Chapter 1
Introduction

Education has been an important aspect of human beings. It is especially so with women because they can then widen their knowledge. It is obvious that without the struggle for education in the early nineteenth century we would not have had Indian English women's fiction at all. Let us see how women have acquired education in early nineteenth century. According to P. S. Balasubramanian, "By the beginning of the nineteenth century women in India were hardly educated" (71). Moreover, there was "a superstitious feeling" among the majority of Hindu families that if a girl was educated she "will soon" "become" "a widow". This was according to a report of William Adam on the state of Education in Bengal in 1836. Perhaps this was the reason why women themselves "enforced the prohibition against female education" (Forbes 33). The British government "was also apathetic towards educational activities for girls in the beginning" (Balasubramanian 71). The progress of women's education in India during the British period was extremely slow, as the British government did not encourage women's education. It was the same in England too in Valerie Hey's view:

The historical development of education in England in nineteenth century traces the role of ideologies of femininity and their contestation. [...] Educational provision was initially restricted to the aspirant sons of the upper class. This practice confirmed the scholarly clerical tradition of Oxbridge. Despite capitalist expansion stimulating the demand for education, middle and upper class women and their working-class sisters were variously denied access. The subsequent history of education traces numerous challenges to this exclusion. (67)
Women's movement was thus a result of the denial of education to women across the globe. One of the "challenges" was to see why women were excluded in the history of education.

Coming back to India, according to Sahab Deena:

[●●] in 1819 Christian missionaries opened girls' schools. But many families did not send their children to these schools. The first step in giving a modern education to girls was taken up by the missionaries in 1821, but these efforts were marred by the emphasis on Christian religious education. The Bethune school had great difficulties in securing students. The young students were shouted at and abused and sometimes even their parents were subjected to social boycott. Many believed that girls who had received western education would make slaves of their husbands. (63)

Thus, the parents were hesitant to send their girl children to school. In addition to this, the fact that parents were subjected to "social boycott" shows that something like the caste system existed then. There was yet another opinion that those girls who "received" "western education" would make their "husbands slaves".

The missionary schools had spread to all parts of the country. For example, "The Church Missionary Society was more successful in South India where it opened its first boarding school for girls in Tirunelveli in 1821" (Forbes 39). However, in North India "female education was encouraged by the Arya Samaj, a reformist Hindu sect which followed the teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. By the end of nineteenth century, progressive Arya Samajists recognized the importance of involving women in their reform efforts" (Forbes 44). According to Sahab Deena, in the western part of India "in 1848 several educated young men formed the students' literary and
scientific society, which had two branches, the Gujarati and the Marathi. One of the aims of the society was to start schools for the education of women" (63). This was a welcome step by the young men. As has been already indicated, "The Bethune school, founded in Calcutta in 1849, was the first fruit of the powerful movement for women's education that arose in the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} decade of the nineteenth century. While the education of women was not unknown in India, a great deal of prejudice against it existed" (Deena 63). The "Wood's Despatch in 1854 was the first official proclamation pleading for the encouragement of women's education" (Balasubramanian 71). According to Mehtab Giri, "No schools were supported before 1854. Only after 1854 was official/governmental support given in the form of grants-in-aid. The Brahmo Samaj too contributed towards women's education in Bengal" (80).

The main hurdle for the growth of women's education in the nineteenth century was the role religion played. Yes, religious Hindu parents were not in favour of sending their girls either out into the world or to schools. Hindu society was a kind of closed society. As opposed to this, Christian Missionaries were in favour of education for women and they did play a role in educating women. The missionaries were aware of the lacuna in the education of women in India. Thus they took up the cause of educating women\textsuperscript{2}. Just like the missionaries the Indian religious reform movements too made some efforts towards encouraging education of girls as can be seen from the following:

[W]anting to present a juxtaposition to the sweeping popularity of Christianity in Indian society, [they] tried to do everything they could to match Christian missionaries. They tried to develop parallels to missionary action. The education of women was an area which Indian reformers handled with singular success. By the middle and the end of the nineteenth century the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the
Arya Samaj etc. were all actively engaged in the education of women.

- About this time, around 1860-1870 European liberalism was beginning to have a strong impact on Indian thinking. (Chitnis 61)

The historical fact is that "In 1883, two Bengali Brahma Samaj women became the first Indian women from Bethune college". (Giri 80)

Mehtab Giri gives us "the old maxim": 'When you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman you educate a family and a nation' is not an exaggeration" (79). I agree with Mahtab Giri as it is generally believed that women take great care of children's education. So it is better to provide education first to girls, then to the family, the village, the town, the district and the state. Thus the country will have better citizens. Superstitious beliefs, ignorance and economic reasons were responsible for the absence of systematic female education at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the social evils of child marriage and the purdah system were also responsible for not sending the girls to educational institutions. However, some Christian missionaries and social reformers like Swami Dayanand Vidyasagar and P. C. Benerjee attempted to educate girls during this period.

Susanne Greenhalgh in her article "Growing Up" presents the argument about girls of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remaining restricted either to home or to employment. As a result, they were deprived of education and were' married off. They, thus, did not constitute the category "youth":

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a gendered way of viewing youth was reflected and developed in novels and other writing. Youth came to be seen as a period of restless experimentation, a journey of rebellion and self-discovery which ended in acceptance of the demands of society, usually in the form of marriage (Moretti,
Such stories of adventures in search of a "sentimental education" away from home were essentially boys' stories, however. A girl's growing up, based in the home of her family or employers until marriage, largely excluded from education, and often rigorously protected from sexual encounters, did not take the same form, either in fiction or in fact. To a large extent girls were not seen as part of this new category of "youth". (20)

This confinement to home denied them any exposure to the outside world:

This historical association of girls with home also made them less prominent in public, on the streets, where they were out of place and even at risk. As a result girls were thought of as less of a public problem than boys. Indeed the term "youth" came to have predominantly masculine and delinquent connotations and adolescence, viewed as a phase of achieving a separate, individual identity, often through rebellion against family or social conventions, came to be typified by the sort of teenage boy played by James Dean in 1950s films such as Rebel Without a Cause. For girls, however, such adolescent attempts to take charge of their sexuality and other aspects of their lives conflicted with the socially preferred feminine goals of being carers, dependents and sex objects (Lees, 1993: 15, 17, 21). (Greenhalgh21)

These views are relevant in the case of India too. That is why I feel education is a must for all girls irrespective of their nation and country. They should not be brought up in the above manner. They have to be given education in order not to be "carers", "dependents" or "sex objects".

In the Indian context, "Pandita" Ramabai was truly remarkable as a pioneer in women's education and as a rebel and champion of women's rights. Her
father supervised her education and allowed her to remain unmarried. When her father and mother died, Ramabai was sixteen years old, unmarried, and able to read Sanskrit" (Forbes 46). She wrote a book entitled *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (1888). This book is a critique of Hindu customs and traditions of women in terms of caste, marriage, children, duties of a wife and widowhood. In the book she also appeals to all men and women who have sympathy for the high-caste Hindu women to help them by making them aspire for "self-reliance" (Ramabai 100) and providing them "education" (Ramabai 102) and "Native Women Teachers" (Ramabai 105) in order to improve the condition and status of Hindu women in India. It is important to note that "[t]en thousand copies of this book were sold before Ramabai had left America. In 1887 Boston admirers set up a Ramabai Association to support her work in India" (Forbes 47).

According to the *Status of Women in India: A Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee of the Status of Women (1971-74)* (New Delhi: ICSSR, 1988), the nineteenth century social reformers' "aim [...] was to use education to make women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers and not to make them more efficient and active units in the process of socio-economic or political development. The colonial authorities generally supported this limited view of women's education" (88). "Education started" according to Alladi Uma "on a large scale in the late nineteenth century, but at that time it was designed to develop in a woman those qualities that were seen as essential to making her a good housewife—reticence in speech, subservience of manners, fortitude, and consciousness" (8). Although the "aim" was limited in its scope, it was a stepping-stone for women to get educated. In Madras the Theosophical Society did encourage female education. "Speaking as a leader of the society, Annie Besant (1847-1933) asserted that in ancient times Hindu women were educated and moved freely in society. She urged women to return to this "golden age" (Forbes 43).
According to K. A. Kunjakkan:

More education gives more intelligence, reasoning power, more I. Q., and such an individual is able to understand and comprehend things around them. They acquire an inquisitive mind and thus able to question things. This is however opposed to Indian view of life, where women are expected to be obedient, disciplined, submissive, chaste and docile. All these womanly qualities are believed to be evaporated (sic) on attaining excess education by women. The feminists say that this misunderstanding is due to the popular notion that women are to be a wife and a mother. Nothing more (371).

I strongly agree with Kunjakkan views about education giving more intelligence, reasoning power, more I. Q., and an ability to comprehend things but I do not agree with the later part of Kunjakkan’s ideas about women being expected to be obedient, submissive, and docile. In fact my work is based on the assumption that "education" can make women more intelligent and comprehend things in a better fashion.

After this brief historical and sociological background to the question of education, let us move on to how education for women has been viewed in the literary world in the nineteenth century. Before I proceed, let me make a statement about my choice of the novels for study in this dissertation. I am dealing only with selected novels originally written in English from the 1950s to the 1990s by women writers and not translations. This is only for the purposes of convenience and to make the study focussed. I also need to define what I mean by "educated" women. I consider any woman with a formal education (from the primary level to the doctoral) an "educated" woman. Moreover, I have not considered those novels that have no "educated" women characters at all. The novels that I have not considered for instance in the present study are: Kamala Markandaya's A Silence of Desire (1960), A

I have considered only "educated" Hindu women characters and not considered those with a different religious or cultural background like Roshan Merchant in Kamala Markandaya's Some Inner Fury (1955), Caroline in Kamala Markandaya's Possession (1963), Helen in Kamala Markandaya's The Coffer-Dams (1969), Sarah in Anita Desai's Bye-Bye Blackbird (1971), Miss Mendoza in Kamala Markandaya's Two Virgins (1972), Nell and Lydia in Nayantara Sahgal's A Situation in New Delhi (1977), Anna Hansen and Stella in Nayantara Sahgal's Plans for Departure (1985), Rose in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us (1985), Roxanne Lamba in Namita Gokhale's Gods, Graves and Grandmother (1994), Rahel and Margaret Kochamma in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (1997). In other words, I will be dealing with characters with an Indian Hindu background, who are "educated" and who live in India.

I will deal with these "educated" women in terms of "Marriage", "Career" and "Divorce". These three issues are not independent but are inter-connected. Moreover, by dividing my dissertation into five chapters chronologically, I will analyse the novels to see if different decades have any effect on the issues discussed. The final concluding chapter will sum up my findings.

There are a few novels written originally in English and published in the late nineteenth century. I consider these novels to provide the historical background and in order to place Indian English women's fiction in the Post-Independence Era. The novels that are written in the late 19th century are:
Toru Dutt "is the first Indian woman novelist in English and the first woman novelist of India" (Mund 25). Although Bianca in Toru Dutt's *Bianca: Or The Young Spanish Maiden* is not a Hindu woman character, I would like to discuss her, as she is the first woman character in Indian English women's fiction. In this novel we have Bianca, an "educated" woman, rejecting a marriage proposal on the ground that the man who proposed was already in love with her sister Inez. Although he proposed to Inez when she was alive, he claims that he is in love with Bianca too. She tells him that he cannot change his mind of having loved her sister like that and propose to any family member of Mr. Alanzo Garcia. He has to be reasonable in his proposal. Moreover, his logic is not adequate. Thus, she rejects his proposal. Later she falls in love with Henry Montague Moore. This is her true love. However, initially her father Mr. Alanzo Garcia resists this marriage proposal. Later on he agrees. Henry's mother wants her son to marry Miss De Wilton and not Bianca. The reason is that she can bring fifty thousand pounds as dowry. Henry's mother is interested only in the dowry and is not concerned about the mind or choice of her son. Moreover, Henry is strongly in love with Bianca and turns down his mother's proposal. Henry's sister Maggie supports her brother and is interested in her brother marrying Bianca. Henry's mother says this about Bianca to her daughter Maggie: "She is not at all like what an English young lady ought to be" (Dutt *Bianca* 91). Also Henry's mother wants her daughter-in-law to be like an English girl. Her daughter says: "But mamma, if Henry marries her, we can polish her up in a few days, and make her a little more English!" (91).

Another interesting thing about Bianca living in Indian culture is that although she is not an Indian she feels as though she has committed a sin when Henry kisses her without her permission. In the later novels discussed in this study...
we find even having pre-marital sex is not considered a sin. There is lot of change in the perspective of "educated" women in the later novels.

Even as *Bianca* was the first published novel by an Indian woman, the editor of *Kamala: The Story of Hindu Life* (1894), Chandani Lokuge claims that "[•••] Krupabai Satthianadhan holds the distinction of being the first Indian woman author to fictionalize in English, the life of an upper-caste Hindu woman" (1). Lokuge in the introduction to *Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* says that "while Indian women were contributing to the genre during the late nineteenth century in various Indian languages, Krupabai Satthianadhan pioneered that tradition in English" (1) with her autobiographical novel *Saguna*. But I feel that Toru Dutt is the pioneer of Indian English woman novelists as her novel *Bianca Or The Young Spanish Maiden* was not only written in 1878 but also dealt with "Indian" themes (I have indicated one such instance in my previous paragraph.) [See M. K. Naik’s *A History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982) and K. R. Srinivasa Iycngar's *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962) who have also argued that *Bianca* is the first novel.]

In Toru Dutt’s *Bianca* we have a possibility of love marriage but the marriage does not take place. Bianca is betrothed to Henry who is only able to put a ring on her finger but has to leave for war. On the one hand love marriage is not successful and on the other hand, in Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Kamala* there is an arranged marriage in the form of a child marriage. In those days, in orthodox Hindu families, child marriages were quite common. Chandani Lokuge rightly says, "Kamala has no voice in the selection of her partner; the marriage has been arranged in her infancy by elders" (4). During those days parents used to think that they arranged marriages for the bright future of their daughters. And it was true that they were also responsible for any unfortunate incident that may happen in their marriage. Although Kamala is not formally
educated, her educated husband Ganesh "introduces her to the basics of education. She is seen to blossom under his tutelage. However, Ganesh is too weak to oppose traditional Hindu opposition to female education, and withdraws from the experiment" (7). Men like Ganesh were ready to help girls/women by educating them. But the tradition was so rigid that it would not allow any male member to undertake reforms in female education at an individual level.

In the late nineteenth century itself the nuclear family emerges, breaking out from the joint family system. Perhaps, this allowed for the woman's individual self to emerge. As Chandani Lokuge says:

Satthianadhan provides Kamala with the opportunity of expressing her latent feminism when she transfers Kamala and Ganesh from Ganesh's parents' residence to a house of their own in the city. By granting them this independence, Satthianadhan also enables them to transcend the traditions of the joint or extended family. (11)

Kamala "transcending] the traditions of the joint or extended family" as far back as the late nineteenth century will have some kind of a bearing on the later novelists. While the nuclear family may have its positive effect on Kamala, it enables Ganesh to entertain his lover Sai in his home. Perhaps, this is one of the drawbacks of the nuclear family. In the joint family system, a person like Ganesh would not have dared entertain his lover, as he would have been afraid of his parents and family members. At the same time Kamala shows her authority in her home. Chandani Lokuge says:

[H]er awkward selfhood cannot be contained now and develops subversively and when Ganesh begins to entertain his lover [Sai] in their [Kamala's and his] home, it asserts itself. One of the most memorable moments of the novel occurs when the unfailingly humble
pativrata (husband-worshipper) militantly stands up to her husband and to his mistress. "It was an unusual thing for a woman to behave in this fashion," the author herself admits as she records how Kamala literally drives Sai out of her house. Indeed, it was quite against the norm: Kamala's speech and behaviour mark a momentous and historic step forward for India's upper-caste Hindu womanhood. Kamala, by this assertion of the rights of individualism, crosses the traditional threshold. Kamala's rebellion is the culmination of Satthianadhan's feminist stance in the novel; at least fictionally, she has liberated the upper caste Hindu women from the bondage of mute husband-worship.

(Lokuge Kamala 11-12)

Kamala has literally driven her husband's lover Sai "out of her house" and has asserted her "right" and her "individualism" over her husband and her house. In the traditional sense it is "against the norm" of decorum. Kamala's "speech and behaviour" remain a significant and historical lesson for any Indian Hindu womanhood not just for "upper caste Hindu womanhood". This "rebellion" and "liberation" of "upper caste Hindu women from the bondage of mute husband-worship" may be seen in Hindu women of other castes also. As far as Sai is concerned she is educated and she misuses this advantage. She tries to interfere in the life of Ganesh and Kamala and even disturbs their married life for some time. Ganesh is also a party to Sai becoming his mistress. He is aware that he is married and has a child to look after. How then could he have a relationship with Sai and bring her home? He has a wife and a son at home. Due to Kamala's bold steps Sai has to leave Ganesh. One cannot but appreciate Kamala's boldness in claiming that it is her house as she is the daughter-in-law of the house. Sai "[•••] is shown up as a vile and amoral opportunist. Unorthodox female education and female liberation are held responsible for the destruction of her moral sensibility" (Lokuge Kamala 16). Sai misuses education in trying to snatch Kamala's legal husband.
Sai, an unmarried woman, tries to have sex with Ganesh. She knows very well that Ganesh is married; yet she tries to keep Ganesh to herself. Sai even goes to the extent of breaking Ganesh's relationship with Kamala by creating false ideas in his mind. She finds out, first of all, information from Ramchanderpunt about the purpose of his visit and takes him to a place where she can show Kamala talking to Ramachanderpunt who has come there only to inform her about her father's deteriorating health condition. Thus she creates misconception in Ganesh's mind about a non-existent affair between Kamala and Ramachanderpunt.

After Bianca and Kamala we have Krupabai Satthianadhan's Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman (1895). Before I proceed to discuss Saguna I would like to justify the use of this work for this study. Krupabai was one of "the first converts to Christianity in the Bombay Presidency (an administrative unit of the colonial government)" (Tharu and Lalita 275). I mention this fact here because this is an autobiographical novel. She is a Hindu woman but her family had converted to Christianity. During those days converting to Christianity had many benefits like access to western education, freedom from several orthodox rituals and scope for earning money. Hindu society was a closed society. So the conversion. In spite of conversion, her mother hinders her education. Her mother is of the following opinion: "What a girl you are to go and trouble your head with books! What is the use of learning for a girl? A girl's training school is near the chool (the fire over which everything is cooked), and however learned a girl may be she must come to the choof" (Satthianadhan Saguna 21). I do not agree with Saguna's mother's view about her daughter troubling her head with books. It is with the help of learning that there will be a change for girls in the future. At the same time we cannot blame Saguna's mother having that kind of an opinion. She is part of a patriarchal set up. However, Saguna is clever enough and is passionate about learning. She says: "I generally managed to seat myself beside them with a pencil and a slate and pretend to be very busy and quite ...
I tried to pick up little snatches of knowledge, and employed my time in working out the sums on which my brothers were engaged, and in setting their lessons by heart" (Satthianadhan Saguna 21). If the girl like Saguna has this kind of a passion for studies, one has to appreciate her interest. She also questions the society at large about gender discrimination.

Prema and Harni who are friends of Saguna are educated women. Saguna's mother has been helpful in making Saguna visit Prema and Harni quite often. Perhaps Saguna's mother wants her daughter to mingle with Prema and Harini so that she may get interested in studies. Saguna claims:

They regarded me as a younger sister, and let me hold their hand and stand by them while they chatted with others after the service. [...] Prema, my first friend, to whom I have only made a cursory reference, was tall, and had a peculiar sweetness of face and manner. [...] She talked English as her mother tongue, for she went to a European school. She was fond of telling me of her school, where the teacher wore a train and belt and a flower, and where she expected soon to be a teacher; for she was in the highest class. (Satthianadhan Saguna 79)

In the late nineteenth century, the age for marriage was approximately fifteen. The girls were also conscious of their marriageable age. Prema tells Saguna:

"It is only girls of my age that know what it is. When a man offers his hand in marriage, the young lady accepts it. Then she is engaged and a ring is put on her finger."
"And shall I be engaged too?" I said.
"Oh! Not all girls are engaged. When they are young ladies, you know, like me. They must be fifteen and you are only twelve."

(Satthianadhan Saguna 84)
Prema explains to Saguna at what "age" "girls" are married as though she is aware of all these details. But Saguna's mother has now changed her opinion that a girl's training is not near the chool but at the school, and she is keen on educating her daughter. She herself takes her daughter along and says:

"My daughter is alone at home. She learns a little too much, so I have brought her here to be more like other girls, to learn a little and to play a little; but you will have to give her a room to herself, and let her be free from the rules of the school at first. Let her join the classes or not as she likes; for she is delicate. I will pay all extra charges."

(Satthianadhan Saguna 125-126)

Perhaps Saguna's mother being a home-maker has experienced loneliness "at home". Therefore, she wants her daughter not to face the same loneliness "at home" as she had faced, whether it is before marriage or after marriage. Thus, she wants her daughter to be "more like other girls," learning and playing at school. However, Saguna's mother requests that she be provided a separate "room" and not be forced to join classes. The reason for not making Saguna attend classes compulsorily is due to her "delicate" nature and she is ready to "pay all extra charges" for those facilities.

Saguna is so bright that the teachers are amazed. She seems to be a gifted child. The teacher even recommends Saguna to move on to a higher class. One of the teachers tests her and says:

"Well," said the teacher, "you can afford not to see, you can sit where you like."

Several other subjects followed, in which I found myself far ahead of the girls, but in passing I came to a standstill.

(Satthianadhan Saguna 129)
Saguna proves that if parents encourage their daughters they can prove their talents and intelligence to society. Saguna is given an option to "sit" in whichever class she would "like" to sit. She has been tested in several "subjects". In whichever subject she is tested, she has been "far ahead" of all "the girls" in the school. I feel it is because of her mother's sense of adventure, that too in the late nineteenth century, in admitting her in a school that makes Saguna do exceedingly well. Furthermore, looking at Saguna's intelligence and sharp brain Mrs. T encourages her to do medicine. She says:

"... You had better learn medicine."
"Medicine?" Oh I wish I could," I said, quite taken aback by the proposal ... I felt bewildered, and turned inquiringly to Mrs. T. "She is th[e] lady doctor, you know," she said in answer to my look, "and it is veN good of her to take an interest in you. Could you learn medicine?"

"Anything" I said impetuously, now quite beside myself with joy.

(Satthianadhan Saguna 130-131).

When Mrs. T wants to send Saguna to England to do her medicine, there are complaints against Saguna that she is not religious enough to go to England. Saguna ought to be religious as she is sponsored by the British. She is questioned for she "do[es] not read ... Bible, or pray" (133). She too questions them: "How do you know?" (133) She says she does pray but is not a pretender.

The important point to be noted is that given a chance any girl will be able to do any kind of course. Saguna has been identified as a genius and she has been asked to take up medicine. So the career in medicine had started as early as in the late nineteenth century for "educated" women.
Having seen Bianca, Kamala and Saguna, the last character in the late nineteenth century I would like to look at is Ratanbai in Shevantibai M. Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895). Ratanbai undergoes child marriage as it used to be the tradition in those days. However, she is sent to school as long as she is with her parents. Her school going stops once she goes to her in-laws. She has no encouragement from her mother Anandibai, her aunt Kakubai and her mother-in-law. Her father Vasudevrav Kashinath Dalvi is a strong advocate of women's education. Even Ratanbai's husband Prataprao has no problem in his wife being sent to school. Ratanbai's mother Anandibai has to do what Ratanbai's mother-in-law asks her to do. When Anandibai asks her whether she has any objection to sending Rantanbai to Goa in order to stop her schooling, she says:

"Send her anywhere, but not send her to school." It was, then, thus settled, but Ratanbai was kept in ignorance of her being removed from school. She was told to go to school and take two months' leave, to pay the fees for those months, and to tell the Bai that she was going to Goa with her aunt. Ratan obeyed sadly and reluctantly, and the teachers and the girls were very sorry indeed to lose her, though they were led to suppose, for a time only. (Nikambe *Ratanbai* 64)

Though such an attitude of the mother-in-law may have to be condemned, we may wonder whether we need to understand why she does so, coming from the background she does. Here it is Ratanbai who is being stopped from attending school. She asks Ratanbai's mother to "send" their daughter "anywhere" but not to "school". This is ridiculous. She has been doing exceedingly well in school. She is just like Saguna, doing exceedingly well in school. Why should her schooling be stopped? Moreover, Ratanbai "has been kept in ignorance" about "being removed" from school. On the other hand, she has been asked "to take two months leave" from school and "pay her
school fees for those months" and "tell the Bai that she was going to Goa with her aunt". Ratan "obeyed sadly and reluctantly". But her teachers feel "very sorry" about losing her, even for a short time. In fact the decision is taken for her entire life.

But, later on, her husband helps her by encouraging and allowing her to attend school, despite his failing in his examinations. He is broadminded unlike his mother. He is just like his father-in-law who supports women's education. In this novel those who create problems for girls' education are women themselves whereas the male characters are for women's education. For example, take the case of Vasudevrvav and Rambhao talking about sending Ratanbai to school again. Vasudevrvav says:

When [...] Mr. Rambho (Kamalla's father-in-law) came to Mr. Vasudevrvav, the latter said, "I am sorry to say my daughter is not in my hands. If you can persuade her mother-in-law and the other lady, Kashinathpant's wife, nothing will give me more pleasure, for I am in favour of our girls and women being educated. If some lady were to open a class for the married ladies, I would be the first one to send Anandi. I am thinking, however, of getting a native lady to come to my house and teach her. If Ratan were in my charge, I would send her to school to-day. I would not have allowed her to be kept at home at this early age, when she was getting on nicely, too; but our girls are not ours when married!"

(Nikambe Ratanbai 72)

One can easily understand Vasudevrvav feeling sad that Ratan is "not" in his "hands". He is in "favour of girls and women being educated". He would have "sent" his daughter "to school" if she were to be unmarried. According to Eunice de Souza in her introduction to the book, "Ratanbai's father [Vasudevrvav], a lawyer, is an interesting character, full of contradictions. He
insists on Ratan being educated, but the constant pressure of his women-folk makes him give in. His progressiveness does not extend to meal-times, when he is served before the others. Shevantibai does not comment on this, ironically or otherwise. It is merely stated as a fact" (Ratanbai 7). However, Vasudevraav is willing to send his wife Anandi to the class "if some lady were to open a class for the married ladies." At the same time we can question Vasudevraav himself. If he is so interested in his daughter's education, he would not have got Ratan married at such an early age. But in those days, child marriage was practised and so he perhaps had to go along with society. This argument does not stand as he plans to educate his "wife" with a tutor. He also comments on the tradition of fathers losing the right over their daughters after they are "married".

In conclusion, based on the socio-cultural values as evident from books on women's education and on literary texts, we can say women had to struggle in order to get educated and be called "educated" women. There were traditional women, patriarchal males, orthodox religious preachers, political institutions etc., that were denying education to women as we have seen from our readings of the views of some historians, sociologists and educationists. However, there were a few men who were all for women's education. There were women novelists who were trying to raise some of the important questions about "education", "marriage", "separation" (that may or may not lead to divorce) and "career" in their works written in the late nineteenth century. These women writers showed the path to the Indian English women novelists in the twentieth century.


Mund, Subhendu. Introduction. *Bianca Or The Young Spanish Maiden*. By


Notes

'Eunice de Souza in her introduction to Sevantibai M. Nikambe, *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895) (Rpt. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2003) gives the picture of education for women. Schools were established in order to promote women's education in India in the nineteenth century, starting from 1819 upto 1889. The following information helps in coming to know about people's involvement in female education in India:

Concern for the education of women in India began early in the 19th century. In 1819, the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society under the patronage of the Baptist Mission was established to promote female education. Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savithribai opened the first school for girls in Poona in 1848 while John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune and Ram Gopal Ghosh established the Hindu Female School, later called Bethune College in Kolkata the following year. Faiz-unnessa Chaudhurani set up an English medium school in Bengal in 1873, while Pandita Ramabai set up the Arya Mañila Samaj in 1882 and Sharada Sadan in 1889. (10-11)

2 Vilayalakshmi Seshadri in her book *The New Woman in Indian-English Women Writers Since the 1970s* says: "But there were strong prejudices against schools run by missionaries and the upper caste Hindu families did not 'condescend' to send their girls to such schools. Only converts from Harijan and the lower classes sent their daughters to these schools" (38). Eleanor Zelliot also says in *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*: "His [Jyotiba Phule] schools for Untouchable children in Poona in the 1850s were among the earliest non-missionary efforts on behalf of the Depressed Classes (45). She further says: "Phule backed his preaching with such concrete action as a school for Untouchables and one for women, and
seems to have been the first to use the word *dalit* in connection with caste in the term *dalitodhar* (uplift of the depressed)” (271). I mention these facts to point out that if the upper class and upper caste Hindu women were struggling to get education in those days, could the lower caste, lower class women think of getting education?

3 The first name of Pandita Ramabai is not "Pandita" but it is "Pundita". The original book refers to the name as follows: Pundita Ramabai Saraswati. The title of her book is *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1888 and reprinted in 1984.