Languages, Families and the Plural Learning of the Nineteenth-Century Intelligentsia

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One often hears it said, within India and outside, by foreigners, and by Indian intellectuals themselves about other Indian intellectuals, that the Indian intellectual is uprooted, that he has lost contact with his country and its culture, that he belongs neither to India nor to the West—and all this because he is an Indian taken by Western ways and ideas. In consequence of this, he is alleged to be neurotic, schizophrenic, ambivalent, suspended between two worlds and rooted in neither (Shils 1961: 60-61).

Let us imagine—or remember—three educational practices. The first is teaching. A (previous) knowledge is transmitted by oral or written discourse, swathed in the flux of statements (books, manuals, lectures). The second is apprenticeship. The ‘master’ (no connotation of authority: instead, the reference is Oriental) works for himself in the apprentice’s presence; he does not speak, or at least he sustains no discourse; his remarks are purely deictic: ‘Here; he says, ‘I do this in order to avoid that’ A proficiency is transmitted in silence, a spectacle is put on (that of praxis, to which the apprentice, taking the stage, is gradually introduced. The third is mothering. When the child learns to walk, the mother neither speaks nor demonstrates, she does not teach walking, she does not represent it (she does not walk before the child): she supports, encourages, calls (steps back and calls): she incites and surrounds: the child demands the mother and the mother desires the child’s walking…(Barthes 1989: 336-37).

My essay discusses this problem of the ‘suspension between two worlds’ through the solution of ‘three educational practices’. I suggest here the importance of an empirical sociological enquiry regarding the locus of ideas, the patterns of learning, and the source and effect of intellectual development. In the larger work, I would like to further ground in historical and biographical data what Shils calls the ‘composite’ culture of Indian intellectuals, a combination of their ‘local culture’ and the ‘world’ that ‘transcends’ it that they would like to participate in. While doing so, I hope that my work can also evoke some to the complexity and excitement of the multiple processes of learning, and the drama inherent in any learning whatsoever.
The relevance of Barthes’ quotation on educational practices lies in that he reminds us of the breadth of the phenomenon we otherwise unreflecting call ‘education’. We might question and modify him on each of his three points. We might suggest that formal teaching is not always previous knowledge, but that in the best of rare cases, it can be knowledge formed partly in the process of transmission itself. As for the second and third processes, they need not be separated if we take the business of living itself to be a ‘craft’: how adults fit into their worlds. Then we glimpse the apprenticeship for life to be given also by the same mother who teaches the more ‘natural’ processes—that is, the implication of the last process should be more heavily laden with ‘culture’ than suggested by Barthes. One could well use walking as a metaphor. There are many ways to walk, as we know well from the experience of colonial India where a certain body language was interpreted positively by local people, and negatively by their rulers. The mother teaches the language, body and otherwise, that she knows and considers appropriate. Barthes’ three-fold division may more accurately be converted into a two-fold one.

As for Shils’s dual vision of ‘India’ versus the ‘West’, of a local tradition versus a universal one, I would suggest that there are not so much two phenomenal objects to be contrasted, but two levels of historical enquiry that should not be held discrete but merged in the interest of greater perspicacity. One is a meta enquiry which inevitably uses terms such as ‘Tradition’, ‘Modernity’, and ‘Conflict’. As part of this enquiry we inevitably confront the omnipresent question of History itself: how does the will and the desire to have a History arise among a class? How is Modernity created? How does, or does not, a class accomplish a necessary work, marked by the pain—as in India—accompanying this vast labour of bearing forth the historically imminent while confronted by a non-cooperative political economy and a powerful religious tradition?

But, as this last question can tell us, the weight of this meta-enquiry is on the side of ‘Modernity’: how the discourse of science, of nationalism, and the unilinear temporality of History, succeeded. Not treated as discourses or construction are the other epistemological formations subsumed under ‘Tradition’ which, either as material practices or spiritual beliefs, come to be seen as the dead weight of conservatism.

Indeed, although Shils himself is speaking about the middle of the twentieth century, it is the ‘new’ intelligentsia that was produced by the new system of colonial education in the nineteenth century that are excellent exemplars of his kind of ‘dilemma’. This level of enquiry produces a model of the Indian intelligentsia that is even, ironically, an emic one, reflected by the intelligentsia in its self-presentation: as the leader of reform movements, the builder of a nation, and the unifier of a civilization. From Rammohan Roy onwards, all members of the intelligentsia
have been concerned about this seeming conflict between their tradition and their modernizing role, between their continuity with the past and their integrity as reformers. Ram Mohan’s ‘crisis of identity’, as well as Jawaharlal Nehru’s ‘despondency’ one century later, is an expression of this level of self-conceptualization.

At another level, we could look at the intelligentsia ethnographically. It exists and reproduces socially like other groups, rich in occupational and lifestyle characteristics, captured in its very nomenclatures: babu, pandit, lala, munshi, vellalar, sardar, maulana, mian and so on. These local and variant characteristics preclude flattening, being as ethnographically and discursively riche they are, and pose a problem only when categorized as ‘tradition’ from the perspective of those, like Shils, who take Western-style modernity of granted. They are perfectly well comprehended otherwise by anthropology, which we know can handle non-modern epistemologies and cultures with more acumen that it can ‘modern’ ones, if it can do the latter at all. My interest lies thus in rendering both the self-presentation of the intelligentsia as modernizer (and our theorization of them as such) and the so-called ‘local culture’ more transparent through a gendered, ethnographic exploration of their learning. And to move towards suggesting that this is not a case of conflict between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ so much as a case of plural learning.

The distinction of the two levels, as I have made it, may seem to echo Gramsci’s distinction between two kinds of intellectuals, the ‘organic’ and the ‘essential’ or ‘independent’.

In line with what I have suggested above, the former, of Gramsci, are those rooted in their strata, class or profession, and the latter are those who have the specific function of intellectuals. However, my own distinction, and then the bringing together of the two levels is meant to emphasize that other notion of Gramsci’s which is expressed as: ‘*homo faber* cannot be separated from *home sapiens*’ (Gramsci 1971: 9). I hope to show that those who performed the function of intellectuals were also at the same time organically rooted in their communities and families.

They were formed intellectually by formal learning as well as by processes of acculturation and apprenticeship. Unfortunately, the latter processes are rendered invisible to us when we classify them as ‘tradition’, and also when we separate, like Gramsci, intellectuals’ function from their class and community base. I should add that I am emphatically not claiming that my difference with Gramsci lies in that I am presenting a colonial case, where, it has been imputed, the home represents the private, the pure and the preserved domain, of which women were the high priestesses.

The home, as I see it, was progressively marginalized by the state and its schools for the nineteenth-century Indian intelligentsia. Yet, it continued to perform an important sociological function, which we may be interested in, not to reiterate the discourse of its sacredness nor to
otherwise define it as in opposition to larger structures but to complicate our understanding of the learning and knowledge of the Indian intelligentsia.

Because my interest is in the processes and sites of learning, and in how intellectuals or social leaders are formed in these and in turn form them, I also scrutinize our assumptions about who or what ‘creates,’ ‘declares,’ ‘refuses,’ ‘divides,’ and ‘launches’ domains and projects, and suggest that it is not nationalism, but institutions, languages and everyday workers who do so (Chatterjee 1993: 10-13). In other words, we will pose again Ranajit Guha’s promising question, ‘Where Does Historical Criticism Come From?’ answered by him with a ‘From outside the universe of dominance…. from another and historically antagonistic universe… (Guha 1997: 11)

He expands this very tentatively with Marxist explanations of an ideology antagonistic to the bourgeoisie before the bourgeoisie has even become dominant. And we are left asking, but where does historical criticism come from? I suggest that we any never find the answer to that question unless we look specifically at the sites and contexts for the construction and transmission of ideas.

In the two succeeding sections we will look at the formation of the intellectual, and touch on the familiar areas of education and social criticism in the less familiar light of languages and the family. Throughout there is a commentary on how, while being formed themselves, the intelligentsia in turn created their master narratives, a commentary that ends in the second section with some hypotheses about social reform.

**Language and Schools**

Our discussion of languages should begin with a brief mention that the importance of language learning in this context lies in the closeness of the comparison between language and culture learning. As research on ‘maintenance-loss’ models of the capacity for cross-language speech perception have shown, infants exhibit capacities that adults no longer possess, specifically to distinguish between categories in ‘foreign’ languages (Werker 1989: 54-59).

If this early capacity to detect a sound contrast in foreign tongues is kept alive through even a small amount of initial second language learning during the first two years of life, it is maintained into adulthood. Typically however, it disappears by the end of the first year of life, with the onset of exclusive single language learning… (Shweder 1991: 6)

In bolder more philosophic terms, ‘language is the abode of Being’ and gives from to the world. (Arendt 1978: 174). When new words are learnt, new cultural worlds are discovered and
created. New grammars put new structures of power in place. But old words, as long as not
forgotten, keep old worlds alive. Old grammars keep older structures of power alive. Indeed,
poetry, philosophy and science (if we may use the term) come together on the subject of
language. Words are “prismatic, vehicles of hidden, deeper shades of thought. You can hold them
up at different angles until the light bursts through in an unexpected color. The word carries the
living thing concealed across millennia” (Morrow 1997: 4).

In the nineteenth century, most, if not all, members of the Indian intelligentsia were
educated initially in their own language at an indigenous school or at home. The languages learnt
by them were their mother tongues: Bengali, Urdu, Hindustani, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu
and Malayalam, to mention only some. Apart from language(s), some proceeded to a more
advanced level of literature, grammar or philosophy in Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian. In the
beginning, the reasons for keeping up with vernacular and classical learning were career oriented,
as before. The East India company needed judge-pundits, teachers, and translators. Among the
public there was a demand for Sanskrit and vernacular teachers. Indian languages were learnt
among literate communities also because English teaching was not available everywhere, English
was not immediately seen as more useful, and the East India Company did not make teaching into
a policy. Ishwar Chandra, born in 1820 in the village of Birsingha, 52 miles west of Calcutta, did
dnot study English because there was no English school in his village and his prospects lay with
the learning and teaching of Sanskrit like his peers. His career took a different turn only because
his father, Thakurdas, decided to take him to Calcutta to joint the Sanskrit College there. Its
system of teaching was an improved one, the father had heard, and there were good prospects for
its graduates, such as the post of judge-pundit.

The progress of English merits a narrative in itself, one that respects the markets and
constituencies in the different parts of India. Rammohan Roy was perhaps the first Indian,
followed in 1831 by the ‘citizens of Bombay’, who petitioned to the government that no Indian
beg employed in government offices without English. From then on, there was on looking back,
as the model of colonial schooling came to be seen as ‘natural’ and inevitable at different paces in
the different parts of India. Within a generation, the importance of English for new and old
occupations had grown to such an extent that the sons of mahamukhopadhyayas were all being
given an English education. Later nationalist demands could be made for several kinds of
amelioration—such as for more scientific and technical education, or for a more ‘Indian’
content—but the model itself came to be accepted and no alternatives seriously imagined. ‘
English was the language and also the discourse of a new kind of schooling.
However, as a study of the progress of English shows, were three clearly demarcated parties to the endeavor: the government, Christian missionaries and Indians. Each used English for its own purpose. For the East India company, English teaching began with employment of Indians in a subordinate administrative or translating capacity, moving on to a climactic normalization when ‘English’ was the only knowledge desirable and necessary. Individual members of the government saw the history and future of English education in India as leading towards either a permanent bulwark of British rule in India or, conversely, a political challenge that testified to the acute learning by Indians of British political philosophy.

Missionaries had an agenda of spreading Christianity, which made them more troubled about the failure of the foreign tongue and distant ideas to reach the mind of the student, leaving him to simply regurgitate words and passages. They were, therefore, inclined to be far more pedagogically alert, and both bemoaned the failure of English learning by Indians on the whole, and celebrated its success among the elite when it did occur.

Indians of literate and upwardly mobile classes was interested in the new employment opportunities. They considered the match of these new opportunities and the mastery of a new language natural. Those in direct contact with missionaries could get worried that he latter’s vitriol against their culture could be disruptive of students’ morale, but they could not and did not take the threat of religious or even cultural conversion seriously. As Alexander Duff put it, missionaries believed that

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\text{In the very act of acquiring English, the mind, in grasping the import of new terms, is perpetually brought in contact with the new ideas, the new truths… so that, by the time the language has been mastered, the student must be tenfold less the child of Pantheism, idolatry and superstition than before (Laird 1972: 207-8).}
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For most Hindus, on the other hand, Christianity was not a real danger, and its discourses impinged little on their daily lives. Lal Behari Dey’s father expressed the extreme in caution. He planned to let his son study English in Duff’s school up to a useful point, and then withdraw him when scripture teaching began to have discernible influence (Viswanathan 1989:13).

English education was voluntarily chosen by the Indian intelligentsia and empowered them in a multitude of ways. Knowledge of Sanskrit and especially Persian continued to remain important because of their use in law. But over the nineteenth century they came to be seen as no long directly related to jobs with the monopoly gradually established by English. Sanskrit, Persian and the mother tongue became non-utilitarian choices: not good for careers, and progressively as ‘of little or no use in the development of [the] mind’ (Mitra 1880: 7). At the
same time, the colonial state succeeded in marginalizing and making extinct all types of indigenous institutions of learning. The history of indigenous schools shows them to be ignored by the government in the first half of the century. In the second half, they were systematically discouraged and replaced by new primary schools. We know from the Surveys of Education that their figures dropped markedly after the 1870s and that they had almost become extinct by 1900 (Dharampal 1983, Basu 1981, Report 1877-1888, Howell 1872, Kempson 1867-1877, Monteath 1887, Reid 1852, Thornton 1850).

But over the whole century, while formal indigenous education declined, it continued informally for the intelligentsia at home. All those who grew up to be active in state bureaucracies; who were at different levels of the professions of law, medicine and teaching; who wrote, spoke and led from different platforms, had a vernacular education in early childhood. To mention only a few cases at random: Bankim Chandra (b. 1838) learnt Sanskrit as a child; Kali Prosunno Singh (b. 1841) had Bengali and Sanskrit lessons in his childhood; U. Ve. Caminataiyar (b. 1855) began learning Tamil at 7 or 8; Pandit Ajudhanath (b. 1840) studied Arabic and Persian; Surendranath Banerjea (b. 1848) learnt Bengali in his childhood.; Kashinath Trimbak Telang (b. 1850) learnt Marathi very well; Shankaran Nair (b. 1857) learnt Sanskrit as a child; and Motilal Nehru (b. 1861) read only Arabic and Persian till 12.

It can be shown, I think, that the continuity of vernacular and classical education was an amateur, non-ideologised, non-discursive attempt by the older intelligentsia and elite to reproduce themselves culturally in the face of the ambiguous threat of the colonial school. Here, while we age speaking literally of the language, we must remember that a language can never be divorced from its discourse, its mode of teaching, its power. English schools were at first taken by the older intelligentsia to be shops where the child merely mastered the craft of a new language and an associated science. They were only gradually understood to be educational in a wider sense, as including an ideology and an ethics in their training, therefore acculturating children into worlds that were alien to surrounding ones. We may speculate, and in part document, that the cause for the continuity of indigenous education was this new understanding. The documentation would come from the scores of caste journals and caste association papers that emerged all over India from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, all with the common theme of losing something valuable—that is, both precious, and also something possessed and regarded as inalienable—and speculating on how to protect it (Kumar 1998, 2000: ch.4). However, I cannot help but add the additional speculation that intellectuals everywhere, at all times, tend to be more wide-roaming in the spaces they make available for social and cultural reproduction for their younger generation-
not out of any philanthropic unity with universal humanity, but as part of their professional practice and cultural identity.

The results of this continuity may likewise be speculated on and in part documented, and divided, for heuristic convenience, into the conscious and unconscious. Its most evident conscious result was to generate a continuing interest in the languages, literatures and philosophies of India among the intelligentsia. Old languages were revamped, new technologies of print and journalism used, older literary models were refined, new ambitions for the self and the public developed. What did not exist in formal articulation in the language, such as ‘history’, was freshly expressed or composed. The act was a deliberately constructive one. The construction of ‘new’ as opposed to ‘traditional’ was not intellectually problematic, particularly as the activities of the intelligentsia of the ‘upcountry’ provinces show us. It was logical to use a new epistemology to reinterpret familiar facts, or to fit in new facts into a familiar epistemology.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (b. 1817) remained a product of Delhi’s pre-colonial cultural and intellectual milieu, in spite of serving the British government for some twenty years. As late as 1846-54, when posted in Delhi as munsif, he took again to his studies of the intellectual traditions of Shah Waliullah and Shah Abdul Aziz. Other examples were Zakaullah (b. 1832), Nazir Ahmad (b. 1830), and Altaf Hussain ‘Hali’ (b. 1837) (Minault 1986: 290-91). In the Northwestern Provinces, the vernaculars remained the most important medium right through for all those who were in traditional occupations, such as Kayasthas, Brahmans or various trading and commercial castes, even while all the boys learnt English. Bharatendu Harishchandra (b. 1850) epitomizes some of these complex trends in his use of the new print technology, his literati creativity and ambitions for a new nation, all in vernacular language and idioms (Dalmia 1987).

In the Presidency capitals, and especially in Calcutta, this re-discovery typically took place in later years, after an adolescent and youthful reception and digestion of Western learning had had its time. Then the memories of childhood training leavened with an urge of creativity, led to a re-learning, re-discovery and re-cognition, of the ‘traditions’ of India. Interests might include an extreme of near worship of language or motherland, or language as motherland, such as of Tamil by U.Ve. Caminataiyar, for whom the love of Tamil was a ‘marker of moral character’ (Monius 1997). At the other extreme was a merely practical belief about the necessity and commercial efficacy of English, and the cultural value of the mother tongue or indigenous classical language.

The other, less conscious, more resounding result was that the possible absolute rule of ‘Reason’ in India was postponed. That is, although children were learning only languages, what they were actually learning, as already mentioned, were discourses. The learning and the
intellectual work of the first generation definitely (born before 1800, such as Ramram Basu and Mritunjay Vidyalankar), and that of the second and third generations to a large extent (born in the 1820s–30s and 1850s–60s, such as Degumber Mitter, Ranganada Sastri and Salar Jung), was coloured by the understanding of history, society and the truth that they imbibed both in their colonial and in their indigenous educational settings. The less than perfect reproduction of the Western models of history, society and truth were not due to any failure of capacity on the part of educated Indians, or in the very nature of imitation, or due to an inherent conflict between modern and pre-modern or West and East. It was due to the other education that they had also received.

Although intellectual traditions all over India have not been studied as ‘education’, there are certainly sufficient allusions to them, and sometimes very detailed discussions of them, by literary historians. ‘Non-idolaters’ and ‘rationalists’ may be particularly noted, including the Kartha Bhajas, the Balramis and the followers of Ram Prasad Sen in Bengal—the region most influenced by English educations, where society was seen as ‘crumbling’, having ‘lost her links with her own supreme realizations, her universal and eternal thought,’ where ‘dead, meaningless habit and decadent traditions stifled all creative efforts in the fields of art and culture, religion and politics’ (Laird 1972: vii, Ray 1995). Outside Bengal, there were more vigorous traditions of cultural assimilation and continuity. The eighteenth-century scholar, Shah Waliullah of Delhi, continued to exert, though his disciples and scholarship, tremendous influence on scholars of Urdu and Arabic. While adapted to British rule and keenly aware of the need for social reform, the springs of inspirational for the intelligentsia would necessarily include the intellectual-Sufi approaches already laid down over the last two centuries. And also be motivated by the obvious benefits to sharif culture and status that such learning provided. Delhi renaissance men could even be ambivalent towards the advantages of a new education, and consider English a necessary but subsidiary subjects (Minault 1986, Gupta 1973).

What I am calling ‘plural education’ then, has been clearly noted by many scholars in diverse terminology. Brian Hatcher calls it the ‘convergence of bourgeois ideology with norms of indigenous discourse’ and gives convincing examples from the lives of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Girischandra Vidyaratna. He cites Barbara Metcalf whose study demonstrates how Abul Kalam Azad ‘was profoundly shaped by the complex convergence of the colonial period’, in whose life we see ‘the overlapping and interpretation of indigenous genres and the hegemonic bourgeois model of self-narration introduced by the West (Hatcher 1994). Indeed, it would be difficult for a scholar to not recognize such a convergence, overlapping or interpenetration, in whatever terms she chose to discuss it. (Robb 1993: 1-21, especially 13-21.)
A study of the sociological present such as Edward Shils’ makes many of the same points but cannot support them with ethnographic data or a complex historical narrative. He mentions, for instance, the upbringing of the Indian intellectual within an Indian household in the middle of the twentieth century, with its caste and other vibrant traditions; the closeness of he intellectual to his mother tongue; and the hold on him of religion and astrology. A typical comment is:

The third and fourth stages [of the asramas or stages in life]…continue to have a tremendous power over those we interviewed….The transcendence of the concrete self, detachment or unattachedness, renunciation, escape from the routine and the compromise of market, hearth and committee room—these are some of the ideals of the third and fourth stages and they are common ideals of Indian intellectuals.

What is fascinating about Shils’ discussion is its perfect prototypical representation not only of the intellectual’s ‘conflict’ but of the unspoken critique of ‘tradition’ by ‘modernity’, as in Shils’ statement that Indian intellectuals are more ‘religious’ than their Western counterparts, implicitly, against their wishes.

We are familiar with another version of this plural learning in the notion of the ‘renaissance’. Directly the product of two streams of learning, the renaissance worked at two levels. At one level was the new creativity in languages, genres and media that has come down to us as the achievement of the nineteenth century. The creativity arose from the workings of new Western knowledge not on some abstract ‘past’, but on other bodies of knowledge encountered in quasi formal and informal settings outside the school. The same creativity, I suggest, may be seen in everyday life, in average careers and their pragmatic adjustment to domestic milieus, in answers to private/public questions, without any of this reaching the stage of publishing, lecturing or demonstrating. In this sense, all the first and even later generations of the Western-educated participated in the ‘renaissance’ because they were all brought up in two worlds. socialized by other teachers, elders and womenfolk as well as by their new teachers and new work experience. These two streams of learning did not stay discrete in their lives but were actively amalgamated in ways that may not necessarily seem compatible to us in our search for some elusive holism—and are certainly not sufficiently known by us.

We are further familiar with this in discussion of nationalism. The ‘progress’ of the nationalist movement from a ‘moderate’ to an ‘extremist’ phase was due, of course, to large changes in politics, economics and ideology. But it matched a similar process within the lifespan of single individuals who seemed to discover the missing dimension in their lives. Surendranath Benerjee (b. 1848) thundered when he was about 30 years old.
We are an astute people. We are not as wholly devoid of sagacity and common sense as some people take us to be. Well, then, our fathers, with the astuteness characteristics of our race, at once saw that England’s greatness was, to certain extent at least, due to her noble litterature, to the immortal truths taught by her science, and to the sublime morality which breathes through the burning words of her great writers and thinkers…Might not Bengal freely grope about, in the same direction, and under the same guidance? (Banerjea 1878: 6-7).

On the occasion of the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University, when he was about 70 years old, he spoke—together with all the other speakers on the day—about the importance of incorporating ‘Indian culture’ into the modern curriculum:

We who have profited by experience are not going to make such mistakes. In our curriculum, Hindu ethics and metaphysics will occupy a foremost place, the Western system being used only for purposes of contrast or illustration. Special attention will also be paid to a knowledge of the country, its literature, its history, and its philosophy. (Sundaram 1956: 147).

The relationship of nationalism to the plural learning that characterized the intelligentsia is, of course a very complex one. We are familiar with one side of the relationship, that between colonial education and nationalism, and especially how all nationalists were educated in the colonial mode, were aware of the greatness of Western nations as based in their intellectual pursuits, and were then engaged in the discovery of their own nation’s past glories as being related to excellence in education in the past. The contribution of languages to this discussion lies in that a language is precisely what is not fixed, or traditional, or essentialist. It is duplicitous and offers ceaseless possibilities for play and difference. Even more, a language opens the gate to a literature, which is in itself a repository of ethics, common sense and philosophies of the self. But most of all, a language is a discourse in itself, with a critical definition of every thing in its purview, and beyond. So that the continuities in language learning equalled discursive learning. The intellectual structures inherent in these discourses could be objectified, expanded and marshalled for various purposes, with breathtaking possibilities for a nationalist ‘science’ in particular, and nationalist pride in general.

The Family, Education and Social Reform
The locus for the new, synthetic, syncretistic consciousness of modernity of the intelligentsia, then, was largely the language(s) they worked with, that they comprehended the world through, that they had learnt both in school and outside school or in less formal schools. But what they learnt went beyond language, as we have already suggested, and as we shall explore in greater detail now. Let us imagine the life of an intellectual in the nineteenth century. Let us look at the extreme case of Aurobindo Ghosh. Born in 1872, Aurobindo had a father who, lost in admiration for the British way of life, wished to preserve his son from any contact with Indians. Aurobindo was, therefore, sent to a convent in India at the age of 5 and to the care of an English family in England at the age of 7. Ten years of English education later, he was master of Western knowledge. He was as anglicized as his father would have liked and knew almost nothing about India. But it seems that his father had slipped up somewhere. Otherwise how would Aurobindo have known the little Hindustani and Bengali that he apparently did know? And how was his father to take care of his colour and his name, so that when at Cambridge, Aurobindo could not be kept immune from Indian politics? By 1890, when he failed the Indian Civil Service examination, he was already on his way, at the age of 18, to being a full-blown nationalist.

If we look at the course of his life and his education, we may find at least one missing clue. His mother, the daughter of the Vedanta scholar, Rajnarain Bose, was an orthodox Hindu lady. The two sources of his ‘alternative’ knowledge were his own independent study upon his return to India, and what he must have learnt in his first five years in India from her.

This is one pattern in the history of India that could be given more attention. The fathers of these early generation new intelligentsia were themselves members of the ‘old’ intelligentsia (their famous sons’ names are in parentheses): darogas (Akshay Kumar, b. 1828), diwans (Rammohan Roy, b. 1772; Raghunath Rao, b. 1831), other kinds of court officials (Syed Ahmad Khan, b. 1817; Mahadev Ranade, b. 1842), clerks (Haracharan Ghosh, b. 1817; Vembankum Ramiengar, b. 1826), and pandits (Ishvar Chandra, b. 1820). As pillars of society, the fathers typically honored caste and sectarian rules, practiced gender and age hierarchies, and believed in child marriage. Akshay Kumar and Mahadev Govind Ranade were married at 13, Rammohan Roy at 9 and 10, Sivnath Sastri at 12, Bhabhanicharan Bandopdhaya at 9, Gopal Hari Deshmukh at 7, Lajpat Rai at 12. Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak at 13, and Dhondu Karve at 14.

The mothers of the first and second generation intelligentsia were often widowed, such as those of Akshay Kumar Dutt, Baladev Palit, Gopal Hari Deshmudh, Kandukuri Veerasalingam, Krishnachandra Majumdar, Pratap Chandara Majumdar, Shyamacharan Sarma Sarkar and
Surendranath Majumdar. One may suppose—even without recourse to psychoanalytical discussions of the strong mother-son bond in India (Kakar 1989, Carstairs 1961)—that after the father’s deaths the mother’s bond with the son became further strengthened. The re-appraisal of the status of the ‘female’ in India that is already being done must also be done with reference to the identity of the intelligentsia. Anthropological and feminist work tells us that the maternal and the feminine may be more central and multivocal in Indian society and culture than allowed for. We know particularly of the high evaluation of androgy and sexual inversion Historically, we also know that the tie between mothers and sons was especially close in some regions, such as Bengal, but that the tales of ‘bleeding female lingams’ and ‘male yonis’ come from diverse regions. (Ferro-Luzzi 1987, Borthwick 1984). It is relevant to evoke here all these various ideas, each with its own scholarship, in order to emphasise that we should particularly worry about a current contradictoriness: our present understanding is, on the one hand, hazy about the meaning of the domestic, maternal, parental and ‘traditional’; on the other hand, it has pre-conceived, fixed, non-discursive ideas about this realm of the woman.

For a variety of reasons, therefore, the notions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ in the Indian context are particularly relevant to childhood socialization and need to be further investigated. My particular proposition here is that because of the nature of gender in India, the demographic facts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the nature of childhood, the mother has a profound influence on the making of the adult identity of the intelligentsia. She does this not only through her work of biological reproduction, childrearing and utterance, but through imparting visions of alternative sensibilities, values, narratives and mental worlds to the ones being imbibed in public institutions such as the school and the workplace.

The biographies of men reflect, it is true, an idealized cultural expectation of nurture, and emphasis the ‘nature’ of their mothers rather than their ‘culture’. The case of Gooroodas Banerjee (b. 1844) sums up this image eloquently. Widowed,

the mother on whom the task of bringing up the child now devolved was a woman of great sweetness and force of character, and the gentle but firm touch of her hand had been in no mean degree responsible for the character of her distinguished son (Rao 1983: 70).

Even with a little reading between the lines, we find that what the mother is being attributed with is, in specific cases, the precise qualities of thrift, forethought, strength, and often her own physical labour. Vembankum Ramiengar (b. 1826), “the first Indian in Madras to keep his house in European style, to teach English and European music to the females of this family
and to invite European gentlemen to parties at his residence” attributes his good education to his
mother through exactly these qualities: thrift, foresight and strength (Some Noteworthy Indians
1992: 198). In other instances, the mother could oppose the iconoclasm of her reformer-son, but
support him, and in cases like Rammohan’s, where she opposed him, still exert great influence
on him. Sometimes, it was her positions as member of a particular caste and class that made her
the socializing influence that she was, such as Hatcher argues for the grandmother and, less so,
the mother of Vidyasagar. The former spun yarn to support her children as many in the Bengal
countryside had to at that juncture in history. Both of them in their own ways were Brahman
matriarchs, who, we suspect, maintained the ethics of their clan through the generations (Hatcher
1996).

In numerous cases, it is the language-culture that is attributed to the mother, sometimes
implicitly as a contrast to the paternal schools that the child was later subjected to. Subhas
Chandra Bose, at 16, “was more an ascetic than a political activist perhaps owing to religious
instructions [sic] he received from his mother. As a result, his attachment to Shaktism and
Vaishnavism was clear” (Chakrabarty 1990: 22). When educated, such as in the cases of Syed
Ahmad Khan or Rama Vaerma (b. 1837) the mother was actively and directly involved in the
son’s training.

The mother’s role, however, was far from restricted to a ‘maternal’ as opposed to a
‘paternal’ school. Even while her husband survived, and especially when she was widowed, the
mother could be actively on the side of English education through not only the typical means
available to her, such as thrift, labour and self-denial, but by making the active choice of English
education. In Akshay Kumar’s case, the widowed mother was responsible for the commitment to
his schooling. Veerasalingam’s mother, Purnamma, widowed when he was 4, “wanted to give
her son the best possible education. So she sent him to the Government District School
(Chatterjee and Mukhopadhyaya 1931: 115,127). Again, we must read between the lines at times.
Dadabhai Naoroji’s mother, widowed, ‘worked for’ her child. Illiterate, she was still his wisest
counselor. “She made me what I am,” he reminisced (Indian Worthies 1906: 167-94). The case
of Dhondu Karve’s (b. 1858) mother, widowed when he was in school, illustrates the complex
interplay in the mother’s subjectivity and agency. Her almost total illiteracy went with
‘religiosity’, which, while otherwise opposed by her son in public life, was transmitted to him as
‘charity’ and ‘love’. Her devotion to her son was part of the task of motherhood and, upon her
being widowed, became intensified. She became very ‘careful’ with his upbringing, particularly
with his education, because that was where the future lay. The decision to continue with English
schooling, sometimes in the face of great financial odds, was necessarily taken by her. Her ‘old
ideas’ notwithstanding, she “fully appreciated the great work being done by her Dhondu…” (Paranjpye 1915).

The position of the mother in Indian history has been unjustifiably obscured by the discourse of the ‘Mother’, available at first hand in the recollections of their sons and the sons’ biographers, and then interpreted ironically by historians. She is seen simply as the idealized nurturer of all material and spiritual resources in the otherwise colonized male, and then as the idealized land and nation itself. And the difficulties of historiography are undeniable. No great person’s biography gives a description of the earliest years spent with his mother, as Walsh points out (though Walsh in her turn gives attention exclusively to the father when discussing ‘growing up’ (Walsh 1963: 137). Great men feel obliged to remember their mothers only in the most generalized ways: “About my mother I can only say that she was the typical ideal mother described by everybody…” (Kolhatkar 1963: 137) There is no evocative scene from a dim, past store of images, such as we find in the fictitious description of Nabin Singh, modeled on some nineteenth-century Calcutta grandee, perhaps Kali Prosonno Singh, who spent his days, as a toddler, with his mother, feeding her pet birds and so on, one corner of her sari tightly clasped in his fist. She ‘didn’t know one letter from another’. (Gangopadhyaya 1981: 24).

The point here is not to attribute to a ‘mother’ a particular set of characteristics, and certainly not those of wisdom or sacrifice. The point is to restore, even while problematising it, the sociological status of the mother—and of the surrogate mothers of the family—as the primary caregiver(s) and socializer(s) in the child’s infancy, and, when widowed, in diverse ways even afterwards. In doing this, we also unravel one more strand of the extra-scholastic influences on the intelligentsia. The women themselves certainly experienced their lives as larger than that contained in the overdetermined category of ‘mother’, as the occasional writing by women, spectacularly that by Rashsundari Devi, can reveal to us (Chatterjee 1993; Lalitha and Tharu 1991; S. Sarkar 1998; T. Sarkar 1990). We do not intend to drain her being by restricting her to one static identity. We do not see her as ‘the mother’. We see her as engaged in the work of mothering, and in the process, as engaged in a productive labour that goes beyond physical reproduction and nurturing to social and cultural reproduction (Okin 1981, 1991; Glenn, Chang and Forcey 1994; Jetter, Orleek and Taylor 1997; Phoenix, Woollett and Lloyd 1991; Nair 1990).

Mothers, like all females except prostitutes and Vaishnavis/sadhvis, belonged to an ‘inside’ that was being further bifurcated from the ‘outside,’ to popular culture and in formal learning, to indigenous education. What they transmitted to the child were therefore, naturally, ideas from the general pool of the ‘indigenous’, the ‘vernacular,’ and the ‘traditional’. These could be mythological tales and histories, read or recited. They could be the verses of the poet-
saints, the lore of reformist devotional poetry. They could be the epics, in Sanskrit or the vernacular. They could be nursery rhymes or stories about the family. They could be abhangas, nonsense verses and literary games. They could be any stories about the region or about the Hindu pantheon (Ranade 1963). The few writings that speak directly about childhood mention, typically in a very casual manner, how mothers performed various skilled jobs beyond housework. Ramabai Ranade’s mother, formally uneducated, knew about medications and regularly told her children stories from the Puanas. Parvati Athavale’s mother, similarly uneducated, helped in her husband’s trade (Ranade 1930). It was only by the turn of the century that a bhadramahila mother could be educated enough to teach her son English, but even then Shudha Mazumdar had herself been trained in fasts, rituals and their narratives. When she mentions her English teaching exclusively, we may assume that it is largely the expectation of the ‘modern’ in her narrative that makes her not mention any other teaching (Mazumdar 1977). But whatever the formally retrievable content, in all cases, the early years spent with the mother would comprise an early education.

The education we are speaking of is close to what a Hindu calls samskara, or the ethical dimensions of living as learnt from one’s ancestors. Here I am speaking of the term not in its dictionary meaning of the Sanskrit term samskara as ‘essential rites,’ but in its colloquial (specifically, Hindi and Bengali) usage. In all fairness, transmission of values, or samskara, is not the monopoly of the mother, and for a more complex reason than the workings of patriarchy. It is because ‘mothering’ is not exclusively the domain of one parent. The same processes that made the woman more private, in need or protection, a bearer of tradition, the synonym for home and religion, made her play a progressively larger role in the upbringing of the child over the nineteenth century. But this did not always occur at the same pace between regions, town and countryside, classes and occupations. The English-educated class was miniscule. Even while its ideology of family life was progressively based on the European model, “a husband’s relation to his wife was subordinate to that with his mother” (Borthwick 1984:12). But by the same token, mothering was not a full-time occupation or a science and the husband and children were not seen as exhausting a woman’s whole world. The father, and various other members of the family, also continued to be domesticated, bearers of traditions and synonymous with religion and lineage. Our argument is not for a mother as a somehow unique personage, but rather for recognition of the spaces within which the child learnt apart from his government recognized school.

If the cases of Aurobindo Ghosh and others named earlier tell us of the hidden link of the mother, that of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar tells us of the role of samskara. Hatcher calls it the
vernacular or Bengali traditions, and Ishwar Chandra’s own presentation of the self, a case of Brahman identity. We know that in the retrospective gaze of history, we often impose categories on our subjects that had little meaning at the time they lived. Families, kin groups and networks, clans and lineages, subcastes and biradaris comprised the social experience of people. Hatcher describes rather perspicaciously the experience of a Brahman family, and more, of a gifted individual of a Brahman family. There were identical experiences in all other ‘castes’: Baniya (Agrawal, Khatri, Gujarati, Marwari); Kayastha; Kasera, Lohar, Barhai; and in Muslim lineages (Ansari, Pathan and so on). A Brahman is more easily locatable and retrievable historically, but Hatcher’s study exemplifies the way in which the ‘natural’ cultural characteristics of any group should be problematised. The ethical dimensions of identity were as central to the self-hood of the subject as other material or social dimensions and do deserve obfuscation as ‘tradition.’

Because English education did not and could not take over the whole of life, and language teaching continued, and because ethical teaching—the passing down of samskars—was so central to the existence of the ‘family’, the process of education that actually occurred is what may be described as that of plural acculturation. There is little empirical description of this, since we have as yet no interest in the Indian child or childhood, and no strong analysis of it beyond the metaphor of the child as a battleground of cultures, where the old and the new thrash out a compromise (Nandy 1987). But we may want to question this metaphor as well. Learning is continuous and, rather than confrontational, is creative, enriching and empowering. To make this plural, creative learning a subject of serious inquiry and positive evaluation, we have to attribute an importance to family and community history such as has not been done so far, and pay new attention to the quotidian sources of ideas outside the classroom.

If we take stock of the processes briefly described above, we come up with the following generalisation. The mother and father prepared the child for a career by cooperating in the disciplines of the new education, whether it took their physical labour or their mental compromise. The father’s profession and the parents’ caste and lineage positioning necessarily meant a consciousness in the growing child of his ‘identity’. Even as the father and mother ensured that their son got the English education the father himself may not have had, they taught values that were important to them, and that were as ‘real’ as anything in their world (Nanda 1977). Yes, they were not professionally relevant, and they were not always objectified or available in articulated form. The growing son’s samskara was not confined to certain rituals and practices that he might well abandon. It consisted of an unspoken acceptance of an epistemology and ontology that may be glimpsed in all his later writings and actions. Some of the best insights may be gleaned from attitudes towards the body. Even those totally anglicized through their
formal schooling might continue to believe in the *akhara* as the preferred site for working out and exercising. (Banerjea 1925: 4-5). A ‘modern’ intellectual such as Sigvaswami Aiyer (b.1864) spoke in the Madras legislature against government support of the Ayurvedic and Unani systems but used them in his own home in treating his wife, praising them as superior to the ‘allopathic’ system. (Sastri 1965). At the other end of the spectrum would simply be glimpses, in different degrees of clarity of abstract worldviews and cosmologies. To take from Surendranath Banerjea’s story again, he talks of the naturalness of the ‘reverence for the head and the elders’ of the family shown both by him and his English-educated father (Banerjea 1925: 2). What seems to us as a ‘natural’ movement towards novelty, individualism and modernity in the reproduction of generations is difficult to pin down anthropologically.

Again, both the father, but more typically the mother, since she was often widowed and always in the position of nurturer, taught the child a fund of stories, views and images, to which we have little access yet. But an excellent instance is the continuing popularity of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* corpus of stories, which have never been part of the formal school curriculum, and which are not taught in Hindu homes through any formal religious teaching, and are not to be confused with ‘religion’ in any institutionalised sense. Can we dispute that these corpuses of stories have gone into the making of the Indian intelligentsia? Given the nature of ‘Hinduism’, with its absence of church and priesthood, where would the so-called Western-educated elite of India have learnt of these stories if not through their parents, both biological and surrogate? To ignore the family as a site of learning means, in the colonial case most of all, not so much to neglect ‘family history’ as to short circuit the history of education.

Then we come to the troubled case of ‘reform’. Here, we will barely touch on one aspect of it: the context of the learning of the reformers, which was more wrapped up with the family and the mother than is understood. We can glimpse how the experiential location of the child within a home conceptually structured on a certain *philosophy*, his own early marriage, his constant interaction with servants, if any, and with the world of the streets and popular culture in every case, meant that the stimulus to his reform-mindedness as an adult came equally from his experience and his intuitive interpretation of the home, as from his late intellectual appreciation of it as injustice and oppression in the light of certain teachings. What are regarded as obstacles and inconsistencies in reformist thought must also be understood largely as the complexity of the encounter between experience and its plural theorization.

Indeed, there was a ‘dilemma’ for the reformer. It lay in the nature of active intervention in society, in the nature of violence, and the question of degree. The indigenous reformer is always different from the colonial reformer in a crucial way—in the consciousness of violence.
Some of this comes from familiarity. Reform, change and rejection are all easier when the people, relationships or values being changed or rejected are unfamiliar, strange, and other. But when, though infancy and childhood at least, and in ways that continued to surround and bind in later years, the relationships or values were familiar and at least unilaterally ‘yours’, then the action that changes or rejects them was one or violence. This awareness of violence creates the dilemma. Colonialism defines problems and then sets out to correct them. The indigenous cannot philosophically define itself as the problem, but must rather separate a part of itself as immune to the definition and label the rest of it. But every such separation is violent because there are no discernible lines. So some are drawn, some etched darker, some shifted and re-aligned. That between the masculine and feminine is one such. Another is between the low and the high. A third is between the popular and the classical. Reform and progressiveness resulted almost consistently not only in unequally distributed new rights and favors, but also in extensions of older repressive structures.

Once we have further studies of the links between reform and plural learning, we would find the data to substantiate this ‘dilemma’ further. For the moment we can take a small detour to explicate the point. It the novel Mai we have three main protagonists: two who want to save and reform the third, and the third who is the victim (Shree 2000). What makes this illustrative for our purpose is the author’s tracing of the process whereby the ‘victim’ comes to be understood by one of the projected reformers as someone with a mind of her own and with the choice to fight or not, or, with yet more sensitivity, fight in one of several possible ways. At the same time, the business of being a ‘victim’ becomes complicated as scenarios unfold themselves where she is bullied by the evident oppressors into acting a certain role bully her, but, equally, she is bullied by the saviours into fighting back. There is little to choose between the bullying, the domination, and finally the accusation of weakness hurled against the victim, by either side. Yes, the aims of the two sides are different: the oppressors wish to have her conform and to deny her any subjectivity and being; the reformers want her to be herself and stand up for her subjectivity and being the trouble arises in that neither considers what she is or wishes to be. The former assume she is nothing, and the latter assume she is nothing—for two different reasons. The former seem to be indifferent to her, but perhaps love her in their own way. The latter certainly loves, even worships her, but seems quite indifferent to her preferences.

The dilemma is the outsider-insider’s. Indeed, those very terms are used in the book: We had risen above caste. Above tradition, community, nation, everything. We were not superstitious, not religious, not middle class, or caught in any other binds…our freedom lay in our being ‘outsiders’. At home we were no longer of the inside, so we were free.
Abroad we were outsiders anyway so we could do what we liked. Everywhere we were ‘outsiders’ and therefore alone. Drunk with our freedom… (Shree 2000: 111).

There are two insights to be gleaned from this. As the book goes on to demonstrate, one at least of the ‘outsiders’, totally knowledgeable about and in love with the West as she is, realizes that she will never escape completely to the outside, because the ‘inside’—the house, its traditions, her mother, her foremothers and fathers—are all right there inside her and she has been travelling with them all along. Perhaps one cannot ever become an outsider to every place, as the passage just cited claims: outsider to one’s inside, and outsider to the outside as well—outsider both at home and out of it, both to one’s nation and abroad.

Second, maybe it is not even desirable to be an outsider. Because that implies rejection, condemnation, and a grossness and falsity of understanding. Some truths, at least, are only known from the inside, if they are known at all. Some battles can only be fought from the inside, if they can be fought at all. Once one has rejected or condemned, one may suffer in an unpredicted way, and in some cases, revert to a previous imagined state with impassioned repentance.

If, in terms of the use of sources and data, it seems a travesty to bring in a novel about a contemporary mother into this discussion of reformers in the nineteenth century who have no precise words to say about their own mothers, let us erase all gender considerations and consider the problem of the novel solely as one of reform. Reform implies that we recognise something—it may be ‘us’—as in need of change. But ‘us’ ness implies inter-generational continuity and the feeling of ‘inside’ that recurs at some point even if it disappears in adolescence, and the glimpse or recognition of why some things are the way they are. To quote Shweder, the insider recognizes that: ‘Reason and objectivity may lift us out of error, ignorance, and confusion. Yet error, ignorance, and confusion are not proper synonyms for tradition, custom, and folk belief (Shweder 1991:8). What Shweder is calling ‘tradition, custom, and folk belief,’ are, as this article argues, more precisely understood as the content of other processes of learning.

Conclusion
We are not speaking of perfect reproduction or of functional adaptation over the nineteenth century. The assumption is of a society in profound self-questioning and change, and the lens is that of children located in their families and societies and their experience of learning. The argument is that the combination of certain features in the lives of the early intelligentsias—the recurrence of certain patterns, as I have called them—needs a higher evaluation than it is given. Our data may be empirically less than adequate at present, but while they may be improved with
labour, certain hypotheses enable us to stretch them further already. Notwithstanding the limitations in the present state of the study of ‘education’ in India, it would still seem defensible to argue that the early grounding in one system of thought, however partial, ensures that there will be a complexity in the subsequent mode of thinking. The explanation sought today for ‘alternative modernities’ and the ‘local in the global’ lies largely in that children grow up into adults knowing more than what their schools (and, in contemporary analyses, the media) teach them (Duranti 1997: 351). In the nineteenth century, the first generations of the Indian intelligentsia discovered a cosmogony, an epistemology and a science in their formal schooling that enchanted them. But they were also familiar with another that was taken for granted by those around them. This constituted a mental ‘home’ from which they could wander afar, but to which they could always return; a home that did not necessarily forbid—if correctly manipulated, negotiated with, and won over—all possible intellectual adventures, such as those related to rationalism, universalism, freedom, equality and change. Many searched for these correct negotiations till the end; others were confident of them from the beginning.

Second, an emphasis on family, on childhood experience and on the extra scholastic dimensions of education will enable us to give a place in intellectual history to those who seem otherwise mysteriously silent and absent. This article a study of the production of intellectual cultures and educated people, but it is certainly a statement about the gendered nature of history as well. Given the power and emotive relationships within the family, women had a further role to play, not only in intellectual history as discussed here, but in the history of reform, as can only be suggested at this point. A man’s wife, mother, sisters and daughters may be expected to play an active role in arousing in him an awareness of his groundedness, the first three at least deliberately. Further, father than simply being objects women surely sometimes used, as it were, the man as an instrument to achieve for them their needs: of female education, widow remarriage, raising the age of marriage and other social reforms. At other times, they used their position as mother, wife and so on, to preserve for themselves some enclaves of autonomy and power, and when doing so, seemed to resist reform. All these goals were not uniform, and could and did conflict with each other. But the interlinked activity of women in both creating, learning and producing reform is utterly lost so far in the histories of reform, nationalism and modernity.

The dangers in this line of interpretation have to be recognized and avoided. The fist is a political one. Even as we show the work of childhood socialization and early teaching to be ‘essential’—an indispensable and irrefutable part of the history of education—it is ‘non-essential,’ that is, not ‘natural’ to its practitioners but rather the institutional product of forms of patriarchy. Moreover, we may not be personally interested in mothers, mothering, families, or the
implications of fertility as lying at the centre of women’s lives, and therefore may hesitate to make such a large case for the value of these and related processed.

Another danger is to see each of the bodies of knowledge, the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’, as a ‘body’, corporeal, solid, or fixed. The ‘informal’ at least, would better be seen as many evolving systems of thought always discursively open, in their implications, their potential and their relationships with other systems, if not in their practice. Thus, we could speak of any of the many strands of Islamic or Hindu learning, but more relevantly, of ‘worldview’ and ‘popular conceptions’, as does Dale Eickelman when he argues for widening the understanding of education (Eickelman 1986). Another danger lies in our contemporary differentiation of systems of knowledge as ‘science’, ‘religion’ and so on. Not only is this a distinction not relevant to the time we are speaking of, but also any system of knowledge may be more incomplete and internally inconsistent than this suggests, specially regarding ideas of time, of duty and honour, of action and freedom. Further, there is the question of the old and the new, and of the cultural defense of the ‘old’ which always generates, in the very logic of human activity, ‘new’ symbols and patterns (Conlon 1994: 46).

Finally, there seems to be one important reason for pursuing the hypothesis of this article further, a reason completely implicated in the arguments cited here for the creativity of learning, and the hidden role of women in history. This is our contemporary interest in discourse, and in many cases in that discourse that relates to women. It is not only the stated and the articulated, the wordy and the coherent, that goes into the making of a prevailing discourse, but even more, and more elusively, the ideas, concepts, images that are only suggested, somewhat familiar, somehow intimate, surprisingly natural and powerful, but always on the verge of vanishing. In any study of intellectuals and reformers, then, it would behave us to remember that the most formative influences on them may be exactly those relatively invisible to us: those of their early language, their familiar and their communities.