shown that traditional family pattern, state and civil society discourage the alternative language of change and action in girls’ and women’s life. I have realised this more intensely after I left India in 2001 to pursue higher research on women’s lives in Australia. My lived experience in the last few years, while pursuing this research, has enabled me to reflect more deeply on Actionable Space, recognising its strengths and limitations. It has also enabled me to see more clearly the vast range of life’s meanings available to educated women in different geographical backgrounds.

It is time that we educators introduced ‘Actionable Space’ in formal and non-formal learning environments. My research has shown that women can create a confident space from their ‘torn-between’ experience. In addition, reflecting from my own career as a lecturer and as a trainer in my NGO work background, I now have the understanding that ‘Actionable Space’ should be used consistently in teachers’ training workshops, in parent and community education. This means everyday in all situations of life we critically think with ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. We need to constantly and consciously think of ways of adopting ‘Actionable Space’ in everyday life situations, at home, at school, and in public and private. This will really ‘empower’ girls and women to confidently take action for a positive change in their life circumstances.

Postscript

The value of this research lies in its perspective of asking, listening to and documenting Indian educated women's experiences of 'being an educated woman' for an interpretation. This process has revealed, what was previously hidden from the academic research, each individual woman's insights into education, educational experiences and how individual women perceive their experiences of being educated in the private and public spheres of life. This research contributes to building the knowledge gap by illuminating the personal practical for public knowledge. Through the development of phenomenological interviews and multiple layers of interpretation this research has suggested an alternative way to approach and explore women's experiences.

I began my research journey with a number of questions that were seated deep within me all my life. I had been interrogating myself and my lived world on the purpose of education in women's lives. Some of my questions found answers during this research journey – such as identifying and interpreting tensions and conflicts beneath the 'educated and confident' persona. The nine women's experiences and narration of my own lived experience provided a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of torn-between experience of being a confident ideal and living the social ideal.

While there are some positive aspects that the women perceived about themselves being educated women, their experience exposed levels of contradiction. Eight women's experience illuminated the phenomenological theme of Actionable Space in uniquely individual ways and collectively, women's controlled place in Indian society. Reflecting on this theme furthers my questions on the experience of being an educated woman within Indian society and outside, and the complexity of exploring and interpreting that experience from various geographical and cultural contexts.

The complexity is significant in the light of my own experience in an Australian university. Women's place is defined and prescribed for them in the public sphere. It is said time and again that men, teasing their women colleagues in workplaces, claim that

paid jobs are male domains whereas women's earnings are 'petty cash'; or secondary. Man is the livelihood earner. Women's original place is the kitchen. When I was concluding my M.Ed. thesis in October 2001 at University of Wollongong in Australia, I came across a hand-written scribble in quite a serious book, in the main library. The book, *The Quality of Life* is edited by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) and has a stimulating account related to systems, norms and women's lives (Annas, 1993). Just below the words, Part III, "Women's lives and gender justice" in the book there is a comment scribbled using a pencil: BACK TO THE KITCHEN. I found this very interesting, especially in a wonderful book such as this one. The popular saying, in Indian culture, which was repeated by Kavitha during the research interview, commands women to the kitchen as 'however liberated a woman is, washing dishes and the kitchen drudgery in the husband's family is inescapable.' Does finding BACK TO THE KITCHEN scribbling in a university library in a western, developed country underline the significance of furthering this research in other geographical and cultural contexts? Does it also provide impetus and enhance the complexity of exploring and interpreting 'the experience' of individual women? What is proscribed to women of different cultures and what they claim about culture defining their boundaries? This necessitates another research project.

Journeying through the experiences of nine women participants has given rise to many questions related to my own personal life. I had never before found space for these questions – what are my opportunities of perceiving my self and Actionable Space when I relocate myself with my family in Bangalore sometime in 2007? As the mother of a growing up child and another one on the way, will I in future increasingly focus on my children's well-being only? As a caring wife will I gradually become a 'family-first' woman over my current personality of being an educated woman? Will I talk more about my family than intellectually engaging myself in discussions on agency, identity and empowerment? How will I sustain my marital relationship with a white, western man in the atmosphere of the women's secondary status that is socio-culturally prescribed? Only time will answer these questions. Maybe I will continue to narrate my lived experience as part of my further research.

Linked with the above questions is the question of how were the nine women doing in their life as educated women? In 2004-05 I tried to find out more about their life. I narrate only two participants' life changes here as I felt they were remarkable and significant to further this research. Rani's parents arranged her younger sister's marriage without Rani's consent. This shocked her. Although she continued as a competent professional, she felt dejected in personal life, turned to spirituality and philosophy. She said society's perception towards her had changed, which she did not like. She regretted her earlier decision of standing by her family's decisions and interests. Now she said she could not trust her family any more. On the other hand, Kavitha was married and had a year-old daughter. After marriage she had to join her husband in a different town. She was shocked to find out the realities about her husband's joblessness, financial debts and insecure lifestyle. She was dependent on him for all her wants and needs. Later she had a daughter. All these experiences were quite unexpected and they made her unhappy, she said. She also said her perception of being an educated woman was completely reversed now; her educated position and identity did not matter anymore – she was a dependent housewife. She said it felt strange when I asked about her self-perception of being an educated woman.

The above experiences, which are not recorded in this thesis for an analysis, once again challenge the popular belief 'education brings progress' in women's life. At the same time they locate issues of agency and empowerment in a different site. I believe educational thinkers and researchers, policy makers and parents need to consider these experiences, questions and challenges seriously. Listening to women's experiences of being educated itself may signify an internal change within them (such as Deepa); inspire them to provide space in their own lives to listen and learn about their children's everyday experiences (such as Nirmala). Questioning, learning and reflecting on their own experiences and critically reflecting on their children's, especially girls, is essential, as the life conditions and contexts of Indian society are changing rapidly.

When I started my master's degree research and as I continued with this project I was paddling my little boat in a big ocean. There were huge waves constantly challenging my little boat – any moment it could be turned upside down. But I kept paddling – I

kept looking at those waves, often admiring their strength and their spread. Sometimes I and my boat surfed those waves, sometimes were buried underneath them and some other times moved forward with their gentle push. These gentle pushes gradually made me glance at the horizon - birds flying, smell of the earth, feel of the trees and fresh white water. After reaching the shore I ran to the trees, drank the fresh stream water and tasted the green grass blades. I returned to lie down on the sand; I raised my face to the sun with eyes closed. I felt at peace.

Suddenly I felt the gentle wave at my feet. Or was it a gentle nudge? I opened my eyes, looked at the big ocean. Constant movement of those huge waves. Move, they said. Where's your boat, they asked. Get on, move, continue the journey – you need to listen to many more women, you need to tell their stories to the world, you need to continue to interpret the world and change it, they cautioned. I looked at my boat. I started filling my water bag. For another journey.

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Glossary

Stree dharma – moral and ethical code of conduct prescribed for a Hindu woman

Panchayat – village committee or local, decentralised governance

Puranas – Stories from Hindu religion

Vidya – skill/s or knowledge in a particular area

Shikshan – learning process whereby skills or knowledge is acquired

Sakala vidyaa parangatha – one who has mastered all 64 skills

Panchayat Raj – local, decentralised governance

Vathara – a community dwelling place where many tenants live in small units

Shloka – a stanza in a Vedic hymn that is quoted often in everyday life for its message

Sati- the act of a wife sacrificing her life on the funeral pyre of her dead husband

Appendix A

Martha Nussbaum's ten human capabilities

Appendix B

Consent and Release Forms

Appendix C

An example of thematic development

An example of thematic development

Perceived intentions/benefits of education	Present feelings of being educated
<p>Kanaka: But they always said one has to get education and a job and earn one's own living. So they believed in giving education to their daughters. And said it was important for girls. ... Only to improve the financial conditions, girl's education is being made use of. Only for that reason.</p> <p>Rani: In our school days I was the topper; so teachers always said I would achieve great things going to the college, to the university. Education was common to all, to go to school and college; we all got the same opportunities.</p> <p>Ganga: When we were young, elders used to say education gets us prosperity. So we had this goal that only through our education we could go forward in life.</p> <p>Vinoda: After finishing my SSLC, I became determined to do something more in my life and alter my life style, get education, get a job, become somebody noticeable...</p> <p>Mani: ... nobody really focused much on higher education. The whole environment at home... lacking any awareness about higher education. ... no motivation. ...sometimes a vague thought did occur to my mind then that I could become a teacher if I continued my studies. See this thought appeared because of this girl Savithri ...</p> <p>Nirmala: Wanted a certificate, wanted a job, had to get married ... I came from lower middle class; this education got the job. And these two would get me a good husband – this is the attitude...</p> <p>Deepa: ... like everybody says... education is first... A university degree was valuable. ... father felt if we didn't have a degree then it would become more difficult to get a groom.</p> <p>Kavitha: My father wanted me to study. ... If we didn't</p>	<p>Kanaka: She can make complete use of her education only at the time of bringing up her children. Something for a job, a lot for our family, children, very less for us... that is what I am as an educated woman! ... if not for my education how else I could have got this balance, stamina and confidence.</p> <p>Rani: I am confident as an educated woman. ... an identity today it is through my education. ...a lot of self-confidence. I am financially secure.If (<i>not</i>) I would have been forced to accept my subordinate status... socially, financially controlled... I don't get my own recognition... education ... my personal development too... view the world, think about life...</p> <p>Ganga: I studied well, got qualifications, I got a better job and am independent. Job gives me money.I got this teacher's job, satisfying, gives peace of mind. ...helped me economically. ...respect from the society. Some status... bring them up as good citizens. Not only my children, other children too. ... education we can raise questions why, how, what ...whatever is the situation I say.</p> <p>Vinoda: I can face any kind of life situation, live life confidently. ... teaching job, certain status in the society. People give me respect. Position, my role... I am educated gets some attention because of my behaviour, smooth polished language, easy approach... complete control over my life... take all decisions... to keep moving forward in life. ...know more about it, and apply ...Education given knowledge, awareness, exposure. Understanding people better ... about this society...</p> <p>Mani: ... my MA that qualification itself gave me strength and some power. At least for my mind, for some people, in the society, within the family circles, among my siblings, or social functions... there is some recognition by people ... I feel it very much in my life. I...confidence of getting a job, could survive on my own.</p>

<p>learn properly he would be very harsh saying if you don't pass an SSLC, you would eventually get only a drunkard for a husband. That made us study hard!</p> <p>Shubha: ... my family members always said education first. Even my eldest sister cautioned me that I should study hard, focus more on education... It was my brother ... thought I would achieve great things in life, following his guidance. He wanted me to study science.</p> <p>Vinathe: My mother wanted us to have at least a basic bachelor's degree, preferably government jobs, economic independence.</p> <p>I wanted to be free, independent, living by myself, education and... getting a job was the only answer to that.</p>	<p>...I am very much different from others too.</p> <p>Nirmala: ...position in the family, that confident position. Our education... only 50% use... some financial independence to spend your own money. ... respect because you are earning. ...better than an illiterate woman as you are literate. For a job, a husband of good background, then settle down in life with children, house, luxuries...</p> <p>Deepa: I feel happy If I want to go anywhere, I have got that confidence. at home they give me respect. ... this better position, my status. Such a good family. To stand up to my husband. I feel proud. That satisfaction.</p> <p>And thinking capacity ...helping me in guiding my son.</p> <p>Kavitha: ... confidence, I have got this degree and experience. That I am capable of getting a job and earning for my life, surviving anywhere. ... this job ...have grown tremendously as a person... it has given me strength. I feel proud. Taking my own decisions. And this identity ... both are linked here – my education with my job and my identity.... patience, behaviour, manners, talking and behaving in the public... people recognise that and give respect...</p> <p>Shubha: ...that discipline, that commitment came from my schooling days. That shaped my values also. ... exposed me to people and their psychologies, understanding them...</p> <p>Confidence ... I can do anything ...Education is my base to progress my thoughts, thinking, to analyse the choice also. ...economic independence.</p> <p>Vinathe: I knew I could survive anywhere, on my own, earning a basic living. I had a bachelor's degree by then. ...developing me as a person, courage ... providing alternatives. I was confident...find a better job, earn a better living ... my own decisions, being with the flow of my life...</p>
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Appendix D

An example of thematic development

Tensions and conflicts related to learning and unlearning

Events of learning

Kanaka: But my mother said girls should study only the arts subjects. So let Kanaka do a B.A. degree.

in my high school I had this teacher who taught English language grammar so very well that made me like it so much; today when I take English classes in the school, I remember her.

My mother-in-law said 'resign the job before you come home today.' I wept a lot when I resigned my job. So I didn't want that to happen... nothing should go wrong with my daughter's life. So I learnt to keep quiet. At least the problems that I was having could be solved by my silence, they could be solved then and there by that way. Life at least moves on that way.

When they say Mummy, it can't be done that way, no, I can't... then I think yes, they could be right. I don't say no, you are wrong...

We women construct our worlds within four walls of the house; anything outside this is the outside world or society.

Most of the times she is not her self. So this continues. This is the family woman of our society. This is my experience...

Rani: yes, I can live alone independently... I have the courage, confidence and I am financially secure...

Mani: The only drawback in my education was that I never got a sound, strong guidance to progress in life in this particular direction... no, I didn't get that at any point of my formal education life, that's a pity.

Nirmala: But never went deeply into the subjects, didn't really know what education truly was, the relevance in our life. So I didn't get any education there, my schooling didn't help in getting the true education. It left a deep scar. Even now that feeling is there. An injustice is done to my life, from parents' side, from teachers' side...

Events of unlearning

Kanaka: Whatever you study in the curriculum may influence your mind and set you thinking. This, we may apply in our work; that too if we have opportunities of doing so. But in practical life they may not have much influence.

Vinoda: Because my parents and sister insisted that I got married to him. So I obliged. I had to. Yes, it hurt me a lot when people said she married her own sister's husband...

I take the decisions for my own well being.

I don't show my back to life.

Education gives us women opportunities to participate in life events more. We have to make use of the opportunities.

Personally speaking, I don't know what is the direct influence of politics on my life.

Educated woman is an able woman.

An illiterate person still knows what life is, but for the finer elements of life, we need education.

The saying is that if one woman is educated, the whole family is educated. If one man is educated, it is only him that is educated. Yes, it teaches her adjustment, more cooperation. Adjusting better with the members of her family, like in laws, husband... More adaptation to the family. What I say is that adaptation and adjustment is very important.

Mani: There in the Convent, everything was English-language oriented. I was a bit shocked. I had never suffered from this inferiority complex before, you know about my abilities. I was always bold, frank. But here, in this Convent in Bangalore city, it was totally intimidating for me.

Nirmala: They never gave us any orientation or proper introduction to our learning. They didn't explain why we were learning, how it would be useful in our future life... nothing. They only came to

Deepa: If I had not got this degree education or had got less like PRE-UNIVERSITY COURSE or SSLC, then I would not have this kind of ability to take on all the responsibilities that my husband is giving me.

Actions of learning

Kanaka: In my primary school this particular teacher who taught me in my I, II and III classes; she has a great influence on me. If I am a teacher today probably it is because of her influence as a teacher.

Rani: I was firm, I said no. Because I was confident of myself. I was not one of those illiterates who would submit to the pressure, bend her neck and get married in a slavish manner. I am not that type.

Ganga: These main subjects are useful to me as I am a teacher; I can give extra information to the children in school and my own at home.

Vinoda: I keep myself light-hearted, with a nice joking light mood, humour, I keep laughing. Definitely due to my education and also additionally because I read and absorb a lot from the experienced wise people, so called visionaries, poets...

Mani: See, this education, it is like a base, I think. Keeping that base with you, if you say, you think, you view or analyse your life, there is an influence there, you get more insights there. It is like a facilitating key. So, I would say education has helped me much, I cannot deny that at all.

Nirmala: And through my children now I am becoming educated. Whether it is English language or something to know from the readings, I follow it; I read the books, magazines. I tell myself there is so much that I have to learn, to know... had I done much earlier in my life I would have become a notable person. But I didn't. But I had the zeal, intelligence, capacity to become one. And the confidence. That I could accomplish something... but the world around me was...the society, it was

teach the syllabus portion, that's all.

Actions of unlearning

Vinoda: Again, later, as I was much depressed, they both thought I should have a baby to get over with my depression...

Mani: See, even then I didn't gain much academically. There were lecturers, excellent library, intellectual atmosphere everything was there. But I didn't get good guidance and motivation from these factors. ... When I required to work in the villages, in the actual field, I didn't need these subjects or my degrees. I needed experience, good experience to work in the field.

Nirmala: Education and over the years it is my experience that has helped me more. It is not formal education. Here I call my life experience as my real education ... Life education, how you understand the world, how you handle your life... that will give you more information, confidence, everything... That I call education. Not schooling or formal education.

It is just not possible to be yourself all the time. Family becomes the priority. ... you have to wear a mask all the time for the family sake.

Deepa: More than my own education, I learnt a lot looking at others here, learning from somebody, learning about thing around me, all that happened only here.

I think we learn more as we go in life. It is purely life experience, at least in my case, not my formal education.

different... so it didn't happen.

Deepa: But then with our children's learning we are also learning so much. I try to tutor him at home... This is possible because I am at least a degree holder; I am learning with my son; and I want to learn more to tutor him at home. I want to give him good values. So my education is helping me in guiding my son.