



# The Differentials of Gendered Social Capital in Indian Literary-Educational Activism, 1880–1930: Renewing Transnational Approaches

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on fresh theoretical and methodological approaches to adopt in relation to transnationalism, power, and the work and writings of gendered subaltern actors, both male and female, in the field of education in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while also applying such approaches to a number of case studies. India is in that period of British colonialism and emerging anticolonial movements a fertile laboratory for studying transnationalism; this has frequently been analyzed with focus on white women and their relationship with their South Asian counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Kosambi made significant contributions to studying the transnational writing and activism of the Indian

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educator-reformer Pandita Ramabai<sup>2</sup>; Midgley too has placed Ramabai in a framework of transnational liberal religious networks in a way that pays attention to local Indian groupings with nonetheless a transnational character, notably the Brahma Samaj.<sup>3</sup> I, meanwhile, have argued that the transnational character of the British Empire facilitated the emergence of a women's movement for education that paradoxically often took on an anti-imperial slant.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I extend and deepen earlier work by me.<sup>5</sup> I incorporate theoretical approaches from sociology and literary studies, notably gendered social capital, literary activism, and analysis of fiction as sources for understanding the cultural history of women's education. Firstly, this chapter will extend and deepen the notion of gendered social capital so that it explicitly includes hierarchies of race, caste, and class as analytical differentials to study the work of women educational actors. I focus particularly on caste. Secondly, this chapter will analyze how the literary activism of women actors in education in South Asia created transnational grids of articulation of agency, even in local contexts in which such women did not necessarily travel abroad. The chapter will also analyze how matrices of power, including race, caste, and class, informed such literary activism, through which women laid out claims to formal and informal education.

To illustrate these theoretical and methodological approaches, the paper will use a range of case studies, including the transnational trajectories of Ramabai, converted Indian Christian educational and welfare writer and activist; Savitribai and Jyotiba Phule, pioneering actors in the Dalit or lower-caste movement against Brahminical or upper-caste hegemony, as well as in girls' education and women's welfare; and the writings of Krupabai Satthianadhan, another Christian teacher and novelist, whose books *Saguna* (1887–1888) and *Kamala* (1894), two of India's first English-language novels by and centering on women, are *Bildungsromane* showing both critique of white racist attitudes in the field of education and of contemporary Brahminical society in India. Such literary texts articulate women's voices and agency as well as allowing us to uncover the networks those texts and their creators participated, created, and circulated in, as they sought pathways combining Indian heritage and modern "Western" education.

## THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is written by a scholar in literary studies. Writing gives accounts of activism, but writing is also itself very often a kind of activism. When scholars today read about contemporary, postcolonial women writers from India who were/are also activists, for example, Arundhati Roy (1961–) and the late Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016),<sup>6</sup> who have protested, for example, against the way the state and neoliberal capital dispossess and strip indigenous aboriginal people of rights, only some of them perhaps remember other writer-activists from another time (that is to say, nineteenth-century colonial India), activists such as Ramabai. Education, seen not only as formal education but as informal and lifelong learning too, was written about and redefined by such actors, who are seeking to redefine and critique the differentials in hierarchies, notably caste, race, and gender. This chapter is in dialogue with and builds on my earlier published work on gendered social capital.<sup>7</sup> That chapter had argued that the educational work of activists such as Ramabai manifested itself not simply through the provisions for female schooling that they organized through the associations and institutions that they founded, but also through their writing, through which they formed opinion, educated readers, and took part in debates on women's education and agency in society. The writing itself is thus crucial in harnessing and building the gendered social capital manifested in the educational and public work of such actors.<sup>8</sup>

Among such writings, not just essays and polemics but also fictional and travel writing also need to be considered as key resources for the entangled and connected histories of Indian education we write today,<sup>9</sup> and it is a fruitful endeavor to connect histories of literature (bridging the *bhashas*, that is to say vernacular Indian languages, and European languages), with histories of educational innovation, change, and struggle. The writing this chapter examines is varied, from polemical and essayistic to fictional. In the fictional writing in focus, we find that the making and tracing of the development of a female subject are at the heart of many such fictions, which can be classified as female-centered *Bildungsromane*, novels of formation and development. Such *Bildungsromane* are Indian while being read and reviewed in other nations.

The writing analyzed in this chapter is not by Brahmin, upper-caste Hindu figures, but by Indian, non-white Christians (converted Hindu Brahmins, in the case of both the Christian writers I look at), and lower castes (Sudra, Atisudra, or Dalit, all different terms used to refer to such

groups). The distinguished women's historian Meera Kosambi has termed Marathi upper-caste reformist women writers such as Ramabai gendered subalterns: Ramabai, Kosambi writes, "was exposed to patriarchal subordination despite her elite status".<sup>10</sup> This term can be applied to all the figures in focus in this chapter, men and women contesting, in varying degrees, patriarchy, colonial racism, and the orthodoxies of Brahminical Hinduism. This chapter thus deliberately includes a male figure, Jyotiba Phule, who worked with his wife Savitribai Phule for gender equity and against Brahminical or upper-caste domination in colonial India. Gendered subaltern is an apposite term for such figures; certain kinds of marginality and dissent, against upper-caste patriarchy, engender a kind of subalternity in male figures such as Jyotiba. The historian Ranajit Guha brought the term subaltern into use in historical studies, following Antonio Gramsci's use of the term. Guha preliminarily uses the Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of the word "subaltern," as "of inferior rank" to explicate the work of the Subaltern Studies Collective.<sup>11</sup> Antonio Gramsci's notion of subaltern groups being those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes was of great importance for the work of the Subaltern Studies school of history. A gendered subaltern who acts and speaks, in ways that show dissent from multiple official, hierarchical positions, can also be male when, for example, there is a solidarity against patriarchal oppression and other kinds of oppression (in the context of this article, caste-based oppression) being articulated simultaneously. Jyotiba Phule defended Ramabai, who worked for gender equity and who contested Brahminical power, and he showed solidarity with her. He and his wife Savitribai, meanwhile, worked for gender equity, the education of girls and women, the education of lower-caste men, and against Brahminical domination of education all at the same time.

The chapter also argues that differentials in power and hierarchy are important in understanding such actors as harnessers of gendered social capital. One does not often think of colonial subjects as builders of gendered social capital; however, activists such as Ramabai do need to be seen in this framework if we want to understand how they harnessed intangible resources such as alliances, friendships, and trust in their work:

Social capital, to use Robert Putnam's definition, refers to the ability of human beings to create trust, norms, and networks that facilitate social organization. Gendered social capital, in turn, refers to how certain kinds of social capital can be analytically viewed as constitutively gendered: these

include, for example, institutions and networks built around care, such as nursing, voluntary welfarist associations, and elementary school teaching, which have, through historical and social processes, become associated in particular socio-historical contexts with a particular gender, usually women.<sup>12</sup>

The educational work and the social capital harnessed by writer-activists such as Rokeya and Ramabai were embattled and contentious. While this gendered social capital was built up through welfarist, educational, and developmental associations and institutions, it was, we need to recognize, importantly harnessed through the work of writing in the public sphere.<sup>13</sup> Writing against Brahminical oppression of the lower castes, the Phules castigate the way the British allowed Western formal education to be dominated by Brahminical power, that is to say, by the upper castes. All of the writers battle patriarchal and conservative forces. Bourdieu argued<sup>14</sup> that society reproduced dominant structures through not just economic but also cultural and social capital. He wrote about the tension-ridden nature of education, in which reproduction of dominant power structures can be threatened by democratic transmission of education; in Bourdieu's view, cultural capital, often created in the private sphere such as the family, then can on occasion rein in the subversive potential of the critique and disruption that education can purvey. But in the case of the writers and actors analyzed in this chapter, the cultural capital they built up through (formal and mostly informal) education challenges dominant power structures. Here, educational action and writing does not reproduce dominant cultural and social hierarchies, and instead challenges them.

But why should the dissenting gendered social capital of actors in colonial India be relevant for transnational approaches to educational history? Transnational networks, the transnational nature of the British Empire, and learning from transnational experiences and applying them to their own work were all striking features of the work of colonial Indian writers and activists in the arena of education. Important writers in *bhashas* or vernacular Indian languages think transnationally, such as for example, Jyotiba Phule who in his Marathi writing equates slavery and the plight of the Black population in the USA and Hindu caste bondage in India, or Ramabai, who describes the gendered social capital of white American women in her travelogue about the USA. While only some Indian activists such as Ramabai ever travel abroad, even those who do not travel articulate views that think across and beyond nations. Lastly, since this chapter

also argues that we need to be attentive to differentials in power and hierarchy when analyzing educational writing and activism transnationally, it is relevant that a figure such as Jyotiba Phule compares one kind of power inequality, slavery, with another, caste bondage; or that Krupabai shows that both race and caste orthodoxy are terrains that the non-white “native Christian” Indian woman has to negotiate and battle in her journey of development. This chapter will now consider the case studies, beginning with Savitribai and Jyotiba Phule, going on to Ramabai, and ending with Krupabai Sathianadhan. (I have used the Indian custom of using the first name, rather than the more generalized last name, of each of the figures I examine.)

### CASE STUDIES ABOUT INDIAN LITERARY-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVISTS

Savitribai Phule (1831–1897) was a pioneering woman teacher and founder of a school for girls, pioneering actor in the Dalit/Sudra/Atisudra or lower-caste movement against Brahminical power, along with her husband Jyotiba or Jyotirao Phule. (Brahmins are the highest caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy; traditionally they were also priests who had access to learning.) Born in 1831, in Satara district of Maharashtra, she was married in 1840 to Jyotiba Phule. Educated from 1841, at the initiative of and partly by Jyotiba, Savitribai in 1847 took teacher training from a “Normal School” and on January 1, 1848, founded a pioneering girls’ school at Bhide Wada, in Pune (in the present-day province of Maharashtra, in western India). In 1849, she and her husband left her in-laws’ home to pursue their work for girls’ education since the in-laws disapproved of this work. In 1849–1850, more schools were founded by them in Pune, Satara, and Ahmednagar. The schools were inspected by the government in 1852. Savitribai founded, in 1853, an institution, Balhatya *Pratibandhak Gruh*, at Pune, to help upper-caste widows who became pregnant after losing their husbands, and who frequently tried to commit infanticide due to the social stigma attached to a widow giving birth to an illegitimate child. Savitribai prevented one such woman from committing suicide and adopted her son. Ramabai, incidentally, opened a school and home for Brahmin child-widows, Sharada Sadan (Learning Hall, in English translation), also in Pune. Savitribai was a poet, too: in 1854, she published her first book of poems, *Kavyaphule*.<sup>15</sup> In 1855, she helped to find a night school for farmers and

laborers (for both females and males). She was an active member of the *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Society of Seekers of Truth), founded by Jyotiba Phule in 1873. She died in 1897 of the plague, because she was working intensively during the plague outbreak to keep patients alive.

Jyotiba (1827–1890) was born in Satara district of present-day Maharashtra in western India, and belonged to the Mali or gardener caste, considered inferior to the Brahmins. His father was a vegetable vendor. Although he had to leave studies after primary school for a while, his father was persuaded to reschool him in his teens; he went to the local Scottish Mission High School and graduated in 1847. He attended primary school but left his studies to work on the farms. When an arranged marriage made Savitribai his wife, he taught her to read and write. The earlier paragraph already detailed how the couple built up institution after institution to educate women and to rescue socially outcast women. Jyotiba formed the aforementioned society called *Satya Sodbhak Samaj*, Society of the Seekers of Truth, in 1873. He was also a poet. He died in 1890.

One of the earliest figures who made Jyotiba think across nations was Tom Paine and his *Rights of Man* (1791). In his book *Gulamgiri* (*Slavery*), Jyotiba states that he first encountered Paine and his radical ideas about the rights of man from “enlightened Brahmin scholars” who thought that

unless the people belonging to different castes and social strata in India are united, we shall not be in a position to drive away the English rulers from India. And unless we change and modify our ancient and revealed religion and unless we stand united as one man, we shall never be able to compete with the Americans, the French and the Russians. These enlightened people have proved this favourite thesis of theirs on the authority of quotations from the works of celebrated authors like Thomas Paine and others.<sup>16</sup>

Jyotiba came to disagree with such upper-caste nationalists. He in fact thought that the British could be seen as allies of the Dalits/Sudras/Atisudras, and that Brahminical upper-caste orthodoxy was the principal enemy of the lower castes. In Jyotiba’s thought, the figure of Baliraja, demon king and ally of the lower castes, comes to be seen as an analogue of Jesus. Baliraja, king Bali, was a protagonist in the Hindu *Bhagavat Purana*, a sacred text, featuring in the story of the fifth incarnation of the god Vishnu, who took the form of Vaman, a very short Brahmin, in this episode. The king of the *asuras* or demons, Bali the

king had promised to honor the request of anyone who came and begged before him. Since Bali kept on defeating gods in battle, they requested the god Vishnu for help in vanquishing the former. Vishnu took the form of a dwarf, Vaman, and asked Bali for as much land as could be covered by three of his steps. Even though the guru of the demons Sukracharya warned Bali that he should not accede to this request, since this was no ordinary dwarf, Bali kept his vow. Vaman then became gigantic, encompassing the earth and heaven with two of his steps, with no space left for the third step. Bali offered his own head for Vishnu to trample on. Vishnu, by stepping on Bali's head, pushed him into the netherworld. Impressed however by Bali's devotion, Vishnu made him immortal and allowed him to come to see his subjects periodically. It is not difficult to see why Jyotiba makes Bali a figure for anti-Brahminical resistance, and also not difficult to see how the self-sacrifice of Bali and the self-sacrifice of Jesus both are seen as similar, in Jyotiba's reading. Jyotiba thus reads Hindu mythology and Christianity together to deliver a view that is supportive of Christianity and of the lower castes (identifiable with the *asuras* or demons); from a transnational perspective, this reading is powerful, bringing together radical readings of Indian religion and mythology and Christian theology, in a highly political manner.

With the title *gulamgiri* literally meaning slavery or servitude, *Gulamgiri* or *Slavery* asked lower-caste Indians to take inspiration from the abolition of slavery in America and the American Civil War: Indian lower castes and black American slaves were in similar conditions of servitude, it was argued. Jyotiba sees the Brahmins as people who arrived in India from central Asia, and who then proceeded to subjugate the indigenous inhabitants into material and mental slavery. Jyotiba reads the myths of the ten incarnations or avatars of Vishnu (one of which is the story of Bali) powerfully as tales of Brahminical domination and gradual enslavement of the lower castes. In the introduction to the tract, he compares the condition of former American slaves with those of the lower castes in India:

The good people of America have abolished this pernicious practice of slavery prevalent there for centuries and have freed many poor slaves from the clutches of the slave owners' tyranny. The depressed and down-trodden people of India feel specially happy at this suspicious development, because they alone or the slaves in America have experienced the many inhuman hardships and tortures attendant upon slavery. The only difference between



these two categories of slaves is this: former were first conquered and then enslaved, while the latter were captured (in Africa) and were enslaved in America. The miserable condition of both types of slaves is identical.<sup>17</sup>

When one reads how Jyotiba sets out some of the laws ascribed to the law-maker Manu, which set down tenets of Brahminical dominance, the analogy with slavery and its cruel, exclusionary legal regime is inevitable. Even though we know today that the *Laws of Manu* (which Jyotiba calls by another standard title, the *Manawa Dharma Shastra*) ascribed to Manu was probably written by multiple hands, between 200 BCE and 200 CE, it has become a convention to associate the name of one figure, Manu, with these Brahminical, patriarchal laws. Phule writes:

Any one, who feels disposed to look a little more into the laws and ordinances as embodied in the Manawa Dharma Shastra and other works of the same class, would undoubtedly be impressed with the deep cunning underlying them all. It may not, perhaps, be out of place to cite here a few more instances in which the superiority or excellence of the Brahmins is held and enjoined on pain of Divine displeasure:

The Brahmin is styled the Lord of Universe, even equal to God himself. He is to be worshipped, served and respected by all. A Brahmin can do no wrong. Never shall the King slay a Brahmin, though he has committed all possible crimes. To save the life of a Brahmin any falsehood may be told. These is no sin in it. No one is to take away anything belonging to Brahmin. A king, though dying with want, must not receive any tax from a Brahmin, nor suffer him to be afflicted with hunger or the whole kingdom will be afflicted with famine.<sup>18</sup>

Jyotiba thus offers a biting listing of prescriptions and proscriptions which help secure the dominance of upper castes and the subordination of the lower castes in India. Along with this analysis of the servitude of the lower castes, analogous to slaves in America, we find a critique of the way nineteenth-century formal education in India was also dominated by upper castes. Jyotiba desperately wants the British government to intervene, and to rein in upper-caste hegemony in education. “That Government should expend profusely a large portion of revenue thus raised, on the education of the higher classes, for it is these only who take advantage of it, is anything but just or equitable.”<sup>19</sup> The object of *Gulamgiri* is to alert both government and the Sudras that such inequitable education is not just.

I sincerely hope that Government will ere long see the error of their ways, trust less to writers or men who look through high- class spectacles and take that glory into their own hands of emancipating my Sudra brethren from the trammels of bondage which the Brahmins have woven round them like the coils of a serpent. It is no less the duty of such of my Sudra brethren as have received any education to place before Government the true state of their fellowmen and endeavour to the best of their power to emancipate themselves from brahmin thralldom. Let there be schools for the Sudras in every village; but away with all Brahmin school-masters! The Sudra are the life and sinews of the country, and it is to them alone and not to the Brahmins that the Government must ever look to tide them over their difficulties, financial as well as political.<sup>20</sup>

Education, Jyotiba thus argues, will offer a path for the emancipation of the lower castes in India, but only provided that upper-caste dominance of the classroom stops. Lower castes need to be educated and trained to become teachers, and the colonial government needs to take steps to suppress Brahminical or upper-caste educational hegemony. *Gulamgiri* was published in Marathi and was translated into English in 1991 as *Slavery* by P. G. Patil. Thus, in the public sphere of *bhasha* or vernacular print culture, there was ample space for the articulation of comparative perspectives cutting across nations and races, transnational perspectives, in other words. Savitribai too wrote her poems in Marathi; excerpts from one of them, from her 1854 collection *Kavyaphule*, are given below in English translation.

*Rise to Learn and Act*

Weak and oppressed! Rise my brother  
 Come out of living in slavery.  
 Manu-follower Peshwas are dead and gone  
 Manu's the one who barred us from education.  
 Givers of knowledge– the English have come  
 Learn, you've had no chance in a millennium.  
 We'll teach our children and ourselves to learn  
 Receive knowledge, become wise to discern.<sup>21</sup>

Peshwas were Brahmin Prime Ministers of the Maratha kings, from the region in western India to which the Phules belonged, who became de facto rulers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, until the British reduced them to titular rulers. Savitribai is through her poetry enunciating a vision which is broadly the same as that enunciated by her

husband in *Slavery*. The Phules also had great respect and sympathy for Ramabai, who was born into a Brahmin family and who left her religion and upper-caste hierarchies. In the journal *Satsar* (The Essence of Truth), a journal which Phule published in 1885, of which two issues were published, Phule defended Ramabai.<sup>22</sup> Jyotiba here defended Ramabai's right to convert, and her right to get education herself and to ask for education, including Western and Sanskrit education, for all other women.

Ramabai (1858–1922) was a campaigner for women's education, an essayist, a writer of travelogues, and founder of multiple welfarist institutions, that included schools and homes for widows, prostitutes, and destitutes, in both urban and rural areas. Her Brahmin father taught Sanskrit learning to his wife and two daughters, and one son. The family led a wandering life all over India and eked out a living from alms by reciting religious texts. Her parents and sister died during a famine that ravaged western India in the 1870s. This, incidentally, was the same famine during which the Phules became heavily involved in relief work. Ramabai and her brother survived the famine and went to Calcutta in Bengal where Ramabai was conferred the titles of Pandita (learned woman) and Saraswati (goddess of learning) by an assembly of learned high-caste men. She abjured such honors and married a non-Brahmin; she was widowed soon after and was left with an infant daughter. She started an association for women, called *Arya Mahila Samaj*, that asked women to become agents of change. In 1883, supported by the Anglican order, she traveled to England, where she was to remain until her American visit in 1886. She converted to Anglican Christianity, though she later adopted a non-denominational form of Christianity as her faith. Ramabai made a scathing critique of Brahminical patriarchal Hinduism in her book *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1887), published during her American sojourn. In 1889, she published a Marathi travelogue, *United Stateschi Lokashthiti ani Pravasavritta*, loosely translated as *The Peoples of the United States*, which was published in Bombay. After she returned to India from the USA, Ramabai successfully founded educational and welfarist institutions, first in urban Mumbai and Pune, and then in rural Kedgaon, all in the present-day province of Maharashtra in India. The first to be founded was Sharada Sadan (translatable as Learning Hall), a school, home, and training institution for child-widows, followed by Mukti Sadan (translatable as Salvation Hall) and Kripa Sadan (Hall of Mercy), which served lower-caste women, rescued sex workers, and offered training and refuge to the blind, and to other disabled women.

Ramabai's bravest hours were perhaps during the famine of the late 1890s, when she rescued hundreds of girls and women, irrespective of caste or religion or class, many of whom had been forced into sex work, and housed them in huts in rural Kedgaon, where she had a farm of a hundred acres: this was the nucleus of Mukti Sadan or Mukti Mission.

Ramabai worked transnationally, and her trip to the USA was crucial in her harnessing of gendered social capital transnationally. Writing her travelogue in Marathi, a *bhasha* or vernacular Indian language, Ramabai gives a detailed account of how American white women campaigned for women's education, built up civic associations, went into paid employment, and led the Temperance movement against alcohol. Equally, she critiqued the exploitation of Native Americans, and of Blacks, in the USA, though she was optimistic that such exploitation and oppression would gradually be wiped out through public action. Ramabai's American visit gave her a very large number of allies, who formed Ramabai Circles and Ramabai Associations, which helped support her Indian welfarist work. Equally, by giving an account in Marathi of women in the USA, Ramabai was trying to educate her Indian readers and find support through this comparative perspective for Indian women's engagement in welfarist work and in supporting women's education. Ramabai found supporters in countries such as Australia as well, and she did not allow her agenda to be set by her transnational supporters, though she kept them informed through the essays she wrote for the reports of the various foreign Ramabai circles and associations. The fact that she translated the Bible from Hebrew into Marathi is another sign of her thinking across languages, civilizations, and nations. Of all the figures invoked in this chapter, Ramabai is most obviously approachable and generative from a transnational perspective.

Ramabai and the Phules were literary activists in education in South Asia, with their books and essays being as constitutive of their role as public actors as their founding and building of educational and welfarist institutions. Ramabai created transnational grids of articulation of agency, while the Phules had a perspective which was comparative and transnational. This chapter now examines the writings of Krupabai Satthianadhan (1862–1894), Indian Christian teacher and writer, whose fictions *Saguna* (1887–1888) and *Kamala* (1894) are two of India's first English-language novels by and centering on women; these critique contemporary Brahminical society in India and racism in the field of education.

Novels by Krupabai Satthianadhan are pioneering and high-quality pieces of Indian literature in English, delineating landscapes and scenery, manners and morals of Indian Christian and Hindu life vividly. Krupabai died at the age of thirty-two. She was Christian, with parents who had been Hindu Brahmins and who had then converted to Christianity. There are many parallels between the oeuvre and life of Krupabai and another Hindu Brahmin who had converted to Christianity, namely Ramabai. Ramabai's book *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1887) offers a vivid portrait of the sufferings of the upper-caste Hindu widow, in ways that are comparable to Satthianadhan's novel *Kamala*, 1892–1894. Both Ramabai and Krupabai intended to study medicine in England. Both had to give up their plans due to health reasons. Ramabai had a hearing impairment, and Krupabai, who won a scholarship to study in medicine in England, was not allowed to go due to her failing health; she later enrolled at Madras Christian College for the same purpose, but had to give up her studies, again due to health reasons. Krupabai started a school for Muslim girls in Ootacamund, after marriage to Samuel Satthianadhan, with help from the Church Missionary Society; she taught girls in other schools too. She was thus, like Ramabai, active in the educational sphere. Krupabai also wrote an admiring essay about a visit to Ramabai's home for widows, Sharada Sadan, in Pune, and gives a vivid account of meeting Ramabai there.<sup>23</sup> Krupabai was memorialized soon after her death firstly by a scholarship in her name, to enable an Indian woman to study medicine at Madras Christian College, and secondly, by a gold medal in her name to be awarded to the woman who got the highest marks in English. Both the scholarship and the medal were open to native Indians, and not to Europeans or Eurasians: a testament to Krupabai's work for Indian women's quest for education, and her speaking up against white-dominated or racist ideologies of higher education for women.

Satthianadhan's novel *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* was serialized in the Madras Christian College Magazine in 1887–1888 and then published as a book.<sup>24</sup> Her other novel, *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life*, was published in 1894 in Madras.<sup>25</sup> *Saguna* tells the semi-autobiographical story of a young Indian woman who converts to Christianity. *Kamala* tells the story of an upper-caste Hindu child-wife and, later, widow. The novel offers a sympathetic anatomy of Kamala's life. At the end, Kamala refuses a chance to remarry and escape her life; she busies herself with philanthropic and charitable acts.

A selection of reviews of *Saguna* and *Kamala* excerpted in a collection of Krupabai's essays show how transnational the reception of her works was.<sup>26</sup> The literary public sphere abroad was keenly interested in writing in English by a woman from India and saw contemporary issues round the emancipation of women represented there: we read in a review, "Saguna, her first book, may be described as a study of the 'New Woman' as she is in Indian surroundings. It is to some extent biographical ... The story which relies on characterisation rather than plot is told in the first person ... We get many glimpses of inner native life and thought almost unknown to European readers. Many of her descriptions of scenery, household routine, and pleasures, and jealously believed legends are fascinating reading, and she possesses a vein of incisive satire."<sup>27</sup> Krupabai thus evolved a high reputation transnationally through her fictions. Only one of the excerpted reviews understands Krupabai's work in analogy to earlier British writers: "It is not possible for me to give a work of fiction higher praise than to say that it reminds me of Jane Austin's [sic] writings, and that praise is not too extreme for this Hindu girl's picture of Native and European Christian life together in India."<sup>28</sup> A lot of the other reviews see Krupabai's fiction as Indian writing representing Indian Christian life, with strong autobiographical contours. For example, see this excerpt: "It is, we believe, the first work of fiction ever written by a Hindu lady in the English language. The authoress writes anonymously, but she is the wife of a well-known Native Christian in Madras, and the work itself is really an autobiographical sketch. All who are interested in the Zenana Mission in India will do well to read the story, which is a faithful portraiture from inside of Indian life and customs."<sup>29</sup>

Krupabai Satthianadhan married into a literary family. Krupabai's husband's father, Rev. W. T. Satthianadhan, Krupabai's husband's mother, Anna Satthianadhan, Krupabai's husband, Samuel Satthianadhan, and her husband Samuel's second wife, Kamala Satthianadhan (whom Samuel married after Krupabai's death) all wrote and published<sup>30</sup>; as did the daughter of Samuel and Kamala Satthianadhan, Padmini Sen Gupta.<sup>31</sup>

*Saguna* is quasi-autobiography: like Krupabai, her heroine Saguna grows up in a pious Indian Christian family; like Krupabai, Saguna is a clever young woman who receives education from some of the ladies of a mission, then from a Christian training community for girls where she is picked out by a woman doctor to prepare for becoming a doctor in England; like Krupabai, Saguna then goes to a college in a big city in India to study medicine, and not to England, for health reasons; and

like Krupabai, Saguna has to abandon her plans to practice as a doctor, even though she is a very bright student, again for health reasons; the book ends with Saguna finding love and happiness with the son of a man she had lodged with, as Krupabai too would with Samuel Satthianadhan, son of Reverend W. T. Satthianadhan. Krupabai is positioned by admirers contemporary to her as an Indian writer who chooses the medium of English. F. C. A. Benson, who writes a Preface to the second edition of *Saguna*, writes that the English language allows “Hindu women” (a generic term for native Indian women including Krupabai, whose Christian faith Benson eulogizes) empowered access to a transnational community, comprising both English women and literatures in English, if such women themselves learn and use English: “English is the one language that will enable them to have intercourse with English women from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, and which will open to them a world-wide literature, of present, as well as of past, interest.”<sup>32</sup> English would connect such women “with all that is most interesting and progressive in the development of home, country, and empire.”<sup>33</sup>

In another article, I analyze the life and work of Toru Dutt (1856–1877), another nineteenth-century Indian Christian writer in English (and French) whose transnational trajectories, both educational and literary, were shaped by imperial cosmopolitanism; equally, that article argued that in their writing, writers such as Toru evolved a rooted or vernacular cosmopolitanism.<sup>34</sup> The cosmopolitan and the transnational have fruitful overlaps, with the citizen of a global polis, the cosmopolite, also often thinking across nations. Krupabai’s work too belongs in the lineage, and this is sharpened by her writing novels which belong very much in the tradition of the female *Bildungsroman*, since this form of the novel, about education, formation, and development of female characters, is highly transnational: Krupabai’s heroines Saguna and Kamala, for example, are compared fruitfully with those of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871–1872), with all the novels having intense, clever, passionate teenage female heroines. Krupabai’s heroine Saguna devours George Eliot’s books, which had once been forbidden to her, and “had longed for independence and a life of intellectual ease”<sup>35</sup>; and in Kamala, Krupabai’s other heroine, a Hindu child-wife and young widow, one can find analogues with Eliot’s Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, a modern-day St. Teresa searching for a vocation.

Giving vivid accounts of the development, thwarted or fulfilled, of young Indian women, either Brahmin (Kamala) or a member of a former Brahmin family which converted to Christianity (Saguna), Krupabai's novels open up a transnational space through the use of English, the interest in female subjectivity and development, and exploration of possible female vocations, whether the philanthropy and charity that the widowed Kamala chooses at the end, or the fulfillment through love and companionate Christian marriage, and possibilities of Christian educational work, that Saguna embraces. Krupabai's work strongly challenges patronizing views of native Indian Christian converts. One finds a space built up in the novels for an articulate Indian female voice, that will work gladly in tandem with white associates and supporters, but which will also claim a local space, in which women can find meaningful vocations, manifesting intelligence, grace, emotion, and action.

Upper-caste-dominated, Brahminical, and white missionary-centric histories of education are challenged by the writers and educational actors examined in this chapter. They write across nations, and our analysis captures how their work enriches theoretical and methodological approaches to the transnational in histories of education. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), towering leader of the Indian Dalits, and chief constitution-maker for India, was shaped partly by his education at Columbia University in the USA. Manan Desai writes,

In the 1940s, Ambedkar contacted [W.E.B.] Du Bois to inquire about the National Negro Congress petition to the U.N., which attempted to secure minority rights through the U.N. council. Ambedkar explained that he had been a “student of the Negro problem,” and that “[t]here is so much similarity between the position of the Untouchables in India and of the position of the Negroes in America that the study of the latter is not only natural but necessary.” In a letter dated July 31, 1946, Du Bois responded by telling Ambedkar he was familiar with his name, and that he had “every sympathy with the Untouchables of India.”<sup>36</sup>

Ambedkar thus also followed in the footsteps of Jyotiba Phule in seeing analogies between American slaves and Indian lower castes.



## CONCLUSION

After reading this chapter, the reader will, one hopes, be persuaded about transnational connections in colonial Indian educational and cultural history which are fruitfully analyzed using transnational methods, which enable us also to see how many different kinds of writers and actors could challenge upper-caste and white racist hegemonies in colonial Indian society. Scholars such as Eleanor Zelliott<sup>37</sup> have written powerfully about Dalit activism in the field of education. Converted Christian colonial Indian writer-educators such as Ramabai and Krupabai, who were originally Brahmin, and Dalit writer-educators such as Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule need to be conceptualized as key players in challenging caste, class, and race-based hegemonies in education. The transnational perspective of anti-brahminical educators such as the Phules needs to be explicitly acknowledged. Such an approach also enables us to bridge apparent divides such as elite and subaltern.

Scholars such as the late anthropologist Bernard Cohn<sup>38</sup> had argued, from the Subaltern Studies school of social sciences, that the British conquest of India needs to be seen as a conquest through and of knowledge too, eliminating as it did indigenous knowledges of various sorts. But this chapter allows us to see how modern “Western” education could be deployed in unusual ways, contesting various hierarchies and knowledge hegemonies. An approach that brings out the transnationalism and the harnessing of gendered social capital, foregrounding the agency of women and men seeking gender equity, is key to the new transnational, transcultural, connected histories of education we are writing today.<sup>39</sup>

## NOTES

1. Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Rule* (London: Routledge, 1995); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
2. Meera Kosambi and Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, *Returning the American Gaze: Pandita Ramabai's The Peoples of the United States* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1889/2003).
3. Clare Midgley, “Indian Feminist Pandita Ramabai and Transnational Liberal Religious Networks in the Nineteenth-Century World,” in *Women in Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global*, ed. Clare

- Midgley, Alison Twells, and Julie Carlier, 13–32 (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge).
4. Barnita Bagchi, “Towards Ladyland: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and the Movement for Women’s Education in Colonial Bengal, c.1900–c.1932,” *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 6 (2009): 743–755.
  5. Barnita Bagchi, “Ramabai, Rokeya, and the History of Gendered Social Capital in India,” in *Women, Education, and Agency 1600–2000*, ed. Sarah Aiston, Maureen Meikle, and Jean Spence (London: Routledge, 2010), 66–82.
  6. On these two writers, see, for example, Alessandra Marino, *Acts of Angry Writing: On Citizenship and Orientalism in Postcolonial India* (Wayne State University Press, 2015).
  7. Bagchi, “Ramabai, Rokeya, and the History,” 2010.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. Barnita Bagchi, “Connected and Entangled Histories: Writing Histories of Education in the Indian Context,” *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 50, no. 6 (2014): 813–821.
  10. Meera Kosambi, “Tracing the Voice: Pandita Ramabai’s Life Through Her Landmark Texts,” *Australian Feminist Studies*, 19, no. 43 (2004): 19–28. See also Meera Kosambi, *Women Writing Gender: Marathi Fiction Before Independence* (New Delhi: Permanent Black), 2012, *passim*. Please note that Kosambi does not use the term gendered subaltern with the same sense of impasse and questioning of whether the subaltern can speak that Gayatri Chakravorty does: Spivak, taking the example of the Sati, the widow who burnt herself on her husband’s funeral pyre in colonial India, argued that such a figure is spoken for and appropriated both by British colonialists seeking to ban the practice of Sati, and by Indian nationalists, who argued that the Sati voluntarily chose to die. The subaltern, trapped between colonial reform and nationalism, cannot speak, Spivak suggests. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Laurence Grossberg (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 217–313.
  11. Ranajit Guha, “Preface,” in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), vii–viii.
  12. Bagchi, “Ramabai, Rokeya, and the History,” 69.
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood), 241–258. Reproduced at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm> [January 29, 2019].

15. Savitribai Phule, *Kavyaphule*, translated into English by Ujjwala Mhatre, edited by Lalitha Dhara (Mumbai: Dr. Ambedkar College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai, 2012).
16. Jyotiba Phule, *Slavery (in the Civilized British Government Under the Cloak of Brahmanism)*, trans. P.G. Patil, 1991, reproduced in parts, without pagination, online. <http://sckool.org/slavery-in-the-civilised-british-government-under-the-cloak-of.html?Page=7> [January 29, 2019].
17. Phule, *Slavery*, <http://sckool.org/slavery-in-the-civilised-british-government-under-the-cloak-of.html?page=2>.
18. Phule, *Slavery*, <http://sckool.org/slavery-in-the-civilised-british-government-under-the-cloak-of.html?page=2>.
19. Phule, *Slavery*, <http://sckool.org/slavery-in-the-civilised-british-government-under-the-cloak-of.html?page=2>.
20. Phule, *Slavery*, <http://sckool.org/slavery-in-the-civilised-british-government-under-the-cloak-of.html?page=2>.
21. Poem by Savitribai Phule translated by Sunil Sardar and Victor Paul, <http://roundtableindia.co.in/lit-blogs/?tag=savitribai-phule> [February 29, 2020].
22. G.P. Deshpande, ed., *Selected Writings of Jyotirao Phule* (Delhi: Left Word Books, 2002), 206–210.
23. Krupabai Satthianadhan, “Pandita Ramabai and Her Work,” in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Krupabai Satthianadhan*, 92–95 (Madras: Srinivasa Varadachari, 1896).
24. Krupabai Satthianadhan, *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (Madras: Srinivasa Varadachari, 1895).
25. Krupabai Satthianadhan, *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (Madras: Srinivasa Varadachari, 1894).
26. Satthianadhan, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 118–129.
27. Miss Billington in *The Daily Graphic*, quoted in Satthianadhan, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 123.
28. Mrs. Fenwick Miller in *The Daily Signal*, quoted in Satthianadhan, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 118.
29. Mr. W.T. Stead in the *Review of Reviews*, quoted in Satthianadhan, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 122.
30. *The Satthianadhan Family Album*, edited with an Introduction by Eunice de Souza (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), has excerpts from the writings of these different members of the family.
31. See, for example, Padmini Sengupta, *The Portrait of an Indian Woman* (Calcutta: YWCA, 1956); Padmini Sengupta, *Toru Dutt* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1968); Padmini Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: Her Life and Work* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1970).
32. F.C.A. Benson, “Preface” to the Second Edition, in Satthianadhan, *Saguna*, 1895, ix.

33. Ibid., ix.
34. Barnita Bagchi, "Analyzing Toru Dutt's Oeuvre Today: How a Transnational Literary-Educational Casus from Colonial India Can Enrich Our Conception of Transnational History," in *The Transnational in the History of Education: Concepts and Perspectives*, ed. Eckhardt Fuchs and Eugenia Roldán Vera (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 179–199.
35. Saththianadhan, 1895, 223–224.
36. Manan Desai, "What B.R. Ambedkar Wrote to W.E.B. Du Bois," 22 April 2014, <https://www.saada.org/tides/article/20140422-3553> [January 29, 2019].
37. Eleanor Zelliot, "Experiments in Dalit Education: Maharashtra, 1850–1947," in *Education and the Disprivileged: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2002), 35–49.
38. Bernard S. Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command," *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 276–329.
39. *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post) Colonial Education*, ed. Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs and Kate Rousmaniere (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

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