To my sisters,
for sharing
the quiet strength and silent tears
that comes from stretching two rotis into six mouths
(not counting her own).
For walking two kos for wood and water,
under scorching skies, on thorny feet.
And yet,
being slapped, beaten, and thrown out of the hut she plastered yesterday
for bringing a fifth unwanted girl into the world today.

To my sisters,
for sharing
with silent sighs
the painfully embroidered dreams on limp muslin,
and the tireless struggle of work weary fingers to eke a hundred paise....

To my sisters,
unlettered, unheard, unsung,
Braving death on hill and forest
for a head load of grass,
with only a prayer and a sickle...

To my sisters
for sharing
together with chia, mandua and pipri,
the sordid saga
of being beaten, bruised, raped and abused
for resisting, questioning and not consenting.

To my sisters,
still not losing hope...

-Anindita

4.6.98.